JOURNAL FOR THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

IAPLL

Theoretical Article

Intuition and Reflexivity: The Ethics of Decision-Making in Classroom Practitioner Research

Ema Ushioda, *University of Warwick, United Kingdom*

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9240-6208

e.ushioda@warwick.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

In this conceptual paper I discuss some ethical complexities in conducting classroom practitioner research on the psychology of language learning and I analyse the potential role of intuition in handling these complexities. I begin by developing the ethical argument for taking a *person-focused* rather than *systems-based* approach to researching the psychology of language learning in the classroom. I make the case that practitioner research lends itself particularly well to a strongly person-focused orientation to exploring psychological perspectives in the classroom, since it is typically motivated by a desire to bring about positive change or enhance the quality of classroom life within a specific teaching and learning community. In the core part of the paper, I focus on the role of intuition in the decision-making processes that practitioner researchers undertake as teachers and researchers. In particular, I discuss some potential ethical complexities in how they navigate their dual roles in the classroom and manage their evolving relational work with students, and I consider the contributions and pitfalls of intuition in handling these ethical complexities. Drawing on the work of Guillemin and Gilham (2004), I argue that both intuitive and reflexive forms of thinking are essential to good ethical practice and decision-making when teachers research their own classrooms.

Keywords: decision-making, ethics in practice, pedagogical tact, person-focused approaches, reflexivity

Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning
ISSN: 2642-7001
(2023) Volume 5, Issue 2, pp. 76–87
https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/5/2/7

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I explore the potential role of intuition in handling ethical complexities encountered by practitioner researchers in their evolving relational work with their students when conducting research on the psychology of language learning. In many professional sectors, intuition is considered to play a significant role in shaping judgments and decisions in critical high-pressure contexts (Sinclair, 2011), while in educational settings intuition is said to underpin teachers' *pedagogical tact* (van Manen, 2015) in responding sensitively to complex classroom situations. Drawing on insights from the literature, I discuss the potential contributions but also pitfalls of intuition in the decision-making processes undertaken by classroom practitioner researchers, and I argue for the complementary roles of intuition and reflexivity in handling ethically important situations in practitioner research.

I begin the paper by developing the ethical argument for taking a *person-focused* rather than *systems-based* approach to researching the psychology of language learning in the classroom, and I make the case for practitioner research in particular in this regard.

SYSTEMS-BASED VERSUS PERSON-FOCUSED RESEARCH APPROACHES

In this first part, I draw a distinction between *systems-based* and *person-focused* approaches to researching language learning psychology, and I argue in favour of the latter approaches that prioritize the local needs and concerns of specific communities of teachers and learners. My argument will pave the way for my central discussion of practitioner research as a form of classroom inquiry that illustrates the rich potential but also the ethical and relational challenges of taking a person-focused research approach.

I will begin by briefly discussing the recent expansion of research interest in the psychology of language learning.

Our Growing Interest in Psychological Perspectives

Two decades ago, Dörnyei (2003) noted how psychological perspectives on language learning were beginning to gain some traction in the field of SLA, with interest growing in a few areas such as cognitive processing, working memory, attention and noticing. Dörnyei was writing from the perspective of motivation research and highlighting its relatively isolated status within SLA at the time, which he partly attributed to the different disciplinary traditions of motivation researchers and mainstream SLA researchers. The former were typically social psychologists interested in attitudinal-motivational factors affecting SLA, while the latter were typically linguists interested in internal processes of second language acquisition and development in keeping with the tradition of scientific inquiry established by Corder (1967) and Selinker (1972). In Dörnyei's view, the lack of interface between these psychological and linguistic traditions was preventing psychological perspectives from gaining mainstream status in SLA research.

If we fast forward to today, of course, we can observe that the situation is very different and that interest in the psychological dimensions of language learning and teaching has grown significantly to become largely mainstream. Importantly too, the range of psychological perspectives under focus has expanded and richly diversified to include areas such as boredom, emotional intelligence, emotions in general, empathy, engagement, grit, identity, mindsets, positive psychology, resilience, self-regulation, and wellbeing, as well as more traditional areas such as anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate (WTC). Moreover, these psychological constructs and systems are now being analysed with reference not only to language learners' experiences and behaviours but also to language teachers' experiences and behaviours (e.g., Gkonou et al., 2020), with increasing recognition of the interdependence and complex synergies (or contagion) between teachers' and learners' psychological and emotional lives in the classroom (e.g., Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021; Pinner, 2019).

This growing interest in the psychological and emotional life of language learners and teachers is certainly to be welcomed, as it expands the theoretical and empirical focus beyond the cognitive and technical aspects of language learning and teaching and potentially accommodates a more complex whole-person perspective. Such a perspective would align with Lantolf and Pavlenko's (2001) long-standing call for understanding second language learners as *people* with all their complexity, individuality and lived experience. A holistic perspective on real *persons* rather than on learners as decontextualized abstractions is

something that I have also long advocated (Ushioda, 2009), and it reflects a wider trend across applied linguistics research in the current era, which Benson (2019) has characterized as the era of *person-centredness* with its holistic focus on individual lived experience.

Systems-Based Approaches to Language Learning Psychology

However, despite significant expansion, it remains questionable how much current research on language learning psychology centres on people and their lived experiences in a holistic sense. Reflecting its scientific disciplinary heritage, such research tends instead to take a *systems-based* approach, where the focus is on theoretical constructs and systems, which become foregrounded in our research questions and hypotheses. For example, in the study of language learning psychology, we ask questions such as how does WTC relate to classroom participation or to gender differences, or what types of motivations or mindsets sustain perseverance in language learning? We then design studies to investigate these questions, so that we can validate and refine our theoretical accounts of certain psychological constructs and systems and determine their applicability across different language learning settings, with a view to contributing to knowledge and theory development. While our research may also offer implications for practice or policy, these tend to be subordinate to the academic goals and values shaping the research and can often be rather bland and conventionalized rather than deeply insightful.

As I have argued elsewhere (Ushioda, 2023), this means that our interest in the actual classrooms where we locate our research may be somewhat extrinsic or expedient. Putting it bluntly, we negotiate access to classrooms that can usefully serve our data collection purposes and provide a suitable context for investigating our theorizations, and not necessarily because we are intrinsically interested in these specific teaching and learning communities and their local realities. In effect, these classrooms provide us with "convenience" samples, in the sense of accessible samples of teachers and learners that conveniently serve our data collection purposes. This raises an ethical question about why we do such research, if it is not explicitly for the social purpose of benefiting the classroom communities involved and addressing their needs and priorities.

An Ethical Argument for Person-Focused Approaches

This is an ethical question that I have discussed at length with especial reference to my own subfield of motivation research in language education (Ushioda, 2020). Building on the arguments developed by Ortega (2005) for an ethical lens to strengthen the social purposes and values of instructed SLA research, I have critically interrogated my research subfield by asking whose motivations we are really interested in – that is, the motivations and priorities of the people we are ostensibly researching, or our own academic motivations and priorities as researchers. I have accordingly articulated an ethical agenda to rebalance these priorities and shape our research to be more directly relevant to the needs and concerns of the people we research.

In this connection, recent years have seen increasing critical debate in applied linguistics around the general lack of relevance of academic research to teachers and their classrooms (e.g., McKinley, 2019; Medgyes, 2017; Sato & Loewen, 2018), with increasing calls to bridge the gap between research and teaching (see, for example, the special issue of the *Modern Language Journal* edited by Sato & Loewen, 2022). A common emphasis across this debate is the desirability of making academic research more conceptually accessible and meaningful for teachers, perhaps by providing non-technical lay summaries of research (e.g., Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017), or by engaging in research collaborations with teachers (e.g., Spada & Lightbown, 2022) and ensuring that such collaborations always have benefits for teachers as well as for researchers (e.g., Erickson et al., 2023). However, while we will clearly want to ensure that our research is relevant for teachers, we should be cautious about positioning them as merely consumers of the knowledge and benefits that researchers produce. As Rose (2019) argues, the flow of knowledge between researchers and teachers should be viewed as bidirectional rather than unidirectional, since teachers' practices, experiences, and insights should usefully inform and shape classroom research. As Rose further argues, if it is to be meaningful for teachers, classroom research of this kind should be evaluated for its rich ecological validity, anchored in the complex messy world of teachers' and learners' local classroom realities, in contrast to the decontextualized "sanitized experiments" (p. 899) more typical of psychological research in general, including much research in SLA.

In summary, I argue here for a *person-focused* approach to researching the psychology of language learning, where we focus on specific classroom communities and their social and psychological realities, rather than on generalized theoretical systems within which teachers, learners and their behaviours and practices become reduced to depersonalized abstract elements. Importantly, taking a person-focused approach means shaping the research inquiry specifically to understand and address the situated needs and concerns of these communities, instead of simply pursuing our own questions and priorities as researchers and then distilling some generalized principles for practice based on our research insights. In addition, taking a person-focused approach means framing the research questions in terms of people and their perspectives, behaviours, and experiences. This means that teachers or students are thematized or assigned to agent or patient roles in how we formulate our research questions (e.g., "How do teachers motivate reticent students to engage in speaking activities in class?"), rather than abstract constructs and variables (e.g., "How do motivation and anxiety relate to oral participation in class?"). This helps to ensure that we focus holistically on people and what they do and experience in their situated realities, and that we attribute agency, intentionality, perceptions, and responses to these people, rather than to "their componentized subpersonal parts that are orchestrating courses of action" as Bandura (2001, p. 2) has wryly described.

For researchers who are external to the classroom communities under analysis, taking this kind of person-focused orientation will necessitate a careful process of ethnographic groundwork and collaboration with participating teachers, students, and other relevant stakeholders, in order to understand local perspectives and priorities, negotiate research objectives, and shape the research inquiry accordingly. This journey can entail challenges around managing relationships and power structures in the collaborative process, especially regarding how researchers and teachers position themselves and one another (see Erickson et al., 2023, for extensive discussion of relational complexities in collaborative research in language education).

The Case for Practitioner Research, and the Role of Intuition

Of course, if the research is undertaken by teachers themselves, the relational complexities become somewhat reduced, as does the period of groundwork needed to understand the local context. After all, such research necessarily focuses on the teaching and learning community within which the practitioner researcher is situated, and teachers are ideally positioned to identify the issues that matter to them in their classroom practice and day-to-day engagement with their students. In this respect, practitioner research lends itself especially well to exploring psychological perspectives on language learning and teaching in a strongly person-focused way. As Pinner and Sampson (2022) persuasively argue, it enables the "humanizing" of classroom research since it provides emic and contextually situated insights from an integrated member of the classroom community under focus. Even when the practitioner researcher adopts complexity thinking as an analytical approach, for example, the research can remain focused on people and their individuality, relationships, and experiences, rather than on self-organizing abstract systems and interacting components, as Sampson (2016) has richly illustrated in his action research study of complexity in classroom motivation.

Importantly too, practitioner research is typically motivated by teachers' desire to improve their practice, bring about positive change, or enhance the quality of life in the classroom. In this respect, it is likely to be shaped by locally meaningful social purposes and values rather than by the academic purposes and values of contributing to knowledge. At the same time, as I reflect in a recent article (Ushioda, 2022), practitioner research can greatly enrich our theoretical understandings of various psychological, social, and relational processes in the classroom. Such research can yield understandings that go beyond those achievable by researchers who are external to these classrooms, and these can have wider value and significance for the academic and professional community at large. This is because such understandings are firmly grounded in the complex realities of classroom life and thus have strong ecological validity.

Moreover, unlike external "third-party" researchers, practitioner researchers can bring to their classroom inquiry a situated wealth of *personal insights and intuitions*

accumulated through their lived experience of engaging with various students and classroom groups and becoming attuned to certain social and psychological nuances in these interactions. Indeed, it is likely that these experience-based intuitions may play a role in directing teachers' attention to certain phenomena in the complexity of day-to-day classroom life that merit exploration, which may then lead to systematic inquiry through practitioner research. This is not to imply that the role of intuition lies principally in the early stages of the practitioner research process "as a valuable source of hypotheses" (Claxton, 2000, p. 43), before more systematic modes of inquiry and analysis are undertaken. In the next part, I turn to examine in more depth the role that intuition may play in practitioner research.

INTUITION AND DECISION-MAKING IN PRACTITIONER RESEARCH: SOME ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

In examining the role of intuition, I will focus especially on the decision-making processes that we undertake when engaging in classroom practitioner research on psychological perspectives, as we navigate our twin activities of teaching and researching. I will discuss how intuition may interact with other forms of thinking and decision-making during the research-and-teaching process, and I will highlight some ethical considerations in this regard.

I will begin by examining the role of intuition in decision-making in the teaching process itself.

Intuition and Decision-Making in the Teaching Process

As highlighted already, a key argument for person-focused approaches to researching the psychology of language learning, and for practitioner research especially, is that such research approaches naturally orient to the messy situated complexity of classroom life within which social and psychological processes such as motivation, identity work, or emotions play out. After all, in real classrooms not everything is as neatly predictable, classifiable, and controllable as might be idealized in the "sanitized experiments" criticized by Rose (2019, p. 899). While findings from the latter kind of research may become distilled into sets of generalized pedagogical principles for dealing with certain types of student exhibiting certain types of psychological behaviour, we know that real classrooms comprise real people with all their individuality, relationships, and histories, rather than abstract types of student. In view of this complex and dynamic reality, whatever carefully prepared plans, principles and objectives teachers may bring to a lesson, they will also need to attend to many other things simultaneously happening in the class. Teachers often face unexpected or complex situations and need to be able to read and respond to such situations quickly. For example, they may need to defuse tension, deal with off-task behaviours, or lighten the atmosphere; or they may sense a lack of engagement or comprehension among students and need to change tack to deal with this (for further discussion, see editorial introduction by Sampson & Pinner, this volume; also Pinner & Hanks, this volume).

Teachers thus constantly engage in moment-by-moment interactive decision-making while teaching (Woods, 1996). In fact, according to Korthagen (2017, p. 389), "teachers make relatively few conscious decisions while teaching and therefore their behaviour is only partly influenced by thinking, let alone by theories they have learnt." Instead, as they develop their professional experience and expertise, it seems that teachers rely on unconscious or instinctive modes of reading and responding to situations that arise during teaching. This instinctive responsive approach has been characterized as *pedagogical tact* (van Manen, 1991; 2015) – that is, a dynamic ability to handle complex or delicate classroom situations tactfully and appropriately in the immediacy of the moment.

The literature on teachers' pedagogical tact suggests that it is strongly underpinned by a developed sense of intuition built on accumulated experience and expertise (e.g., Sipman et al., 2019; Vagle, 2011). While definitions and forms of intuition vary, intuition is broadly conceptualized as "affectively charged judgements" (Dane & Pratt, 2007, p. 33) through immediate multisensory processing of information and environmental cues at a non-conscious level, often based on holistic recognition of familiar patterns and associations from relevant domain knowledge, which is a significant aspect of expertise. As Kahneman (2012, pp. 11–12) puts it: "Valid intuitions develop when experts have learned to recognize familiar elements in a new situation and to act in a manner that is appropriate to it."

In this respect, teachers' use of intuition to respond swiftly to complex classroom situations parallels its use in many other professional sectors where quick reactive decision-making under pressure is a common necessity. This is especially the case in critical settings such as emergency medicine, air-traffic control, the military, or crisis management, where Langan-Fox and Vranic (2011) note that intuition is considered crucially important. As they comment, frontline professionals in such settings usually undergo training in becoming attuned to environmental cues and key signals, and in deploying all their senses when assessing the feel of a complex critical situation, alongside training in systematic analytical and rational thinking. In this respect, there is a growing wealth of cross-disciplinary intuition research across various professional fields, and it is worth noting that not all of these are related to critical settings but they also include diverse fields such as management, sport psychology, and the creative arts. This is evidenced in an extensive edited volume of intuition research (Sinclair, 2011) and even a handbook of research methods on intuition (Sinclair, 2016), while intuition research is now often associated with the well-established broader interdisciplinary study of decision-making in psychology and behavioural economics (e.g., Newell et al., 2022).

However, as Sipman et al. (2019) observe, within the education field, the role of intuition in teachers' decision-making processes seems not only under-researched but also largely neglected in teacher education and training. As they critically comment, this may partly be attributable to the prevailing emphasis on evidence-based actions, results, and accountability in educational policy, which may devalue the role of intangible soft skills such as intuition. As their own exploratory research with a range of education professionals shows, teachers seem to vary in their capacity to tune into their intuition and are rarely trained or even encouraged to develop and make use of their intuition, despite its importance in enabling them to handle complex classroom situations quickly and sensitively.

Intuition and Decision-Making in the Teaching-and-Researching Process

If we now turn our attention to what happens when teachers are not only teaching but also researching their classrooms, it becomes clear that there are additional layers of complexity to be negotiated where intuitive decision-making processes may come into play. This is because practitioner researchers must navigate dual roles as they manage their lessons and their relational work with their students, and hence their intuitive responses to situations that arise may be shaped by their priorities and expertise as teacher, or as researcher, or as both. Moreover, these situational complexities may be more diverse than when focusing just on teaching. For example, they may relate to challenges encountered in collecting data as planned, or in balancing teaching and research objectives and ensuring that researching does not interfere with teaching.

Of course, some forms of practitioner research such as exploratory practice (EP; Allwright, 2003; Hanks, 2017) are built on the principle that the research process should be seamlessly integrated into normal classroom practices, instead of interfering with or imposing additional demands on students' (and teachers') time. The idea here is that there should be complete congruence between research tools and objectives and pedagogical tools and objectives, and that research inquiry should revolve around what Hanks (2017) calls potentially exploitable pedagogic activities (PEPAs) that can yield valuable data for analysis and reflection.

Nevertheless, however seamlessly the research process is integrated into the teaching process, practitioner researchers will always need to navigate various situational and relational complexities during their journey, very few of which can be anticipated and prepared for in advance. This was certainly the experience of Li (2006), who, despite adopting EP principles to integrate teaching and researching in her work, struggled to negotiate the unexpected external and relational challenges she faced in conducting her practitioner research on English learning motivation in a Chinese university. Such challenges included, for example, being allocated final year rather than freshman classes as anticipated, and then being required to turn her course into a test-taking training programme to prepare students for the National English test. These local classroom realities prevented her from carrying out her original teaching plans and thus from generating the data she had intended. Ultimately, she prioritized her sense of responsibility as a teacher over her data collection needs as a researcher, although an intuitive "spur of the moment" (Li, 2006, p. 447) decision to explore why class attendance fluctuated then yielded richly insightful unplanned data for her research.

Li's (2006) experience illustrates the dynamic tensions and synergies between the teaching and researching processes in practitioner inquiry, many of which revolve around the complexities of relational work in the classroom where the teacher is also a researcher. Unlike external "third party" researchers who briefly visit classrooms to gather data, teachers who research their own classrooms have a shared history of lived experiences, interactions, and relationships with their students. As they get to know their students, they naturally orient to them as individual and complex people with unique personalities, identities, characteristics, and backgrounds. This person-focused orientation as a teacher clearly then lends itself to taking a person-focused (rather than systems-based) approach as a practitioner researcher. However, this can also potentially give rise to some ethical complexities in how practitioner researchers manage relational work with their students while wearing their two hats as teacher and researcher. In the next section, I will turn to examine these ethical complexities and consider the potential role of intuition in responding to these, as well as the potential pitfalls of intuition in these contexts and how to mitigate these.

Ethical Perspectives on Decision-Making in Practitioner Research

Students will naturally bring to the classroom certain expectations of their teachers and their relationships with them, and of the kinds of activities they will be asked to engage in. It seems unlikely, however, that they will expect to be involved in classroom research conducted by their teachers or anticipate that teachers will wish to gather research data from them, unless research activity of this kind is a regular feature of the local classroom or institutional culture. Clearly, teachers who intend to conduct research in their classrooms will follow the necessary ethical protocols to ensure that students understand what their research involvement will entail and are able to give (or withhold) voluntary informed consent. Through this process, students may thus develop a sense of what the research is about and how it affects or does not affect their work and their relationship with their teacher. For example, participant information sheets for classroom research will often include statements assuring students that the data they provide will not have impact on their academic grades or on other forms of evaluation by the teacher, or that withholding consent or withdrawing their data will not have negative consequences for them.

Yet despite providing such assurances through these standard protocols, teachers who are researching psychological perspectives in their own classrooms may face ethical complexities because of the power structures inherent in their relationships with their students. For example, can they be sure if students are giving consent willingly or "simply because they think an authoritative figure wants them to do it" (Comstock, 2012, p. 172)? Or if some students choose to withhold consent or withdraw their data, might this unconsciously affect teachers' perceptions of them? Might such students feel disadvantaged or excluded if they perceive that their peers who willingly provide self-report data may subsequently benefit from a closer relationship with their teachers, as teachers will gain deeper empathetic understanding of the psychological and emotional factors affecting their learning?

In this respect, practitioner researchers who adopt EP principles and generate their research data solely through pedagogical data (such as learner journals) may be able to mitigate some of these challenges. They can at least ensure an inclusive approach in their communications with students, even if not all students' pedagogical data may be treated as research data (if permission for such use is withheld by some). Yet even this kind of inclusive approach does not obviate the need for teachers to remain constantly sensitive to how the processes of conducting research in their own classrooms may affect and be affected by their evolving relational work with their students. For example, in Li's (2006) practitioner research cited earlier, she highlights her deep sensitivity to her students' verbal or behavioural indications of interest or indifference and how these affected her own behaviours, which led to her "intuition" (p. 452) that her own demeanour and behaviours in class similarly affected her students in a reciprocal way. More generally, if teachers are researching aspects of students' psychological and emotional experiences, they may need to be especially sensitive to students' potential readiness or desire to share deeply personal matters with them in their self-report data, such as confidential disclosures about health or family life, or experiences of bullying or discrimination.

This need for ongoing sensitivity during the teaching and researching process concerns what Guillemin and Gillam

(2004) call the *ethics in practice* dimension of research, which they distinguish from the standard protocols of *procedural ethics* undertaken in advance. As they explain, the ethics in practice dimension relates to being attuned to "ethically important moments" (p. 262) as they arise during the research process, especially pertaining to the *micro-ethics* (Komesaroff, 1995) of evolving relational work and interactions with participants; and being able to respond appropriately and sensitively to these ethically important situations. Essentially, as I have argued elsewhere (Ushioda, 2020), this sensitive orientation stems from adopting a critical ethical lens and ensuring that in our research practice we constantly prioritize and attend to students' needs and perspectives. This is with a view to resolving their issues and improving their lives and experiences, as a fundamental ethical principle of the research we do and the responsive decisions we make during our research practice.

In this connection, there is a strong parallel here with the concept of *pedagogical tact* (van Manen, 1991) discussed earlier, which references teachers' ability to respond tactfully and appropriately to delicate classroom situations. As noted then, teachers' dynamic capacity for decision-making in the immediacy of the moment in such situations is strongly underpinned by their sense of intuition, in parallel with intuitive processes of decision-making in complex pressurized situations in other professional sectors. Therefore, this suggests that intuition will similarly play a significant role in how practitioner researchers sense and respond to ethically important moments in their relational work with students. As discussed earlier, intuition is based on holistic recognition of familiar patterns and associations from relevant domain knowledge or expertise. Hence some interesting questions are whether practitioner researchers derive their intuitions from their accumulated professional experience and expertise as teachers, or from their (perhaps still developing) expertise as researchers, and how these twin domains of knowledge interact in producing their intuitions. As Kahneman (2012, p. 11) notes with reference to how expert intuition functions, "intuition is nothing more and nothing less than recognition" based on associative memory through access to stored knowledge and experience in a particular activity domain. If practitioner researchers are highly experienced teachers yet relatively inexperienced researchers, what might be the consequences for how they respond intuitively to ethically important situations they may encounter while teaching and researching?

Complementary Roles of Intuition and Reflexivity in Ethics in Practice

In this respect, the potential for people to make flawed or inappropriate decisions based on intuition is an area that has received significant critical attention in discussion on human thinking and judgment. Moreover, the literature suggests that the fallibility of our intuitions is not necessarily a matter of insufficient expertise in a specific domain but rather a matter of the systematic errors and cognitive biases to which our minds are susceptible. This is a central principle of the prevailing dual processing models of human thinking, which have been popularized especially through Kahneman's (2012) work on *thinking fast* (System 1) and *thinking slow* (System 2). In Kahneman's analysis, System 1 is associated with rapid, automatic, emotional, unconscious, and intuitive modes of thinking, based on associative memory, such as when we instinctively size someone up at a first encounter, or when we flinch at an unexpected loud noise. In contrast, System 2 is associated with slow, conscious, rational, deliberate, effortful, and analytical modes of thinking, such as when we strategically prepare for a job interview or engage in complex mental arithmetic. While there is considerable debate about how this dual-process architecture works and how the two thinking systems interact (e.g., De Neys, 2023), the pitfalls (as well as advantages) of System 1 thinking are commonly highlighted, such as its susceptibility to bias, stereotyping, and errors of judgment (Kahneman, 2012). This can happen, for example, when we rely on initial impressions of people based on physical appearance and demeanour, or when we let our emotions shape our evaluative judgments. This is clearly why, as noted earlier, frontline professionals working in critical settings such as emergency medicine or air-traffic control typically receive training in analytical (System 2) as well as intuitive (System 1) modes of assessing situations, to offset the potential risks of making decisions based on intuition alone (Langan-Fox & Vranic, 2011). As Kahneman (2012, p. 26) comments: "One of the tasks of System 2 is to overcome the impulses of System 1. In other words, System 2 is in charge of self-control."

This suggests that for teachers researching their own classrooms who encounter ethically important situations in their relational work with students, trusting their intuitions to guide their responses and decisions might not always be the best approach. While intuition may attune them to social and environmental cues in such situations such as sensing a

student's discomfort in sharing a difficult personal story, the capacity to respond appropriately to these delicate situations calls for conscious and careful *reflexivity* on the part of the researcher, as Guillemin and Gillam (2004) emphasize.

Guillemin and Gillam's (2004) concept of reflexivity extends its scope beyond its traditional focus in qualitative inquiry, which is concerned with enhancing research quality and rigour through consciously acknowledging our presence as researcher in the research process. Reflexivity in this original sense means, for example, reflecting on potential subjectivity and bias in how we conduct our research and analyse our data (Dean, 2017), and explicitly acknowledging relevant life experiences or "life capital" (Consoli, 2022) that we bring as researchers to the inquiry (Consoli & Ganassin, 2023). As Guillemin and Gillam explain, reflexivity in the broader context of ethics in practice means also being constantly aware of the subtle micro-ethical dimensions of our research processes, reflecting on how we manage our evolving relationships with participants, thinking carefully about how we respond to any ethical concerns that may arise in these relationships, and consciously prioritizing our duty of care to our participants in the decisions we make. For those of us who are practitioner researchers, this clearly implies prioritizing our duty of care and relational work in our capacity as teachers, even if this means changing or suspending aspects of our work as researchers.

In this regard, discussions of reflexivity around the micro-ethical dimensions of research (as opposed to its epistemological dimensions of rigour and quality) point to an intricate symbiotic relationship with intuition. As Guillemin and Gillam (2004, p. 276) emphasize, being reflexive in this sense involves not only "an acknowledgement of microethics" and "being able to develop a means of addressing and responding to ethical concerns if and when they arise," but also "sensitivity to what we call the 'ethically important moments' in research practice, in all their particularities." In other words, it is through being reflexive and exercising that heightened sense of sensitivity to micro-ethical issues that the researcher's responsive intuitions become primed. In a similar vein, in a paper discussing researcher reflexivity as an important tool in navigating ethical decision-making, Kubanyiova (2008) emphasizes how we develop our (intuitive) ability to notice and respond to ethically important moments in our research by constantly exercising reflexivity as a sustained feature of our ethical behaviour as researchers.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the argument here is that intuition and reflexivity should play complementary roles in how practitioner researchers handle ethically significant situations in their evolving relationships with students and make appropriate decisions. They may use their intuitions to sense relevant social and environmental cues in these situations, drawing on their accumulated experiences and expertise as teachers who have worked with these students, or their developing experiences and expertise as researchers, or drawing on both areas of knowledge. Yet practitioner researchers will also need to engage in reflexivity and pay careful conscious attention to the micro-ethics of how to analyse the situations they encounter, exercise their duty of care towards their students, and respond sensitively and appropriately.

As noted earlier, frontline professionals in critical settings typically undergo dedicated training to hone the complementary skills of intuition and analysis that are required to handle complex decision-making under pressure. While situational complexities in the classroom rarely concern critical matters of life and death, there is clearly considerable scope for developing a similar programme of training for teachers who engage in practitioner research.

Author's Contributions

The author alone undertook all aspects of conceptualizing the paper, constructing the argument, and writing the manuscript.

Funding

This paper is not associated with any source of internal or external funding.

REFERENCES

Allwright, D. (2003). Exploratory practice: Rethinking practitioner research in language teaching. *Language Teaching Research*, *7*(2), 113–141. https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168803lr118oa

Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1

Benson, P. (2019). Ways of seeing: The individual and the social in applied linguistics research methodologies. *Language Teaching*, *52*(1), 60–70. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000234

Claxton, G. (2000). The anatomy of intuition. In T. Atkinson & G. Claxton (Eds.), *The intuitive practitioner: On the value of not always knowing what one is doing* (pp. 32-52). Taylor & Francis.

Comstock, G. (2012). *Research ethics: A philosophical guide to the responsible conduct of research*. Cambridge University Press.

Consoli, S. (2022). Life capital: An epistemic and methodological lens for TESOL research. *TESOL Quarterly*, *56*(4), 1397–1409. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.3154

Consoli, S., & Ganassin, S. (2023). Navigating the waters of reflexivity in applied linguistics. In S. Consoli & S. Ganassin (Eds.), *Reflexivity in applied linguistics: Opportunities, challenges, and suggestions* (pp. 1–16). Routledge.

Corder, S. P. (1967). The significance of learners' errors. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *5*(2–3), 161–169. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1967.5.1-4.161

Dane, E., & Pratt, M. G. (2007). Exploring intuition and its role in managerial decision-making. *Academy of Management Review*, *32*(1), 33–54. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.23463682

Dean, J. (2017). *Doing reflexivity: An introduction*. Policy Press.

De Neys, W. (2023). Further advancing fast-and-slow theorizing. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *46*, e111. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X2200142X

Dörnyei, Z. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivation in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. *Language Learning*, *53*(S1), 3–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.53222

Erickson, G., Bardel, C., & Little, D. (Eds.). (2023). *Collaborative research in language education: Reciprocal benefits and challenges*. De Gruyter Mouton.

Gkonou, C., Dewaele, J.-M., & King, J. (Eds.). (2020). *The emotional rollercoaster of language teaching*. Multilingual Matters.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and 'ethically important moments' in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*(2), 261–280. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360

Hanks, J. (2017). *Exploratory practice in language teaching: Puzzling about principles and practices*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Kahneman, D. (2012). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Penguin.

Komesaroff, P. (1995). From bioethics to microethics: Ethical debate and clinical medicine. In P. Komesaroff (Ed.), *Troubled bodies: Critical perspectives on postmodernism, medical ethics and the body* (pp. 62–86). Melbourne University Press.

Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: Towards professional development 3.0.

Teachers and Teaching, *23*(4), 387–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1211523

Kubanyiova, M. (2008). Rethinking research ethics in contemporary applied linguistics: The tension between macroethical and microethical perspectives in situated research. *The Modern Language Journal*, *92*(4), 503–518. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00784.x

Langan-Fox, J., & Vranic, V. (2011). Life, death, and intuition in critical occupations. In M. Sinclair (Ed.), *Handbook of intuition research* (pp. 111–121). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Lantolf, J. P., & Pavlenko, A. (2001). (S)econd (L)anguage (A)ctivity theory: Understanding second language learners as people. In M. P. Breen (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning* (pp. 141–158). Pearson Education.

Li, N. (2006). Researching and experiencing motivation: A plea for 'balanced research.' *Language Teaching Research*, *10*(4), 437–456. https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168806lr206pr

Marsden, E., & Kasprowicz, R. (2017). Foreign language educators' exposure to research: Reported experiences, exposure via citations, and a proposal for action. *The Modern Language Journal*, *101*(4), 613–642. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12426

McKinley, J. (2019). Evolving the TESOL teaching-research nexus. *TESOL Quarterly*, *53*(3), 875–884. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.509

Medgyes, P. (2017). The (ir)relevance of academic research for the language teacher. *ELT Journal*, *71*(4), 491–498. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccx034

Moskowitz, S., & Dewaele, J.-M. (2021). Is teacher happiness contagious? A study of the link between perceptions of language teacher happiness and student attitudes. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *15*(2), 117–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2019.1707205

Newell, B. R., Lagnado, D. A., & Shanks, D. R. (2022). *Straight choices: The psychology of decision making* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Ortega, L. (2005). For what and for whom is our research? The ethical as transformative lens in instructed SLA. *The Modern Language Journal*, *89*(3), 427–443. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00315.x

Pinner, R. S. (2019). *Authenticity and teacher-student motivational synergy: A narrative of language teaching.* Routledge.

Pinner, R. S., & Sampson, R. J. (2022). Humanizing TESOL research through the lens of complexity thinking. *TESOL Quarterly*, *55*(2), 633–642. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.604

Rose, H. (2019). Dismantling the ivory tower in TESOL: A renewed call for teaching-informed research. *TESOL Quarterly*, *53*(3), 895–905. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.517

Sampson, R. J. (2016). *Complexity in classroom foreign language motivation: A practitioner research perspective from Japan*. Multilingual Matters.

Sato, M., & Loewen, S. (2018). Do teachers care about research? The research-pedagogy dialogue. *ELT Journal*, *73*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy048

Sato, M, & Loewen, S. (Eds.). (2022). Connecting second language research and practice: Observations and interventions [Special issue]. *The Modern Language Journal*, *106*(3).

Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, *10*(3), 209–231. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.1972.10.1-4.209

Sinclair, M. (Ed.). (2011). *Handbook of intuition research*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Sinclair, M. (Ed.). (2016). *Handbook of research methods on intuition*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Sipman, G., Thölke, J., Martens, R., & McKenney, S. (2019). The role of intuition in pedagogical tact. *British Educational Research Journal*, *45*(6), 1186–1202. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3557

Spada, N., & Lightbown, P. (2022). In it together: Teachers, researchers, and classroom SLA. *The*

Modern Language Journal, *106*(3), 635–650. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12792

Ushioda, E. (2009). A person-in-context relational view of emergent motivation, self and identity. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 215–228). Multilingual Matters.

Ushioda, E. (2020). *Language learning motivation: An ethical agenda for research*. Oxford University Press.

Ushioda, E. (2022). Ema Ushioda's essential bookshelf: Teacher engagement with classroom motivation research. *Language Teaching*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444822000428

Ushioda, E. (2023). Why we do language education research: Reflecting on academic and social values. *JACET Kansai Journal*, *25*, 31–39.

Vagle, M. (2011). Critically-oriented pedagogical tact: Learning about and through our compulsions as teacher educators. *Teaching Education*, *22*(4), 413–426. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210.2011.618534

van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The measuring of pedagogical thoughtfulness.* State University of New York Press.

van Manen, M. (2015). *Pedagogical tact: Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do*. Routledge.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching: Beliefs, decision-making and classroom practice*. Cambridge University Press.