

Exploring Action Research Method in English Language Teaching

Prabha Devi

Research Scholar University of Lucknow Department of English

Abstract

Action research is progressive and formal in nature. It helps in classroom activity and data analysis of students. It is also called classroom action research and is problem-oriented research. It focuses on a specific problem to find its solution. Action research also encourages teachers to use appropriate methods in their teaching. It is considered that this research helps in improving students' performance. It is noticeable that this research is widely used in the improvisation of academicians and teachers' performance and techniques. The action research and education are well matched as it helps both the learners and teachers. Action research helps in professional development and promotes group investigation. It is a collaborative and reflective process which aims at solving real time problems in the classrooms and world. It involves participants to point out issues, improvement, implement solutions, and examining results in a cyclical manner. This research method facilitates continue amelioration, enhance professional skill and development and contributes to impart knowledge generation in multiple areas of practices. This paper aims to explore various dimensions as well as challenges associated with action research method in English language teaching.

Key terms: Action research, classroom activity, cyclic in nature, problem and solutions solution oriented.

INTRODUCTION

Action research (AR) is a method that is used to investigate and find solutions related to teaching and learning. The method is also known as Participatory Action Research (PAR), Action Cycle Research. The term 'action research' was coined by Prof. Kurt Lewin of MIT in 1944 (Scirbber 1). This was his practical endeavour to use topographical psychology. In other words, he and his associates formulated field theory for already existing psychological ideas. The method was developed to investigate and find solutions to the problems of minority groups, such as exploitation and colonialism. The idea was proposed that through the action research changes might come in the society. Lewin made an effort to explore different types of social conditions, their effects, and possible solutions to the problems. On seeing the effectiveness of the methods, innovative researchers in the field of education applied this method to find practical solutions to teaching/learning problems to make teaching-learning effective. In education, AR basically means evaluative, analytical, and investigative methods dedicated to studying academic problems. There are a few conditions and steps for the application of AR investigate and solve a problem. For effective and successful research, certain conditions must be observed, such as (a) the research must be problem-oriented, (b) the participants (teacher or students) must be at the centre, (c)

discussion of current situation is must, (d) the research must find some practical solutions, and (e) findings must fit in a useful theory (Science Direct 1-2).

What is Action research:

The method is known as cycle because of it has a certain predefined steps that are followed and repeated while conducting research. Kurt divided the whole research into three major steps (a) planning, (b) action, and (c) results. At first step, researchers identify and defines a problem. They collect information related to problem through observation. At second step, researchers plan and analyse the data collected through the observation to figure out the nature of the problem under study. At the final step, the findings are used to formulate solutions to the problem or issue studied (Quill Bot1). There are many types of action research such as teacher oriented, purposeful, cyclical in nature, reflective practices, learner centred, data collection, collaborative in nature, adaptability, innovative, topic-specific, professional development, improve students result in the classrooms, learners responses, qualitative and quantitative research methods, Action-oriented, encouragement for leaning, class-rooms research, ethical in nature, investigation cycle, improvements in teaching strategies, goal oriented, problem investigation, promote culture enquiry, present time study, focus on improving language skills, reflective in nature, proofs of changes, improve assessment strategies, peer review, measurable, foster critical thinking, support heterogeneous learning, accuracy, and transparency (El Haddad, Hillon, and Hillon 1-18).

Procedure of action research in English language teaching: Action research in language teaching is a reflective, cyclical process used by teachers to improve their instructional practices and students' learning experiences. It involves identifying an issue or challenge in the classroom, implementing a strategy or intervention to address it, observing the outcomes, and adjusting the approach based on the results. In short, action research in language teaching is a felicitating learning process for students and teachers, allowing them to inquire and address classrooms issues while developing or ameliorating their teaching methods and their learners' learning experiences (New Parairie Press 1-2). In the field of education, the role of action research is crucial. There is the basic need to foster research in education sector for improving academic performance. In all types of research action research plays a crucial role to reduce day to day academic problems and classrooms problems. Action research focuses on immediate problem solving in scientific manner (Raheesh 775).

Problem identification:

For conducting any type of research, the researcher must know what is his/her focus of study. In action researches, identifying the problem or issue is the first stage. At this stage, he/she must know what professional practice he/she wants to improve. After identifying the issue. Mc Niff et al suggests the researcher to think if he/she can do something to solve the issue. For instance, a teacher can study how he can improve speaking skill of his students. By doing this, a teacher/researcher has identified a problem. After this, teacher follows the second step, i.e., data collection (Mc Niff et al 37).

Review of some action researches in education:

I reviewed some actions researches to understand what types of problems can be studied and how effective solutions or answers it can provide.

Seeger et al. (2023) studied the impact of pandemic on classroom education and how it affected teaching

and learning. It was conducted to find solutions for improvisation in classroom situation. The researchers hypothesized that due to Covid pandemic the effectiveness of teaching/learning, ability of educators, and academical works were greatly affected.

Mertler (2017) and Efron and Ravid (2017) investigated how one can become knowledgeable by conducting research in their teaching process. Action research is also known as classroom research as it provides help to the educators to find solutions to their problems. Teachers learn through observing every moment of their classroom. After learning the problems in their teaching methods, they can facilitate teaching/learning.

Lesha (2014) studied that action research is school-based research. Teacher examines the appropriate strategies, techniques and approaches they apply in their classrooms. Teachers should examine students' data with consistency to ensure their success. School should be restructured professionally if there is any problem in the structure.

Charles and Ward (2007) investigated that action research is an umbrella term. It covers different types of research like practical and experimental research and their approaches too with their focus on social, organisational, and economic changes in the society. Furthermore, he described the relationship between the approaches of social sciences and action research to explore the core components of action research. Through his research he examines various types of problems and their possible solutions in rural areas.

Titchen (2015) analysed that action research follows the rules of systematic development in research field. It develops fresh and new methods of organisational changes in any society. This research focuses on exploring new strategies for bringing changes and their impacts on the society. Action research implemented new methods of practice for development in the area of profession and healthcare.

Jacobs (2018) studied that action research is participatory research which is conducted on members of a company or organisation not on other participants.

Moroni (2011) investigated that action research is an undefinable term because it has different meanings and concepts. This theoretical and practical action research have been developed over 65 years ago. Further, Moroni described the history of action research. Kurt Lewin used this term for improving the condition of working-class people in USA.

Hoppe (2019) pointed out the difference between action research and other research. The results of this research directly solve practical problems. Action research fully depends on the ideas of democracy where questions are raised for solving problems of the society.

Bolghari and Hajimaghsoodi (2017) studied that action research is not a new term. It is well known practical research to several fields. Action research means continuous development.

Khasinah (2013) studied that action research is the classroom research. Students conduct research after finishing their study work. They need help of professional researchers for guidance for knowing how to conduct research. This research is related to problems which they face in their classroom. In the classroom, research is formulated by the teachers by their own way. Its main goal is to improve the teaching quality and it is conducted as a cycle of investigation. There is various important stages in this study, purpose of class room research, definition of action research, and steps of action research. With a view to action research ameliorate practitioners, professional and societal status. In this research process educators improve their mistakes and errors by examining their own practice. Further he added that action research is the systematic compilation of information that is created for societal changes. The

problems of rural areas can be improved by immediate taking action.

Arora (2017) investigated in his study that action research helps teachers when they analyse any text by their self-critical thinking. Gradually teachers begin recognition of problems or concepts, understanding, compilation of data and then self-examine. By this process teachers improve their teaching practice. Action research not only affect teachers teaching but also leaves a positive impact on students learning. Further, he defined that action research is comparative research. This type of research follows spiral steps in research for taking action. Firstly, it makes circle of plans, then finds out facts.

Muxtorovna (2019) studied the difference between action research and traditional research. Action research is similar to traditional research in data collecting and analysis, creating questions and writing report. Action research is a process of practical research theory and is applied on classroom problems. In this research, school and community participate to provide data and researcher investigate solutions to problem. It is cyclic research which explores problems. Its process was found improving continuously. It is conducted for changes in curriculum and polices. It provides direct benefit to school participants and educators who are related to research area. The traditional research is founded straight forward in nature. This research is considered effective in comparison to other researches. This research also studies qualitative data and collects emotional reaction of the participants as the data. In this research, theory is developed and testing is conducted separately. In this research learning and knowledge of teaching is developed outside.

Abrenica and Cascolan (2022) highlighted that action research is like a scale which evaluates and investigates issues and weaknesses of any society or quality of school education. Educators develop practical solution for improving education conditions in society. Action research is used for enhancing the quality of education. It is not a big issue of an education; educators try to learn more and want to improve quality of education. Further, the researcher added that the common aim of action research is to create a simple, practical, repeatable process of learning, improvement and evaluation, which helps for good outcomes for teachers, and school programs. Besides, action research is authentic research and beneficial for researchers and teachers because it is applied by teachers in the classrooms. Action research is self-reflective research which emphasizes to analyse one's teaching environment.

Hong and Lawrence (2011) investigated that learning teaching is resilient practice which occurs in the critical preservation of individual, cultural, social, and political settings and develop relationship in global and local context. Further he considered that the teaching quality of any teacher depends upon student's behaviour. He also added that students have diverse experiences by doing practical research. This study also focuses on research on teacher, which encourage self-exploration and evaluation in contemporary society. Before some time, there have been enthusiastic scholarly efforts to formalise self-study. Self-study is an accepted genre of investigation and it is also accepted framework of trusted research pattern in school education.

Shiferaw (2017) studied how to reach the participation of preparatory secondary-school teachers in action research. This study explored factors of action research which creates hindrance in the awareness of action research in schools. Action research is the part of applied research for seeking solutions in a specific practical problem.

Data collection:

In action research, the process of data collection should be planned and thoughtful. Ferrance emphasizes on structured and systematic collection of data. It does not have any unique data collection methods. To

collect data in action research, teacher can conduct interviews, collect notebooks, checklists, conduct special exams etc. It must be kept in mind that in action researches data collection is the most important step. Data collection is done repeated over period of time to ensure the consistency of the collected data. A researcher is recommended to prepare list of how, when, and how many times, he/she need to collect the data. He/she must identify where he/she can collect the right data. There can be various data sources. For instance, groups these data sources in three categories: (a) existing archival sources, such as registers and files of the school, (b) conventional sources, such as observations in form of looking, listening and recording, and interviews, writing samples, surveys, etc. and (c) original or inventive sources, such as assessments, videotapes, photographs, and portfolios (Pine 252).

Analysing the data:

Data analysis is a very critical work in the action research. It defines the understanding of any study. It is a helpful for decision making and creating new path for professional future. The researcher raises his questions and tries to seek answers to them, and thus realizing his/her purpose of the research. The analysis is when the researcher interprets, summaries the collected data in accurate manner. The quantitative data is analyzed using statistical tools and other data in form of opinions, checklist, and attitudes can be interpreted holistically and important observations can be noted (Ferrance, 2000).

Conclusion:

The methods of action researches are very effective. It is very scientific and systematic in its approach. The results achieved through action researches provide effective solution to the studied problems. To conduct action research, it requires a person skilled in qualitative and quantitative tools of analysis. The literature reviews suggests that it can effectively use to conducted classroom researches to study students', teachers' administration's problems. Therefore, it can safely be said that teachers facing problems in effectiveness of teaching/learning, they can investigate their problems through action researches.

References:

1. Abrenica, J. T., & Cascolan, H. M. S. (2022). Impact of action research: Experiences and challenges faced by teachers. *International Journal of Scientific and Management Research*, 5(2), 1-15. https://ijsmr.in/doc/ijsmr05_13.pdf
2. Arora, C. (2017). Action research in school and utility for teachers. *IRA-International Journal of Education & Multidisciplinary Studies*, 6(2), 163-169. <https://doi.org/10.21013/jems.v6.n2.p3>
3. Bolghari, S. M., & Hajimaghsodi, A. (2017). Action research as a bottom-up approach to foster teacher involvement in language curriculum change. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(2), 362-369. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0802.20>
4. Carr, W. S., & Kemmis, S. (1986). Becoming critical: Education knowledge and action research. *The Journal of Education Thought*, 23(3), 65-66. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203496626/becoming-critical>
5. Charles, L., & Ward, N. (2017). Generating change through research: Action research and implications. *Centre for Rural Economy*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.4086.1206>
6. Efron, E. S., & Ravid, R. (2013). Action in education: A practical guide. Guilford Press. El Haddad,

- Pierre, Yue Cai Hillon, and Mark E. Hillon. Kurt Lewin's Action- Research. Conference paper, Saint Joseph University, Jan. 2018. ResearchGate, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344324373>.
7. Ferrance, E. (2000). Themes in education: Action research. Brown University.
8. Hong, C., Eunyoung, & Lawrence, S. A. (2011). Action research in teacher education: Classroom inquiry, reflection, and data-driven decision making. *Journal of Inquiry and Action in Education*, 4(2).
9. Hoppe, M. (2019). Choosing an outlet for action research: Publication patterns in *Innovation Journal. Technology Innovation Management Review*, 9(4). <https://timreview.ca/article/1236>
10. <https://kstatelibraries.pressbooks.pub/gradactionresearch/chapter/chapt1/>
11. <https://quillbot.com/blog/research/action-research/>
12. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/action-research#:~:text=Evaluation%20of%20published%20research&text=the%20standard%20of%20the%20tech>
13. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/action-research/>
14. Jacobs, D. S. (2018). A history and analysis of the evolution of action and participatory action research. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 19(3), 35- 52.
file:///C:/Users/acer/Downloads/mbarker,+19.3.2+-+Jacobs%20(1).pdf
15. Khasinah, S. (2013). Classroom action research. *Pionir*, 1(1), Jul.-Dec.
16. Lesh, J. (2014). Action research in education. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(13), May.
17. Lewin, K. (1947). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), 34-46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1946.295.x>
18. Mac Niff, J., et al. (1996). *You and your action research process*. Hyde Publications.
19. Mertler, C. A. (2017). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators* (5th ed.).
20. Mills, G. E. (2003). *Action research: A guide for teacher research* (2nd ed.). Merrill.
21. Moroni, I. (2011). Action research in the library: Methods, experience, and a significant case. *Italian Journal of Library and Information Science*, 2(2). http://eprints.rclis.org/16598/1/Action%20Research_Moroni%20ENG.pdf
22. Muxtorovna, M. A., et al. (2019). The difference of action research with traditional research and the role of action research in teaching FL. *European Journal and Reflection in Educational Science*, 7(12), 145. Progressive Academic Publishing. <https://www.idpublications.org/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01>
23. Pine, G. J. (2009). *Teacher action research: Building knowledge democracies*. Sage Publications.
24. Raheesh, Ram. Spelling Mistakes Made by Students: An Action Research. *IRE Journals*, vol. 6, no. 11, May 2023, pp. 775–779. ISSN 2456-8880, IRE 1704541.
25. Sagor, R. (2004). *The action research guidebook: A four-step process for educators and schools*.
26. Seeger, V., et al. (2023). Action research in the time of COVID-19. *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research*, 24(1). <https://newprairiepress.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1349&context=networks>
27. Shiferaw, G. (2017). Action research practice of preparatory secondary school teachers in West Gojjam administrative zone, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(19). www.iiste.org

28. Titchen, A. (2015). Action research: Genesis, evolution and orientations. International Practice Development Journal. <http://www.fons.org/library/>