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## Series Editor's Preface

As English language educators, we value research for its benefit in providing evidence-based knowledge in our understanding of how English as a second or foreign language is learned (or acquired) by our students. Research also provides insight on best practices for teaching. But such research is only useful insofar as it is practical for teachers in classroom settings. It is necessary to translate, and indeed, *transform* conceptual and empirical research into practical and applicable information so that it can be used to evoke positive change for teachers and learners. That is, engaging with research is critical for practicing teachers.

TESOL International Association's research agenda (2014) promotes one issue very relevant to engaging research. One of its six bullet points maintains that the agenda intends to "promote dialog between doers and users of research" (p. 1). Furthermore, the agenda maintains that "because research is sometimes viewed as activity that generates knowledge but which has little relevance to everyday practice, (it) calls for more attention on how practitioners can use research" (p. 2). It is this grounding on which the current series is rooted.

The main goal of this series is to create new spaces for practitioner knowledge and engagement with English language teaching (ELT) research. As a professional community, we are interested in highlighting how ELT practitioners direct their own learning through reading, questioning, interpreting, and adapting research findings to and in their own contexts. Understanding and accessing original research in the field is critically important for teachers of all levels, and busy ELT professionals may not always have the opportunity or inclination to spend time reading and digesting academic journals or theory-based texts. As such, this series serves ELT practitioners by providing nuggets of original research from TESOL publications in the form of rich and detailed synopses. Further, each chapter puts the original highlighted research into practice by providing a replicable lesson plan and a reflection on its implementation, so teachers will have an idea of how such a lesson plays out in certain contexts. The result is a very accessible and rich collection that adds to the profession's overall knowledge base, while also validating the critical role teachers play in TESOL's overall mission to improve learning and teaching. The series recasts a great amount of ELT material from *TESOL Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *Essential Teacher*, and other TESOL Press publications, such as the English Language Teaching in Context series.

There are four books in the series, with each book following a similar format. Three of the books cover the elementary, middle school, and high school levels and have chapters dedicated to the content areas of mathematics, science, social studies,



and English language arts. There is also a volume devoted to English as a foreign language, and it is divided into three parts: primary, secondary, and higher education. The series is published in print, but resources, interactive links, and supplementary materials are available for download on a website dedicated to the series. In this way, teachers have ready access to multiple resources for their classrooms.

A benefit of the series stems from the diversity of classrooms and teachers represented in each volume. The individual chapters speak to the various educational profiles of students in diverse regions. As a result, the chapters highlight English learners (ELs) hailing from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds throughout the United States and beyond, as well as teachers with varying content and training backgrounds. Accordingly, academic and language standards for lesson plans correspond to the location and context in which each chapter is set. Among others, readers see Common Core State Standards for content, standards specific to particular states, and language standards, such as WIDA. This makes for a comprehensive and wide-ranging collection of classroom lessons.

The chapters follow a similar format for ease of use. To begin, each chapter provides a brief introduction that highlights the focal topic of the original research and the lesson plan, and background on the context, such as the school, student demographics, content area, and language and grade levels of students. Next follows a synopsis of the original research article or chapter, including the original citation. Then, authors include their rationale for choosing the research and creating a lesson based on it. Each chapter next highlights a clearly written lesson plan that allows readers to experience the context and follow the development of the lesson as it unfolds. To maintain continuity, ease of use, and readability, each lesson includes similar components to include the grade and subject area, content and language objectives, connections to appropriate standards, desired outcomes, students' proficiency levels, materials needed to carry out lesson, duration of the lesson, and highlighted strategies that can facilitate ELs' learning. Lessons in each chapter also follow a similar format and include procedures (the specific details regarding what the students will do during the lesson) and assessment and evaluation of the lesson. Finally, each chapter closes with a reflection that summarizes how the original TESOL research informs teachers' practice and raises valuable questions for further inquiry.

This series of books can be utilized by a wide range of participants in the TESOL community, including English language teachers, mainstream content-area teachers who work with ELs, program administrators, coaches, and trainers. Because of their teacher-friendly format and ancillary online resources, the books are appropriate for use as course readings for preservice and in-service teacher education programs and as professional development for teachers of ELs. Also, because the classroom contexts are set in schools throughout the United States, readers gain a breadth of understanding regarding standards, demographics, grade levels, and English as a second language programs.

In this volume, lessons are focused on the elementary context, with student activities appropriate for kindergarten through upper elementary grades. The chapters center on science, English language arts, and social studies and address concepts such as joint construction; empathetic critical integrations, or ECIs; social justice

in social studies classrooms; systemic functional linguistics; teachers' big questions; and standards-based assessments. The research covered in this volume is cutting edge, insightful, and applicable to a broad range of ELT contexts at elementary levels.

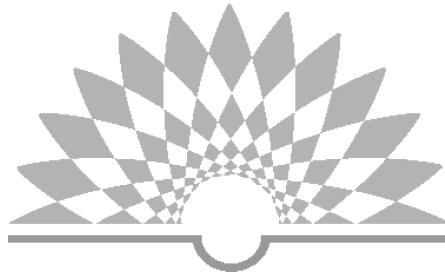
The contributors to the elementary volume represent a mix of teacher educators/researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, and elementary school teachers, and many chapters are written in collaboration with various constituents. In this way, the chapters truly put research into practice in a clear, hands-on, accessible, and digestible way. It is my hope that you will benefit from—and enjoy—this compilation as much as I do.

*Holly Hansen-Thomas*  
*Texas Woman's University*

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## Introduction

Judy Sharkey

### **“They Say/I Say”: Entering the Research-Practice Dialogue**

*Engaging Research: Transforming Practices for the Elementary Classroom* is a collection of 10 chapters involving the collaborations of 25 authors serving English learners (ELs) in elementary classrooms in the United States. In addition to learning from the lesson plans and reflections representing language arts, social studies, and science curricula, readers see how the authors, a rich array of pre- and in-service teachers, graduate students, and university-based researchers, drew on specific research texts from TESOL International Association publications and made appropriate, sometimes creative adaptations for their own planning, curricula, and assessment. The book’s companion website, [www.tesol.org/practices-elementary](http://www.tesol.org/practices-elementary), provides additional, supplemental materials that authors used in their classrooms.

The collection is also an invitation to readers (practitioners, researchers, administrators) to enter a stimulating, professional dialogue, one that evokes Graff and Birkenstein’s (2010) popular academic writing book, *They Say/I Say*. Based on a simple yet persuasive premise that “writing well means entering into a conversation with others. . . . [It] means engaging the voices of others and *letting them in turn engage us* (emphasis added)” (p. xvi), *They Say/I Say* also captures the research-practice/researcher-practitioner (RP<sup>2</sup>)<sup>1</sup> relationships that the Engaging Research series addresses. RP<sup>2</sup> is a dialogic relationship, one that only advances the English language teaching (ELT) field if we see these activities and actors as mutually informing and beneficial. Participating in RP<sup>2</sup> dialogues has multiple benefits: Participation enhances teaching and learning (thus serving students); creates and sustains a more inclusive, participatory professional community; and calls on researchers to ground their inquiries and analyses in the day-to-day realities and challenges of classrooms and schools. Research is more likely to affect practice when teachers have the opportunities and space to explore, interpret, and adapt theories and concepts to their

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<sup>1</sup> RP<sup>2</sup> captures the multiple types of interactions in and among the activities and actors. These include the relationships between research and practice, researchers and practitioners, practitioners and research (i.e., How is research informing my practice?), and researchers and practice (i.e., How is practice informing my research?).

contexts rather than apply them in an “unmediated manner” (Larsen-Freeman, 2015, p. 263). Often, the most fruitful opportunities, as we see in this volume and in other studies (Sharkey & Johnson, 2003; Sharkey, Clavijo Olatte, & Ramirez, 2016), are part of collaborations and benefit researchers just as much as they do practitioners.

As Holly Hansen-Thomas eloquently explains in her message from the series editor, the call for contributions to the Engaging Research series was an invitation to ELT professionals to share how the published literature of TESOL International Association (i.e., the “they say” part of the phrase) informs student and teacher learning in their contexts. After providing synopses of the original research, the authors share and reflect on classroom lessons based on their interpretations and adaptations of that research (i.e., “I say” or “we say”). The anchor texts cited by the authors in *Engaging Research: Transforming Practices for the Elementary Classroom* range from publication in 2003 to 2016 and include some of the most pressing perennial issues and current hot topics: implications and challenges of the Common Core State Standards, standardized assessments and accountability measures, the increased use of systemic functional linguistics, technology and multimodalities, and addressing issues of social justice. See the Appendix of this book for the list of anchor texts. Reading over the titles offers an excellent preview to the book and serves as a great reading list for professional learning communities and teacher reading circles.

Readers of this volume should not expect step-by-step recipes based on published research but should be intrigued and inspired by the multiple ways in which the authors interpreted the TESOL texts—from adapting a specific classroom activity like the mini-novela (Chapter 4) to designing a curricular response to the “linguistic ceiling,” a problem identified in a longitudinal research study (Chapter 6).

## **How Is This Volume Organized?**

The chapters are organized according to subject areas: language arts, social studies, and science. Within those sections, the chapters are ordered according to grade level in ascending order. Following, I summarize and highlight some of the themes and key concepts within each chapter. Although the comments are organized by content area, readers will notice several prominent cross-cutting themes and concepts, including developing academic language, culturally affirming pedagogies, and increasing interaction and participation.

### **Language Arts**

Joy Dangora Erickson shares how it is possible and necessary to build critical empathy in our classrooms starting with young learners. Working in a low-incidence school (one with few ELs) but against a backdrop of the divisive, anti-immigrant, and racist discourse of the 2016 presidential campaign, Erickson teams with two teachers and develops lessons that focus on her English-speaking first-graders. An often overlooked reality is that these children are key players—as peers and friends—in the successful integration of newcomers. Erickson’s lessons integrate empathy building and global outlooks into a curriculum that must also address the mandated mainstream language and literacy standards.

As researcher, graduate student, and classroom teacher, respectively, Luciana de Oliveira, Loren Jones, and Jeanette Arana collaborate to use the teaching and learning cycle to help first-graders develop the academic language necessary to meet the Common Core State Standards through the deconstruction, joint construction, and then independent construction of a text. But, like with Erickson's project, meeting the standards does not mean ignoring the importance of community awareness and civic engagement. In fact, the students develop the appropriate academic language needed to inform the principal of a food drive they organize to support a community organization.

Zohreh Eslami and Mahjabin Chowdhury argue for the powerful role of technology in teaching and learning through and with multimodalities. On one level, this is a very detailed description of how Mahjabin successfully used touch tablets in her first-grade classroom to increase her ELs' participation and agency. However, I draw readers' attention to the way that Mahjabin used her knowledge of a focal student's linguistic and cultural identities and assets to increase that student's status in the eyes of her English-dominant classmates.

Continuing with the theme of culturally responsive instruction and affirming students' funds of knowledge, Holly Hansen-Thomas applies the cultural concept of the telenovela, well known to many Spanish-speaking communities, to help struggling or reluctant fifth-grade writers. Hansen-Thomas shares equivalent concepts from other cultures, illustrating how teachers can be creative in looking for elements from students' cultures and using them as bridges to U.S. school curricula.

## Social Studies

Mayra C. Daniel and Carolyn Riley make a passionate and convincing argument for the role of social justice in educating all our students. Two key takeaways from their chapter is that social justice education is not accomplished through one or two lessons, but K–5 teachers can plan and implement a series of lessons that include social justice–building activities. Additionally, helping students develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes for participating in and sustaining democracies is not an add-on to a curriculum; it directly connects to social studies and college-and-career-ready standards.

Keeping with the theme of helping students participate in democracies, María Estela Brisk, Jasmine Alvarado, Beverly Timothy, and Pat Scialoia share lessons from two fifth-grade classrooms where students were engaged in learning and writing about the major positions of the two presidential candidates in the 2016 election. The authors were part of an ongoing university-school research collaboration in which teachers were learning about and integrating a systemic functional linguistics approach to helping students access and produce complex academic texts.

## Science

Katlyn Lawver and Sarah Rilling's chapter, based in a mainstream kindergarten classroom, is a strong response to the critiques that standardized assessments too often mask ELs' content knowledge. Katlyn, a preservice teacher, designed and implemented a participatory observation assessment that allowed her to better monitor, document, and share with her administrators and parents the learning the ELs were doing in science.



Continuing the theme of increasing ELs' participation in mainstream classrooms, Melissa Mazzaro, the focal teacher working with Lorrie Stoops Verplaetse and Marisa Ferraro, redesigns a unit on the water cycle so that it includes more opportunities and differentiated support for her ELs. The result is increased language output, interaction, and engagement in scientific thinking. The collaboration among the three authors is a wonderful example of the sustainability of RP<sup>2</sup> partnerships.

Megan Madigan Peercy, Megan DeStefano, Kendall Sethna, and Melissa Bitter deepen our understanding of scaffolding by highlighting two important yet distinct types of scaffolding: designed in and contingent. The focus lesson takes place in a fourth-grade earth science unit on national parks. The title of the chapter attempts to capture the teacher learner scaffolding (peer collaboration and joint analysis of student learning) that facilitates richer student learning.

Echoing Chapters 2 (de Oliveira, Jones, and Arana) and Chapter 6 (Brisk, Alvarado, Timothy, and Scialoia), Michaela Colombo, Nicole Finneran, and Linda Gormley-Bonanno share how they use systemic functional linguistics to analyze and help students access the content and concepts in a mainstream curriculum. Here, the focus is on a district-adopted science series used with fifth graders, and the target lesson addresses students' understanding of tectonic plates. The chapter is a rich, detailed example of how teachers build and leverage students' metalinguistic knowledge.

## Looking Forward: "They Say/I Say"—What Will You Say?

The collaborative, productive work of the authors in this volume attest to how much we can learn from published research but also from each other, no matter what our position or stage of our professional careers (preservice teacher, university researcher, veteran teacher, etc.). As mentioned earlier, *Engaging Research: Transforming Practices for the Elementary Classroom* is an invitation to readers to enter a thought-provoking professional dialogue. Quoting Graff and Birkenstein (2010), I emphasized the phrase, "and letting them in turn engage us" (p. xvi). Readers, please enter the dialogue(s) and allow yourself to be engaged.

*Judy Sharkey, PhD, is associate professor of education, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire, USA.*

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