



INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL
OF MENTORING TEACHER-
RESEARCH IN ELT



Webinar

“Challenges in mentoring teacher-research, and how to overcome them”



An online event in
the International
Festival of
Mentoring Teacher-
Research in ELT

May 4, 2024 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm (GMT)
Featuring poster presentations and
Q&A with mentors of teacher-research
from around the world

SUPPORTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK AND
THE UK ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

[Watch video of the event by clicking here.](#) Best viewed
together with posters – click on links below

13:00-13:15
(GMT)

Opening remarks

Recent developments in mentoring teacher-research

Richard Smith

In recent years, mentoring of teachers to engage in practitioner research has been gaining in popularity and prominence. In this introduction to today's event, I provide some background, explaining the role and significance of [MenTRnet](#) and the [International Festival of Mentoring Teacher-Research](#), before introducing the work of today's speakers.

Session 1

13:15-
14:30
(GMT)

Empowering teachers: Transforming concerns into confidence with EAR

Chang Liu

In mentoring teachers to carry out exploratory action research (EAR), I encountered an important pair of challenges: many teachers were unfamiliar with EAR and concerned about the potential workload. To address these, I adopted a practical, supportive approach, sharing my own positive experiences and providing clear, concise explanations to demystify the process. I reassured teachers that EAR would not be overly time-consuming, and recommended accessible resources to guide them. To further ease their concerns, I outlined a clear structure and timeline for the research tasks. I also fostered a collaborative environment by forming learning buddy groups, which helped teachers support and motivate each other. Experienced teachers were invited to share their successes in EAR, highlighting its benefits for professional development and student learning. These measures proved effective, as teachers expressed a shift in perspective, growing to appreciate EAR's manageability and value, with increased interest in engaging in their own research.

[Link to poster](#)

Moving beyond mentee disengagement and building a collaborative research environment

Patcharin Kunna

As a new mentor, I faced self-doubt due to a mentee's lack of engagement and apparent low motivation to conduct research. I tried so hard to show them how flexible and trusting I am so that they could continue their work and I would always be there for them. Nevertheless, they left without notice and I felt really bad about it. I refocused on my remaining, hard-working teachers. I tried to make sure we had good communication among us so that we had mutual understanding of our situations, with reflective sessions once a month to follow progress and set timelines. These strategies proved successful, enabling us to complete the research project, which fostered a sense of pride among my teachers.

[Link to poster](#)

My lessons about how to improve communication between mentor and mentee

Khoi Tan Minh Vuong

Mentoring teacher-research has been a rewarding journey for me but along the way both mentor and mentee can encounter certain obstacles. In my experience, managing time and motivation have been the two main challenges. With mentoring involving at least two people, finding time can be even more of a problem than it usually is for us. Clear communication about expected deadlines and flexible planning can be very helpful to help both parties reach the goal. Another problem is maintaining motivation. The amount of work at school is already a lot for teachers and taking on the work of becoming a teacher-researcher requires even more effort. For first-time mentors, encountering challenges can be demotivating. In my experience, building rapport in communication and making sure communication is clear have helped greatly.

[Link to poster](#)

The challenge of time management in teacher-researcher mentoring

Jittima Duangmanee

The biggest challenge I faced as a mentor was the difficulty of scheduling meetings to accommodate both my and my teacher's schedules, while ensuring sufficient time for in-depth discussions and collaborative work. This problem went beyond scheduling, and involved a need to maintain organized research plans amidst unexpected disruptions. The urgency of adapting to these disruptions, while keeping the research project on track, was a significant challenge in this mentoring context. To address this challenge, as a proposed solution, I established a regular schedule meeting time once a week or once every two weeks to maintain effective communication and provide feedback and advice. This way, we could ensure the meetings were productive and focused.

[Link to poster](#)

Finding a balance between being supportive and nurturing independence

Azadeh Moladoost

During my recent mentoring of a university teacher in Iran, I found there was a tendency for over-reliance on my guidance. I grappled with determining the appropriate balance between pushing her towards independence and taking a more proactive role in guiding her. Ultimately, I approached the process as a collaborative effort, aiming to foster independence while offering continuous support. Maintaining a supportive and encouraging demeanor toward my mentee was crucial. However, navigating the delicate balance between leading the way and providing support still proved challenging for me.

[Link to poster](#)

Helping a Bangladeshi primary teacher with qualitative data analysis

Sabreena Ahmed

This poster presentation reports on how I guided a teacher-researcher in a Bangladeshi government primary school to explore the difficulties in reading faced by pupils after the post-pandemic reopening of schools. Overall, he was motivated to complete the study and meet the given deadlines on time. I guided him through coming up with relevant research questions, designing the interview question list and showing him how to analyse the interview data. However, a challenge emerged with regard to coding the transcription of the interviews he carried out with pupils and finding the prominent themes through qualitative data analysis. I showed him how to use a simple MS Word table to find thematic patterns, and this helped to solve the issue.

[Link to poster](#)

14:30-14:35
(GMT)

Break

Using allegorical stories to maintain motivation in teacher-research

Gyanu Dahal

Mentoring teacher-research represents an exciting opportunity for mentors to update their knowledge and skills. However, mentors can experience challenges in motivating their mentees to conduct their research. In my years-long experience of mentoring teacher-researchers, I have found that sharing allegorical stories with mentees is really useful to keep them motivated and on track. I also share with them my own and other relatively experienced teachers' experiences, talking metaphorically about how we went from being like caterpillars (innocent/unknown) to being more like butterflies (mature/experienced). These types of story and anecdote help my teacher-researchers to have a clear picture of their development and stay motivated.

[Link to poster](#)

Session 2

14:35-15:50
(GMT)

Technological tools for sustaining interest throughout a project

Vinayadhar Raju

Motivating teachers to persist with classroom based exploratory action research has been a big challenge during our project. Most of the teachers are very enthusiastic at the beginning but after one month they may stop responding to emails and messages. We struggled a lot with motivating them and sustaining their interest at the beginning. To overcome this challenge we tried different strategies like asking them to present their progress on Zoom

with the teachers in their community to recognise their work and gain them feedback from their friends and colleagues. Sometimes we recorded their presentations and shared those links through Google forms so that other teacher-researchers would watch their presentations and record their feedback using the screen recorder option. We also incorporated other technologies to sustain their interest throughout the project. I will share these strategies in my poster presentation.

[Link to poster](#)

Reflective dialogues to scaffold teachers in planning classroom actions

Ella Maksakova & Vanita Chopra

We describe a dilemma we faced when mentoring teachers from Thailand. During discussions about plans for action (following exploration), we noticed that teachers tended to select new activities quite intuitively rather than on the basis of pedagogical or methodological considerations. On the one hand, we acknowledged the teachers' classroom expertise and tried to avoid "judgementoring" their choices; on the other hand, we were concerned about their rush for "low-hanging fruit" as this seemed to reveal a lack of the kind of reflection which is supposed to underlie practitioner research. We saw our mission as not to make the teachers change their decisions, but to raise their awareness of principles behind their choices by offering individual and small group collaborative reflection sessions. Here, we engaged them in oral reflection and assisted them with note-taking about their ideas to make the process more critical and explicit to them.

[Link to poster](#)

Exploring the value of mentor-mentoring in building resilience

Ana García Stone

In discussions on teacher-research mentoring, little is usually said about maintaining mentor motivation or developing mentor resilience. This story describes my experience of regular meetings with a critical friend/fellow mentor Mariana Serra while I was mentoring a group of teachers online who were in Thailand. My original idea was to have a mentoring dialogue to help me bring ideas to the surface regarding international mentoring, but our conversations developed within a space where I could openly discuss challenges I was facing and, as a result of Mariana's mentoring skills, I became aware of how I gradually built resilience as a mentor.

[Link to poster](#)

Building a trusting community of teacher-mentees and fostering open communication

Seden Eraldemir Tuyan

During the time I spent with my PhD students in our Teacher Education and Professional Development Course, one of my biggest challenges was understanding and adapting mentoring strategies to their specific contexts, as EFL contexts vary widely between institutions and student cohorts. Balancing my mentoring responsibilities and other professional commitments also required dedicated time and effort. Overcoming initial concerns, building a trusting community of teacher-mentees and fostering open communication all took time – motivating and encouraging active participation and providing constructive feedback that fostered growth without discouraging my teacher-mentees were all things that I actively pursued.

[Link to poster](#)

**15:50-16:00
(GMT)**

Round-Up
Richard Smith