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## Teachers and Research Practices: Perspectives from English Language Educators in a Philippine University

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## Teachers And Research Practices: Perspectives From English Language Educators In A Philippine University

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*Abstract: Given the paucity of studies regarding research practices of teachers, particularly English language teaching (ELT) practitioners in the ASEAN region and in the Philippines, this study explores the research practices of English language teachers in the Philippines. Using purposive-convenience sampling, a total of 49 teachers of English from a Philippine university were asked to answer a survey. To validate the data, pertinent public university documents were examined, and interviews with the university research heads were conducted. Findings suggest that the teachers were cognizant of the link between teaching and their own and their schools' research practices. This research also reports the teachers' positive perception towards research, and high receptivity to and interest in it. However, such research engagement was somehow constrained by factors such as crowded teaching timetables or heavy workload, lack of funding or financial support, difficulty in understanding (e.g., the language) published research, and the challenge of contextualising research findings for classroom use. This paper concludes with a note on how a conducive research climate in a school is a requisite in cultivating teachers' interest in research.*

### Introduction

The roles of teachers are no longer limited to being effective communicators with students, organisers of classroom activities, and managers and facilitators of the learning process. On top of these so-called traditional roles and responsibilities, teachers are also viewed as active catalysts for change in their educational environment. Brown (2001) avers, "You [teachers] are an agent for change in a world in desperate need for change: change from competition to cooperation, from powerlessness to empowerment, from conflict to resolution, from prejudice to understanding" (p. 445). Lerner (2004, as cited in Fareh & Saeed, 2011), who shares the same perspective, argues that a teacher should "never [be] content with the status quo but rather always look for a better way" (p. 32). These two empowering statements call for extending the teacher's roles to engage in research, that is, developing an inquisitive attitude to identify and address problems in the classroom (Ulla et al., 2017), question and reflect on teaching practices (Simms, 2013), and acquire a better understanding of the teaching-learning process. In the field of English language education, teachers can become 'researchers' when their inquisitive nature is

prompted by the need to investigate certain events in the classroom such as understanding how the language works and deciding on the best teaching techniques and practices that can help optimise language learning.

Much has been written about the significance of teachers' engagement in research and their perceptions towards it. For example, Procter's (2015) research demonstrated that teachers put a premium on the use of research practices, both their own and their schools'. Recent studies have been conducted to explore the importance of doing research (e.g., action or practitioner research) in terms of improving teachers' lifelong professional learning (Hine & Lavery, 2014; Ulla, 2018). Previous studies have also reported that doing research is a way to acquire necessary skills to identify practical and systematic solutions to classroom problems (Buglio, 2015; Burns, 2010; Hine, 2013). In particular, conducting action research helps boost reflective practices of teachers in the classroom (Ado, 2013; Cain & Harris, 2013; Hodgson, 2013; Morales, 2016; Smith et al., 2010). Action research, in this context, is primarily conducted by teacher-researchers to identify and carefully examine a problem or an issue in the classroom or in the school that needs solution (Burns & Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2014). While previous investigations have examined the positive effects of doing research on the teaching-learning process (Borg, 2014; Burns & Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2014; Fagundes, 2016; Ulla, 2018), a number of research have revealed the following barriers that prevent teachers from research engagement: lack of research skills and expertise (Allison & Carey, 2007; Norasmah & Chia, 2016; Zhou 2012); heavy workload and lack of time (Ellis & Loughland, 2016; Kutlay, 2012; Ulla, 2018), for teachers work more overtime than any other professions (Wiggins, 2015); and lack of funding or financial support to run research (Firth, 2016; Vecaldo et al., 2019).

This study reports on research practices used by English language teachers and their university. The term 'research practices,' in this study, is operationalized to cover a range of activities the teachers and the school use and engage in, such as research-focused discussion with colleagues in the department/unit, reading and writing (and conducting) research, participation in research-focused professional or academic conferences, involvement in research-related networking and collaboration, and the like. Such immersion into research practices draws attention to Procter (2015), who argued that "for research evidence to be used more effectively, it is important to know the extent to which research evidence is currently being used by teachers and their schools" (p. 464). In this theoretical paradigm, knowledge mobilisation becomes crucial in order for teaching to become an evidence-informed profession. The term 'knowledge mobilisation' pertains to "efforts to understand and strengthen the relationship between research and practice" (Levin, 2013, p. 2). Cooper and Levin (2010), however, have observed that teachers lack engagement with available research. Studies have revealed a number of difficulties with teachers utilizing research upon which to base their practice. For instance, Levin et al. (2010) have reviewed the research of Cooper et al. (2009) and Levin (2008), and have highlighted two difficulties:

- (1) Concerns about the quality, relevance, and accessibility of research in education to practitioners and policy-makers (e.g., the use of language or the publication outlets in which research tends to appear).
- (2) Educators report a high level of receptivity to research but a relatively low level of active engagement with research in the sense of spending time reading or discussing it. (p. 4)

In another vein, some researchers have noted the value that teachers place on their professional interpersonal relationships when it comes to research engagement. They highlighted

that colleagues' personal recommendations influenced what research they considered (Cordingley, 2004). More so, Levin et al. (2010) observed that personal experience usually has more impact than research and that professional behaviour is primarily linked to what colleagues and superiors do and value (Cordingley, 2008; Nutley et al., 2007). These findings point to the possibility of research findings, despite being vetted and proven to be reliable, being rendered irrelevant to teachers' classroom practices.

The present study reports on research into the research practices used by English language teachers and their university, which is located in Manila, the Philippines. Apart from the recent local studies by Morales et al. (2016), Ulla (2018), Ulla et al. (2017), and Vecaldo et al. (2019) which dealt with experiences, benefits, and challenges in doing research, there is a general lack of research regarding teachers' and schools' research practices in the Philippine setting, which is the gap in the literature this paper addresses. Procter (2015) emphasises that it is important to look at teachers' use of research practices as these "may be a determinate of their proclivity to the use of [research] evidence" (p. 466). The present investigation likewise echoes the assumption posited by Dehghan and Sahragard (2015); that is, knowing such research practices and eventually paying a closer attention to developing a positive mentality in teachers concerning their role as reflective teachers could be a significant stride towards educational change.

### **Teachers and Their Research (Dis)Engagement**

The literature is rich in arguments in favour of doing research (i.e., teacher research and action research) and the benefits it brings both to teachers and to their pedagogical practices. For one, teachers who are engaged in action research have developed confidence in teaching and are motivated to teach (Borg, 2014). Two, conducting an action research involves teachers in a systematic intentional examination of their own professional practice (Ado, 2013; Cain & Harris, 2013; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Hodgson, 2013) by "fostering professional growth, enhancing instruction and assessment, and building reflective skills" (Smith et al., 2010). Three, teaching practices informed by research increase one's deeper understanding of students' needs (Borg, 2014; Burns, 2010; General Education Council for England, 2006). Lastly, research engagement can bring teachers together and reflect on pedagogy, and can inspire curiosity and professional discussion among teachers, giving them a chance to consolidate their existing skills and practices and develop new ones (General Education Council for England, 2006; Grima-Farrell, 2017).

In the ASEAN context, however, only a few studies have been published to lend support to the growing body of literature on teachers and their research practices. For instance, Dehghan and Sahragard (2015) in their paper "Iranian EFL [English as a Foreign Language] Teachers' Views on Action Research and Its Application in Their Classrooms: A Case Study," reported that while most language teachers who participated in the study were familiar with the fundamental concepts of action research, they did not use research in their classes, for they considered it as the duty of professional researchers, not teachers. Through case studies, Zhou (2012) has identified the problems teachers encountered when conducting action research, which corroborate earlier findings with respect to teachers' negative attitudes towards research, pointing to the lack of time, resources, and professional expertise or knowledge of research (Ellis & Loughland, 2016; Firth, 2016; Hine & Lavery, 2014; Kutlay, 2012). Related studies on teachers' views on research in the Philippine setting have remained limited. The works of

Morales (2016), Morales et al. (2016), Ulla (2018), Ulla et al. (2017), and Vecaldo et al. (2019) revealed that while teachers had positive perceptions towards doing research, they would tend to disengage from it because of challenges and constraints such as lack of time and insufficient research knowledge and skills, heavy workload, and inadequate resources and lack of financial support from schools.

Interestingly, although limited and are found in foreign contexts, a few studies have been conducted in the field of English language education, which concentrated on teachers' views on research. Although Burns and Kurtoglu-Hooton's (2014), Dehghan and Sahragard's (2015), and Fareh and Saeed's (2011) studies highlighted the benefits of reflective teaching and critical thinking as results of action research, they found that some language teachers did not rely on research findings to solve their classroom problems. Instead, they performed actions intuitively based on their accumulated teaching experiences, preservice training, and basic ideas (Crookes & Araki, 1999). Kutlay (2012) found that the most common reason why teachers did not conduct research was the belief that research does not give practical pieces of advice for classroom use. Further, Allison and Carey (2007) in their study with 22 language teachers in Canada reported some factors impeding research productivity among teachers, namely lack of time, encouragement, and expertise; and heavy workload.

A noteworthy contrast about research engagement in terms of reading research could be identified in Kutlay's (2012) and Rankin and Becker's (2006) research. While the latter revealed that reading and discussing research with a German teacher created a positive change in the teacher's classroom practices, the former reported that a majority of teachers rarely read research, which were usually lifted from web-based sources instead of academic books and journals. In a recent study, Marsden and Kasproicz (2017) found that more than half of the teachers surveyed reported never having read a research and that the average number of research read during their entire career was nine.

While there has been a sustained interest in conducting studies dealing with benefits and challenges, and views on doing research among teachers, only a small number of these studies dealt with realities in the ASEAN context and in the Philippines. More work is needed to ascertain the roles research engagement play in one's teaching career and to determine what practices can make the use of research effective in the teaching profession. Further, although related research in foreign settings have been done in the field of ELT, no single study exists that examines teachers' and schools' research practices in the Philippines, an area in the literature which has not been given sufficient attention by scholars. This study likewise puts emphasis on reading research as a research practice. Firth (2016) and Rankin and Becker (2006) claim that as a form of research engagement, reading research findings helps teachers develop a better understanding of educational issues, which they can utilize to reshape their practices. Therefore, the present study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What research practices do Filipino teachers of English maintain?
2. What views do these teachers hold with regard to their university's research practices?
3. What are the perceptions of these teachers towards reading research and its relation to English language teaching?
4. What factors do they perceive as barriers to reading and utilising research?

## Method

### Participants

The study used nonprobability sampling, particularly purposive-convenience sampling. A total of 49 university English language teachers from one comprehensive Catholic university in Manila, the Philippines volunteered to participate in the study. The choice for the university was based upon the following: first, it is a university based on the typologies set by the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED)<sup>1</sup>; second, it has six research centers; and third, its academic offerings require research output and dissemination. Also, the university has relatively easier access to academic resources, which include updated international literature and any other references such as online research journals. The choice for the research site was likewise based on accessibility and practicality as all three researchers were teaching with the participants in the university at the time of the study. The researchers believe that these teacher-participants were involved in this research for the reasons that findings of this study would redound to their own benefits and that they were representative members and stakeholders of the university population. A majority of the respondents (79.60%) were female and were relatively young in the teaching profession, for most of them have been teaching for 11 to 15 years (26.50%), or 16 to 20 years (18.40%). In terms of educational attainment, more than half (67.30%) have master's degrees, while 24.50% hold doctorate degrees; those who have bachelor's degrees had the least percentage (8.20%). Most of them teach in the undergraduate level, and a few handle courses both in the undergraduate and graduate levels. A majority of the participants likewise teach research-related courses and serve as research advisers to their students. Most of them have prior research engagement, especially during their graduate studies, and some have written and published research in reputable journals. Some also serve as resident researchers and research associates in the university's research centers.

### Data Collection and Analysis

A modified online survey questionnaire was formulated based on Procter's (2015), Levin et al.'s (2010), and Hall's (in press) studies. The questionnaire items focus on the importance of asking about practices rather than attitudes when probing into teacher-practitioners' research practices (Levin et al., 2010). The questionnaire was pilot-tested among 30 university English language teachers who were not actual respondents of the study. Afterward, the questionnaire was slightly revised based on concerns raised in the pilot-testing. Two essential changes in the survey questionnaire were made based on the pilot-test results. First, each section about research practices was provided with a comment section should the participants wish to give additional details or related experiences. Second, for readability, choices/descriptors appeared in each item of the online survey.

The questionnaire is composed of six parts: Part 1. Profile of the Respondents; Part 2. Research Practices: "You and Research"; Part 3. Research Practices: "Your School and

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<sup>1</sup> The Philippine Commission on Higher Education (2012) defined universities as those that "contribute to nation-building by providing highly specialized educational experiences to train experts in the various technical and disciplinary areas and by emphasizing the development of new knowledge and skills through research and development" (p. 8). To qualify as such, an institution must have a range of bachelor's to doctoral programs, learning resources to provide knowledge, and faculty members who are engaged in research, as evidenced by patents and publications. Academic programs must also require the "submission of a thesis / project / research papers" (p. 20). This regulation led to the subject university providing a research environment that complies with the requirements, and it permeates to the basic education level.

Research”; Part 4. Reading Research and English Language Teaching; Part 5. “Roadblocks” to Reading and Utilising Research; Part 6. Further Comments. The questionnaire uses a Likert (1932) scale format to determine the participants’ perception of the extent to which a research practice is carried out by themselves or their university. Moreover, the questionnaire is a mix of statements to tick and some open boxes for additional and expanded responses.

A request letter was sent to concerned offices to secure permission to administer the online survey. It was made clear in the letter that the teachers’ participation in the study was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential. Upon approval of the request, the researchers sent email to the target participants to ask for their voluntary participation. The said email also clearly discussed the purpose of the study. All the 55 target participants agreed to participate in the study. After which, the online survey questionnaire was administered among these English language teachers for two weeks. The response rate was relatively high at 89.09%.

To validate the data, pertinent public university documents were examined, and semi-structured interviews with the university research heads were conducted. A request letter was sent to concerned offices to secure permission to access these documents and conduct individual interviews. The letter stipulated that participation in the study was voluntary and that interviewees’ responses would remain confidential. Upon approval of the request, the researchers emailed the written interview form to the participants. Follow-up interviews for further questions and clarifications were likewise conducted.

The survey data were computed using frequency and percentage in Microsoft Excel, and were then reported, tabulated, and analysed following the thematic categorisations of the 43 questionnaire items based on the research questions posed. These quantitative findings were analysed and discussed vis-à-vis the qualitative data obtained from the university documents and the interviews.

## **Results**

### **Research Practices: “You and Research”**

The first facet of the present investigation dealt with research practices the respondents maintain. An analysis of the responses indicated that six out of the nine research practices (66.66%) were either ‘often true’ or ‘mostly true’ for the teacher-respondents (see Table 1). The three items ‘you have attended research-focused professional or academic conferences in the last year,’ ‘you have attended research-focused school-, college-, or university-organised events in the last year,’ and ‘you engage or engaged in research in postgraduate studies’ were ‘mostly true’ for the respondents at 19/49 (38.78%), 17/49 (34.69%), and 18/49 (36.73%), respectively. These three items are related; teachers are encouraged to pursue graduate studies, which are typically research-oriented, and with this kind of orientation, they most likely participate in institutionally-organised and outside-school research-focused academic or professional conferences. In fact, 45/49 (91.80%) of the respondents have master’s and doctorate degrees.

Items	Never true		Rarely true		Often true		Mostly true	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
You engage in research-focused discussion with colleagues in the department/unit.	0	0.00	15	30.61	26	53.06	8	16.33
You engage in research-related reading (e.g., journal articles, professional-development materials) about language education and applied linguistics.	1	2.04	12	24.50	18	36.73	18	36.73
You engage in research-related networking (formal or informal).	4	8.16	18	36.73	17	34.69	10	20.40
You engage in research-related events (e.g., conferences, workshops).	2	4.08	12	24.50	19	38.78	16	32.65
You have attended research-focused professional or academic conferences in the last year.	4	8.16	9	18.37	17	34.69	19	38.78
You have attended research-focused school-, college-, or university-organised events in the last year.	5	10.20	11	22.45	16	32.65	17	34.69
You engage or engaged in research in postgraduate studies.	10	20.40	7	14.28	14	28.57	18	36.73
You have received funds from the university to carry out research.	34	69.39	4	8.16	4	8.16	7	14.28
You have received funds from outside organisations to conduct your research.	36	73.47	5	10.20	4	8.16	4	8.16

**Table 1: Research practices: “You and Research”**

A little more than half of the respondents (26/49 or 53.06%) expressed that engagement in research-focused discussion with colleagues in the department/unit was ‘often true’ for them. Likewise, the teachers’ relatively high engagement in research was reflected in the items concerning research-related reading about language education and applied linguistics (18/49 or 36.73%); and research-related events, e.g., conferences, workshops (19/49 or 38.78%). The three aforementioned research practices may be related in a sense that research ideas gained from conference or workshop participation and from reading by teachers are discussed between colleagues to determine how research can be utilised to address important classroom concerns and to reflect on ideas as to how they may improve their teaching practices. However, they rarely or often engaged in research-related networking (formal or informal); and they hardly (i.e., never) received funds from the university and from outside organisations to conduct research at 34/49 (69.39%) and 36/49 (73.47%), respectively. Growing one’s research network can take place in professional and academic conferences and organisations where people who share similar interests discuss and build potential research collaborations. Building a solid network can also happen through establishing new contacts with peer experts by email or social media, or through research fellowship. Interestingly, a few respondents provided the following research practices, the first two of which cover the aspect of research-related networking:

- a. “Collaboration with other schools/researchers”
- b. “Join professional research organizations, publish research work and contribute in the review process of research publications, assist in organizing research seminars and conferences”
- c. “I publish my research in reputable journals.”

On the issue of funding opportunities, university policies reveal that a faculty member may apply for research load and funding prior to the next academic year. This load and equivalent grant may vary depending on the number of ‘units’ approved. Should a teacher be granted the research load, this will mean a reduction in the number of classes he or she will be allowed to teach, to avoid sacrificing the quality of service or output in either or both areas—teaching and research.

Attendance in research conferences can also be funded, fully or partially, by the university through the faculty development fund for each faculty member. The university’s research foundation also provides travel grants for approved research undertakings.

**Research Practices: “Your School and Research”**

Following the section on describing the respondents’ research practices, the English language teachers were asked about their views as regards their university’s research practices.

Items	Never true		Rarely true		Often true		Mostly true	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
In your university/school, research is discussed in faculty or departmental meetings.	1	2.04	9	18.37	22	44.90	17	34.69
In your university/school, research is discussed in professional-development meetings.	1	2.04	9	18.37	20	40.82	19	38.78
In your university/school, research is discussed in informal networking events.	0	0.00	12	24.50	26	53.06	11	22.45
Your university/school provides funds for research generation and utilization.	2	4.08	13	26.53	19	38.78	15	30.61
Your university/school encourages or facilitates action research (the teacher or practitioner as researcher).	1	2.04	12	24.50	24	49.00	12	24.50
Your university/school maintains ongoing relationships with external researchers.	1	2.04	8	16.33	26	53.06	14	28.57
Your university/school encourages research-related professional-development programs (e.g., postgraduate studies, conference attendance).	0	0.00	4	8.16	18	36.73	27	55.10
Your university/school sponsors or coordinates research-focused events (e.g., workshops, conferences).	1	2.04	5	10.20	21	42.86	22	44.90
Your university/school provides opportunities for informal networking related to research.	0	0.00	13	26.53	24	49.00	12	24.50
Your university/school circulates research articles.	2	4.08	11	22.45	17	34.69	19	38.78
Your university/school provides faculty members with time to engage in research-related activities.	2	4.08	16	32.65	19	38.78	12	24.50

**Table 2: Research practices: “Your school and research”**

An analysis of the responses in Table 2 indicated that eight out of the 11 items (72.72%) were 'often true' for the respondents. On average, nearly half of the teachers (23/49 or 46.93%) opined that these items were 'mostly true' for them: 'your university/school encourages research-related professional-development programs (e.g., postgraduate studies, conference attendance),' 'your university/school sponsors or coordinates research-focused events (e.g., workshops, conferences),' and 'your university/school circulates research articles.'

Five statements about the teachers' school's research practices, which were evaluated as 'often true,' were scored nearly or above 50%, and they deal with the following aspects: 'research is discussed in faculty or departmental meetings,' 'research is discussed in informal networking events,' 'university/school encourages or facilitates action research (the teacher or practitioner as researcher),' 'university/school maintains ongoing relationships with external researchers,' and 'university/school provides opportunities for informal networking related to research.' However, the item 'your university/school provides faculty members with time to engage in research-related activities' was either 'rarely true' or 'often true' for the English teachers.

The following school's or university's research practices were added by the respondents:

- a. "Priority is given to those with research track. How will the newbies get started?"
- b. "The university considers research presentations and publications for faculty promotion and academic ranking."
- c. "The university gives research awards to faculty members who publish their works in reputable journals."
- d. "Team research or cluster research on their interest"

Excerpts b-d are validated by university policies on promotion and the publication of available grants for research, such as those by the research and endowment foundation. Also, recognition activities are conducted annually by the university, with awards classified into 'Gold Series,' 'Silver Series,' and 'International Publication Award,' depending on the attainment of set criteria. Finally, research centers are composed of Research Interest Groups (RIGs), where several faculty members can work on a single project funded by the university and/or an external agency.

### **Reading Research and English Language Teaching (ELT)**

Another interesting aspect of the present study explored the respondents' reading-research practices and the link these practices have to ELT.

An analysis of the responses in Table 3 revealed that the respondents strongly agreed to nine of the 11 statements (81.81%). The highest scored items, at 41/49 (83.67%) and 35/49 (71.43%), respectively, were 'English language teachers should regularly read latest research on language education and applied linguistics' and 'reading research regularly provides ideas that teachers can utilise in class.' These two complementary statements may entail that if English language teachers are expected to engage in research to enrich their pedagogical practices, they should keep themselves abreast of the latest in language education and applied linguistics through reading research.

Items	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
English language teachers should regularly read latest research on language education and applied linguistics.	1	2.04	0	0.00	7	14.28	41	83.67
Reading research is one of the prime duties of a teacher.	1	2.04	0	0.00	22	44.90	26	53.06
Reading research helps build my confidence in teaching.	1	2.04	0	0.00	18	36.73	30	61.22
Reading research regularly helps in teachers' professional development.	1	2.04	0	0.00	14	28.57	34	69.39
Reading research regularly provides ideas that teachers can utilise in class.	1	2.04	0	0.00	13	26.53	35	71.43
Reading research provides focuses for challenging teaching practices, thus encouraging teachers to undertake their own practitioner inquiry.	1	2.04	0	0.00	16	32.65	32	65.31
Reading research influences my classroom practices.	1	2.04	1	2.04	22	44.90	25	51.02
Reading research regularly helps teachers to make decisions in class.	1	2.04	1	2.04	20	40.82	27	55.10
When I encounter a problem in my classroom, I try to solve it through reading research.	1	2.04	7	14.28	30	61.22	11	22.45
The language of research articles is highly specialised.	1	2.04	5	10.20	17	34.69	26	53.06
My university/school expects me to read research regularly.	1	2.04	6	12.24	23	46.94	19	38.78

**Table 3. Reading research and English language teaching**

More so, three of the statements to which the teachers strongly agreed were scored between 60% to 70%: ‘reading research helps build my confidence in teaching,’ ‘reading research regularly helps in teachers’ professional development,’ and ‘reading research provides focuses for challenging teaching practices, thus encouraging teachers to undertake their own practitioner inquiry.’ As opposed to the above highly scored statements, most respondents merely agreed to the items ‘when I encounter a problem in my classroom, I try to solve it through reading research’ (30/49 or 61.22%) and ‘my university/school expects me to read research regularly’ (23/49 or 46.94%). The latter statement may relate to an earlier finding concerning the relatively insufficient time the university gives to faculty members to engage in research-related activities.

Two respondents added comments regarding their reading-research practices:

- a. “Unfortunately, administrators hardly have time to read on research, considering their workload.”
- b. “Reading research depends on the interest of the researcher.”

**“Roadblocks” to Reading and Utilising Research**

The respondents generally gave favourable responses to this aspect of the study. Most of the items stating factors that serve as barriers to reading and utilising research were evaluated by the teachers as either ‘not at all’ or ‘slightly.’

Items	Not at all		Slightly		Considerable		Very much	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I cannot find time to read research.	8	16.33	22	44.90	13	26.53	6	12.24
Published research is challenging and difficult to understand.	20	40.82	23	46.94	5	10.20	1	2.04
Although language research deals with classroom problems and students’ needs, research problems are so localised and unique that they are not applicable to my context.	19	38.78	20	40.82	9	18.37	1	2.04
Published research is inaccessible and expensive.	19	38.78	16	32.65	14	28.57	0	0.00
The language used in published research is difficult to understand.	22	44.90	24	49.00	3	6.12	0	0.00
I cannot make myself interested to read published research.	33	67.35	12	24.50	3	6.12	1	2.04
Reading research is not necessary because my own teaching experiences are sufficient to solve my classroom problems.	38	77.55	6	12.24	5	10.20	0	0.00
I cannot see the relevance of published research to my classroom context and practices.	38	77.55	7	14.28	4	8.16	0	0.00
Published research does not provide results that apply to several language-teaching contexts.	34	69.39	11	22.45	4	8.16	0	0.00
I do not have adequate exposure to research even in my academic preparations.	25	51.02	16	32.65	8	16.33	0	0.00

**Table 4. “Roadblocks” to reading and utilising research**

Most of the respondents, at 67% to 78%, strongly expressed that these four statements never, i.e., ‘not at all,’ served as barriers to reading research: ‘I cannot make myself interested to read published research,’ ‘reading research is not necessary because my own teaching experiences are sufficient to solve my classroom problems,’ ‘I cannot see the relevance of published research to my classroom context and practices,’ and ‘published research does not provide results that apply to several language-teaching contexts.’ These results, which show a considerable level of receptivity to research, are consistent with the teachers’ favorable responses as regards their own research practices and views on the significant link between reading research and ELT.

While a majority negated the above statements concerning barriers to reading and utilising research, 22/49 (44.90%) of the respondents opined that the following factors could prevent them from reading research: ‘published research is challenging and difficult to understand,’ ‘although language research deals with classroom problems and students’ needs,

research problems are so localised and unique that they are not applicable to my context, ‘ and ‘The language used in published research is difficult to understand.’

Interestingly, a few respondents gave the following additional factors:

- a. “Workload”
- b. “Too many teaching load or academic-related tasks”
- c. “Those who are just getting initiated into reading research find it overwhelming.”
- d. “They are not interested to do research because of their age.”

## Discussion

Given the paucity of studies regarding research practices of teachers, particularly ELT practitioners in the ASEAN region and in the Philippines, this study aimed to ascertain the research practices Filipino teachers of English maintain, the views they hold as regards their university’s research practices, their perceptions towards reading research and its relation to ELT, and the factors they perceive as barriers to reading and utilising research. Specific key points can be taken from the findings. First, with respect to the teachers’ research practices, it was found that, congruent to the findings in the studies conducted by Behrstock-Sherratt et al. (2011), Cordingley (2008), and Procter (2015), the participants maintained a relatively high level of receptivity to research in terms of participation in research-focused events (e.g., academic or professional conferences, workshops) within and outside the university, engagement in research in postgraduate studies and in research-focused discussion with colleagues in the department or unit, and research-related reading. Teaching in a research university, which exposes its stakeholders to an institutional climate that is committed to research as a central part of its mission, could be the reason for this positive reception to research of the participants.

In contrast, a few recent findings on teachers’ research practices would show otherwise. For instance, Dehghan and Sahragard’s (2015) work found that Iranian EFL teachers held a negative view on doing research. Biruk’s (2013) and Norasmah and Chia’s (2016) studies in Ethiopia and Malaysia, respectively, also revealed that while teachers held a positive attitude towards research, their engagement or participation was reported to be relatively low, which could be attributed to lack of time, resources, and professional expertise.

While the participants in the present study reported a generally positive view on their research practices, findings also revealed their lack of research engagement because of limited professional expertise and resources. The English language teachers rarely or often engaged in research-related networking (formal and informal), so it can be assumed that their professional expertise in doing research could be inadequate since they hardly engaged in research mentorship and collaboration, which is an important research practice one respondent added. Another respondent averred that joining professional research organisations is essential. This lack of professional expertise in doing research could be surprising since most of the teacher-participants are graduate-degree holders; thus, it can be assumed that they have relatively adequate exposure to research. It is worthy to investigate, then, on what caused the seeming halt, if any, to their research engagement from the time they finished their graduate degrees to the present.

In addition, some of the teacher-participants reported challenges in accessing research funds either from the university or external agencies, a similar challenge identified in recent studies (Ulla et al., 2017; Vecaldo et al., 2019). These two reported challenges may warrant a

review of institutional policies to ensure that funding opportunities are communicated and made accessible. Conducting department-level trainings and research activities may also be intensified by the institution. Furthermore, the finding points to the need for the teachers to start building research collaborations as an excellent way to introduce themselves to other academics and peer experts. Fortunately, technology has facilitated communication among scholars in different fields across the globe. Teachers may use social media, e.g., Facebook where a number of online teacher-development platforms can be found, to share their research ideas and collaborate with other language researchers and language-teaching professionals.

Second, the teachers, in general, positively viewed the university's research practices in most aspects, which include encouraging teachers to engage in research-related professional-development programs, sponsoring or coordinating research-focused events, circulating research articles, discussing research in faculty or department meetings, encouraging or facilitating action research, and providing opportunities for research-related collaboration or networking. It can be deduced from these findings that the university values research culture and highlights professional interpersonal relationships in exposing teachers to research. One respondent commented that it would really help teachers and the university if teachers will be exposed to research at the onset of their career; she shared, "sometimes, exposure can lead to falling in love in research." Cordingley (2004) noted that colleagues' personal recommendations influenced what research they would ponder on. Also, teachers who conduct research can share with their colleagues best pedagogical practices that are important for learners (Grima-Farrell, 2017; Simms, 2013). In this context, the need to collaborate with teachers as practitioner researchers in addressing the needs of diverse learners in classrooms becomes crucial. By and large, research engagement cultivated by schools can help teachers get together and inspire them to be involved in professional discussion and reflect on pedagogy.

On the other hand, the teachers thought that the university provided them with limited time to engage in research-related activities. They perhaps rarely had time to do research because of so much teaching hours (Kutlay, 2012; Morales, 2016; Ulla, 2018). To mitigate this challenge, the university may incentivise teachers' involvement in research. Two respondents added that the university considers research presentations and publications for faculty promotion and academic ranking, and gives research awards to faculty members who publish works in reputable journals.

Third, reading research was covered as an added and more specific layer in exploring the teacher-participants' research practices. The participants believed that reading research has a direct link to their ELT practices, and that reading research could create a positive change in a teacher's classroom practices (Rankin & Becker, 2006). Specific key points can be inferred from this finding. For one, reading research can help teachers make informed decisions in addressing issues or concerns in the classroom. Two, informed by trends and current issues in the field, ELT practitioners can bring to the classroom relevant information borne out of research, which can enhance the teaching-learning experience. Lastly, educational institutions and academics should work together in ensuring that research findings are integrated from the curriculum down to the instructional level, and that in light of latest research findings, traditional teaching techniques are gradually transformed into new ones. In other words, research should ground teaching.

Finally, as to the roadblocks to reading and utilising research, the respondents did not report any major concern or factor preventing them from engaging in research through reading. It can be assumed that they are cognizant of their reading-research practices and priorities, and this can be attributed to their exposure to an institutional climate that nurtures research culture as integral to its mission. Also, since they teach in a research university, they are provided with a

relatively easier access to updated academic resources and literature such as online research journals subscribed by the university library. However, they believed that challenges in understanding published research, e.g., the use of language, and in contextualising research findings for classroom use could potentially serve as barriers (Kutlay, 2012; Levin et al., 2010, as cited in Procter, 2015). One respondent added that getting initiated into reading research can be overwhelming, while two others noted that too many workload limits the time they can spend for reading research. Two key points can be deduced from these findings.

First, while some great papers have to be long, e.g., state-of-the-art review papers synthesizing years of research with a purpose to determine directions for future research (Renandya, 2020), academic research, they tend to be cumbersome and are not always easy to read. Krashen (2019) in his article about writing short papers published in *Language Magazine* emphasized that teachers do not read ‘serious’ scholarly articles because they do not have time and are overworked, a reality which was recently reported in Marsden and Kasprovicz’s (2017) study. Likewise, Krashen (2019) argued that most research and theory papers tend to be unnecessarily long and tedious.

Second, since reading/writing long papers is a luxury most language teachers cannot afford (Renandya, 2020), it can be assumed that the teacher-participants in the present study would prefer to read (and perhaps write) short and practical papers (e.g., brief reports, pedagogically-oriented research), which can be found in certain publications such as *Modern English Teacher* and *Humanising Language Teaching*. However, as this assumption is currently unknown, further investigation may be conducted to explore this area. Maley (2016) opines that academic research, which is done to critique and to advance existing theories, has no immediate applications for language teaching; thus, it may be uncertain if teachers will find reading academic research useful for their own research.

## Conclusion

This investigation into the research practices of Filipino teachers has added another textured layer of research to the area, one that explores research practices from the point-of-view of English language teachers. One important thing the present study has found is that the English language teachers are keenly aware of the link between their own and their schools’ research practices, and teaching. Teaching in a university that promotes a conducive research climate can be a crucial factor why the teacher-participants are interested in research. They are interested in research evidence from which they can base their practice in English language teaching. Their positive perception towards research, and high receptivity to and interest in it are commendable yet are somehow constrained by certain factors such as crowded teaching timetables or heavy workloads, lack of funding or financial support, which are contextual factors beyond their control; and difficulty in understanding (e.g., particularly the language) published research along with the challenge in contextualising research findings for classroom use. As argued by Procter (2015), “If teachers are allowed the time and space to engage with research evidence, to be critical of it and reflect on it, then there is a better chance that they can change their practice based on research evidence” (p. 475). Therefore, given the right conditions for research, teachers could be catalysts for change in the field of education and beyond.

While the present study claims strengths in exploring the research practices of English language teachers in a Philippine university, the findings may not provide a sound representation

of all English language teachers in the Philippines. Given the limited number of teacher-respondents, this study suggests that a follow-up research should include more English language teachers from different Philippine academic institutions to yield more comprehensive results. A qualitative study through interviews can also be conducted to probe deeper into the research practices, motivations, and challenges of Filipino teachers of English.

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