

**Do I need to attend another CPD session?
Action Research as a powerful alternative.**

Monika Wierzanska-Villar, Regent's University London

About me

- Head of English Language Centre at Regent's University London
- Recently completed an MA Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching at King's College London
- My main area of interest is teacher education and development and my presentation today is related to my MA dissertation



Teacher Education and Development

- Teaching as a lifelong learning profession
- Strong tradition of professional development of teachers in ELT
- Formal initial qualifications e.g. Cambridge CELTA or Trinity CertTESOL
- Qualifications aimed at experienced teachers, e.g. Cambridge DELTA, Trinity DipTESOL, MA Applied Linguistics/TESOL
- Formal and informal CPD opportunities: in-house sessions, external conferences etc.

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

- ‘continual intellectual, experiential and attitudinal growth of teachers’ (Lange, 1990:4)
- ‘It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice.’ (Day, 1999: 4)

My experience from the past



Top down approach to CPD

- Conventional training-transmission model
- Teachers as consumers rather than producers of knowledge
- Knowledge presented to teachers through in-house training sessions, workshops or external conferences
- Content dictated by the current, global trends in ELT
- Management aiming at introducing specific changes or improvements in their institutions, often without consultation with teachers
- Attempts to influence classroom practice through government policies

Issues with the top down approach to CPD

- It puts others, e.g. managers, institutions, policy makers, governments etc. in charge of teachers' CPD (Borg, 2015)
- Teachers are provided with classroom solutions that may not work with their students or cannot be applied successfully in their contexts
- Sustained positive changes in teaching and learning cannot be achieved if the focus of CPD is on classroom behaviours and not teacher beliefs (Borg, 2015)

Reflection and self-development

- 'At the heart of teacher development is the idea of self-development' (Edge, 1992: 3)
- Self-reflection has the potential to lead to teacher change (Woods, 1992)
- Transformational CPD activities which support teachers in investigating their teaching help them gain better understanding and enhancement of their practice (Burns, 2009)
- Self-development and teacher reflection are at the centre of a bottom up approach to CPD which puts the teacher in charge of their professional development (Borg, 2015)
- Teacher research engagement has a transformative potential and can play a very important role in helping teachers understand their own professional contexts (Borg, 2010).

Teacher – researcher divide

‘I think our field must soon be known for the incredible leaps in logic we make in applying our research findings to classroom teaching.’

(Hatch, 1975: 124)

‘It seems possible that the teacher will assume the role of a researcher.’

(Stenhouse, 1975: 155)

‘Empirical accounts of teachers’ practices and experiences in doing teacher research (...) are, however, limited and diffuse.’

(Borg, 2010: 391)

Teacher research

‘systematic inquiry, qualitative and/or quantitative, conducted by teachers in their own professional contexts, individually or collaboratively (with other teachers and/or external collaborators), which aims to enhance teachers’ understandings of some aspect of their work, is made public, has the potential to contribute to better quality teaching and learning in individual classrooms, and which may also inform institutional improvement and educational policy more broadly’ (Borg, 2010: 395)

Teacher research

Teacher
research

Classroom
research

Action
research

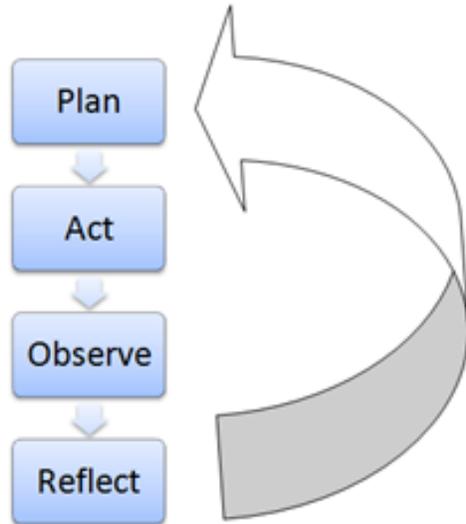
Practitioner
research

Exploratory
practice

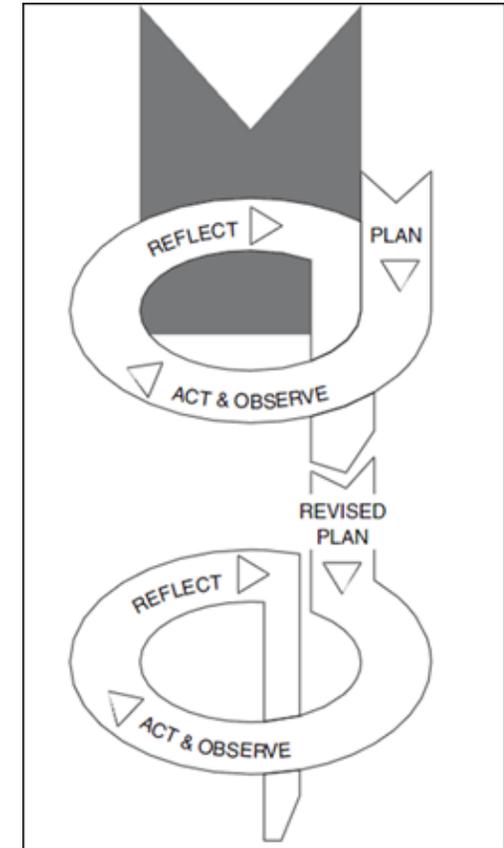
What is action research in ELT?

- ‘A form of self-reflective inquiry carried out by practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practice or enhancing understanding’ (Nunan, 1992: 229)
- A particular methodology applied to teacher research, typically involving repeated cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection (Burns, 2010)

Models of Action Research



A basic action research model (Costello, 2011)



The Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) spiral model of action research

Main features of Action Research

- **Cyclical** – the process is reiterative
- **Open-ended** – the end point is not fixed
- **Systematic** – action is based on observation and reflection
- **Exploratory** – the focus is not the final findings of the research but exploration of the research questions

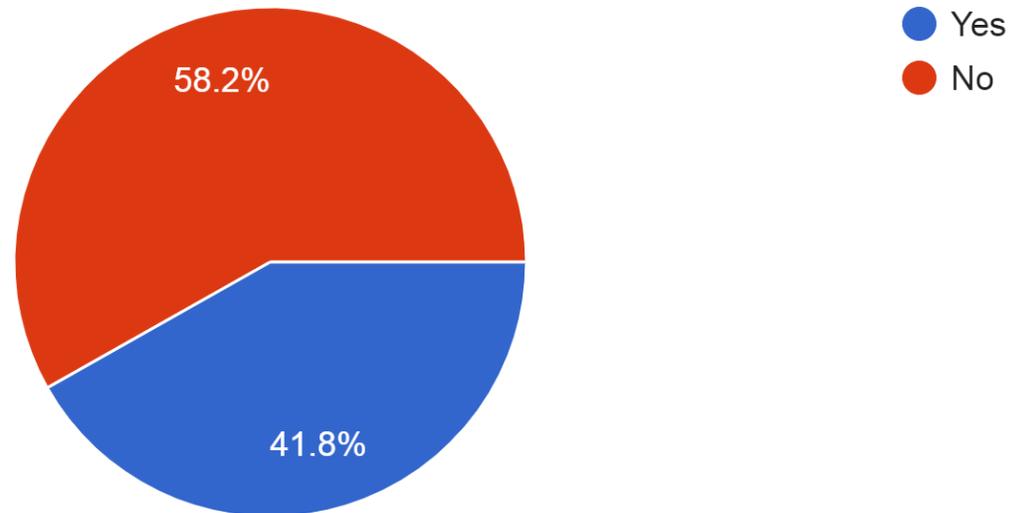
My study

1. What is the level of awareness and engagement in AR among English language teachers in the UK who work in the EFL, EAP and ESOL sectors?
2. How do teachers in the UK conceive AR and what motivates their engagement in AR?
3. What sort of institutional support is available to teachers who carry out AR and what are the main obstacles and challenges teachers face?
4. How do teachers' attitudes, beliefs and identities change as a result of their engagement in AR?

Level of awareness and engagement in AR among English language teachers in the UK

Have you engaged in any Action Research? (select one answer)

67 responses



Understanding

Action research is often confused with reflective practice

The need use of research tools for systematic data collection

The need to disseminate results

Motivation

To solve a specific
classroom issue

To develop as a
teacher, to gain
better understanding
of one's own practice

To influence wider
practice at one's
workplace

Outcomes

Teachers feel
empowered

Increased teacher
motivation

Students actively
engaged in
decisions about
the classroom life

Increased student
motivation

Students become
more autonomous
learners

Teachers able to
take more risks

Institutional support

Time

Training in research methods and procedures

Opportunities to collaborate

Opportunities for dissemination of findings

Teachers' attitudes, beliefs and identities

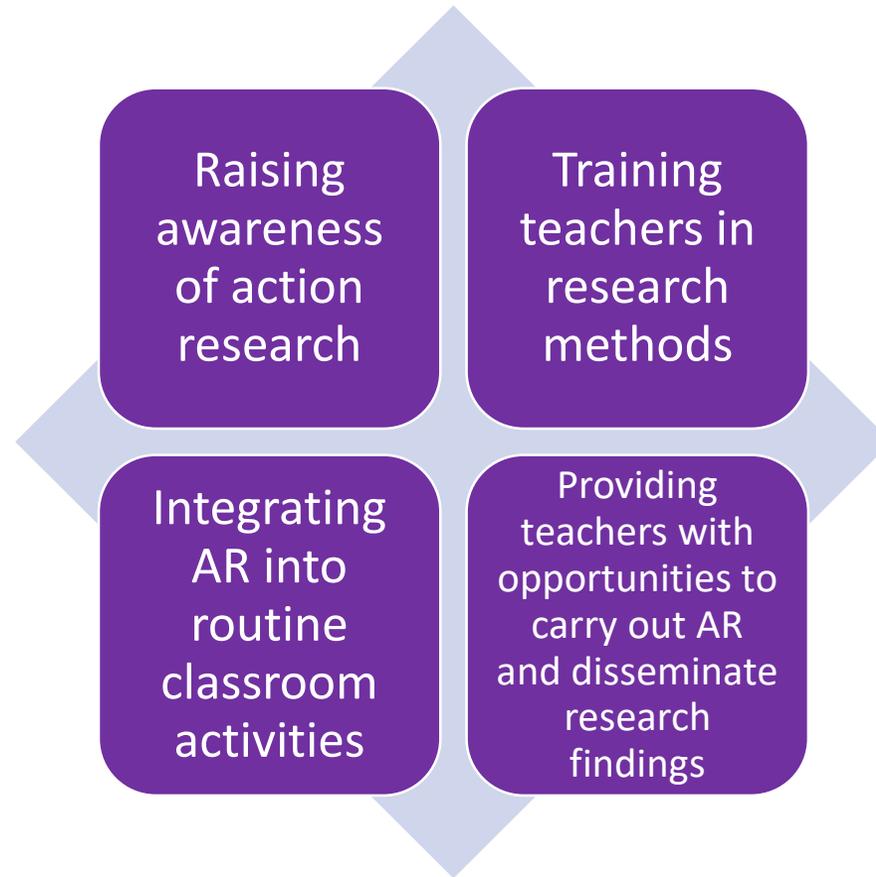
Traditional teacher-researcher divide still exists

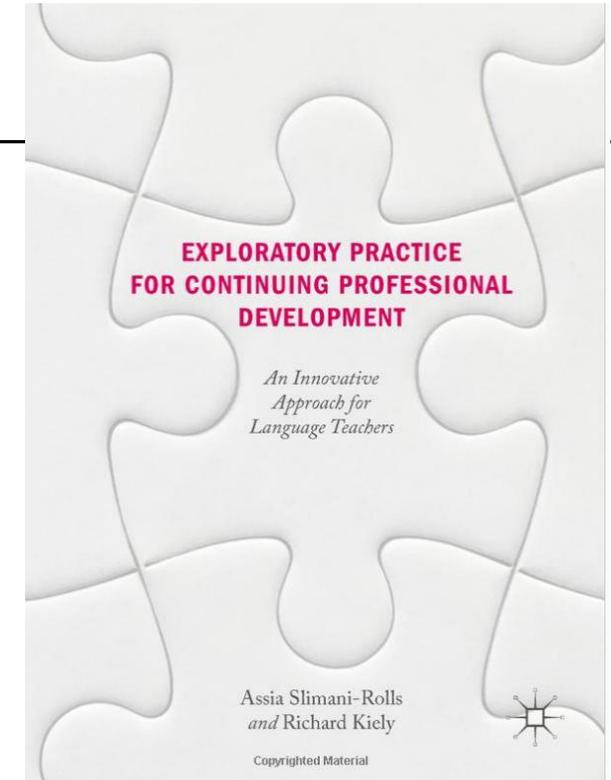
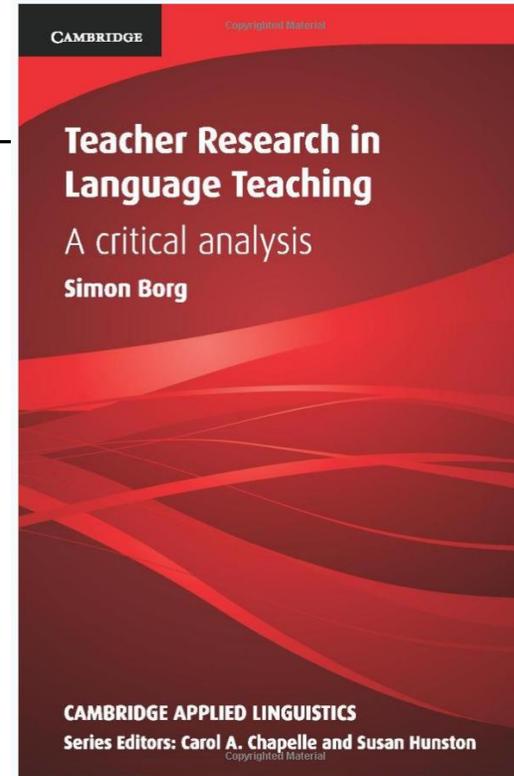
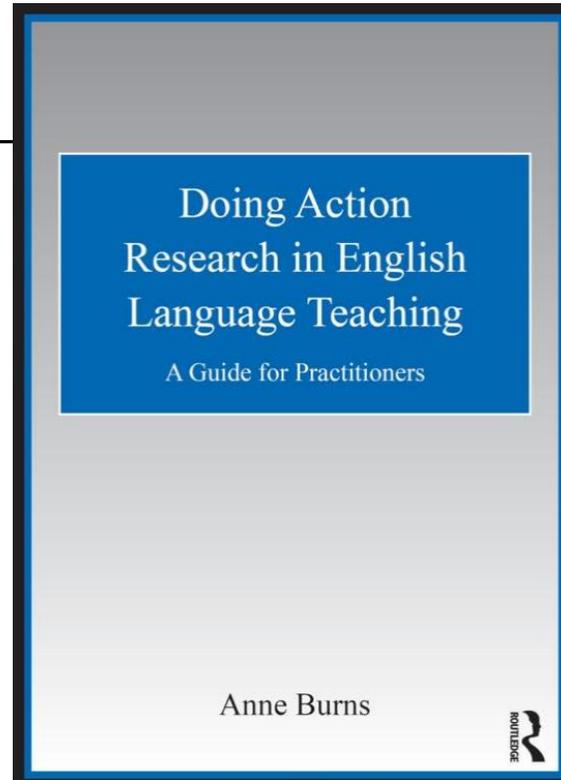
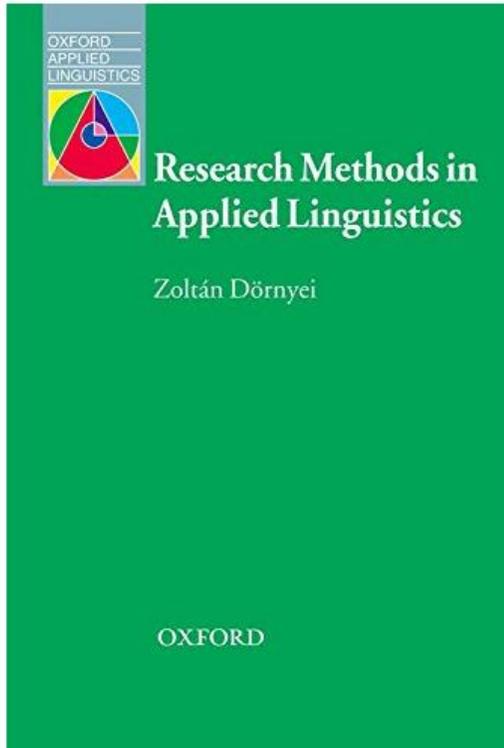
Teachers consider their engagement in AR highly beneficial

Differences between academic research and what is feasible in the classroom

AR remains a predominantly private, reflective activity

Implications and recommendations





Recommended publications

Disclaimer



Question and reflection time



Share your answers in the chat box

- What do you do for professional development?
- Do you attend in-house CPD sessions and external conferences?
- Do you incorporate ideas from these sessions into your teaching practice?
- Have you ever done AR or are you planning to?
- What are you planning to do for your professional development in the next few months?
- What sort of support do you expect from your employer/institution?

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