

# More than a rite of passage? Debating the relevance of research with student teachers

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# Outline



- Student-teachers' perception of research mandated by their degree programme
- Instructors' motivation for demanding research
- The LL-project
  - Classroom-based inquiry (Kostoulas, 2018)
  - Contexts for professional learning (Koffeman & Snoek, 2019)
- Suggestions for fostering long-term engagement with research and incentivising classroom-based inquiry

# The student-teachers' perspective



- empirical research in the Master's programme and its relevance for student teachers

“If unsuccessful or dissatisfied, the teacher will probably close her mind to the possibility of ever undertaking classroom research again – remembering the experience as over-demanding in terms of time and effort, and as ultimately stressful and unrewarding.” (Maley, 2016)

- student teachers want research that is ‘doable’

# The student-teachers' perspective



- engage teachers with research in a purposeful way → developing teachers' research competences (Kostoulas, 2018, p. 14)

**Research literacy** = which means the ability to locate relevant research, appraise it in relation to one's specific teaching needs and to judiciously apply it to one's professional context

**Research experience** = participation in research activities

# The student-teachers' perspective



“In many teacher education programmes, professional knowledge is usually disseminated by “knowledge-brokers”, who “choose, summarize, and convey research findings to teachers” (Anwaruddin, 2015, p. 6). This creates a risk of disempowering the teaching professionals, who are relegated to a role of passive consumers of information. Developing the teachers’ ability to actively participate in knowledge construction therefore seems imperative in order to counteract this danger.” (Kostoulas, 2018, p. 16)

- the ideal situation for a student teacher = collaboration between equals (Reynolds, 2018)
- connecting research evidence with practice (Kostoulas, 2018)

# Not a minority view



‘pseudo-research’ done by many MA and many PhD students, which is often more in the nature of a rite of passage than a real contribution to our understanding of how people learn languages or how language works.

- to prove that the candidate has mastered the genre requirements of the thesis
- concentrate on trivia
- not written to be read but simply to satisfy a requirement for a higher degree.

(Maley, 2016)

# Research competence



excluding research from teacher education risks “accepting (legitimising even!) the fossilisation of the profession in conservative practices, derived from our collective experience, reproduced through the ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975), and never questioned.” (Kostoulas, 2018, p. 13)

“[T]he process can put you off balance. In fact, that is part of its purpose. [...] When you take on the researcher’s stance, you question what you think is going on. In that questioning [...] you may realise that what you think is actually based on assumption. It is a process of unmaking up your mind in order to discover a new or different meaning.”

(Freeman, 2018, p.28)

# Teachers as researchers



- Classroom research
- Action research
- Teacher research
- Exploratory practice
- Lesson study
- ...



# The Linguistic Landscape Project



- Input in a course in a Masters' programme, connected to a research project
- Task design and feedback
- Practical implementation in the classroom
- Learner feedback via a questionnaire

# Christmas Shop Window



# Christmas Shop Window



## Writing Prompt

Write a story about a real or made-up shopping experience at Christmas time. You can choose between the following two options:

- a) A story about a busy Christmas shopping day where you wanted to find the perfect gift for a friend or family member. How did you feel while trying to find the perfect gift? Was it joyful?
- b) A story about somebody who decided to donate all their Christmas money to charities in the name of their friend/family member. How did they feel when donating? Were they joyful?

Include 2-3 sentences in which you describe the real or fictional Christmas shop window.

Make sure to make a mind-map of your chosen option first!

Underline all past simple and past progressive forms in your story!

# Christmas Shop Window



1. shopping mall

- lots of stores
- huge building


2. finds a shop

- window says: let your night shine
- searching for a gift, finds one and buys it

3. emotions

- desperate at first
- happy to find the perfect gift later

The Story about a busy christmas shopping day

 A X-Mas shopping day

On the 22nd December I decided to go shopping and search for a gift for my little brother. The building was huge and had over 200 shops. I didn't know what to gift him and he didn't tell me something specific he wants. After searching for quite a while I came across a colourful shop. The window said "let your night shine". The outlet looked very bright and was full of toys and candy. I went into the shop and it was full of kids and parents searching for gifts. I didn't know where to look first so I asked an employee for help to pick the best present. He told me to look at the Lego section and I quickly found something interesting. I ended up buying a cool Lego set and a pack of sweets. I asked the cashier to wrap it in wrapping paper, so I don't have to, and went home. The day was very joyful and I'm happy with the gift I bought. At first I was very desperate but in the end everything went well.

Option A

- not enough time?
- no idea
- what should I buy?
- present for a friend
- feeling during that: busy: good
- toys/clothes

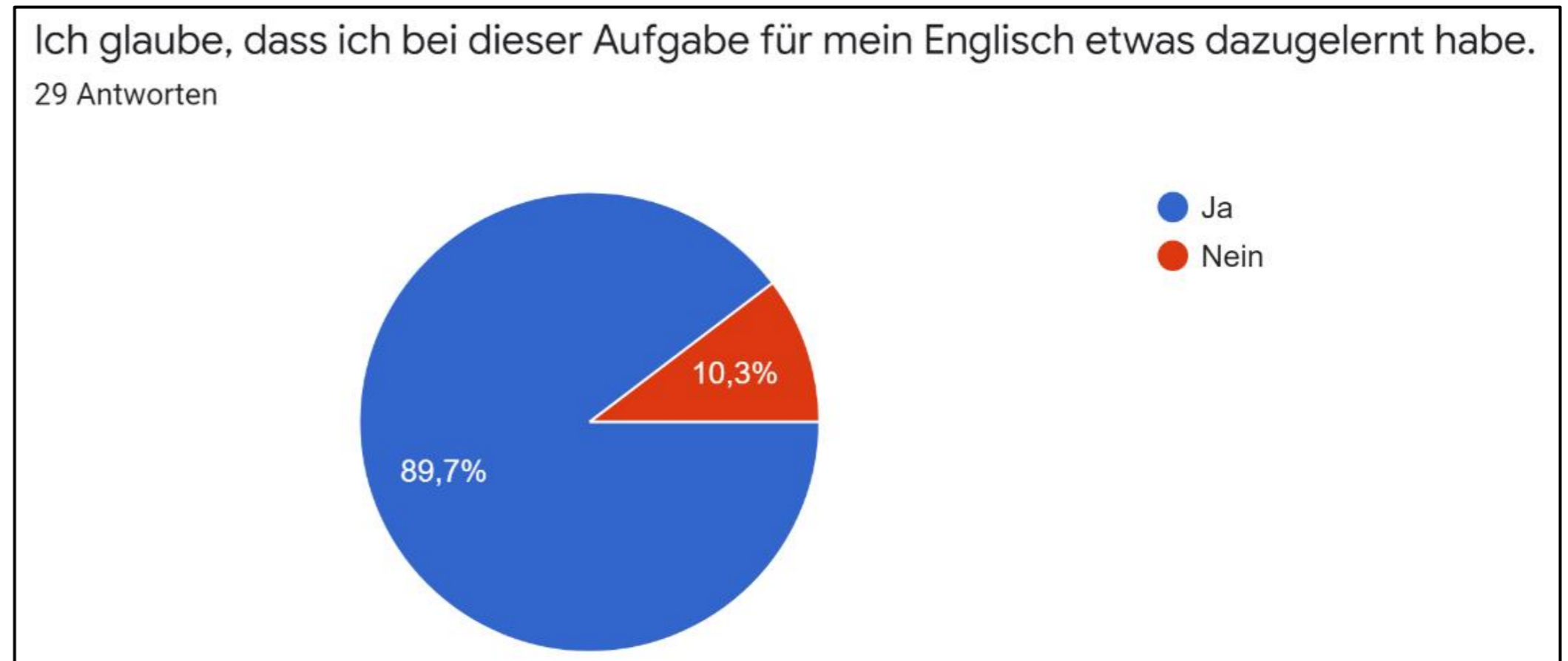
Story:

It was one day before Christmas Eve, I knew that I didn't have a present for my best friend. After lunch I got a train to the city, when I was there I thought about what my friend likes. He likes clothes or toys, but I think he's too old for toys. After a time of thinking I decided and went to a clothes store. Last year I bought a nice jacket for him. I looked around but I didn't find anything for him. I was busy, I didn't know what to do. So I went through the street and looked around there was a little shop, in the shopping window there was a gingerbread house and in front of it there was a gingerbread man. It looked very nice, behind I saw a board game. He and my friend wanted to play it months ago, but it was too expensive. But now it was in sale, so I bought it. We had much fun when we both played it, I was happy that I found something on time.

# Reflection and analysis



- Lessons learned
  - new research perspective
  - improving classroom practices
  - real-life applications of current research



# Characteristics of classroom-based inquiry



- a) systematic engagement with the realities of school life
- b) which aims to question established ways of doing things
- c) with a view to improving outcomes for teachers and learners

(Kostoulas, 2018, p. 16)

# Sources for teacher professional learning



- Practice
- Social context
- Theory

(Koffeman & Snoek, 2019)

# From a collaborative mindset...



first step towards dialogue: “nurturing a collaborative mindset in both researchers and teachers” (Sato & Loewen, 2022)

“But without institutional support, mindsets are unlikely to become more collaborative, and the suggestions for institutional support (e.g. time release and financial support for teachers) are just pie in the sky.” (Kerr, 2021 – Adaptive Learning in ELT)



# ...to institutional support



## Curriculum:

- raise the reputation of teacher-researcher role
- development of research literacy

## Institutional frameworks:

- create channels for dialogue to facilitate an equal partnership (CPD, MEd theses, professional networks...)

participating in research activities leads to **“an understanding of best practice that is both empirically grounded and personally relevant”** (Kostoulas, 2018, p. 13)

# References



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