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An investigation of English language trainers' perception and practice of action research: the case of graduate preparation, training and department, Basra, Iraq

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Abstract

The main objective of this study was to investigate English language trainers perception and practice of action research with reference to the Graduate preparation, training, and development department in Basra. The qualitative method was used to conduct the study. The subjects of the study were 21, out of which 6 were English Language trainers, 4 were Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, the Head of the department, and 10 were purposively selected English majoring trainees. Two data collection tools were used, namely, interviews and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six trainers, four RPC members, and a head to examine the perception of English Language trainers about action research, to analyze the extent to which perception affects their practice of action research, and to probe other non-perceptual factors that affect English Language trainers practice of action research. Whereas, focus group discussions were held with English-majoring trainees to assess how trainers assist trainees in action research on practicum courses. To that end, the findings reveal that First, English language trainers saw the value of action research in improving their teaching practice, resolving students' academic and non-academic difficulties, developing teamwork and mutual support among teacher educators, providing opportunities for them to enhance their academic writing skills, and evolving their personal and professional lives. Second, the less in the practice of action research by the trainers was not attributed to their perception but to other external factors such as the laissez-faire administration of the Department, lack of emphasis by the RPC, trainers' dual role as teachers and researchers, lack of resources like time, budget, and materials, lack of initiation, and recognition by the trainers themselves. Third, English language trainers' provision of professional advice to trainees on action research was not satisfactory. They did not properly assist their trainees in the action research that trainees conduct during the final practicum course as a requirement for graduation. It was said that the lack of incentives for research advisors was to blame for the trainers' lack of motivation, encouragement, and hard work.

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1. Introduction

The action research family is wide and diverse, and inevitably, different people say different things about what action research is, what it is for, and who can do it and how it can be done. To give a brief definition, it is possible to consider the definition given by the following two scholars: Firstly, Cohen et al ^[1] define action research as a small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention. Secondly, McNiff and colleagues ^[2] define action research as a form of inquiry that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work. It has to do with figuring out what the problem is and how to fix it in a certain setting, like a school or classroom.

Trainers and trainees can use action research to assess all of their instruction's strengths and faults when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language. It is becoming more vital for English language teachers to enhance their instructional strategies, especially when they are presented to a professional audience for critique. In this sense, Hopkins study ^[3] explains that classroom research encourages teachers to engage in a research-based, action-oriented, and practice-improvement dialogue.

The logic behind classroom research publication and critique is to share our experiences as well as the social and intellectual advantages that follow, not to meet some abstract academic requirements. In addition, in Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (1994:24), it is suggested that instructors and researchers will be supported in gaining the essential field experience in various development and service organizations, as well as professionals from such institutions in teaching. Action research needs to be a part of everyday teaching for teachers to get the professional experience and growth they need.

International research studies such as the works of previous study ^[4] are among a few research inputs which show the involvement of English language teachers in action research. Investigated how elementary, junior, secondary, and senior secondary school teachers participated in educational action research, ^[5] whereas other study ^[6] carried out her research on the participation of ELT of Teachers Training Colleges in action research. As a result, there appeared to be a scarcity of literature on the perception of English language trainers and their action research practice, particularly in teacher education colleges. The above research work stressed only the involvement of ELT teachers in action research at various educational levels.

They did not seem to focus on the factors that affected the involvement of these teachers in action research; in this case, perception. The participation of these teachers might be determined by the perception they hold pertaining to the activity of action research. English language trainers need to have the necessary awareness that research is important to improve their practice, develop team spirit, diagnose and solve instructional problems, and develop their professional careers. In this regard, Johnson and co-authors ^[7] believes that "engaging instructors in classroom research can result in enhanced teaching, more reflective students, professional advancement, and collegial sharing." On the other hand, in this study, the researchers were inspired to study the perception that English language trainers had about action research and their practice. They also asked how this perception affected the way these trainers did their jobs as practitioners and how it affected the advice they gave to trainees in action research, especially during the practicum courses.

Statements of Problem

As mentioned in the background section, the fact that there was a scarcity of literature or studies that touched upon EL trainers' perception and their action research practice, particularly at teacher training departments, prompted the researchers to develop an interest in examining the issue. In addition, from their experience as English trainers, the researchers recognized that action research was marginalized both by the major stakeholders and other teacher educators due to perceptual problems and other related factors. Consequently, the practice of action research by EL trainers and other educators in the department was low. This had potential problems for the pre-service teacher trainees' professional careers, such as an inability to effectively undertake action research both independently and with others; less participation in action research; poor academic writing skills; and an inability to resolve their students' academic, psychological, as well as social problems. Furthermore, have emphasized that a successful teacher must also be an active researcher. Trainees are expected to have a

thorough understanding of the subject matter and technique, as well as the requisite research skills to assess, examine, upgrade, enhance, and grow in their professional and personal lives. Freeman and Richards ^[8] say that the best way to develop professionally on your own is to be able to reflect on your own work through action research. As a result of the preceding argument and the researcher's doubts about teachers' perceptions of action research based on their experience as English language instructors and practitioners in their area, they were interested in investigating EL trainers' perceptions and practice of action research.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to show how EL trainers in Basra's Graduate of Preparation, Training and Development Department thought about action research and how they used it. As a result, the following four particular goals were developed.

1. To examine the perceptions of EL trainers about action research.
2. To analyse how EL trainers' perception affects their practice in action research.
3. To probe other non-perceptual factors, if any, that affect EL trainers' action research practice.
4. To find out how graduate of preparation, training, and development department Basra EL trainers help their trainees with action research on the practicum.

1.2. Research Questions

The researchers aimed to identify plausible solutions to the following four research questions in this study.

1. What are the perceptions of EL trainers concerning action research?
2. How does perception affect EL trainers' practice of action research?
3. What other non-perceptual factors, if any, affect EL trainers action research practice?
4. How do Graduate of preparation, training and development department Basra EL trainers assist their trainees in action research on practicum courses?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Action Research Perspectives

Many researchers with different focuses have characterized action research differently at different periods since its inception. Action research, according to Hammersley ^[9], is a type of research conducted by practitioners into their methods. It is a type of self-reflective inquiry used by participants in social circumstances to enhance the rationality and fairness of their own social or educational practices, as well as the situations in which they are carried out ^[10]. Previous studies ^[11, 12] explain action research in four different ways.

The first definition is by Robert ^[13], by working together in a mutually acceptable ethical framework, action research strives to contribute to both the practical concerns of people in a crisis scenario and the goals of social science.

According to the above study, the main goal of action research is to solve people's practical and immediate problems by working with other people.

The second definition is by Stephen Kemmis ^[12], participants in social (including educational) settings do action research to enhance the logic and fairness of their own social or educational activities, as well as their understanding of these

practices and the situations in which they occur. It is most rationally empowering when done by participants collectively, but it is regularly done by individuals and occasionally in partnership with outsiders. Action research has been used in the field of education to create school-based curricula, professional development, school improvement programs, system planning, and policy.

A recent study by Ismail et al. ^[13] stated that researchers are advised to avoid using the vague language in their research because it can create unclear content for the reader. In addition, they suggested using correct lexical items that can describe the idea precisely rather than using the vague language.

According to Stephen Kemmis ^[14], action research is perceived as a method by which professionals (practitioners) assess and improve their own practice, recognize their weaknesses and strengths, evaluate the effectiveness of educational policies and curriculum development programs, and assess their own educational and social situations as well as school improvement programs at large.

The third definition is by Dave Ebbutt (15). He forwarded. Action research is the systematic study of how groups of people try to improve educational practice through their own actions and then think about how those actions worked. Similarly, Ebbutt (1985), conceived action research as a systematic study of attempts to enhance educational practices by groups of professionals in order to seek immediate solutions to practical problems.

The fourth definition is by John Elliot ^[16]. The study of a social situation with the goal of increasing the quality of action within it is known as action research. Its purpose is to inform practical judgments in real-world circumstances, and the validity of the "theories" or hypotheses it develops is determined by their utility in assisting people to act more wisely and skillfully, rather than by scientific tests of reality. Theories are not independently validated and then put to practice in action research. Practice has confirmed them.

Furthermore, Elliot ^[17] emphasized the importance of action research in studying social situations in order to demonstrate the application of theories based on scientific evidence and truth tests. He further capitalized on the validation of hypothesis to test truth on the basis of their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skillfully.

2.2. Characteristics of Action Research

According to Cohen et al, it is usually collaborative a group of teachers and practitioners collaborate; participatory team members participate directly or indirectly in the study implementation; and self-evaluative adjustments are continuously reviewed within the ongoing scenario (1980). In a similar way, the Institute for Curriculum Development and Research (ICDR, 1999:155–6) ^[18] pointed out that classroom action research has the following qualities:

Action research is simply an on-the-spot process for dealing with a specific problem that arises in the moment. It is concerned with providing feedback in order to assist the ongoing process in the long run. Its findings are promptly implemented. It is targeted at the practice environment in schools, which, of course, necessitates a shift in instructors' attitudes and behaviours. It is adaptable and flexible.

It depends on observation and behavioral data. Its objective is situational and specific. Its sample is restricted and unrepresentative. It doesn't have much or any control over an independent variable, and its results can only be used in the setting where the research is done.

Action research, according to the aforementioned literature, differs from other types of research in that it addresses specific and immediate school problems with the goal of improving practice. It is also specific, practical, flexible, adaptive, and empirically based.

2.3. Action Research Steps and Processes

Despite the fact that there appears to be some variance among scholars in describing action research methods or steps, it is up to the practitioner to choose the process that best suits the context in which he or she works. Nunan ^[19] says that the stages of action research are imitation, preliminary study, hypothesis, intervention, evaluation, sharing, and follow-up. Besides, O'Brien (1998) states that action research follows planning, acting, observing, and reflection processes. The researchers believe that teacher-researchers (practitioners) should not worry much about which steps and processes to adopt from the different scholar approaches. They need to use a systematic way of selecting and adapting from the various steps and processes suggested by different scholars above and contextualize them in accordance with the actual school settings where they work. But adoption may be important and advisable for novice or beginner researchers in the area.

2.4. The Rationale for Involving EL Trainers in Action Research

As stated in the study's introduction, action research appears to be a revealing and appealing sort of research that can assist ELT trainers in examining and understanding what happens in the actual classroom. This seems to be why it's important for ELT teachers to take part in action research or teacher-led research.

In relation to this, Devon Woods ^[20] says that on the basis of its 'pedagogical implications', claiming to extend our knowledge of second language learning/foreign language teaching, and in particular the teaching of English, research has become the focus of language teaching to examine the learning or acquisition processes of the second language learner.

Previous work completed by Ismail and Dawoud ^[21] has showed that online learning can play a significant role in the learning process. Postgraduate students have showed satisfaction by shifting to online learning during the crisis. Having this in mind, students demonstrated that using other online platforms i.e., Zoom, Google Meet, and so forth would be effective and save their time and efforts rather than remaining to traditional learning contexts.

Heather Denny ^[22] found the following to be important benefits of teachers conducting collaborative action research in their own classrooms: To begin with, it aids professional development; the development of reflective abilities; the development of materials; the generation of context-relevant theory; and the development of confidence. Second, it promotes the development of research skills by allowing individuals to learn by doing as well as by sharing knowledge and experience. Finally, more general but equally valuable knowledge of the research process, such as the amount of time required for research, time management tactics, the nature of the research process, and the advantages of conducting research in a group. On the other hand, the second way of looking at the relationship between teaching and research doesn't focus on English language education in particular. However, both researchers' points of view show that teaching and research help each other.

3. Study Methods

This section of the paper discusses the research design employed, research setting, sampling and sampling techniques, instruments for gathering data, and methods of data analysis.

3.1. Study Design

A qualitative research method was used in order to properly achieve the research objectives. This method helped the researcher by addressing issues pertaining to perception, the extent to which perception affects EL trainers' practice of action research, and the manner in which trainers provide professional advice to their trainees on action research during practicum courses. Therefore, in this study, qualitative data was generated through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to investigate EL trainers' perception and practice of action research in the Graduate of Preparation, Training and Development Department, Basra, Iraq.

3.2. Research Setting, Sampling and Sampling Techniques

3.2.1. Research Setting

The study was conducted at the Graduate of Preparation, Training, and Development Department, Basra, one of the departments of the Ministry of Education in Iraq. Similar to other departments, the department is committed to providing training to prospective teachers at the diploma level for the teaching of primary school. The researcher selected the above-mentioned department as a site for the study because it is an institution where she has taught the English language for the last four years. So, to study EL trainers' perception and participation in action research, EL trainers, Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, the Head of the Department, and English majoring trainees who undertake action research as a requirement were under consideration, particularly in the year 2012/1/22.

3.2.2. Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The target population of the study included all EL trainers, Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, English majoring trainees, and the Head of the Department. This Research and Publication Committee (RPC) was committed to encouraging and coordinating all teachers and other academic staff to prepare graduation bulletins, undertake action research, write poems, and publish pamphlets and brochures that regularly enlighten trainees. Therefore, in the above-mentioned department, there were 6 EL trainers, 4 Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, 52 English-majoring trainees, and a head, for a total of 63 subjects.

Out of the many teacher training departments found in the country, the researcher selected the one above (Basra Department), using the purposive sampling technique, because it is an institution in which the researcher was working. Similarly, all EL trainers, Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, and a head were selected purposively as a representative sample because they were typically important to give rich data concerning the perception and practice of action research in the Department. Purposive sampling is defined by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996:227) as a circumstance in which the researcher selects a sample that meets the study's aims and is convenient. So, the researcher has conveniently selected the participants mentioned above because they were at the forefront of implementing the aim of action research for ESL/EFL

teachers. Similarly, for the trainees, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique. Assuming that they are efficient in understanding the questions and providing objective data, the top 10 trainees were selected based on their cumulative grade point average (CGPA). So, 21 people were chosen to be a good representation of the study as a whole.

3.3. Instruments for Collecting Data

In this study, interview and focus group discussions were required as instruments for gathering data.

3.3.1. Interviews

An interview was the primary tool used by the researchers to gather pertinent data concerning the issue under investigation. As indicated by Wilkinson and Bhandarkar (1999), interviewing is necessary to get deep feelings, perceptions, values, or how people interpret the world around them and past events that are impossible to replicate. The semi-structured interview was chosen because it gives the interviewer more freedom to ask more questions and makes it easier to steer the interview in the right direction to get the needed information.

Furthermore, the semi-structured interview allowed the researchers to gain a comprehensive picture of EL trainers' attitudes and practices toward action research. According to Bell ^[19], Bush, and Goulding, educational academics like the semi-structured interview because it allows respondents to express themselves at length while still providing enough framework to prevent mindless rambling (1984:184). Burns ^[20] also says that semi-structured interviews can help researchers find themes and topics that were not planned for when the interviews were set up.

In light of this, the researchers conducted interviews with all the available EL trainers, Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, and Head of the Department using semi-structured questions, which are related to the perception of EL trainers and their practice in action research. To this end, eleven specific core questions were prepared for EL trainers. Five questions were made ahead of time for the members of the Research and Publication Committee (RPC), and seven questions were made ahead of time for the Head of the Department. However, in all cases, the questions and answers were left open to some explanation. Before conducting the interview with all the informants, the interviewer explained the purpose of the study to the interviewees. All interviews were prepared and conducted in English. Then, the researchers read out each item of the interview to each informant one by one and recorded their responses.

3.3.2. Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was the researchers' secondary strategy for gathering data. Focus group discussion is a semistructured, fast data collection method in which a carefully chosen group of participants gathers to discuss issues and concerns based on a list of key themes compiled by the researcher/facilitator ^[21]. To this end, in this study, ten top English-majoring trainees were selected based on their cumulative grade point average (CGPA), because they were supposed to provide objective data relative to the other trainees in the field. Then, they were organized into one big group and allowed to discuss seven predetermined and defined questions posed by the researchers to generate

pertinent data concerning how EL trainers provide professional advice in action research that trainees conduct on the final practicum course.

3.4. Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative data was collected through the semi-structured interview with the EL trainers, Research and Publication Committee (RPC) members, and Head of the Department. The interview data was recorded by using a cassette-tape recorder, and the audio-recorded interviewees' responses were transcribed. The transcription of each interviewee was documented for evidence. To make the analysis easy and precise, the researchers randomly gave trainers T₁, T₂, T₃...T₆ according to the sequence of interviews (See Appendix I). Similarly, for the data gathered from RPC members, they gave RPC₁, RPC₂, RPC₃, and RPC₄. While no code was assigned to the data collected from the Head of the Department, the response was transcribed, quoted, and analyzed in relation to the data collected from other respondents based on the research questions posed.

On the other hand, for the data gathered through focus group discussions from trainees, the researchers took down notes, presented the results by taking a direct quote of their discussion report, and then organized and qualitatively analyzed it along with the data gathered through a semi-structured interview by narrative analysis. Myers ^[22] stated that narrative analysis is an in-depth approach to analyzing qualitative data. Lastly, the results from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were put together, and correct conclusions were drawn from them.

4. Results and Discussions

This chapter discusses the analysis and discussion of the data. After being collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the data was analyzed and interpreted to answer the four research questions of the study.

4.1. The EL Trainers' perceptions about action Research

4.1.1. The general relationship between teaching and research

According to the interview, teaching and research were highly linked. According to the trainers, it is impossible to view one without the other because research enables teacher educators to analyze and diagnose teaching and learning difficulties as well as act to uncover alternative answers. In this regard, one trainer (T₁) expressed himself as follows:

Teaching and research are inextricably linked. Teaching is a form of art. It undergoes several modifications and developments as an art form. Modern and inventive teaching approaches are frequently replacing traditional classroom instruction methods. However, such improvements are frequently the result of scientific research rather than simple trial and error. As a result, I believe the relationship between teaching and research is analogous to that of a cart and a horse guiding a horse, with teaching being guided or led by research. (T₁).

Another trainer (T₂) to strengthen the above idea of the relationship between teaching and research, revealed: Both teaching and research are grounded in reality, are recognized as essential rather than optional, provide immediate feedback, allow practitioners to test out new ideas and solutions to issues, and foster reflection and progress. In general, trainers operate as researchers in their courses, putting the findings into practice and exercising as part of their continuing

education. (T₂). In a similar manner, another trainer (T₃) stressed the relationship between teaching and research and articulated: They are both interconnected. Research can be regarded as a reliable source for improving instruction, particularly in the English language. New insights could be mined and applied to language teaching. (T₃).

For the trainer (T₃) mentioned above, research and teaching should be interdependent in order to improve instruction. Also, research helps people make the most of their human potential, which makes it easier for them to use new ideas and concepts when making decisions about their education. Furthermore, another trainer (T₄) explained the relationship between research and teaching by saying, Research is a means to offer new methods of teaching, analyze difficulties, and seek answers to problems. According to him, teacher educators examine new methods, tactics, and ways of doing things as they conduct various forms of research.

4.1.3. Trainers' beliefs about the role of action research in teaching EFL

One trainer (T₁), for example, responded to the question, "What are your ideas regarding the significance of action research in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)?" by saying, "I feel that action research plays a crucial part in the teaching of EFL. Foreign languages are not always learned in the same way as one's own. Because of this, action research is needed to look into different ways to teach foreign languages.

Other trainers agreed that action research is an important instrument for measuring and evaluating the overall teaching program, particularly the instruction of the English language, and that it can assist in enhancing, modifying, or even abandoning it. Trainer (T₂) stated in this regard.

The following are my thoughts on the role of action research in teaching English as a foreign language as a foreign for starters, it alters teaching and assessment methodologies. Second, it promotes the selection of the most relevant principles and their implementation in the classroom. Third, it allows me to analyze learners' problems and intervene in disadvantaged kids' life prospects. Fourth, it enhances instructional methods. Finally, it aids in the methodical observation, description, planning, action, reflection, evaluation, and modification of the situation. (T₂)

Supporting the above trainer's view of the role of action research in the teaching of EFL, another trainer (T₃) forwarded that The importance of action research in teaching EF as a language is dynamic; we anticipate changes in life that will generate quick changes in language words, approaches, methods, and procedures that will help learners improve their overall ability." Because action research is collaborative in nature, it may elicit debate and discussion among practitioners, providing an opportunity for them to develop new ideas, methodologies, principles, and procedures. For instance, when teachers work together on action research, they talk about different methods that help them do their jobs as teacher educators better.

Action research is a crucial approach to delivering instant solutions to challenges that students and teachers confront in every day teaching and learning processes, he (T₃) added. He said that action research can be used to evaluate one's own teaching, how well students are learning, how different active learning methods are actually being used, and the teaching and learning environment.

According to one respondent, the purpose of action research

in EFL teaching could be to adapt the various teaching methodologies proposed by different scholars to local demands (T4). Action research is critical to back up our knowledge and connect a foreign language (in this case, English) to our place, "(T6) remarked (T4). Action research, according to both trainers (T4 and T6), is crucial in balancing the diverse methods of teaching English as a second language utilized around the world with our students' needs, interests, skills, backgrounds, and classroom situations.

Action research is critical for assessing the effectiveness of the teaching process. It assists in the search for potential answers to challenges encountered while teaching English. It follows the steps of creating an action plan, implementing it, and evaluating it to determine the extent to which the problem has been solved. (T4)

Finally, one trainer (T5) stated, the function of action research in teaching English is that it allows the teacher to quickly identify difficulties related to his teaching and provide fast answers. According to him, action research allows teachers to learn from their practice and plan what changes or interventions should be implemented. So, they were able to easily meet the needs of their students, both as individuals and as a group.

4.1.4. Trainer views on action research as a means of developing collaboration and team spirit among teachers

According to most trainers' reflections, action research's contribution to developing collaboration and team spirit among teachers was viewed positively. One trainer (T1) offered his opinion, and I believe it is significant. Teachers will be able to share their experiences and employ research-based pedagogy to engage students in active, communicative learning. Teachers can talk openly, dispute, debate, and share their experiences in an action research setting. Another trainer (T2), in turn, articulated. Teachers can build mutual understanding and trust by using action research to foster collaboration and teamwork among themselves. It also allows for engaging discussions to help students solve issues, comprehend concepts, and build critical thinking abilities. (T2).

From the foregoing perspective, it is reasonable to conclude that, as a profession, teaching should be governed by some professional standards of ethics. Collaboration and collegiality among staff members are required under one of its codes of ethics. According to ^[23] Küçük and epni (2005), a teacher's participation in a collaborative action research group and communication, discussion, and sharing of ideas, as well as making judgements with the other participants, can lead to changes in teaching practices. To achieve this aim, EFL teaching necessitates collaboration among teachers, as language growth necessitates interaction, frequent drilling, and practice. This could lead to the achievement of the institution's objectives and ambitions.

Another trainer (T₃), stressed the significance of action research in developing collaboration and team work among teachers and revealed,

For starters, it promotes debate and conflict among teachers, as well as self-reliance. Second, it encourages teachers to implement meaningful tasks and activities in their classrooms in order to improve student learning. Third, it pushes trainers to revise their teaching programs and enhance their pace on a regular basis. Fourth, it allows teachers to commit and share their experiences on a regular basis. Finally, it helps students work together to address academic and/or classroom

difficulties (T3).

Action research trainers (T4, T5, and T6) agreed with the above trainers' assessment of action research's contribution to the development of collaboration and team spirit among practitioners, saying that action research and its implementation can develop and strengthen team spirit when done on mutually agreeable teaching methods. Furthermore, it facilitates the establishment of teacher alliances by allowing teachers who teach the same course to collaborate on discussing the course and their classroom, devising better teaching methods, and intervening in students' academic challenges. There is harmony and mutual support where teacher-practitioners use action research effectively.

4.1.5. The evaluation of RPC concerning the perception of EL trainers about action research

According to the results of the interview with the RPC, all department trainers in general, and EL trainers in particular, have minimal problems with action research awareness but motivational variables that affect their action research practice. "Generally, trainers are not interested in carrying out action research on their own internal motivation unless there is some reinforcement behind it," RPC₁ said.

He further revealed that as an RPC member and HD leader, almost all trainers are motivated by reinforcements such as career development, job promotion, or salary increment, and English language teachers are no different in reacting to this concern, except that they are confident in writing the action research and using appropriate research language (especially from my observation during seminars, short-term training, or workshops) rendered by me as an HD official. RPC₁. Most of these EL trainers thought that action research was a good way to improve their teaching, help students with both academic and non-academic problems, build teamwork and support among teacher educators, help students improve their academic writing skills, and help them grow in both their personal and professional lives.

4.2. Perceptual Factors that Affect the EL Trainers' Action Research Practice To analyze the extent to which perception affected EL trainers' action research practice, data was collected through the semi-structured interview from trainers' own self-reflection, the Dean of the College, and RPC members, and analyzed hereunder.

4.2.1. Trainers' self-reflection on their practice of action research in teaching EFL

The comments of EL trainers on their action research practice revealed that they put in less effort for various reasons. One respondent (T4), for example, stated that rarely due to constraints such as time, budget, initiation, and lack of recognition. A trainer (T6) ascribed his failure to conduct research to a lack of favorable or adequate conditions. He thought about how he used to do action research studies but was never able to finish them well.

The majority of respondents held similar opinions about their use of action research, stating that they put in little effort or only participated in it on occasion. Only when I was enrolled in the Higher Diploma Program did I participate in action research. "T3" was one of the respondents (HDP). I did one action research project with two of my coworkers. "According to this trainer, HDP is part of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and all trainers should do it. Because of this, they were able to do action research, which

is a requirement for finishing the program.

4.2.2. Major stakeholders' evaluation of EL trainers' action research practice

According to the information from the major stakeholders (i.e., the Head of the Department and RPC), trainers' research reports were not documented, except when they were used for special purposes. For example, as a requirement for the successful completion of HD training, teacher educators used to conduct action research at least in a team of four or five members. Then, it should be submitted to the committee for comments, discussions, and arguments, and approvals, which determine HD certification, salary increment, and academic promotion. In this regard, RPC₁ revealed that.

Except in a team of four or five individuals, I have never seen an action research paper completed by an individual English language trainer. Teacher educators should actively participate in activities such as active learning methods, instructional planning, and action research, according to the HDP concept. All educators, especially English language instructors, must complete these activities and learn how to do action research. As a result, the action research practice of EL trainers is not considerably different from that of others. EL trainers, like other college trainers, are instrumentally focused on practice (i.e., wage growth, academic promotion, etc.). RPC₁

According to the aforesaid concept, RPC was founded not only to coordinate and supervise EL trainers' research activities but also trainers in other fields of expertise. The EL trainers found no noteworthy research practices in the department. In support of the foregoing viewpoint, the head stated that both EL and other college trainers perform poorly in action research. Extending his point, he went on to say that trainers are normally only involved in such activities when there are intellectual, financial, and material benefits. So, trainers, especially EL trainers, tended to look at action research from the point of view of incentives.

In addition, another RPC member, RPC₂, expressed his doubt that there was nothing tangible done concerning the documentation of the report by researchers, and articulated it as personally, no. But, the documents (action research reports) might be collected by the Academic Vice Head Official as he is the chairperson of the committee. To these people, the work was not seriously planned, organized, and managed by both the committee and the administrative staff of the department. In their response to the interview questions, the RPC members were not satisfied with the pace and progress of the project. The committee was considering the role as a supplementary activity, and was paying less attention to its effective implementation.

Moreover, another member of the committee, RPC₃, disclosed that if any research work is done in the department, it is an uncommon occurrence. Whenever some study or paper arrives at the committee, we obtain a returnable copy, remark on it, and return it to the owner. RPC₃

In strengthening the views of the above members of the committee, he (RPC₃) stated that research work was seldom done in the department, and EL trainers' participation status in action research was difficult to independently judge. According to the primary stakeholders, action research was not seen as a part of teachers' daily duties. Furthermore, the RPC was founded with the sole purpose of fulfilling the formalities of the regional education bureau's guidelines. It failed to adequately prepare the exercise, encourage

educators, and assess the results. It seemed to downplay the importance of action research in, among other things, improving educational practice, solving problems, building team spirit, and helping students learn more.

4.3. Non-Perceptual Factors that Affect EL Trainers' Action Research Practice

To arrive at the general conclusion as regards to whether perception has affected EL trainers' practice or not, the researchers presented and analyzed respondents' responses to external factors that might intervene in their research practice.

According to the respondents, there were attributes other than perception that affected EL trainers' practice of action research. Therefore, the role significant stakeholders (i.e., Department Heads and RPC) played, and constraints linked to trainers' professional practice and factors related to resources such as time, budget, material, and human effort were organized and discussed.

4.3.1. The role major stakeholders of the college play in encouraging trainers to carry out action research

Under this sub-heading, the major stakeholders' role in encouraging trainers to engage them in the practice could be presented and discussed from two significant perspectives. The first was the evaluative report of English language trainers about the role of these stakeholders, and the second was the RPC's self-reflection on their own duties and responsibilities.

4.3.1.2. The RPC's self-reflection regarding their role in encouraging trainers to practice action research

The interview made with the RPC members revealed that they used to encourage trainers to practice action research. RPC₁, as a member of the committee and Higher Diploma leader, for example, was constantly encouraging trainers to participate in the practice of research.

On the other hand, RPC₂ forwarded. The department has valued research as a professional commitment and has developed criteria for professional as well as biennial work efficiency review (done by the department itself), but there is no financial or material reward. The RPC did not provide any practical assistance aside from preparing a session for the personnel. RPC₂

According to the aforementioned answer, participation in action research is one of the professional qualities that trainers should pursue in addition to their usual teaching and learning activities. The college, on the other hand, did not provide the necessary facilities, financial, or material resources to complete the project successfully. According to Martyn Hammersley (2007: 176), "the interaction between outside facilitators and action researchers can have significant impacts on the quality of the action research done. The Head acknowledged the aforesaid reality and responded. We have done nothing substantive aside from emphasizing the need for action research at staff meetings, but there's now a plan to hold awareness-raising trainings in partnership with HDLs and RPC members.

The committee was demotivated to properly design, implement, and evaluate the practice and progress of action research in the college because of the lack of emphasis on the department's authorities' project. As a result, the committee rarely encouraged teachers, especially English-language instructors, to participate in the research.

I urge teachers to do action research since it is the best approach for bringing viable solutions to problems that develop in the process of teaching and learning, RPC4 said as a committee, but he did not define what kind of incentive (moral or financial) he gives to these trainers. He contends that because of their roles as lecturers, trainers were prohibited from doing action research. He thinks that action research is important for English language teachers to do in order to improve their teaching methods, back up their decisions with evidence, improve their professional skills, and, among other things, create a supportive learning environment.

4.3.2. The efforts made by RPC to raise the awareness of trainers regarding action research

The primary responsibility of RPC was to encourage, organize, and create awareness among trainers to carry out action research. From this perspective, the data gathered from RPC members could be presented and discussed in two categories. The results of the first category indicated that there was a positive attempt towards the awareness-raising program for trainers concerning the importance of action research in the EFL classes. In this respect, RPC1 revealed. Firstly, as a responsibility, we (RPC) tried to motivate these trainers to carry out action research specifically to improve the teaching and learning that takes place in English classrooms. Additionally, even though it is not done specifically for English language trainers, short-term training and workshops are formally given at least once in an academic year with the initiation of the HDP leader and RPC of the department. But recently, there has not been any such initiation made by us to raise awareness among the trainers of the department. RPC1

4.3.3. The Constraints or challenges that trainers face when carrying out action research

According to the subjects' comments, the most often cited obstacles that limit their action research practice are a lack of time and financial support. The most revealing issues or research limits are time and cash, said one responder (T5). He went on to say that a lack of time was a major factor in his ability to conduct satisfactory research while still fulfilling his professional obligations, including teaching. Time and budgetary constraints are impeding my practice of action research," another respondent (T1) added. He also said that people who do research projects need to be ready to spend a lot of time and money on making sure they are done right and thoroughly.

Sharing the above respondents' view, another informant (T₄) mentioned the constraints: "time, budget, initiation, and lack of recognition." From this, it is possible to deduce that the lack of initiation and recognition forwarded by the informant (T₄) resulted from the laissez-faire quality of the authoritative personals of the college. In this respect, the Dean said, I have not yet tried to resolve the constraints mentioned so far. The Dean and other stakeholders did not pay due attention to the effective implementation of the project.

To conclude, some of the non-perceptual factors (i.e., external factors) that affected EL trainers' action research practice include the casual administration of the department; lack of emphasis towards action research as a project by the stakeholders; lack of financial support; time and material resources necessary to carry out the research; lack of initiation and recognition by the trainers themselves; and lack

of readiness to tackle the challenges in the research process.

4.4. The EL Trainers' Provision of Professional Advice to Trainees on Action Research

The researcher believed that assessing these trainees' awareness of action research was critical in examining the trainers' provision of action research advice.

4.4.1. The Trainees' awareness about the role of action research in teaching EFL

Students confront several issues in the teaching of EFL classes, according to the trainees. The fact that English is a foreign language has instilled in students the belief that it is a difficult language to learn quickly and readily. A ten-member trainee group reported,

Action research has a number of benefits for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL): first, it helps them learn more about their subject; second, it makes the classroom a good place to teach and learn; third, it helps teachers make realistic decisions or judgments; and fourth, it helps evaluate how well theory and classroom practice match up. The trainees also stated that action research plays an important role in achieving pre-determined educational goals and objectives. Teachers can adjust the speed of their instruction and progress in their professional careers as English language teachers by using action research, which is a problem-solving and professional development strategy. They listed some of the things that EFL teachers need to do as part of action research in this area, such as:

It aids in obtaining feedback on a teacher's effectiveness, resolving issues identified in a specific situation, injecting additional or innovative approaches to teaching and learning into an ongoing system, determining the best method of the teaching-learning process, improving education quality, promoting better student learning, and bringing about the necessary change.

From the trainees' perspectives, it is clear that they feel teachers should actively participate in action research. As they include action research into their daily routines, they will have the opportunity to improve their writing abilities, build critical thinking and problem-solving skills, foster positive team spirit, and gain space to reflect on their own practice.

4.4.2. The EL trainers' provision of advice to trainees on action research

According to their replies, English language teachers employed different techniques to encourage trainees to undertake action research. For instance, one trainer (T₁) suggested. For the active participation of trainees in action research, they should be morally encouraged, get financial and material incentives, see good models of their teachers, and have a healthy and inspiring environment where all cooperate and work for the betterment of education. (T₁).

He put special emphasis on the role the administrative or officials play (i.e., resources for the project) in ensuring the active involvement of trainees in action research towards the improvement of quality education in the college. The informant (T₁) said this about the advice he gave to action research trainees, especially during the final practicum course:

I assist them, first by planning and modeling the kind of research that they are going to adopt; second by letting them get involved in the practice; third by observing how well they are doing their work; fourth by evaluating their reflections or

reports; and finally by giving them oral and written feedback (T₁).

As for him, he used to follow a set of carefully thought-out steps when giving professional advice to trainees so that they could do research in their education and work as an English language teacher in the future. In addition, the trainer (T₂) expressed his view regarding some of the techniques to adopt to motivate trainees to take part in action research: "I repeatedly encourage them to develop an interest in practicing research." Moreover, he used to provide pieces of advice concerning the methods and procedures in action research, encouragement towards its practice regardless of the inconveniences, and motivation through praise of practitioners' good attempts as mechanisms to initiate trainees towards the activity.

On the other hand, another respondent (T₃), on his side, mentioned the methods he used to employ to promote active students' involvement in action research as, The techniques I used to get trainees involved in action research include: giving them a guide or research manual on action research; suggesting specific, researchable, and existing problems; and suggesting relevant reference materials." Unlike (T₁), (T₃) tried to mention his own mechanisms of encouraging trainees to participate in action research activities. For (T₁), the administrative/officials should take prime responsibility for running action research projects done by the trainers and trainees. In contrast, according to (T₃), trainers themselves could handle the work done to get the trainees involved in the project. In this respect, (T₃) stated that he used to assist trainees by giving them a typical example (i.e., model action research), explaining to them the techniques and procedures to be followed, providing them with a format based on the available guidelines for action research and editing, and finally suggesting what to be improved.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the conclusions of the findings and recommendations.

5.1. Conclusions

5.2. The debate in the preceding sections of this paper led to the following findings

1. EL trainers said that action research helped them improve their teaching, solve students' academic and non-academic problems, work together as a team, and help each other. It also gave them chances to improve their academic writing skills and helped them grow in their personal and professional lives. EL trainers' practice of action research was low, not due to the problem of perception, but due to other non-perceptual factors (i.e., other external factors). The views of the major stakeholders (i.e., the Head of the Department and RPC members) indicated that action research was not perceived as part of teachers' everyday duty. Furthermore, the RPC was founded with the sole purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the regional education bureau's guidelines. It failed to adequately prepare the exercise, encourage teachers to use it, or assess the results. It seemed to downplay the importance of action research in improving school practice, solving problems, building team spirit, helping students learn more, and improving a wide range of English language skills.
2. The study's findings indicated that EL trainers' action research practice was negatively affected by non-

perceptual factors (i.e., external factors). This includes the laissez-faire administration of the Department; lack of empathy towards action research as a project by the RPC; trainers' dual role as teachers and researchers; lack of financial support, time and material resources necessary to effectively carry out research; lack of initiation and recognition by the trainers themselves; and lack of readiness by the trainers to tackle the challenges in the research process.

- 5.3. 4. The outcomes of the study also revealed that trainees were dissatisfied with their research advisers' professional support in action research throughout practicum courses. EL instructors rarely participate in the action research that their students conduct. Except for minor differences in the study environment, handwriting, punctuation marks, and other formats, trainees conducted action research in an identical manner (i.e., one is a copy of the other_plagiarism). Trainers, on the other hand, had no conceptual issues with action research, both theoretically and practically. Despite this, they lacked commitment, motivation, and diligence, which was blamed on a lack of appropriate incentives and other necessary facilities. As a result, the level of advice given by EL trainers to trainees in action research on practicum courses was determined to be low.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on what they found and what they learned, the researchers would like to make the following suggestions.

1. To effectively promote promising and participatory action research in the Department, due attention should be given to the project, and appropriate research funds, materials, and other resources should be allocated for interested researchers. Then, inevitably, all trainers in general, and EL trainers in particular, will develop an interest in engaging themselves in the practice, and their commitment and diligence will increase.
2. The RPC should work in collaboration with the department authorities to recognize the activity as part of trainers' every day duty, plan awareness-raising workshops, encourage and motivate trainers to foster their practice, and maintain the intertwining relationship between English language teaching and research.
3. The Department, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should seriously work in order to avoid plagiarism among teachers. They should give trainees the opportunity to practice action research, orient them with the principles and research ethics, and make strict supervision as to whether the work is authentic and done by the trainees' own effort or not.
4. The EL trainers should commit themselves to carrying out their professional responsibility by providing advice and directions to trainees in action research. They should inspire the trainees towards the project and help them to identify specific and researchable topics, problematize the issue under investigation, write the hypothesis, gather relevant data, analyze, interpret, and draw accurate inferences.
5. Since research and English language teaching are inseparable and should appear together in the process of teaching and learning, EL trainers should acknowledge this fact and put as much effort as possible into engaging trainees in the practice of action research regardless of

the external constraints such as lack of support from the major stakeholders, lack of resources, their dual roles as teachers and researchers, and other inconveniences.

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