

Background: Interfaces between second language research and practitioners

Publishing technical, scientific articles in high impact journals, which are usually behind paywalls, is the main priority of most academic researchers; it is highly-incentivized, with huge public investment. This research, in the field of L2 learning, is often motivated by issues relating to learners, users, educators, testers, policy-makers, and these communities often provide our data. Yet the extent to which findings from research published in high impact journals is relevant to or even reaches these communities has been repeatedly debated, with little data available on the nature, scale, and severity of these problems. As a result, we have a poor understanding about the flow of internationally peer-reviewed research from journals that claim some relevance to the classroom, both in terms of FL educators' *direct* exposure (via reading such research) and *indirect* exposure (via citation in publications they read or talks they hear).

Aim

Our 2 studies provide data about the flow of research to foreign language (FL) educators in majority Anglophone contexts. We focus on language educators' exposure to research, and temporarily put aside important issues around conceptualizations of research–practice relations (collaborative/action research), teacher cognition, and identity.

Study 1: Teachers' and teacher educators' reported exposure to research

The first study investigated the reported exposure to research among FL educators in the United Kingdom using 2 surveys ($n = 391$; $n = 183$). Respondents were mainly school teachers, with about $\frac{1}{4}$ non-school based practitioners who were mostly university-based teacher educators. The data showed (a) some limited exposure to research via professional association publications and face to face events, (b) negligible *direct* exposure to publications in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI), (c) the main barriers to exposure were caused by poor *physical* and *conceptual* access, due to a lack of access to journals and lack of time and training to understand technical research reports, though there were generally positive perceptions of the relevance and usefulness of research, and (d) the importance of university-based teacher educators for research–practice interfaces.

Study 2: Teachers' and teacher educators' reported exposure to research

The second study investigated the potential for *indirect* exposure to research via 7 professional publications over 5 years in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. We systematically reviewed the extent to which these professional publications referenced 29 SSCI journals that state in their aims to publish some pedagogy-relevant research. In our corpus of 8,516 references in 284 articles in professional journals, the mean proportion of references to all 29 SSCI journals, *combined*, was 12.43% per professional article. The overall mean number of references to each SSCI journal was 0.17 per professional article.

One proposed way forward

The emerging picture is rather bleak. We propose action from academic journals and researchers to promote a more international, systematic, and sustainable flow of research. Our data suggest that a concerted push is required from journal editors to incentivize and facilitate authors to make their research more physically and conceptually accessible. One page lay summaries would provide more detail than abstracts to allow readers to evaluate relevance to their own contexts or interests. These summaries would be freely available on a searchable, international repository, to which societies and associations could link. Though many challenges face such an initiative, similar practices of providing non-technical summaries are taking off in other disciplines, such as psychology, as part of the wider research transparency movement. The initiative could encompass both blue skies theoretical or laboratory studies as well as more applied research. Initiatives to date, such as review centers, digests, teaching subgroups in research associations, and research subgroups in teaching associations, have not, according to our data, yet improved access satisfactorily; they have been vulnerable to political shifts, have not been subject-specific or international, and, critically, have not interfaced in a sustained and systematic way with international, peer-reviewed research in higher impact journals. An independent infrastructure that emanates from journals (which enjoy relative longevity) could, we argue, improve access to high quality research and increase the value and visibility of research.