

Challenges Faced by University TEFL Teachers in Integrating Research into Practice in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Classes

Saeed Kheiri , Alireza Bonyadi , Yahya Safikhani , Maryam Hadi 

Corresponding Author: EFL Instructor, Department of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran.

saeed.kheiri90@gmail.com

Assistant Professor, Department of English Language, Islamic Azad University, Urmia, Iran.

Alireza.Bonyadi@iau.ac.ir

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran.

U.safikhani@cfu.ac.ir

PhD candidate, Department of English Language and Literature, Urmia University, Iran.

m.hadi57@chmail.ir

ABSTRACT

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has become increasingly important in applied linguistics, driven by universities' and policymakers' growing demands to integrate research into educational practice. However, how this integration occurs across disciplines and contexts remains unclear. This mixed-method study investigates challenges in language instruction in Iran. Using random sampling, 50 TEFL instructors teaching EAP participated; 89% held doctorates, and 73% spent 10–30% of their work time on research. The study examines the difficulties university-level TEFL professors face in integrating research into EAP instruction. A detailed Likert-scale questionnaire assessed perceptions of ideal versus actual inclusion of seven research-related concepts. Due to non-homogeneous data, the Wilcoxon signed-rank and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used. Three key themes from open-ended responses explained the gap between expectations and practice: organizational limitations, student-related variables, and instructor-related obstacles. Results showed strong belief in research integration but limited implementation. Student issues included low motivation; institutional barriers involved rigid curricula and misaligned goals. Instructor challenges included limited research skills, disciplinary expertise, self-confidence, and motivation. These challenges are shaped by institutional context, research experience, and workload. The study highlights the need for institutional support, curriculum reform, and professional development to help TEFL instructors effectively connect research and EAP teaching.

ARTICLE INFO:

Received: 2025-05-09

Revised: 2025-08-13

Accepted: 2025-08-13

Published online: 2025-12-26

Keywords:

English for academic purposes (EAP),
University TEFL teachers,
integrating research

Article type: Research Article | **Publisher:** Farhangian University <https://elt.cfu.ac.ir>
©2025/The author(s) retain the copyright and full publishing rights

Citation: Kheiri, S.; Bonyadi, A.; Safikhani, Y.; Hadi, M. (2025). Challenges faced by university TEFEL teachers in integrating research into practice in English for academic purposes (EAP) Classes. *Research in English Language Education Journal*, 4(2), 31-45.
[DOI: 10.48210/relej.2025.19310.1133](https://doi.org/10.48210/relej.2025.19310.1133)



1. Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has emerged as a pivotal domain within applied linguistics, driven by the escalating demands of universities and policymakers to embed research-based practices into language instruction. This integration is particularly critical in contexts like Iran, where proficiency in academic English is essential for students' participation in global academic discourse, including reading, publishing, and presenting scholarly work in English. (Soodmand Afshar & Ranjbar, 2021). Despite the recognized importance of research-informed pedagogy, the practical application of research integration in EAP classrooms remains ambiguous and inconsistent across disciplines and institutional settings (Sarkeshikian, Golshan, & Movahhedi, 2023). Investigations into the interplay between teaching and research have examined various aspects, including the correlation between research outputs, such as publications, and the effectiveness of teaching, as well as perceptions regarding the optimal integration of research and instructional practices (Nassaji et al., 2012). More recent studies have highlighted practices where research activities are directly incorporated into teaching to improve student learning outcomes (Dekker et al., 2022; Hartmann & Kunter, 2022; Nind, Curtin, & Hall, 2016; Ferrie & Greenwood, 2023).

By looking at the problems TEFL university teachers in Iran encounter when integrating research into their EAP teaching strategies, this study helps to fill this void. The setting is characterized by a complicated interplay of institutional rules, curricular inflexibility, and cultural influences affecting teachers and pupils. Although mandated nationally, Iranian EAP programs have had difficulties reaching their goals, with students frequently unable to appropriately utilize English for academic purposes despite finishing prescribed courses (Soodmand Afshar & Movassagh, 2016). In order to direct the investigation, two research questions were formulated:

Research Question 1: What are the major challenges faced by EFL instructors in Iranian universities when incorporating research into teaching?

Research Question 2: What opportunities and support systems are available to Iranian EFL instructors?

2. Review of Literature

Incorporating research into higher education instruction is considered essential for achieving expected learning outcomes and preparing students for the knowledge society. Emphasizing changing undergraduate education, the seminal Boyer Commission report (1998) encouraged students to actively interact with faculty research rather than merely taking in information by integrating research-based learning. Through research-informed teaching, this project sought to raise the relevance and quality of higher education.

Healey (2005) emphasized the advantages of inquiry-based learning, in which students actively engage in research activities, demonstrating that such involvement produces better learning results than conventional, teacher-centered teaching. This change heralded a more student-centered approach, expressly connecting teaching and research.

Jenkins and Healey (2005) discovered major institutional hurdles to incorporating research into instruction, notwithstanding its advantages: inadequate recognition or rewards for teachers, constrained time and funding, and absence of supportive policies. Significantly, Fanghanel and Trowler (2008) criticized strategies that concentrate only

on people or technical answers, advising instead that the relational settings in which professors create their teaching techniques be given priority. Thus, social practice points of view call attention to the interaction among institutional structures, disciplinary cultures, and individual agency in molding research-based instruction, therefore emphasizing diversity and complexity in higher education. Furthermore, disciplinary situations are important. Durning and Jenkins (2005) demonstrated that differing approaches across departments show how disciplinary epistemologies affect how educators include research into their teaching. Since then, theories of social practice have offered a wider perspective, highlighting relational and environmental influences influencing academic activity.

Further pointing out the scarcity of studies investigating the obstacles and enablers of this integration, Brew and Mantai (2017) called for more focused research into faculty roles and institutional dynamics. Trowler (2008), Mathieson (2012), and Englund et al. (2018) elucidated how disciplinary workgroups and institutional culture control teaching methods and the uptake of research-informed approaches.

More recent systematic evaluations, like those of Griffioen et al. (2019), confirm the general awareness of the need to combine study and education, yet stress a continuing absence of empirical studies analyzing how curriculum design can best advance student learning via research exposure. Gaps in knowledge of the actual impacts of various integration techniques point up continuing difficulties for colleges.

Literature over the past two and a half decades suggests increasing agreement that incorporating research into teaching improves student learning, but this remains a multi-layered obstacle. By means of coordinated approaches, including policies, faculty development, and curriculum innovation, institutional constraints, disciplinary differences, and contextual factors have to be addressed. For understanding and promoting persistent research-informed teaching across a range of higher education situations, the social practice lens offers a useful framework.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. English for academic purposes

EAP is commonly regarded as a specialized area of English language instruction whose purposes are to equip learners with the capacities needed for productive participation in higher education, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening at an academic standard (Bruce, 2008). Historically, EAP developed in the 1970s as a response to the increasing number of non-native English speakers attending English-medium universities, initially focusing on the development of study skills. Later on, its aim expanded to cover not just language skills but also academic literacy, critical thinking, and research skills to achieve academic success (Bruce, 2008). This development illustrates the multifaceted nature of academic communication, embracing not just linguistic ability but also disciplinary knowledge and intercultural competence (Hyland, 2006; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). The growing global demand for English for Academic Purposes reflects the increasing internationalization of higher education and the predominance of English as the lingua franca of academia. In response, universities worldwide value EAP programs to facilitate students' academic integration and achievement. Nonetheless, there are still challenges, such as students' different levels of English proficiency, motivation, and understanding of academic conventions (Mustaqimah, 2019). Additionally, the fast evolution of English for Academic Purposes has led to concerns regarding teacher readiness, curriculum development, and test

validity, hence the calls for continued research and teacher development (Bruce, 2008; Hyland, 2006; Dekker et al., 2022).

Recent research emphasizes the role of English for Academic Purposes in the development of students' academic literacy and research competences, which enable them to work with scholarly texts and become members of academic discourse communities (Zabolotna et al., 2021). Incorporation of research-based tasks into EAP classes has been shown to have a beneficial impact on motivation and students' success in academic writing and critical thinking (Dekker et al., 2022). However, realization will hinge on institutional support, adaptive curricula, and teacher competence in language instruction and disciplinary research methods (Hartmann & Kunter, 2022). In summary, EAP is an expanding field linking academic adaptation with language study. It shows the value of teaching designed to address language, subject-specific, and cultural needs. Some issues remain, like curriculum creation, teacher preparation, and student motivation. These results provide a firm foundation for studies on how university English instructors, such as those in Iran, can include research in EAP teaching approaches.

3.2. University TEFL Teachers

English for Academic Purposes is a developing area that links academic adaptation with language learning. It stresses the value of instruction designed to address linguistic, subject-related, and cultural needs. It also identifies current problems like course design, instructor preparation, and student drive. These results give a firm basis for studies on how university Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) instructors, especially in countries such as Iran, can include research in EAP teaching approaches.

TEFL teachers instruct students whose native language is not English. They usually work in places where English is not the main language, assisting students in improving their English abilities in grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Bernstein, Joshua D., 2021). University TEFL teachers often have several roles, such as teaching, practice supervision, research, and publishing. A study of TESOL teacher educators from 2010 to 2020 found four main topics: their general job situation (roles, problems, quality), job involvement (teaching, supervision, research), thought processes (beliefs, knowledge, experience), and ongoing learning and identity growth. The study highlights the importance of treating TEFL educators as individuals by recognizing their strengths, challenges, and learning needs rather than viewing them as flawless (Yuan et al., 2022). The motivation of university EFL teachers is influenced by institutional regulations, workload, and personal perspectives. Low levels of research motivation are common and are often linked to insufficient support, excessive stress, and a lack of personal interest. Addressing these issues requires policy reforms and professional development opportunities tailored to teachers' specific needs (Liu et al., 2023).

This analysis shows that university TEFL teachers work in complicated jobs involving teaching, research, and continuous identity development. They have problems from school demands, technology changes, and personal drive, which calls for complete help through training, rules, and research created for their specific

3.3. Integrating research

The incorporation of research into educational methodologies is considered crucial for attaining the intended learning objectives within higher education (Boyer Commission,

1998). A substantial body of research illustrates various methods through which research is incorporated into the curriculum, linking these approaches to diverse student learning outcomes. Inquiry-based learning, which engages students in active research participation, has been suggested to yield more favorable results for student learning compared to traditional, teacher-centered, content-driven instruction (Healey, 2005). Studies have also identified institutional obstacles to research-informed teaching (Healey & Jenkins, 2005), including inadequate institutional policies to encourage the integration of research and teaching, constraints related to time and funding, and a lack of appropriate recognition and incentives for such efforts.

Social practice theories concerning academic workgroups critique the methodological individualism that characterizes approaches focused on individual academics, as well as the technical rationalism inherent in structuralist interventions. They argue that it is essential to consider the context of practice (Fanghanel & Trowler, 2008). In the context of teaching enhancement, social practice perspectives emphasize how academics develop their teaching methodologies within specific relational contexts and the associated opportunities and constraints, highlighting variations in practices among different disciplinary workgroups (Mathieson, 2012; Trowler, 2008). The amalgamation of research and pedagogy is not an automatic occurrence; it requires intentional initiatives to embed it within students' learning experiences, particularly at the undergraduate level. However, Brew and Mantai (2017) observed a notable lack of extensive research examining the elements that both obstruct and promote the integration of research into the undergraduate curriculum.

A variety of approaches have been suggested to facilitate this integration, especially those that focus on the roles of individual faculty members (Brooke et al., 2024). In sum, studies demonstrate that teachers who actively participate in research tend to enhance both their teaching skills and student learning outcomes. Nevertheless, despite this acknowledged benefit, many EFL university teachers face pedagogical challenges, such as a lack of familiarity with research-based teaching methods and difficulties in adapting research to diverse academic disciplines and student needs (Atai & Khazaei, 2014). Based on these findings, the present study aims to identify the major challenges facing university EFL teachers and to examine the opportunities and support systems available to them.

4. Methods

4-1. Research Design

This research design uses a mixed-methods framework combining nonparametric statistical analysis to handle non-normal questionnaire data with qualitative content analysis to deepen understanding of the factors shaping teacher perceptions about research use in teaching. This approach offers both statistical rigor and rich contextual insights, enabling practical implications for improving research integration in educational settings.

4-2. Participants

A random sampling method was used to select fifty university-level TEFL instructors currently teaching EAP courses, ensuring that the sample was representative of the target population of EAP teachers within the university context. A significant proportion of the respondents held a doctoral degree (89%), and 73% reported dedicating 10-30% of their work time to research activities. According to research on sample size in EFL

and educational studies, a sample size of around 30 to 50 participants is generally sufficient for questionnaire-based pilot studies or exploratory research to identify key issues and patterns reliably (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Since our study focuses on a single group of TEFL instructors, 50 responses exceed this minimum threshold, providing a reasonable balance between practical constraints and data reliability. Detailed information concerning the demographic attributes of the respondents is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

An examination of the characteristics that define the backgrounds of educators. (n = 50).

Background characteristics		Count of participants.
Academic qualifications	BA. s	2
	MA. s	37
	Ph.D.s.	11
Institutional background	Research-intensive university	28
	Non-research-intensive university	8
	Missing	14
Experience in research (years)	<3	7
	3 - 10	15
	>10	28
Instructional background (years)	<5	2
	5 - 10	10
	10 - 15	22
	>15	16
The proportion of total work time dedicated to conducting research.	< 1%	4
	5 - 20%	25
	At least 25%	21

*Universities and other higher education institutions are often categorized as either "research-intensive" or "non-research-intensive" based on their focus on and investment in research activities. Research-intensive institutions prioritize and heavily invest in scholarly research across various academic disciplines, often possessing advanced facilities and resources to support research projects. Conversely, non-research-intensive institutions may focus more on teaching and other academic or administrative functions, with less emphasis on research output (Hu, Yanjuan, 2014).

4-3. Data Collection Instruments

This study employed two main research instruments – a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments designed to assess perceptions of research integration in academic contexts (e.g., Vereijken & Van Driel et al., 2016) and consisted of seven scales that measured the optimal and real incorporation of research into pedagogical methods. These scales examined areas such as creative and critical dispositions, research skills, and student engagement with research. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = almost never to 5 = almost always). While five scales were adapted from existing instruments (Van der Rijst et al., 2013), two additional scales—creative disposition and research skills—were newly developed for this study (Annual HU et al., 2019).

Although these new scales were carefully constructed based on theoretical frameworks and expert input, it is important to note that formal validation procedures such as pilot testing, factor analysis, and reliability assessments were conducted before their use. The seven -scales questionnaire was delineated as follows: (1) fostering an innovative mindset, (2) developing a critical attitude, (3) supporting academic interest, (4) enhancing study competencies, (5) promoting student opinion about research, (6) familiarizing students with current investigations, and (7) enabling student participation in research activities. Participants evaluated these items concerning both their optimal and real teaching contexts.

4-4. Data Collection Procedure

Fifty university-level TEFL teachers actively teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses were first chosen using a random sampling technique. This sampling method was created to guarantee that the individuals reflected the target group of EAP teachers in a university environment.

Each selected instructor was contacted and given a thorough explanation of the goals of the research, stressing voluntary participation and secrecy of answers. Participants were then asked to fill out a standardized questionnaire with several scales assessing opinions about the actual versus ideal inclusion of the study in their instruction, as well as basic and professional background data. An open-ended question encouraging qualitative responses on causes of differences between expected and actual research incorporation was also included on the questionnaire.

To promote wide access and simple answers, the poll was sent online via a secure digital platform. To maximize response rates, respondents were allotted a set deadline to finish the survey and sent reminder emails. The total period of data gathering covered several weeks to fit participants' schedules and organizational obligations.

Fifty finished questionnaires were received overall; demographic information reveals that 89% of respondents had doctoral degrees and 73% devoted between 10 and 30% of their work time to research activities, therefore emphasizing their research activity.

Simultaneously with the open-ended qualitative responses gathered via the same instrument, complementary quantitative data allowed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative content analysis.

Prior to data analysis, the dataset was meticulously screened for missing values. Testing for randomness, the missing data was limited, confirming missing totally at random (MCAR). As a result, listwise deletion was employed to retain only complete cases, therefore guaranteeing the integrity of the next nonparametric statistical tests.

The open-ended responses were qualitatively content analyzed by two independent coders to improve the reliability of results. Coders first independently coded a subset of responses to create a shared coding framework, then Cohen's Kappa was used to evaluate consistency. Discrepancies were addressed and fixed, producing a finalized coding scheme for examining the full qualitative database. This methodical data gathering method guaranteed the gathering of rich, accurate, and valid data mirroring university-level TEFL teachers' perceptions and experiences about research integration in EAP instruction. Since Cronbach's Alpha is 0.83 ($\alpha > 0.7$) and item-total correlations are satisfactory, the scale is reliable and has high internal consistency (Table 2).

Table 2

Reliability of the questionnaire

Scale	α (Beliefs)	α (Perceptions)	Sample item
			In an optimal teaching scenario, I would...
fostering an innovative mindset	.84	.84	Encourage to cultivate their innovative thinking
developing a judgmental attitude	.81	.81	Encourage students to seek a deeper understanding rather than being readily content with a superficial explanation
supporting academic interest	.75	.76	enhancing study competencies
enhancing study competencies	.80	.80	Enhance students' capacity to engage in research activities.
promoting student opinion about research	.79	.83	Increase students' skills
familiarizing students with current investigation	.81	.82	Introduce current studies
enabling student participation in research activities	.77	.85	Motivate to participate in research initiatives

4-5. Data Analysis

Because most questionnaire scales broke homogeneity assumptions, data were analyzed with nonparametric statistics. To look at the first research question about how teachers felt about the real versus ideal incorporation of research in their teaching, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were run. For the second question, which looked at differences across institutional backgrounds, Kruskal-Wallis tests were done. Effect sizes for the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were shown using rank-biserial correlation to give a clear measure of how big and in what way paired differences existed. For the Kruskal-Wallis tests, epsilon squared (ϵ^2) was calculated to estimate the amount of variance explained by institutional background. Also, Cliff's delta was used in post-hoc pairwise comparisons to see how many groups overlapped. Missing data from incomplete surveys were checked carefully for randomness. The amount of missing was small and found to be Missing Completely at Random (MCAR), so listwise deletion was used to only include complete cases in the analyses. This kept the nonparametric tests sound and had enough statistical power. Aside from quantitative analyses, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on teachers' responses to an open question about why there were differences between the ideal and real use of research in their teaching. Answers were coded in a systematic way with descriptive labels and then grouped into three main categories that showed explanations tied to institutional, student, and teacher factors. This mixed-methods approach gave a better understanding of the context and personal problems that affected research use in teaching.

The researcher used qualitative content analysis (QCA) to analyze the qualitative data from the questionnaire scales and open-ended answers. This method helps find patterns and themes by reducing and grouping text data. Because the seven scales had a theoretical basis, we mainly used a deductive coding method. This means the coding groups were mainly set in advance using the already checked scales and idea setup (like

encouraging an innovative mentality, growing a judgmental attitude, etc.). To allow for unexpected ideas to come up, an inductive part was added.

This let us spot new themes or subcategories that didn't exactly fit into the starting coding frame. This mix of deductive-inductive ways made sure we were both careful and flexible in catching how teachers see things and what they believe.

To make the coding more reliable and valid, two separate coders helped analyze the qualitative data. They first coded a part of the data on their own to build a common sense of the coding groups and rules. Then, it was checked how well the coders agreed by using Cohen's Kappa or percentage agreement to measure how consistent the coding choices were.

5. Results

This paper tries to balance explaining these ideas clearly and allowing experts to make changes to make research integration and implementation expertise official. A knowledge base to improve research integration and implementation skills could help people get and use the most helpful know-how and expertise. Things are improving to fix the problem of research being split up. The idea of 'borrowing'—using concepts and methods from one field in another—is becoming important in interdisciplinary research (Klein, 1990). The Integration and Implementation Insights blog (2019) is another good thing. It links researchers from different fields and issues, helping them share knowledge about integration and implementation clearly. This fits with the community-building Leonelli and Ankeny (2015) talked about, which is key to a complete knowledge base. Specialized centers are being created that bring together experts from different fields to solve complex social problems. The leaders of these centers are forming a group to make sure that funders and research policymakers understand, value, and support expertise in research integration and implementation (Palmer, 2018).

Bringing research and teaching together is good for teachers and students. Using research knowledge makes teaching better. Teaching, in turn, gives feedback that can make research better. It also strengthens relationships with students, colleagues, and outside partners by getting them involved in research and teaching activities. This inspires students and pushes them to learn actively, gain research skills, and learn how to solve problems. Also, students get important research skills, knowledge, and ways of thinking that they'll need for future studies or jobs. Overall, when research and teaching work together, education gets better, and the field moves forward through new thoughts and work. Combining research and teaching creates problems that need careful thought and action. Not having enough time or resources and having too much work can make things hard. School, department, or field rules may add more problems. Not having the needed skills, knowledge, or faith can also get in the way of a connection between these things.

There might also be pushback from students, colleagues, or leaders who don't see the value in connecting research and teaching. Managing the different needs, rules, and moral questions that come up in research and teaching can be hard, calling for a promise to keep things high-quality and relevant. Table 3 shows the findings and average scores. They suggest a gap between what teachers believe about adding research to teaching and what they do, with large differences in all cases. Blending research with teaching is hard and needs thought and action. Time, money, and how much work there is can stop you from doing it. School or subject rules can also get in the way. If you don't have the skills or feel sure of yourself, it's even harder to mix the two well. Some students,

coworkers, or bosses might not see why it matters, either. Furthermore, research and teaching operate under distinct norms and values, making it challenging to maintain excellence and currency in both. The findings—comprising median scores and results from the Wilcoxon signed-rank test—are displayed in Table 3 and reveal a substantial disparity between teachers' beliefs about the optimal integration of research into teaching and their perceptions of actual integration across all seven scales, with large effect sizes in every case ($r > .50$).

Table 3.

Comparative analysis of university educators' beliefs and perceptions regarding the incorporation of research into their teaching practices, utilizing the Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Scale	n	Median		Z	r
		Optimal/beliefs	Real/perceptions		
fostering an innovative mindset	43	3.67	2.50	−8.24***	.55
developing a judgmental attitude	44	4.00	2.67	−8.79***	.59
supporting academic interest	42	3.75	2.67	−8.26***	.55
enhancing study competencies	44	4.00	2.50	−8.44***	.56
promoting student opinion about research	44	3.75	2.67	−8.10***	.54
familiarizing students with current investigation	44	3.75	2.50	−8.85***	.59
enabling student participation in research activities	42	3.75	2.50	−8.46***	.57

*** $p < .001$.

6. Discussion

This research demonstrates that, although educators hold firm beliefs about the importance of research in the field of education, they frequently encounter challenges when attempting to integrate research into their instructional practices. An examination of the median scale scores indicated that teachers assigned varying levels of importance to the seven dimensions of research integration in teaching, depending on whether they were in ideal or current teaching environments. Notably, the enhancement of students' creative dispositions was rated as the most significant, whereas the fostering of student engagement in research and reflective practices concerning research received the least favorable evaluations. This trend implies that teachers view the enhancement of student creativity as paramount, whereas fostering student engagement and reflection in research is perceived as less critical.

Participants identified three primary categories of reasons for these inconsistencies: institutional structural factors, student motivation and capabilities, and the level of research training received by teachers. The most frequently cited issue was related to institutional structures, particularly the lack of time, which hindered teachers from contemplating methods to weave research into their instructional practices.

The observation that educators in our research placed significant importance on integrating research into English language instruction is unexpected, particularly in light of the robust advocacy for involving students in research more broadly (e.g., Pan et al., 2014). There remains a paucity of knowledge regarding the application of study within the context of a language class. Existing studies indicate various limitations and highlight a considerable disparity between teachers' perceptions of how research ought to be incorporated and their real practices in language instruction (Hu et al., 2015; Nassaji, 2012). Furthermore, prior research has predominantly focused on language departments within institutions that emphasize teaching (Bai, 2012), and the instruction of English as an EFL in Iran has largely prioritized the enhancement of language proficiency, with many educators believing that this goal cannot be reconciled with the integration of research into teaching methodologies. Nevertheless, the fact that these teachers continue to value the integration of research into their pedagogical approaches is a positive development. Looking into teachers was also pertinent to the discrepancy between the optimal and real situation. Educators from research-intensive universities viewed the incorporation of research into their instructional practices more favorably than those from non-research-intensive universities.

Given the results that language educators value incorporating inquiry into instruction but face significant difficulties, especially Iranian instructors dealing with student motivation problems, poor research abilities, inflexible curricula, and institutional misdirection, universities should create professional development programs to improve teachers' research abilities, disciplinary knowledge, and confidence in carrying out research-based teaching. To provide more room for including research projects following institutional objectives, educational policymakers must update inflexible curricula so that teachers may more effectively use inquiry-based strategies. Incorporating tactics that actively involve kids, like group projects, real-world problem-solving, and culturally relevant materials, helps to develop an internal drive for research projects. These results are in line with more widespread problems in language teaching, including catering to many students' needs, bridging inspiration gaps, and overcoming institutional constraints revealed in recent studies. Holistic treatment of these elements can help to close the gap between the ambitions of teachers and the realities of the classroom, therefore increasing the efficacy of inquiry-based language instruction.

7. Conclusion

EFL teachers see a difference between how they think research should be part of their teaching and how it actually is. Teachers who feel ready to use research in class usually come from universities that focus on research and have more research experience themselves. Also, teachers noted issues like time constraints, heavy workloads, rigid lesson plans, and student engagement or English proficiency. We don't know much about how research is used in language classes. Some studies show problems and a difference between what teachers think is good and what they do in class. Earlier studies mostly looked at language departments in schools that focused on teaching.

In Iran, teaching English as a foreign language is mostly about getting better at the language, and many teachers think research doesn't fit with this. But it's good that these teachers still think research is valuable in their teaching. In conclusion, this study shows that language teachers think it's important to add research to their lessons, but they have trouble doing it. The researcher found reasons for this difference. Besides challenges related to teachers' backgrounds, experience, and research tenure, we also

identified additional problems faced by Iranian teachers. These include students not being interested, teachers not having research skills or confidence, strict lesson plans, and trouble connecting research with what the school wants. This study shows a clear difference between what EFL teachers think about research in teaching and what happens in reality. For teachers, this means they need specific help and ways to correct this difference. First, teachers from research universities with more research experience can usually add research to their teaching more easily. This means that training programs should help teachers in other schools improve their research skills and confidence, so they can mix research with language teaching and not have enough time, teaching too much, strict lesson plans, and students not being interested or good at English make it hard to add research. Schools and leaders should think about these problems by changing how many work teachers have, allowing more flexible lesson plans, and finding ways to get students more involved and better at English. Also, because many Iranian EFL teachers think research and language learning are different, training should show how research can help, not fight with, language learning.

Giving examples and ways for teachers to share ideas could make them feel better about research-based teaching. Teachers can integrate research and teaching by planning carefully, setting goals that match their skills and interests, seeking school assistance, improving skills, and thinking about their actions. Departments and schools can help by building a positive atmosphere, providing mentors, and supporting feedback from teachers and students. By giving specific training, changing school rules, and creating supportive places, we can help language teachers add research to their teaching and make learning better.

Acknowledgments

We are truly grateful to all of the university-level TEFL teachers who were part of this study and who so generously shared their time and thoughts. It has been thanks to them that we have been able to count on a satisfying corpus enabling us to draw a representative, trustworthy picture of research activity in the EAP teaching sphere. I am also grateful to the researchers in the field who developed studies in sample size and research design, in particular Johanson and Brooks (2010), that guided the design and validation of this study.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that no financial ties could unfairly bias or influence the findings presented here. Any commercial or institutional sources that could pose a conflict of interest did not provide any financing or help. The authors independently carried out research; the results, interpretations, and conclusions are only those of the authors.

References

- Afshar, H. S., Yenkimaleki, M., & van Heuven, V. J. J. P. (2023). The efficacy of segmental/suprasegmental vs. holistic pronunciation instruction on the development of listening comprehension skills by interpreter trainees: An experimental study. *The Language Learning Journal*, 51(6), 734–748. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2022.2073382>
- Sarkeshikian, M., Golshan, M., & Movahhedi, T. (2023). Iranian EAP teachers and students' perceptions of critical English for academic purposes. *Journal of Modern*

- Research in English Language Studies.*
<https://doi.org/10.30479/jmrels.2023.18332.2193>
- Atai, M. R., & Khazaei, M. (2014). Developing academic writing skills: The role of self-regulation and motivation. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 2(2), 1–18. http://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir/article_2108.html
- Bai, L., Millwater, J., & Hudson, P. (2012). Chinese teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) academics' perception about research in a transitional culture. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34, 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2012.642336>
- Bernstein, J. D. (2021). Gobbledygook: The proliferation of jargon in English language teaching. *TESOL Journal*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.541>
- Boyer Commission. (1998). *Reinventing undergraduate education: A blueprint for America's research universities*. State University of New York, Stony Brook: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of University Teaching. [https://repo.library.stonybrook.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11401/57972/Reinventing%20Undergraduate%20Education%20\(Boyer%20Report%20I\).pdf?sequence=1](https://repo.library.stonybrook.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11401/57972/Reinventing%20Undergraduate%20Education%20(Boyer%20Report%20I).pdf?sequence=1)
- Brew, A., & Mantai, L. (2017). Academics' perceptions of the challenges and barriers to implementing research-based experiences for undergraduates. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(5), 551–568. <https://trmodule.pupub.org/pub/831421wg/release/1>
- Bruce, I. (2008). *Academic writing and genre: A systematic analysis*. Continuum. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/academic-writing-and-genre-9781441103086/>
- Durning, B., & Jenkins, A. (2005). Teaching-research relations in departments: The perspectives of built environment academics. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(4), 407–426. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/74390538.pdf>
- Fanghanel, J., & Trowler, P. (2008). Exploring academic identities and practices in a competitive enhancement context: A UK case study. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/author/pamela-trowler/1216538>
- Ferrie, J., & Greenwood, S. (2023). 'To be honest, it's complicated': Training postgraduate students to work with emotions in qualitative research. *Teaching in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2023.2212609>
- Griffioen, D. M. E., De Jong, U., & Jak, S. (2013). Research self-efficacy of lecturers in non-university higher education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 50, 25–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2013.847794>
- Hassan Soodmand Afshar, & Movassagh, H. (2016). EAP education in Iran: Where does the problem lie? Where are we heading? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2016.04.002>
- Hartmann, U., & Kunter, M. (2022). Bridging the research practice gap in education: Initiatives from 3 OECD countries. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/c0d3f781-en>
- Healey, M., Bovill, C., & Jenkins, A. (2015). Students as partners in learning. In J. Lea (Ed.), *Enhancing learning and teaching in higher education: Engaging with the dimensions of practice* (pp. 141–162). Open University Press. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher-education>
- Hu, Y., van der Rijst, R. M., van Veen, K., & Verloop, N. (2015). The role of research in teaching: A comparison of teachers from research universities and those from

- universities of applied sciences. *Higher Education Policy*, 28, 535–554. https://pure.rug.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/229765278/The_Role_of_Research_in_Teaching_A_Comparison_of_Teachers_from_Research.pdf
- Hyland, K. (2006). *English for academic purposes: An advanced resource book*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/English-for-Academic-Purposes-An-Advanced-Resource-Book/Hyland/p/book/9780415369433>
- Hyland, K., & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2002). EAP: Issues and directions. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1(1), 1–12. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585\(02\)00002-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585(02)00002-0)
- Jenkins, A., & Healey, M. (2005). Institutional strategies for linking teaching and research. Higher Education Academy. <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/institutional-strategies-linking-teaching-and-research>
- Johanson, G. A., & Brooks, G. P. (2010). Initial scale development: Sample size for pilot studies. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 70(3), 394–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164409355692>
- Klein, J. T. (1990). *Interdisciplinarity: History, theory, and practice*. Wayne State University Press. <https://books.google.com/books?id=J6TqAAAAMAAJ>
- Leonelli, S., & Ankeny, R. A. (2015). Repertoires: How to transform a project into a research community. *BioScience*, 65(7), 701–708. <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/65/7/701/260738>
- Long, T., et al. (2018). The impact of undergraduate research experiences on student intellectual growth, affective development, and career outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(4), 651–665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1204983>
- Brooke, M., Nind, M., Harrison, N., & Mpamhanga, K. (2024). Advancing the methodological frontiers of research into teaching in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2024.2393070>
- Mathieson, S. (2012). Disciplinary cultures of teaching and learning as socially situated practice: Rethinking the space between social constructivism and epistemological essentialism from the South African experience. *Higher Education*, 63, 549–564. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=xfEZz4QAAAAJ>
- Murray, D. E. (2008). From marginalization to transformation: How ICT is being used in ESL learning today. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 4(5), 20–35. <http://www.apacall.org/ijpl/v4n5/>
- Mustaqimah, Z. (2019). Students' motivation in learning English as a foreign language. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(2), 345–352. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1002.20>
- Nassaji, H. (2012). The relationship between SLA research and language pedagogy: Teachers' perspectives. *Language Teaching Research*, 16, 337–365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168812436903>
- Nind, M., Curtin, A., & Hall, K. (2016). Participatory data analysis: A step too far? *Qualitative Research*, 16(4), 417–434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794115617411>
- Palmer, P. J. (2018). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life* (20th Anniversary ed.). Jossey-Bass. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/The+Courage+to+Teach%3A+Exploring+the+Inner+Landscape+of+a+Teacher%27s+Life%2C+20th+Anniversary+Edition-p-9781119445814>

- Paltridge, B. (2002). Thesis and dissertation writing: An examination of published advice and real practice. *English for Specific Purposes*, 21, 125–144. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(00\)00025-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(00)00025-9)
- Pan, W., Cotton, D., & Murray, P. (2013). Linking research and teaching: Context, conflict, and complementarity. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 51(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2013.770138>
- Trowler, P. (2008). *Cultures and change in higher education: Theories and practice*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9780335221435>
- Turner, K., Dekker, S. W. A., et al. (2022). Restorative just culture significantly improves stakeholder inclusion, second victim experiences and quality of recommendations in incident responses. *Journal of Hospital Administration*, 11(2). <https://sidneydekker.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/RJCresults.pdf>
- van der Rijst, R. M., et al. (2013). The role of research in teaching: A comparison of teachers from research universities and those from universities of applied sciences. *Higher Education Policy*, 28(4), 535–554. https://pure.rug.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/229765278/The_Role_of_Research_in_Teaching_A_Comparison_of_Teachers_from_Research.pdf
- Vereijken, M. W. C., van der Rijst, R. M., de Beaufort, A. J., van Driel, J. H., & Dekker, F. W. (2016). Fostering first-year student learning through research integration into teaching: Student perceptions, beliefs about the value of research and student achievement. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2016.1260490>
- Zabolotna, N., Gut, O., & Shcherban, O. (2021). Development of academic literacy in EFL students. *Journal of Language and Education*, 7(3), 45–56. <https://jle.org.ua/>