CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

Researching Young Learners

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This chapter will endeavour to give just a brief account of the developments in the 'Age factor' literature and their implications, and then it will outline some current trends in research within applied linguistics with a focus on younger language learners (as opposed to adults) highlighting what emerges as distinctive about children. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the chapter will devote a substantial section to discussing the status of children in current second language acquisition (SLA)/applied linguistics research. I will suggest that there are three ways in which children can be conceptualized in research (object, subject and active participant/co-researcher), and all studies sit somewhere on this continuum. Two examples from different ends of the continuum will be exemplified in some detail to illustrate methodological, ethical and procedural differences. Finally, resources will be listed for further study and exploration.

When writing a chapter about young learners, it is important to define what the term means. Definitions of 'young learners' and 'children' are notoriously difficult to pin down, and the use of these concepts has been inconsistent both within and outside applied linguistics. While some scholars use terms such as 'early childhood', 'middle childhood' and 'adolescence' or 'youth', there is no firm agreement about the exact age brackets implied by these terms (see e.g. Ellis 2014). In this chapter, I will refer to children learning L2 English formally in both primary and pre-primary education and also in informal contexts (roughly between the ages of 4/5 and 12/13).

Young learners and the 'age factor'

In applied linguistics, one key area of research for the last thirty years has been the effect of age, and despite the huge amount of research devoted to the age factor, outcomes are still inconclusive. Dörnyei (2009, p. 233) comments that 'while everybody agrees that the learner's age does influence the SLA process, scholars have not been able to establish the exact pattern or nature of age related change, let alone identify the specific causes and mediators of the process.'

On the face of it, it seems that younger children have clear advantages over adult learners because in ESL contexts, they end up as fluent and competent speakers, very similar to their native-speaking counterparts. Adults or those who start an L2 later in life are typically less successful in their attempts to master the L2. However, these anecdotal observations in ESL contexts about children as more successful language learners have not been fully backed up by clear empirical evidence.

To explain the age-related effects on language learning, the 'Critical Period Hypothesis' (CPH) (Lenneberg 1967) was proposed some time ago. The CPH is based on biological principles, and it refers to a declining learning ability once a specific window of opportunity has closed. A critical period for L1 has been largely accepted, based on studies such as those by Mayberry, Lock and Kazmi (2002) with deaf children. This body of work shows that deaf children who had no access to early language input were unable to acquire English grammar well enough even after several years of effortful learning. Delayed linguistic input (i.e. missing an early window of opportunity) was indeed the cause of their problems. For L2 learning, the link between biology, that is, the CPH and language acquisition, is much less clear.

DeKeyser's (2012) meta-analysis of age factor studies suggests that there is indeed some empirical evidence for an upper age limit to the decline at least for some linguistic features. Studies that explored correlations between age of arrival (AOA) using grammaticality judgment tests (GJT) found non-continuity of decline in implicit language learning ability. Those studies that looked at the correlation between AOA and L2 proficiency of morpho-syntax as measured by other tests (not GJT) also showed that learners older than 15–16 years of age were simply not as good as younger learners. Looking at studies which examined the correlations between AOA and phonological ratings indicates that younger learners are consistently rated better. DeKeyser (2012) comments that not all aspects of language are effected in the same way, for example, different morpho-syntactic structures show different degrees of decline (DeKeyser 2000; Johnson & Newport 1989), and there are some areas of language learning (such as vocabulary learning) which might be less effected or not effected at all.

Krashen et al. (1979) suggested that CPH studies should be categorized into two main types: those exploring the 'speed of learning'

and those exploring 'ultimate attainment'. Younger children are good at achieving more native-like levels ultimately, but they are certainly not faster learners than adults. Studies that have analysed data from the same learners tend to show that after a limited exposure, older learners will do better, but after a longer period of time (several years), younger learners tend to overtake older ones (Jia & Fuse 2007; Larson-Hall 2008; Snow & Höfnagel-Höhle 1978).

The 'younger the better' hypothesis however applies only in naturalistic environments where children are immersed in the language environment and have plenty of opportunities to interact with a variety of native speakers. Jia and Fuse (2007) talk about at least three factors working together in the case of young immigrant children: a sensitive time window, a richer L2 environment and experience with less interference with their L1. In English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, however, such advantages simply do not apply. In these contexts, where children are learning English as a school subject, 'the older the better' seems to be true because older learners rely on more efficient learning strategies, larger memory stores and can focus on the learning task with intensity. Even if younger children were better in the long run, the time spent on learning the second language in most formal EFL contexts is so minimal (often just 2 × 45 minutes a week) that younger learners simply do not have the chance to overtake older ones (Singleton & Ryan 2004). Muñoz (2006) also reports that older learners in Spanish schools progress faster than younger learners, and even after longer periods of time, younger learners do not outperform later starters, except perhaps in pronunciation (Muñoz 2008). This early ability to acquire good pronunciation is a common observation across many studies. As Dörnyei (2009) points out:

> Indeed, some linguistic areas such as pragmatic knowledge and vocabulary size might show a continuous growth throughout the lifespan, whereas the hierarchy of neural circuits that underlies phonetic skills appears to be subject to CP [Critical Period] effects. (p. 245)

More recently, longitudinal studies have been suggesting that language learning in childhood may be complex and unique to different learner trajectories. Jia and Aaronson's (2003) longitudinal study of Chinese immigrant children in the United States indicates that there is quite a high variability of acquisition rates across the participating children. Cognitive, social and cultural variables all interact with each other.

Different methodological shortcomings make it difficult for us to interpret the results of the age factor studies. For example, many studies compare L2 learners with native speakers. These comparisons with native speakers are problematic because 'native-ness' is a difficult concept and the boundaries of 'nativeness' are hard to define. In addition, if younger learners are tested using the same test tools as older learners, this may put them at

a disadvantage. If they are less adept at taking tests, their results will come across as worse than their actual ability.

Much hope therefore rests with the technological enhancements offered by neuroscience, although currently evidence from neuroscience is ambiguous. Overall, according to DeKeyser (2012) evidence in the literature definitely supports some non-continuous age effects. This is contrasted with evidence from self-rating and census data (e.g. Bialystok & Hakuta 1994; Chiswick & Miller 2008; Hakuta et al. 2003) which suggests that there is a continuous life-long decline in one's ability to learn a second language. There are also many studies that claim that adults can hold up under scrutiny and achieve native-like or near native-like levels even in the area of pronunciation (e.g. Birdsong 2007; Bongaerts, Mennen and van der Slik 2000). Typically, these adults are exposed to good quality input, have appropriate training and are highly motivated learners. They are also high achievers, score high levels on aptitude tests and are often highly educated language professionals with a huge amount of practice, reflection and training. Nonetheless, these studies go some way of refuting the existence of the CPH and instead emphasize the importance of social and psychological variables in the context, such as the learners' personal commitment and motivation, and general 'favourable circumstances' in the case of young learners (Marionova-Todd et al. 2000).

The age factor literature continues to be one of the most researched areas in SLA despite, or, perhaps, because of the lack of consensus. In the future, studies that have a longitudinal design to track learners using different tasks and measures and studies in neuroscience hold promise to understand better aspects of the age effect.

Young learners and L2 learning: Extension of adult studies in applied linguistics

Almost everywhere in the world English is being introduced to ever younger generations of children in preschools and primary schools (Rixon 2013). Immersion programs, cram schools and private institutions are on the rise attracting the attention of parents, promising a better future for their children through learning English early in life. Since more and more programs are run for young learners, more and more research is generated in these contexts with children as research objects/subjects. Studies often compare children to adults, and whatever aspects of L2 learning is focused on, the findings are always interpreted against the backdrop of the more established adult literature in SLA and applied linguistics.

Processes of L2 acquisition in childhood are in some ways similar but not the same as adult processes for two main reasons, which are cognitive and social (Paradis, 2007). According to Philp et al. (2008), children's SLA is different from adults in that they learn from both adults and peers and these

different relationships actively shape their learning experiences. Teachers provide more formal input while peers serve as a source of informal input and provide opportunities for enjoyable practice. Siblings can also be sources of useful language learning through playing together informally at home (e.g. Mitchell & Lee 2008). Nicholas and Lightbown (2008) claim that young learners (aged between 2 and 7 years) go through what we refer to as a 'substantial silent period', and they also engage in specific patterns of code-mixing and extensive language play. Language play has been studied particularly extensively, and research shows that it supports affiliation, it is fun and engaging, children can assume new roles and this gives them low-anxiety opportunities for practice and confidence growth (e.g. DaSilva & McCafferty 2007). Language play might involve not only the manipulation of form as well as meaning, a great deal of imitation and repetition but also deeper processing (e.g. Cekaite & Aronson 2005; Cook 2000; Sullivan 2000). Older learners, on the other hand, tend to benefit from more formal teaching, rely more on their developing cognitive and metacognitive skills and can usefully reflect on their learning processes.

Studies with child participants often compare different groups of children to extend the findings of the adult literature in an area, such as task-based learning (e.g. Mackey et al. 2003; Oliver & Mackey 2003) to children. The task-based approach with children has been a particularly exciting area of research (e.g. Mackey et al. 2007; Mackey, Oliver & Leeman 2003; Oliver 2002; Oliver & Mackey 2003), as well as classrooms and corrective feedback (Lyster & Ranta 1997; Spada & Lightbown 1993). In addition, research has also focused on interactional opportunities provided by peers (e.g. Miller 2003; Willett 1995). A large majority of these studies are experimental and fall into a quantitative tradition, but qualitative studies have also contributed to our understanding of L2 child learning thanks to classics such as Wong Fillmore (1976). Longitudinal qualitative approaches help us understand language acquisition over time (e.g. Hawkins 2005; Jia & Aaronson 2003; Toohey 2000), and they shed light on individual differences and unique pathways of learning.

EFL and ESL contexts are still substantially different, although the distinction is not as clear-cut as it used to be due to the availability of the internet and global travel. Many children move in and out of EFL and ESL contexts and/or have access to a variety of virtual language learning opportunities that go well beyond the walls of the classrooms. Overall, much less research has targeted EFL than ESL but see Nikolov (2009) or Edelenbos and Kubanek (2009). Edelenbos and Kubanek (2009) summarize features of good practice in EFL contexts based on some empirical research in Europe and beyond. They suggest that in EFL contexts, children need frequent exposure to English in the primary years, they benefit from holistic learning and contextualized themes and the teaching needs to be multisensory. Children can achieve more comprehension than production, and they need to be learning the L2 in

an active way. In addition to linguistic goals, most primary programs promote tolerance and understanding of other cultures.

Young learners and their status in applied linguistics research

According to Kellett (2010), children are portrayed as either objects or subjects in the majority of research where they are participants. When they are portrayed as objects, typically, children are passive and unaware, and their own consents are rarely sought. As objects of the research, they have no control whatsoever over the research process and often do not understand what is going on and why. Research like this is typically of large scale, involving large numbers of learners, and indeed, individual differences and unique characteristics of children do not matter. When children are portrayed as subjects, their characteristics are more in the focus, and the qualitative and longitudinal research designs tend to allow for a closer tracking of unique features of child learners. As subjects, children are also more likely to be aware of the research project, their comments might be sought and the adult researchers might make conscious efforts to get to know them. However, even in the subject role, they have no control over the research process which is still entirely adult-motivated, adult-initiated and adult-dominated.

In some applied linguistics research, children are not treated differently from adults. However, researchers, often retrospectively, flag up methodological difficulties such as the particular tools used did not actually suit the children's needs (e.g. Macaro & Erler 2008, or Gue et al. 2005). In other studies, there is a clear acknowledgement from the start that the child participants need to be treated differently from adults. For example, Mackey and Gass (2005) in their research methods manual comment that child subjects are different from adults, and thus, researchers need to explain their study carefully, so that it is comprehensible and meaningful to the child. This suggests that tools, tasks and tests need to be tailored to children's cognitive and social needs and made more child-friendly. Adult instruments such as questionnaires can be reworked and simplified, interview schedules can be embedded in familiar contexts (Eder & Fingerson 2002) and alternative methods (e.g. drama, or role plays, drawings) that adults judge to be appropriate based on their experience might be used with children. However, all these 'child-friendly' approaches and adjustments, although consistent with a 'subject' rather than an 'object' status, ultimately come from our adult perspectives and understandings about what might be appropriate for certain age groups.

More recently, with the rise of the concept of the 'social child' (Christensen & James 2008; Christensen & Prout 2002), following the political legacy of

the UN resolution (Declaration of Children's Rights by the United Nations 1989), some child researchers have come to reject research where children are objects (unknowing, passive receivers of the research) or even subjects (participants defined by adult criteria) in favour of working with children as social actors/active research participants or even co-researchers. This means that children are placed right in the centre of the research process, and the adult researcher makes a conscious effort to include the children in the research in a way that they can shape it and influence it ideally at every step of the way. According to Scott (2008, p. 88), 'the best people to provide information on the child's perspective, actions, and attributes are the children themselves'.

A substantial body of research in sociology and anthropology suggests that there are many potential benefits of working with children in this way. They commit to the research project fully which leads to rising levels of self-esteem and to taking ownership of the project. They also acquire useful transferable skills and have fun at the same time. Children can offer insights that are drastically different from adults' views and even challenge those. Working with children as co-researchers is an area that is currently almost totally absent from applied linguistics (Pinter 2014), even though, in addition to the studies that conceptualize children as objects or subjects, we do need studies that extend children's roles and elevate their status.

How can such a perspective be possible? The first step is to begin work with a group of children who are aware of and interested in contributing to a project proposed by the adult researcher. When these children have spent some time working alongside the adult researcher taking responsibility for various aspects of the research process on a voluntary basis, they might be interested to be involved more. At some point, some children may become fully-fledged researchers themselves who are able to take full control of the process. However, this should be seen as a continuum where any move towards more responsibility will help engage the children more meaningfully, but where the goal is not necessarily to achieve full control. Children taking full control over the research process will in fact be impossible and undesirable in some contexts. Small steps might be more appropriate especially at the start. For example, children might usefully feed ideas into the research tool designed by an adult researcher for other children, or they may take spontaneous interest in the research process, ask questions and make comments that are meaningful to them (e.g. Kuchah & Pinter 2012; Pinter & Zandian 2012, 2014).

Working with children as social actors/co-researchers, of course, will mean that ethical and methodological dilemmas intensify and take on new shapes and guises. Relationship building between the adult researcher and the children becomes crucially important. Time and effort need to be devoted to rapport building and revisiting agreements, understandings and shared ideas. Reflexivity, which entails checking and double-checking the

adult's own and the children's interpretations of the research process and everyone's roles in it, is time-consuming but essential. Dilemmas regarding how much of the children's time is ethical to take and where the line falls between facilitating their progress towards ownership of the research as opposed to just exposing them to adult concepts of research are difficult to solve. There is also a great deal of peer pressure and a culture of adult dominance in schools, so how the children are to be persuaded that there is no right answer and their opinions and views are not being evaluated are also important issues to tackle. Some researchers recommend conducting research outside school premises, but in many cases, this is neither feasible nor necessary. Children need to be able to give their own consent when it comes to the research project, and the adult researchers need to take steps to make sure that the children understand what this means.

All research is representation, and ultimately, it is still the adult researcher who writes up the research and makes sense of it. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) in their discussion of participatory research claim that involving children as active participants is just another adult-controlled tool. While these critical comments are undeniably relevant, this does not mean that we must abandon our quest of exploring opportunities for research in applied linguistics where children can take more of a central stage.

What type of research one ends up doing with children within applied linguistics will depend on a number of considerations, such as one's experience, one's interest and the research question, but also it crucially depends on the researcher's own conceptions of childhood (e.g. Alderson 2005). What do we believe about children? Are they unreliable, vulnerable and helpless, needing control, or are they in fact responsible and capable to make decisions for themselves? Whatever our deep-rooted beliefs may be, they will inevitably influence how we will proceed in any research project.

Sample studies

According to how the children are perceived by the researchers, that is, as objects, subjects or active participants/co-researchers, there is a continuum of methodological decisions from the passive object to the active participant co-researcher status. Here, I contrast two studies (namely Kuchah & Pinter 2012; Mackey et al. 2003) that show very different methodological decisions reflecting different researcher priorities regarding the status of children in the research but also reflecting very different topics and research questions. There is no suggestion that one study is 'better' than the other, though. Instead, Table 25.1 is intended to contrast two different ways of researching young learners and the consequences of one's choices. But, the intention is also to suggest that once we are familiar with the different possibilities, we can make informed decisions about combining aspects of different approaches.

Table 25.1 Different ways of researching children: two examples

	Mackey et al. 2003	Kuchah and Pinter 2012
Source	Journal article	Journal article
Design	Experimental	Exploratory
Aims	Comparison between adult and child participants' L2 output	Children's views are sought without reference to adults
Analysis	Quantitative	Qualitative
Researcher intention/ explicit/implicit belief about status of child participants:	An implicit assumption that children's output will be different from that of the adults because of their less-developed cognitive and social skills	An explicit intention to explore what good teaching is from the children's point of view
Focus	Eliciting L2 language output: task-based research (immigrant children in Australia)	Eliciting views and perspectives: interview study with children about their views about good teachers and good English teaching (Children in a French-medium school in Cameroon)
Participants	96 participants, children and adults in equal numbers Adults: university students Children: 8–12 years old Randomly matched into NS/NNS and NNS/NNS adult and child pairs (12 pairs of each type of pairing)	2 groups of learners (5–6 in each group; 1 group of girls and 1 group of boys; open-ended questions and prompts
Tools	Tasks: 2 tasks: describe and draw (one way task) and complete a picture together (two way tasks)	Different tools: drawings, sentence completion, free-flowing discussion
Data	All pairs did both tasks and were recorded talking; the first 100 utterances were analysed for target like/non-target like utterances and feedback; modified input was also coded	Variety of data from a variety of sources: negotiation of interpretations; focus on unique views and interpretations; attention paid to what is 'raw and spontaneous' as opposed to what is a standard answer to an adult question
Results	Expressed in statistics; statistically significant correlations are reported and the findings are explained with reference to adult studies	Expressed qualitatively, by analysing the flow of the discussion between adult researcher and the children
Ethics	No specific discussion	Dilemmas and complexities are fully discussed

These two are very different studies, asking very different questions. Mackey et al. (2003) is representative of the traditional approach within applied linguistics where the children are compared to adults. In a large group, individuals fade into insignificance, and children certainly do not need to know too much about why the research is undertaken. Of course, this is perfectly understandable with these procedures, within this tradition and with these research questions. Kuchah and Pinter (2012), although do not go very far on the continuum from object status to fully-fledged co-researcher status, do indicate that it is possible to incorporate procedures into the design that help children to take at least some ownership of the research and bring their own perspectives to the research. In this case, the children actually convinced the adult researcher to change his research design by including a teacher in the study that they recommended. Not only did they voice their opinions and views about good English teaching, they also influenced the shape of the adult study in a significant way.

Table 25.2 contains some key questions researchers working with children should consult.

Table 25.2 Key questions to ask when working with child research participants

Questions	Comments
What are my underlying beliefs about children and childhood? How are these beliefs influencing the type of project I am planning to engage in?	Every researcher working with children needs to ask this question, even though there is no 'right' answer.
What are my research questions? What is the relationship between the questions, the type of tools required to probe into these questions and the age of the children?	It is important to make sure that the types of tools will be appropriate for the group of children they are intended for. Some initial observation of the children is recommended, even the children's opinions or views are not the focus of the study.
What are the implications of my status as a researcher in the given context? What is the level of researchers' knowledge and experience in child research?	You might be conducting a large-scale study where your identity and status as a researcher is less important. It is important to think about the power gap between any adult and child in a project and how such a gap might be an influencing factor that needs to be considered.

(*continued*)

Questions	Comments
What is the time allocated for the project?	If you want to work with the children more closely and want to involve them more actively, perhaps as co-researchers in the study, relationship building can take a lot of time. It is important to think about the time frame realistically.
What research ethics apply in my context?	Schools, local authorities in different contexts as well as your university (if you are doing research as part of your PG studies) will all have ethical guidelines to follow, in addition to your own personal concerns and views. It is important to engage with all of these, revisit them during the study and work out some compromises which are recorded in writing.
How will I negotiate access? Whose consent will I need?	Parents' consent? Head-teacher's consent? The children's consent? All of the above? What if there is a conflict?
How will I make sure that the children understand the focus of the research?	In some studies, this is less important than others. You need to think about how important it is in your study for the children to have a full understanding of the research. Often, this requires time and talking things through several times. Also, children's spontaneous comments reveal a great deal about their perspectives.
How will the children participate in the study? Why? Is there another way?	Have you thought about alternative ways the children may usefully contribute to the study? Is it meaningful/ feasible to discuss options with them? Have you got additional ideas just in case something planned does not work out? Have you thought about showing your initial plan for the study to some children (other than the ones you will be working with) and ask for their feedback?
Where is the project going to run?	If possible, organize a safe, quiet and friendly venue; sometimes, it is not possible to take children out of school, but a library corner is much better than the teachers' staffroom.

(*continued*)

Questions	Comments
How will I monitor their participation?	During the study, children may lose interest or change their minds, so you need to think of monitoring their participation and revisit the goals of the study and their consent.
Whose interests does this study serve?	This is an ethical question which makes you think about the outcomes of the study. How can you give something back to the children? What is their benefit?
How will the results be analysed and disseminated?	Can the children feed into these stages of the research? It might not be appropriate at all for some research questions, but if it is, how can you involve them? Children's own written summaries might be included in the adult's report.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to illustrate just how rich the 'young learners' field is within applied linguistics. Researchers continue to investigate how age affects the L2 learning process in childhood, what research comes out of classrooms and other learning contexts with children as research participants and what roles children can take in research. Future research in applied linguistic needs to pay more attention to EFL contexts, engage more in longitudinal research that unpacks the complexities of learning and, to add to the traditional body of evidence, needs to involve children as more active and more equal participants in research.

Resources for further reading

Books

Murphy, V 2014, Second Language Learning in the Early School Years: Trends and Contexts: An Overview, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

This is an up-to-date volume that examines past and present research evidence on bilingualism, second language and foreign language learning in childhood, making links between different contexts and highlighting the similarities and differences in child L2 learning across these contexts. The discussion focuses on learning contexts that intersect with educational provision in the early school years and explores

current trends towards a younger starting age for foreign language learning. The book provides a broad overview of research findings across a range of different contexts.

Pinter, A 2011, *Children Learning Second Languages: Research and Practice in Applied Linguistics*, Palgrave, Macmillan, Basingstoke.

This volume covers child development, L1 and L2 language learning processes in childhood and offers a guide to contexts from foreign language learning at school to immersion education and bilingual/trilingual acquisition at home. It also gives an overview of current research in the area of child SLA and pedagogy, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of different traditions and types of research. This is followed by a close examination of eight case studies and some suggestions for future research. Resources are also listed, including hands-on teaching materials, handbooks, theoretical books, details of organizations and projects in the broad area of child second language learning.

Philp J, Oliver, R &Mackey, A (eds), 2008, *Second Language Acquisition and the Younger Learner – Child's Play?*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

This book highlights the distinctiveness of child SLA through a collection of different types of empirical research all focused on younger learners. Child SLA is often thought of as simple (and often enjoyable and universally effortless), in other words, as 'child's play'; the learning paths which emerge in the sixteen papers in this book invite the reader to reconsider the reality and the complex processes for many younger learners. Chapters describe second and foreign language learning by children ranging from preschoolers to young adolescents, in home and school contexts, with caregivers, peers and teachers as interlocutors.

Sergeant, J & Harcourt, D 2012, *Doing Ethical Research with Children*, Open University Press, McGraw Hill, Maidenhead.

This is a step-by-step guide to planning, undertaking and disseminating research with children focusing on ethical questions and dilemmas. The book presents an overview of different traditions of research with children and the discussion combines both theoretical and practical concerns. The authors emphasize the importance of research that gives agency and voice to children. There are regular reflection tasks and case studies highlighting important aspects of research procedures involving child participants.

Singleton, D & Ryan, L 2004, *Language Acquisition: The Age Factor*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

This is a comprehensive overview of the CPH both in first and second language development. It addresses key theoretical perspectives as well as educational dimensions and offers a balanced discussion of this complex area of research. The authors also discuss what the research results mean for practice and policy. This is an excellent resource for all those interested in the CPH.

Projects

Enever, J (ed.), 2011, *ELLIE: Early Language Learning in Europe*, British Council, London.

This project reports on the challenges and achievements of introducing English as foreign language to 6–7-year-olds in seven European countries. Data was drawn from 1400 children across different context in a large-scale longitudinal research study. The breadth and the depth of the research provides sound basis for future policy development in Europe and beyond. See <http://www.ellieresearch.eu>, viewed 24 July 2014.

Rixon, S 2013, *British Council Survey of Policy and Practice in Primary English Language Teaching Worldwide*, British Council, London.

This is a very large database containing information about global practices in relation to English-language teaching in primary contexts. The current survey represents sixty-four countries. Information drawn from questionnaires filled in by primary sector experts in ELT/ESL covers topics, such as policy, age of starting English, teacher supply, curriculum and syllabus, target levels and assessment, transition from primary to secondary and public-/private-sector relationships. This is an invaluable source of information (downloadable at <www.britishcouncil.org>, viewed 24 July 2014).

Websites

BRITISH COUNCIL English for kids and teens: http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/, viewed 29 January 2015.

ESL kids world: http://www.eslkidsworld.com/, viewed 24 July 2014.

International Children's Digital Library: http://en.childrenslibrary.org/, viewed 24 July 2014.

IATEFL Young Learners SIG: https://www.yltsig.org, viewed 24 July 2014.

TESOL-K12: http://www.tesol.org/advance-the-field/standards/prek-12-english-language-proficiency-standards, viewed 24 July 2014.

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