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Foreign Language Teachers' Views on Pedagogic Research

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Abstract

Pedagogic research may be called insider action research that has several objectives. The research conducted by teachers in educational settings may result in furthering the already existing knowledge on a particular pedagogic approach, increasing the efficiency of learning, or contributing to the development of policy and practice within the related contexts. A question whether teachers should engage in research hereof appears. In order to probe the issue, the current phenomenologic study utilized a scale (N= 118) and a semi-structured interview (N= 20) directed to EFL teachers working at state schools in the disadvantaged areas in Turkey. The findings suggested that having no available time, resources, and institutional support, but having high level of stress or related psychological barriers as a result of working at disadvantaged areas, teachers lacked both psychological and physical accessibility to research. Further, the study put forward precious advice to authorities in promoting ways to develop the conditions of EFL teachers working in disadvantaged areas.

Keywords: Scientific Research, Action Research, Foreign Language, English as a Foreign Language

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Introduction

Traditional approach to teaching and learning advises to start from the beginning of the process, although the related studies and suggestions on how to promote student learning and teachers' teaching propose the counter point of view— starting from the end. A teacher well knows how to design the course content and where to deliver the students when s/he is aware of the outcome of the teaching and learning process. A teacher is also well knows to evaluate the learning journey of the students and probe the deviations and drawbacks along the process (Gurung & Schwartz, 2011). Action research is more employed as a practice for teachers to enhance their teaching, but for some the practice of implementing action research can be partially threatening (Henning, Stone, & Kelly, 2009). Action research is a kind of investigation that qualifies implementers everywhere to interrogate and assess their practice. Action researchers ask what they are doing, what they have to promote, and how to promote it. Their practices illustrate how they are attempting to develop their own teaching, and affect others accordingly (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Action research happens at regular intervals and it is based on 'think – do – think' approach in order to form a change. We consider what we are doing now, then we get into action to initiate change, and again we think about what we have done and the related consequences. Our reasoning illuminates our work; and our work illuminates our further reasoning. Action researchers name this repetitive course of 'think – do – think' process the action research cycle. Diverse action researchers vary in specific aspects of the circle of action research, yet they all chiefly consent that it contains certain courses of reasoning and doing to form change. The stages of action research may occasionally overlap. For instance, when you reflect to conclude what you aim to change, you may well begin to plan how to form that change; and occasionally, you may initiate your action research in the middle of the cycle. Nevertheless, the cycle is still a practical way to sum up the course of change. Action research that forms useful change commonly experiences a number of cycles (Mac Naughton & Hughes, 2008). Action research, just like all types of research, necessitates engagement, sources and time to conduct it auspiciously, yet in some contexts it can be thought to be of little importance when compared with subject research. Thus, the attempt to conduct action research may demand more reasoning, more intelligence and a sensible evaluation of what it can and cannot reach (Fink, 2003; Norton, 2018). Action research has growingly become known all over the world as a type of efficient learning. Further, it has been well established in education, particularly in teaching, and is currently employed broadly across the fields. Action research allures many as it can be conducted by everyone. It is not only for professionals, but also for 'ordinary' practitioners (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

Pedagogic Research

In education, disciplinary research is conducted mainly by psychologists, sociologists, philosophers, economists, and historians. These researchers employ educational data mainly to

promote the theories of their own disciplines while they may also refer to the advance of education. On the other hand, pedagogic research deals with learning and teaching with the basic aim of developing pedagogic practice. In a similar vein, pedagogic research is mainly based on the advance of pedagogy (Bassey, 1983). Eggleston (1979) states that some issues related to teachers are still unknown. For example, the strategies teachers employ such as the selections they make while deciding the facts to be taught, the opportunities supplied to students to improve their concept development, or to teach students through the designated skills still stand as enigmas to be solved. Further, as Eggleston (1979) clarifies, the related literature still does not have sufficient data on how teachers form and employ diagnostic practices and tools to observe students' development, how they use strategies to sustain motivation for learning, and how they make the classroom a friendly setting. Thus, as Stenhouse (1980) suggests, educational research owns its prevailing objective to aid such educational practices. It also aids the planning of research practices in educational environments. The problem is to attain approaches to research which develop theories that are useful for both practitioners of education and educational research. However, Nisbet (1980) claimed an opposite idea stating that recent decades have experienced a move away from the simple view that problems are overcome by educational research. This view is based on the former 'Educational Science' view which is a fantasy. Educational research can empower the inquiry into learning and teaching which promotes thinking, clarifies problems, stimulates debate and the exchange of opinions, and therefore fosters comprehension. However, this kind of research intends to enhance the problem-solving capacity of the educational system, instead of directly supplying the final answers to questions. Nind and Lewthwaite (2018) put forward that developing competency in research methods necessitates developing the pedagogic culture enclosing this field. Pedagogic dispute invested by research would supply teachers with methods teaching which has low prominence in university education, as well as teachers with methodological proficiency but little expertise in how to pass it on. Existing academic debates over the link between teaching and research in higher education have not focused much to the ways in which teaching and research blend in pedagogic research (Brew 2010). Pedagogies frequently become the matter of research when there are specific threats in the pedagogic context. Pedagogic research in higher education has referred to the instructors' responses to problems emerging from policy drivers, conforming to expanding participation, for instance, or utilizing modern technologies (Rienties, Brouwer, and Lygo-Baker 2013). Maton (2013) suggests that educational research is generally interpreted by knowledge-blindness in that pedagogic research locates disciplinary knowledge in the background, stating that 'psychologically-informed approaches typically focus on generic processes of learning and side-line differences between the forms of knowledge being learned'. It has recently turned out to be crystal clear that the matter of a positive relation between research and teaching has no common answer. Further, there might be a positive relation under specific circumstances. A positive relation might be mainly based on the processes, rather than the consequences in research and

teaching (Elton, 2001). Stierer and Antoniou (2004) have defined pedagogic research as “the study of processes and relationships comprising pedagogy”. Further, they state that the focus is primarily on teachers who engage research in their own teaching. Moreover, MacFarlane (2011) described pedagogic researchers as conducting “research about their own teaching, that of others or focused on the way students learn”. As a result, those carrying out pedagogic research generally employ the binary roles of researcher and teacher. In a similar vein, the studied subjects are generally teachers’ own students (Regan, 2013). In the related literature, a number of studies on teachers’ awareness of action research and whether teachers can implement action research in their classes or not are observed. Though action research plays a significant role in fostering the capacity of teachers as researchers, there has not been much attention given to it by teachers who cannot implement pedagogic research in their classrooms (Leitch & Day, 2000). The studies conducted by Bull (2005) and Ko (2010) aimed to unravel the views of teachers in disadvantaged regions regarding research practices. Additionally, the study carried out by Loannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou (2015) clarifies that English language teachers complain about having no cooperation and inclusion in their professional development. Further, they criticize getting low trust in their professional development decisions. Additionally, Haberman, Lev, and Langley (2003) hint on the teacher awareness of action research and whether teachers can implement action research in their professional carrier or not. The use of action research in language teachers’ professional career, how it supports teachers to have free teaching decisions and to respond to teaching problems, and how it provides reflective teaching skills are emphasized by Gebhard (2005). Pre-service teachers promote their second language teaching by means of action research (Zainuddin & Moore, 2005). In the light of these studies, the study tries to answer the following research questions:

- What are the views of EFL teachers on pedagogic research?
- What are the views of EFL teachers on their facilities to conduct pedagogic research?

Method

This study aims at detecting how EFL teachers working in disadvantaged areas conceive classroom research and developing implications accordingly. To investigate the related issue, the study referred to phenomenology— an approach to conspicuously interpret the third-persons by means of their experiences (Lavery, 2003). It requires using scientific principles with an anthropological ground, relating the third-persons’ utterances with any possible evidence. In brief, the aim of this approach is to understand how people perceive the world around (Annells, 1996). Being a qualitative study, this phenomenologic study probes the qualitatively different ways in which the participants have experience of anything (Richardson, 1999). By using the stated approach, this paper investigated the conceptual underpinnings of the EFL teachers working at the disadvantaged areas of Adana, Turkey.

Instruments

The data of the inquiry were gathered through a scale developed by Gazioğlu and Pesen (2012) and a semi-structured interview developed by the researcher. For the coding reliability of the interview, Kappa Coefficient for Inter-coder Reliability was counted and it was discovered that the coding process was highly reliable ($K = .884$, $p < .001$). Based on a descriptive research design, this paper contained the data analysis of descriptive statistics. In this sense, SPSS 20.0, a Statistical Program for Social Sciences was utilized to report the perceptions of the informants in numerical data. For the analysis of the data obtained from the inventory, mean was used as a statistical technique to find out the rate of agreement related to the items. The following scores were used in order to compare the means of the attitudes specified: (1) strongly disagree: 1.00 – 1.49, (2) disagree: 1.50 – 2.49, (3) neutral: 2.50 – 3.49, (4) agree: 3.50 – 4.49, (5) strongly agree: 4.50 – 5.00. Cronbach's Alpha was used in order to test the reliability of the scale. Responds from 161 participants in total were used in the analysis.

Table 1. Reliability of the Scale

Cronbach's Alpha	N
.928	31

The reliability of the scale was found to be 92% with 31 items. So, the scale is highly reliable.

Participants

138 EFL teachers ($N = 20$ for the interview and $N = 118$ for the scale) working at the state schools in the disadvantaged areas in Adana, Turkey voluntarily participated in the study. In order to easily reach the most possible number of participants, convenience sampling method was employed. 48 of the informants have master degrees while the rest of them have university degrees. 78 of the respondents are female while 60 of them are male.

Findings and Results 1

This section includes the items of the scale. Each item is represented by the mean scores calculated by SPSS 20.0. The items are listed from the highest mean score to the lowest one.

Table 1. Attitudes towards Pedagogic Research

Item	Mean
1. I do not have enough time for research.	4.80
2. Research contributes to my life.	4.78
3. Research is difficult.	4.76
4. Research is useful for my career.	4.75
5. Research is very important.	4.64
6. Research is indispensable in my professional life.	4.62
7. Research helps to make efficient and determinative decisions.	4.61
8. Research is valuable for every professional.	4.60
9. Research gives me confidence.	4.58
10. Research increases my professional motivation.	4.50

11. Research decreases my career mistakes.	4.44
12. Research makes life more meaningful.	4.40
13. Research is complicated.	4.41
14. I cannot think of life without research.	4.40
15. I like doing research.	4.36
16. Research boosts my career confidence.	4.28
17. Research improves general knowledge.	4.18
18. Research improves the personality.	3.48
19. We can achieve new findings via research.	3.44
20. Research is necessary for everyone.	3.38
21. I enjoy studying current research results.	3.18
22. I like topical research.	3.08
23. I am quite confident when it comes to research	3.00
24. I do not think research will produce any results.	2.60
25. I like sharing my research results with friends.	2.52
26. I do not find research problems interesting.	2.50
27. Research worries me.	2.48
28. I worry about not obtaining valid research results.	2.18
29. I make many mistakes in research.	2.12
30. I spend time correlating research results with underlying principles.	2.08
31. I believe that time spent for research is a total waste.	1.46

As can be clearly understood from Table 1, the informants are positive towards research since they find it useful for their professional career. However, they also state that they do not have enough time for research which is a difficult practice. Further, the respondents do not believe that the time spent for research is a waste. Thus, it can be simply understood from the results of the scale that research is positively conceived by EFL teachers.

Findings and Results 2

This section includes the parts of the conducted interview. The sub-headings are successively made up of *Definition of Research*, *Definition of EFL Research*, *Definition of Researcher*, *Benefiting from Researchers*, *Utilized Data Sources*, *Interest in Research*, *The Use of Action Research*, and *Conducting Research in the Classroom*.

Table 2. Definition of Research

Theme	f	Remarks
Gathering data to learn about something	7	I think research means gathering data to see if educational practices function or not.
Findings solutions to problems	4	Research is conducted to find solutions to classroom problems.
Progress in the related field	3	Research refers to improvement in learning.
Inquiry to find out practical data	2	We research for something because we need practical data.
Reviewing literature	2	Research means reviewing the related literature to get informed about a topic.
Critical pedagogy	2	Critical inquiry means researching for the unknown.

It is clearly understood from Table 2 that majority of respondents (N= 7) suggested *Gathering data to learn about something*. Further, while a group of informants (N= 4) stated *Findings solutions to problems*, some of them (N= 3) declared *Progress in the related field*. On the other hand, few

participants (N= 2 for each theme) put forward *Inquiry to find out practical data*, *Reviewing literature*, and *Critical pedagogy*.

Table 3. Definition of EFL Research

Theme	f	Remarks
Inquiry of EFL skills and sources	6	EFL research refers to searching for the required skills and sources in the related area.
Inquiry of EFL trends and innovations	4	EFL research requires investigating the new related trends and innovations in the related research field.
Inquiry of second language acquisition	4	EFL research focuses on second language acquisition.
Inquiry of new research methods	4	As far as I know, it is based on new research methods.
Inquiry of solutions to problems	1	It means finding a solution to a specific problem occurred in the classroom.

Table 3 simply illustrates that most of the informants (N= 6) declare *Inquiry of EFL skills and sources*. Further, a number of respondents (N= 4 for each theme) indicate *Inquiry of EFL trends and innovations*, *Inquiry of second language acquisition*, and *Inquiry of new research methods*. On the other hand only one participant declares *Inquiry of solutions to problems*.

Table 4. Definition of Researcher

Theme	f	Remarks
Someone inquiring	12	I think researcher means anyone requiring for the unknown.
Someone with critical perspectives	6	A researcher refers to someone inquiring critically.
Someone open to progress	2	A researcher is always open to progress. Otherwise, s/he struggles in vain.

It is clearly displayed in Table 4 that a big number of participants (N= 12) suggest *someone inquiring*. Furthermore, while six informants put forward *someone with critical perspectives*, only two respondents express *someone open to progress*.

Table 5. Benefiting from Researchers

Theme	f	Remarks	#
No		Not using the findings of any researcher	2
		To develop myself in the classroom	4
Yes	18	To be aware of innovations in ELT	2
		To write a research paper	2

One can easily observe from the table that most of the informants (N= 18) put forward negative point of view, while only two respondents declare positive views. In other words, negative points of views outnumber the positive perspectives.

Table 6. Utilized Data Sources

Theme	f	Remarks
Online sources	12	I use internet to inquire for any data.
Academic journals	4	I look at academic journals when investigating a topic.
Lecturers	3	I ask lecturers if I do not know about a specific topic.
Printed books	1	I look at the books in the library.

It is clearly conceived from Table 6 that most of the informants (N= 12) stress *Online sources*. Besides, a small number informants (N= 4) express *Academic journals*, as well as those (N= 3) stating *Lecturers*. However, only one participant affirmed *Printed books*.

Table 7. Interest in Research

Theme	f	Remarks
Yes	18	I am always interested in research issues, but I do not have the required opportunities to do research.
No	2	I have no interest in conducting research.

Table 7 clearly illustrates that most of the informants (N=18) declare positive views on interest in research. On the other hand, just two respondents put forward negative views.

Table 8. The Use of Action Research

Theme	f	Remarks
Useful	20	Doing research in the classroom is very useful since it fosters the quality of education.

Table 8 clearly displays that all the respondents (N= 20) find action research useful. In a similar vein, there is a total agreement on the usefulness of action research.

Table 9. Conducting Research in the Classroom

Theme	f	Remarks
No	20	Unfortunately, we are not able to do research since we lack the necessary equipment, time, and motivation.

It is easily understood from Table 9 that all informants (N= 20) reveal that they do not conduct research. Similarly, a total agreement on not doing research in the classroom is clearly understood from the table.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to unravel the views of English teachers in disadvantaged regions regarding research practices. The majority of the participants reported that they developed a positive attitude towards action research and other kinds of research. The findings show similarity with those of Shkedi's (1998) study. However, they noted that they lacked sufficient fund and opportunities to do research because there was a disconnection between ELT departments and their schools. Therefore, they reported that they hardly received any academic help or invitation from ELT departments. In addition, they experienced bureaucratic difficulties in their schools (Benson, 1983). Another problem that they had was that they did not receive effective research classes at the university. They stated that they needed professional or in-service training about doing research. Although research was an important paradigm and topic for them, they could hardly implement research in their schools because of the fact that they were not motivated enough by the administrators. They noted that they needed in-

service training by ELT departments or other social science departments (Britten, 1985). In addition, they reported that they lost their motivation in time (Pintrich, 2004). In addition, they were unaware of different research methods in ELT and applied linguistics (Gao & Lü, 2001; McDonough & Shaw, 2012; McDonough, J. & McDonough, S., 2014). Although western countries have motivated their teachers about doing action research with applied linguistic departments, ELT departments have been unable to develop such a policy that would promote English teachers in disadvantaged schools and regions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Therefore, it can be interpreted that ELT departments need to develop new policies to enable English teachers in these regions to do research because the problems and difficulties that English teachers experienced need to be analyzed by establishing a connection between theory and practice (Rivers, 2011). Otherwise, lack of research in these regions produces serious problems to understand the problems in learning and teaching English in these disadvantaged regions (Hamid, & Baldauf Jr, 2011). Therefore, action research in schools needs to be motivated and funded so that English teachers can voice their ideas and findings in these regions. Prioritizing research that could be carried out by English teachers in their schools can produce important insights into understanding the problems experienced in these regions (Bani-Khaled, 2013). By doing so, ELT departments can adopt a more practical perspective while teaching at higher education because primary and secondary schools as well as high schools can contribute to theoretical issues that are often negotiated and discussed in ELT departments. Therefore, the majority of the participants insistently stated that they had high motivation to do research and stay in liaison with ELT departments in order to receive help from academics and professionals (Hardré, Beesley, Miller, & Pace, 2011). In addition to this advantage, they also stated that doing action research in these disadvantaged schools and regions could enable ELT academics to better understand the nature of English language learning and teaching (Ellis, 1989). The present study intended to examine the perspectives of English teachers in disadvantaged regions regarding research practices. Most of the participants reported that they lacked sufficient resources, fund, and support to do research in their schools. They stated that they had a positive attitude so as to do research if they were given the appropriate opportunities and support. In addition, in-service training that could be given by ELT departments might also contribute to their research opportunities. Further research in the future needs to analyze these problems so that English teachers in disadvantaged regions could do action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) or other qualitative (Patton, 1990) and quantitative research (Vogt, 2007). In addition, policy-makers and ELT departments need to develop a joint project with Ministry of Education in order to support English teachers (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). In addition, critical perspectives can be improved so that English teachers can adopt new perspectives (Darder & Baltodano, 2003; Eryaman, 2007) while doing action or qualitative research (Mills, 2000). It remains important to listen to English teachers' problems in their disadvantaged schools. It can be clearly understood from the study that EFL teachers are eager to conduct pedagogical research to foster their

teaching quality. In a similar vein, they see research practice as a vital issue to develop their professional career. They want to carry out research studies if they can find the required time and facilities. Further, as they strongly emphasize, let alone conducting research studies, they cannot even respond to their primary needs in the school environment. Thus, this problem should be solved to make use of their already existing motivation to conduct research.

Implications

The informants were asked about what should be done to promote their research skills and opportunities. Accordingly, they gave the following suggestions which should be considered by authorities, educational institutions, and policy makers.

- Support through more data sources and time should be supplied for teachers to foster research skills.
- Rather than only attending the courses and having heavy course load, teachers should be encouraged to conduct research studies.
- Teachers should have less file or paper work to find time to conduct classroom research.
- When conducting a classroom research, it should be enough to ask parents and students for permission. Otherwise, teachers have to wait for months to get permission from the Ministry of Education.
- Rather than preventing teachers from conducting research studies, school administrations should encourage teachers accordingly.
- Attending educational conferences and presenting research papers in these conferences should be encouraged by authorities.
- Research studies should be conducted voluntarily, rather than being an obligation.
- Research should be realized through the cooperation of authorities, parents, teachers, and students.

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