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Unveiling Algerian EFL Educators' Perceptions and Practices of Action Research: Barriers and Implications for Institutional Support

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Abstract: The Algerian higher education system, long characterized by traditional teaching methods, overcrowded classrooms, and limited pedagogical innovation, has experienced slow and uneven progress in implementing meaningful educational reforms. Within this context, Action Research (AR) has emerged as a promising avenue for promoting reflective teaching and professional development among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) educators. However, despite its documented global benefits, empirical research on AR adoption in Algeria remains scarce. This study investigates the perceptions and practices of 24 EFL teachers at Setif 2 University through a structured quantitative survey. The findings reveal that while 67% of respondents acknowledge AR's potential to improve teaching practices and support professional growth, only 25% actively engage in formal AR cycles involving data collection, analysis, and reflective evaluation. Informal reflection is common, but institutional and structural barriers—particularly time constraints (66.67%), insufficient training (50%), and lack of institutional support (33.33%)—significantly inhibit systematic AR implementation. These results underscore the urgent need for context-responsive institutional support mechanisms, including dedicated training programs, reduced teaching loads, and formal recognition of teacher-led research. The study concludes that for AR to become an integral component of pedagogical reform in Algerian higher education, policy and practice must converge to cultivate an enabling environment that empowers teachers as active researchers and agents of change.

Keywords: action research, professional development, training, institutional support, practices, teachers.

Introduction

Action research is a participatory, reflective, and systematic approach to inquiry that aims to bring about practical solutions to specific problems within a given context. It is characterized by a cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection, with a focus on improving practice and fostering professional growth (McNiff, 2017). Unlike traditional forms of research that emphasize objective observation and external perspectives, action research seeks to engage practitioners directly in the research process, positioning them as active agents in the change process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Action research (AR) serves as a dynamic and reflective methodology aimed at the refinement of pedagogical practices. It is structured around a recursive framework that encompasses planning, execution, observation, and reflection, which empowers educators to engage with specific issues or challenges embedded in their educational practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). In higher education settings, AR allows teachers to engage in continuous professional development, empowering them to enhance their teaching practices and make informed decisions based on evidence gathered from their classrooms (Burns, 2010).

For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, particularly in higher education contexts, the challenges of effectively engaging students and improving language teaching methods are complex. These educators must often navigate diverse student populations, varying levels of language proficiency, and the pressures of academic standards. In this environment, AR has the potential to foster a more personalized and reflective teaching approach, where EFL teachers can tailor their strategies to the needs of their students (Richards, 2003). By engaging in AR, teachers address their immediate teaching concerns and contribute to the broader pedagogical discourse, sharing insights with colleagues and advancing the professional community (Edge, 2001).

English language education in Algeria has gained increasing prominence in recent years, particularly within the higher education sector. English is now a compulsory subject for over 90% of university students across the country, reflecting a growing recognition of its global importance and academic utility (British Council, 2022). Despite this expansion, EFL instruction continues to face significant structural and pedagogical challenges. University instructors frequently manage overcrowded classrooms, with class sizes often exceeding 50 students, while also dealing with heavy teaching loads and limited access to professional development opportunities (Benhassi & Ouahbi, 2014). Moreover, teacher training remains largely traditional, and many educators report low familiarity with contemporary pedagogical and technological tools, particularly in online or research-based instruction (Khedri, 2019). As of 2012, only about 5% of the general Algerian population was considered proficient in English, prompting government efforts to recruit foreign EFL teachers to meet growing demand (British Council, 2013). These statistics underscore the urgent need for pedagogical innovation and institutional support, gaps that Action Research (AR) could potentially address.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Algeria occurs within a complex socio-cultural and educational landscape marked by a diverse student population and systemic challenges within the higher education sector. The Algerian higher education system, which has undergone various reforms in recent decades, is characterized by large class sizes, a predominantly traditional approach to teaching, and a heavy reliance on standardized curricula that often limit innovation in pedagogical practices (Benhassi & Ouahbi, 2014). Although the country has made significant strides in reforming its educational policies,

these reforms have often been slow to translate into actual improvements in teaching methodologies. As a result, Algerian EFL teachers navigate the tension between the push for pedagogical modernization and the constraints of entrenched educational traditions.

Defined by its cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000), AR provides a framework through which educators can systematically assess and improve their practices while simultaneously addressing the specific needs of their students. In higher education settings, Action Research has garnered considerable scholarly interest due to its ability to facilitate reflective practices among educators, support integrating empirical research into pedagogical methodologies, and ultimately improve student outcomes (Burns, 2010). However, despite recognizing AR's value in educational reform globally, its application in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, particularly within Algerian universities, remains insufficiently explored.

One key challenge in this context is the institutional resistance to adopting AR as part of professional development. Algerian universities often lack the resources, training programs, and administrative support to foster a culture of research and reflective practice among EFL teachers. This lack of institutional support presents a significant barrier to the effective implementation of AR. Additionally, many EFL teachers in Algeria are burdened with large class sizes and heavy teaching loads, which leave little time for engaging in reflective practices or conducting research (Benassi & Ouahbi, 2014). These practical constraints, combined with a lack of training in research methodologies, discourage many teachers from attempting AR or limit its scope and effectiveness.

Moreover, cultural and systemic factors in Algerian higher education may contribute to teachers' ambivalence towards AR. In many cases, the prevailing academic culture is more aligned with traditional methods of teaching that prioritize content delivery over reflective practices or self-assessment. Teachers may view AR as an additional, time-consuming responsibility rather than a tool for professional growth and improved teaching. This resistance to adopting innovative pedagogical strategies is further exacerbated by a disconnect between teaching and research activities within the Algerian academic system. The widespread perception that research is the domain of university faculty rather than instructors in the classroom may further marginalize AR as a legitimate form of inquiry within EFL teaching.

AR has the potential to help resolve some of the challenges EFL teachers face in Algeria by promoting reflective practice and emphasizing the essential role of educators in modifying their educational techniques to cater to the diverse needs of their learners. However, a deeper understanding of how AR is perceived and implemented by Algerian EFL teachers is crucial. While the general benefits of AR, such as promoting critical thinking and professional growth, have been well documented (Borg, 2009; Burns, 2010), there remains a considerable gap in the literature regarding its implementation in the Algerian context. Studies examining the challenges and barriers to AR adoption in Algeria are limited, and even fewer have focused on EFL teachers' perceptions regarding AR's relevance and feasibility.

Despite these challenges, AR also has the potential to be a transformative tool in Algerian higher education. As the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research continues to push for reforms in teaching methodologies, including integrating learner-centred approaches and greater emphasis on research-based teaching (Khedri, 2019), the potential for AR to be incorporated into teacher training programs and professional development initiatives is significant. However, for AR to be effectively integrated into Algerian EFL classrooms, a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers perceive its value, the specific barriers they face, and how they adapt AR to fit their teaching contexts is necessary.

Research Problem

In the Algerian context, the integration of Action Research (AR) into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in higher education remains critically underdeveloped. While globally AR has been widely recognized for its capacity to foster reflective teaching and promote professional growth among educators (Borg, 2009; Burns, 2010), its application within Algerian universities has received minimal scholarly attention. Existing literature tends to address broad educational reforms (Toudjine, 2016), often overlooking the specific ways in which EFL instructors engage with AR or the practical challenges they encounter in implementing it. This gap highlights a pressing need to investigate AR within the localized context of Algerian higher education, where systemic constraints often hinder pedagogical innovation.

The urgency of this investigation is underscored by Algeria's ongoing educational reform efforts, which call for a shift from traditional, teacher-centered instruction to more communicative and learner-centered methodologies (Khedri, 2019). Despite these reforms, many institutions continue to rely on outdated pedagogical models and provide limited institutional support for reflective teaching practices. EFL instructors frequently face overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads, insufficient access to research training, and a disconnect between teaching and academic inquiry (Benhassi & Ouahbi, 2014). These conditions not only restrict the professional development of teachers but also reduce opportunities for improving language learning outcomes among students.

Moreover, in a rapidly globalizing academic and professional landscape where English language proficiency is increasingly seen as essential, the quality of EFL instruction in Algeria holds direct implications for the country's educational and socio-economic development. Strengthening teachers' capacities to analyze and refine their practices through AR can lead to more responsive, student-centered instruction and contribute to a more modern and effective educational system.

Analyzing the perceptions and practices of Algerian EFL teachers regarding AR, therefore, serves both scientific and societal interests. It contributes to the scarce body of localized research on teacher development in North Africa, while also offering practical insights for policymakers and institutions aiming to foster sustainable, evidence-based pedagogical change. By identifying the specific barriers and enablers of AR in Algerian universities, this study aims to support the creation of professional development strategies that are both contextually relevant and pedagogically transformative.

Research Focus

This study investigates the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding Action Research (AR) within Algerian higher education. Specifically, it aims to explore how EFL instructors conceptualize the value of AR in enhancing pedagogical effectiveness and supporting ongoing professional development. In addition, the research seeks to identify the practical, institutional, and cultural factors that either hinder or facilitate the integration of AR into teaching practices. By examining these dimensions, the study contributes to the limited body of literature on reflective practice and teacher-led inquiry in the North African context, with a focus on informing context-sensitive strategies for institutional support and professional learning.

Research Questions

To achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of Algerian EFL teachers toward Action Research in higher education?
2. What Action Research practices do EFL teachers currently engage in within their teaching contexts?

3. What are the key barriers and enabling factors that influence the implementation of Action Research among EFL teachers in Algeria?

Research Hypotheses

Informed by existing literature and preliminary contextual insights, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** EFL teachers in Algerian universities generally perceive Action Research as a valuable tool for improving teaching practices and fostering professional growth.
- **H2:** Despite favorable perceptions, the practical implementation of Action Research remains limited due to institutional constraints, lack of training, and excessive workloads.
- **H3:** Institutional support mechanisms, such as research training, administrative encouragement, and time allocation, play a significant role in enabling teachers' engagement with Action Research.

Literature Review

This section provides a comprehensive examination of the theoretical and empirical foundations of Action Research (AR) within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. It critically addresses the evolution and conceptualization of AR, its role in teaching and professional development, current applications in Arab EFL contexts, teacher perceptions and practices, as well as the structural barriers to its implementation in developing countries. The section concludes with the theoretical framework underpinning the present study.

Conceptual Foundations and Historical Evolution of Action Research

The conceptual origins of Action Research (AR) are widely credited to Kurt Lewin (1946), a German-American social psychologist who introduced the term to describe a form of democratic inquiry aimed at addressing social issues through participatory and reflective processes. Lewin's model emphasized a cyclical approach—planning, acting, observing, and reflecting—that remains central to contemporary AR methodology. This iterative process not only allows for the continual refinement of strategies but also encourages researchers to remain responsive to changing contexts and emerging outcomes. Lewin's work laid the groundwork for later expansions of AR in educational settings, where it found fertile ground as a framework for enhancing teaching and learning through reflective practice.

In the 1970s and 1980s, AR gained increased prominence in the field of education, particularly in teacher training programs that prioritized practitioner-led inquiry and reflective methodologies. Elliott (1991) and other scholars advanced AR as a transformative approach, empowering educators to take ownership of their professional development by engaging in systematic, context-sensitive inquiry. Unlike traditional positivist paradigms that separate researchers from their subjects, AR positions teachers as both practitioners and investigators, allowing them to explore and refine their teaching in real-time.

AR's evolution also reflects a broader philosophical shift toward constructivist epistemologies, where knowledge is co-constructed through lived experience and social engagement. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) emphasized this dynamic by arguing that AR enables teachers to become knowledge generators rather than mere implementers of externally imposed reforms. By involving educators in decision-making processes and encouraging localized, data-informed experimentation, AR fosters greater autonomy and critical agency in the classroom. Contemporary contributions, such as those by Bradbury (2021) and Meredith and Quiroz-Niño (2022), underscore AR's continued relevance in promoting socially responsive pedagogy, teacher leadership, and school-based reform. These developments illustrate AR's transformation from a marginal method to a powerful tool for institutional and pedagogical innovation across diverse educational landscapes.

The Role of Action Research in EFL Pedagogy and Teacher Development

Action Research (AR) has emerged as a cornerstone of teacher professional development, particularly within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where pedagogical challenges are complex and context-dependent. In these settings, AR offers teachers a systematic process through which they can identify classroom issues, implement changes, and evaluate the outcomes based on empirical data gathered from their students (Burns & Richards, 2022). This iterative model cultivates a reflective teaching culture, where educators are not only reactive to problems but also proactive in generating solutions tailored to their learners' needs.

Central to AR is the principle of reflective practice, as articulated by Schön (1983), which urges educators to examine their instructional decisions and underlying assumptions critically. Through cycles of inquiry, teachers refine their methods, gain deeper insight into student behavior, and align teaching strategies with learning goals. This approach fosters pedagogical responsiveness, helping educators to better address diverse language proficiencies, motivational levels, and cultural backgrounds prevalent in EFL classrooms. Moreover, AR facilitates sustained professional growth by shifting the locus of control from top-down mandates to teacher-driven inquiry. Kember (2000) and Holt-Reynolds (2000) argue that when teachers are entrusted with examining and modifying their practices, they develop a heightened sense of agency and investment in student outcomes. This empowerment contrasts sharply with traditional teacher development models, which often overlook the contextual realities of classroom life.

In institutional settings, AR serves as a bridge between theoretical training and practical application, especially when integrated into preservice teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). It enables novice teachers to test abstract concepts against real-world challenges, thereby enhancing their confidence, adaptability, and critical thinking skills. Such experiential learning fosters a more nuanced understanding of pedagogy and prepares teachers to navigate complex educational environments. More recent studies have demonstrated that the long-term engagement of teachers in AR leads to measurable improvements in both teaching efficacy and student performance, particularly in multilingual or multicultural classrooms (Aldrin et al., 2024). These findings reinforce the notion that AR is not only a reflective tool but also a mechanism for continuous innovation and educational equity in EFL contexts.

Recent Applications of Action Research in Arab EFL Contexts

The integration of Action Research (AR) into Arab EFL contexts has gained momentum in recent years, reflecting a broader regional interest in practitioner-led inquiry and classroom-based innovation. While the global body of literature on AR is robust, studies from Arab countries have only recently begun to explore its potential in shaping localized pedagogical reform, teacher empowerment, and context-sensitive professional development.

In the Sultanate of Oman, for instance, Al-Malki et al. (2021) conducted an AR study within an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course aimed at enhancing grammar instruction through cycles of data collection, analysis, and reflective adjustment. Their results demonstrated measurable improvements in both teacher self-efficacy and student grammatical competence, reinforcing the role of AR in aligning instruction with learner needs.

In the Gulf region, Aljahromi and Hidri (2023) investigated the use of AR in digitally mediated EFL classrooms across the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Their findings highlighted the effectiveness of collaborative AR projects supported by digital tools in promoting learner engagement, cooperative learning, and real-time instructional feedback. These results are particularly relevant given the increasing reliance on online and blended learning environments in post-pandemic educational systems.

Beyond the Gulf, emerging studies from various Arab higher education institutions point to a gradual institutional acceptance of AR as a legitimate and valuable research approach. Educators engaged in AR have reported increased autonomy, improved adaptability in lesson planning, and more substantial alignment between curricular goals and classroom realities. These practices are especially relevant in settings characterized by rigid curricula, exam-oriented instruction, and high student-teacher ratios. Despite this progress, there remains a noticeable gap in AR-related research across several North African and Levantine countries, particularly Algeria. This absence signals the need for more empirical studies that investigate how AR is conceptualized, applied, and sustained within diverse Arab educational systems. Such efforts are essential for informing policy, strengthening teacher education programs, and promoting reflective teaching across the region.

Teachers' Perceptions and Engagement with Action Research

Teachers' perceptions play a pivotal role in determining the extent to which Action Research (AR) is embraced and effectively implemented in classroom settings. A growing body of research suggests that teachers' beliefs about the purpose and practicality of AR significantly shape their willingness to engage with it as a professional development tool (Borg, 2010). Educators who view AR as a vehicle for agency, reflection, and instructional improvement are more likely to integrate it into their practice, whereas those who perceive it as overly time-consuming, irrelevant to their teaching reality, or too complex to execute often disengage (Hargreaves, 2000; Burns, 2010).

At the personal level, factors influencing engagement include a teacher's self-efficacy, prior experience with research, and professional aspirations. Teachers who feel confident in their ability to conduct systematic inquiry—and who see the value in data-informed decision-making—are more inclined to initiate and sustain AR projects. Additionally, the perceived relevance of AR to one's immediate instructional challenges often determines whether teachers regard the process as worthwhile or burdensome.

Institutional factors are equally critical. Supportive environments—where school or university leadership values reflective inquiry, provides structured professional development, and allocates time for collaborative reflection—tend to foster greater teacher participation in AR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Borg, 2009). Mentorship programs, access to research resources, and formal recognition of practitioner inquiry all serve as enablers, transforming AR from a theoretical ideal into a sustainable professional practice.

Conversely, when institutions lack the infrastructure to support AR—through limited training opportunities, rigid schedules, or undervaluing teacher-led research—teachers often struggle to move beyond passive compliance with externally imposed policies. In such contexts, even those who recognize the value of AR may find it difficult to enact it meaningfully. Understanding these interrelated dynamics is essential for promoting more widespread adoption of AR, particularly in under-researched educational systems. By acknowledging both personal motivations and institutional conditions, stakeholders can create more conducive environments that position teachers not merely as implementers of curriculum but as reflective practitioners and agents of educational change.

Structural Barriers to Action Research in Developing Countries

While Action Research (AR) offers considerable promise as a tool for teacher development and instructional innovation, its implementation in developing countries remains hindered by a complex interplay of structural, institutional, and cultural constraints. In many such contexts, teachers often contend with overwhelming workloads, rigid curricula, and exam-oriented teaching frameworks that leave little room for experimentation or reflective inquiry. The lack of institutional support further

compounds the problem: without access to dedicated time, research training, or incentives for innovation, educators are frequently discouraged from engaging in practitioner research. This absence of enabling conditions creates an environment where AR is perceived not as a feasible developmental pathway but as an added burden to an already demanding profession (Benhassi & Ouahbi, 2014; Borg, 2009).

Recent studies across educational systems in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Arab world consistently highlight similar obstacles. In Sub-Saharan contexts, for instance, Adegoke et al. (2023) reported that teachers often lack exposure to research methodologies and receive little administrative encouragement to pursue inquiry-based teaching practices. The situation is exacerbated by limited infrastructure, minimal funding for school-based research initiatives, and an overarching policy emphasis on quantitative performance metrics. Similar findings have emerged from South Asian EFL classrooms, where Rahman and Naz (2022) note that the dominance of centralized curricula and high-stakes testing leaves little space for reflective practices, particularly in resource-constrained public institutions. These realities reveal a systemic undervaluing of teacher-led research, despite global discourses promoting professional autonomy and classroom-based innovation.

A comparative study by Al-Ghamdi (2023), conducted across Jordan, Sudan, and Egypt, adds further nuance by showing that while many teachers express favorable attitudes toward AR in theory, actual engagement is sporadic and poorly structured. The absence of coherent institutional policies, mentorship programs, or formal recognition mechanisms means that individual enthusiasm for AR rarely translates into sustained, actionable practice. These findings underscore the urgent need for strategic reforms that embed AR within teacher education systems and policy frameworks. Without systemic investment in research literacy, time allocation, and institutional recognition, AR is unlikely to flourish in the very contexts where it is most needed to drive localized, bottom-up educational change.

Theoretical Framework

The present study draws upon two complementary theoretical models to frame its investigation of Algerian EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of Action Research (AR): the Action Research spiral model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) articulated by Ajzen (1991). Together, these frameworks provide a dual lens that captures both the procedural and psychological dimensions of teacher engagement in AR.

Kemmis and McTaggart's model conceptualizes AR as a dynamic, cyclical process comprising four interconnected stages—planning, action, observation, and critical reflection. This model underlines the participatory and recursive nature of teacher inquiry, emphasizing that meaningful change in educational practice emerges through ongoing, collaborative cycles of diagnosis and experimentation. Within the context of this study, their framework offers a structural basis for analyzing how Algerian EFL educators identify classroom challenges, devise instructional interventions, assess outcomes, and adjust their pedagogical approaches accordingly. The model is particularly relevant in contexts characterized by evolving linguistic, institutional, and curricular demands, as it enables teachers to respond adaptively to the complexities of their environment.

To complement this procedural perspective, Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior serves as the conceptual scaffold for understanding the motivational and behavioral components that influence teachers' engagement with AR. According to TPB, behavioral intention—considered the most immediate predictor of action—is shaped by three key factors: attitude toward the behavior, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioral control. This theory provides a nuanced lens for examining how teachers' beliefs about the value and feasibility of AR, along with institutional support and peer influence, affect their willingness and capacity to implement it. In combining these two models, the present study is able

to account for both the iterative logic of the AR process and the attitudinal and contextual variables that shape its practical uptake in Algerian EFL contexts.

Materials and Methods

This section outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical procedures, ensuring a clear framework for how the study was conducted by presenting the approach used to gather and analyze data.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to examine the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding action research (AR) within the Algerian higher education context—a structured, self-administered questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The decision to use a quantitative approach was informed by the objective of gathering measurable, analyzable data capable of identifying patterns and trends aligned with the study’s aims—specifically, to explore EFL teachers’ understandings of AR, their engagement in its implementation, and the barriers they encounter.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The target population included 60 EFL instructors affiliated with Setif 2 University in Algeria. A total of 24 participants voluntarily completed the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 40%. Although the sample size is modest, it was deemed sufficient for exploratory descriptive research and provided valuable insights into the targeted professional group.

Participants varied in terms of demographic and professional characteristics. The sample included both male and female teachers aged between 25 and 55 years, with teaching experience ranging from 2 to over 20 years. They held different academic ranks, including part-time lecturers, full-time instructors, and assistant professors, and taught across diverse instructional levels and subject specializations within the EFL field. This variation enhanced the generalizability of the findings across the Algerian tertiary EFL teaching context.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants (N = 24)

Category	Description
Gender	18 Female, 6 Male
Age Range	25–55 years
Teaching Experience	2 to over 20 years
Academic Rank	Part-time Lecturers, Full-time Instructors, Assistant Professors

Instrument Development and Validation

The questionnaire consists of 20 items divided into four sections:

1. Demographic and Professional Profile, including gender, age, academic rank, and teaching experience.

2. Perceptions of Action Research, comprising eight 4-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree) addressing respondents' beliefs regarding the definition, value, and implementation of AR.
3. Engagement and Implementation, with binary and multiple-response items assessing teachers' experiences with AR, training backgrounds, and involvement in AR projects.
4. Challenges and Motivational Factors, covering institutional constraints and personal motivations relevant to AR adoption.

Prior to distribution, the instrument was piloted with five EFL teachers to assess clarity, content relevance, and item consistency. Minor adjustments were made based on pilot feedback. The instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a coefficient of .82, which indicates high reliability.

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed electronically via university email networks. Participants were given a one-week period to complete and return the questionnaire. To preserve confidentiality, responses were anonymized using participant codes.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research practices in accordance with institutional guidelines. Informed consent was obtained electronically from all participants prior to data collection. They were assured of the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity of responses, and the exclusive academic use of collected data. No personally identifiable information was requested. The study posed minimal risk and conformed to ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods with IBM SPSS Statistics. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to explore trends in participants' perceptions of AR, their levels of engagement, and perceived challenges. This analytical approach supported the development of a nuanced understanding of the structural and pedagogical conditions influencing the implementation of action research in Algerian EFL contexts.

Results

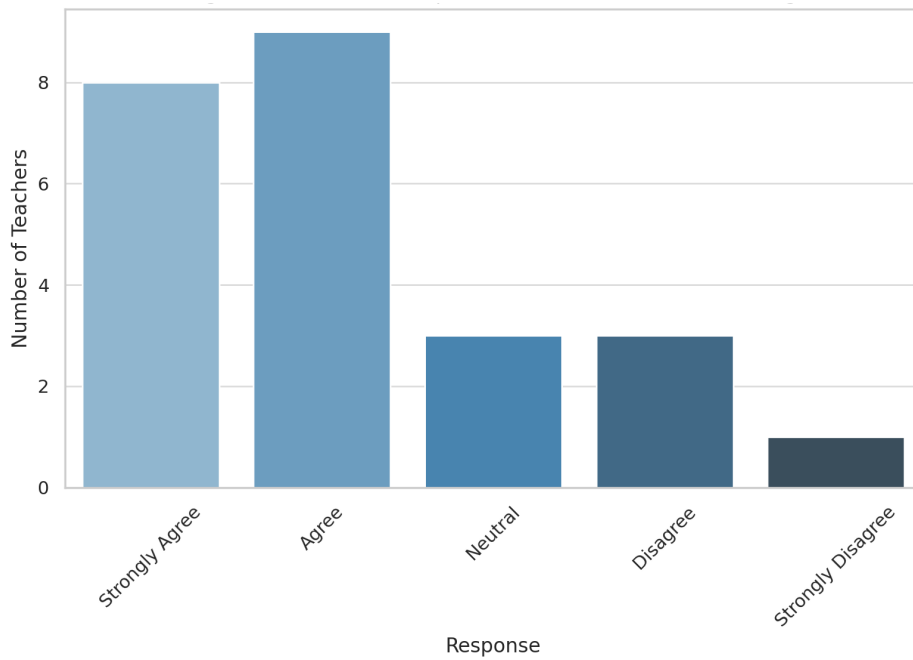
This section presents an in-depth analysis of the quantitative data collected from 24 EFL teachers at the Department of English, Setif 2 University. The analysis addresses the study's research questions and tests its hypotheses by examining teachers' perceptions, practices, encountered barriers, and enabling factors influencing the implementation of Action Research (AR). The discussion is grounded in relevant literature and theoretical perspectives, integrating statistical evidence, subgroup comparisons, and visual data to offer critical interpretation and contextual insight.

Perceptions of Action Research

The findings indicate broadly positive perceptions of AR among Algerian EFL teachers. As shown in Figure 1, 70.83% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that AR is essential for improving teaching practice. These results affirm Hypothesis 1, which posited that EFL teachers in Algerian universities generally perceive AR as a valuable tool for enhancing instructional quality and professional development.

Figure 1

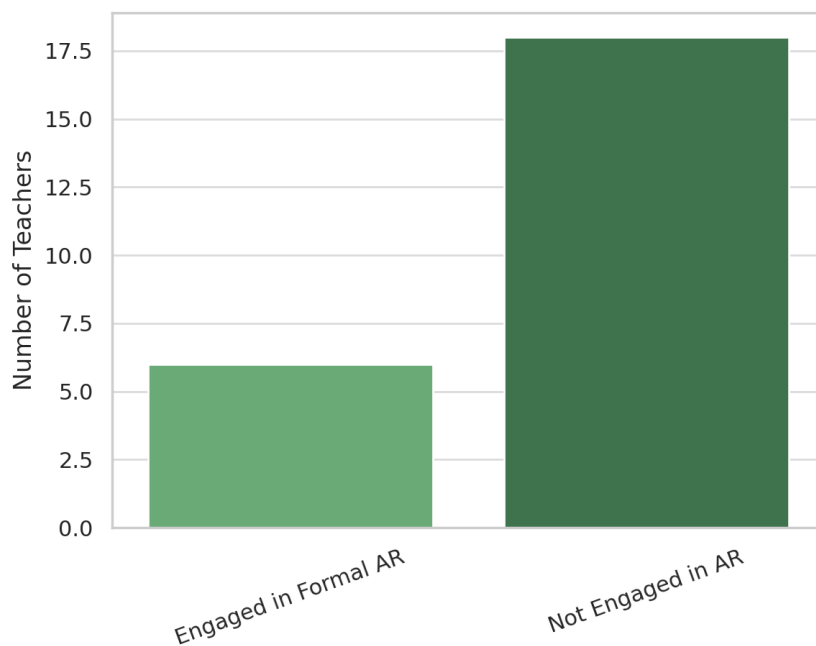
Teachers' Perception of AR as Essential for Teaching Engagement in Action Research



Despite favorable views, only 25% of participants reported active involvement in formal AR cycles such as systematic observation, data analysis, and reflection. This supports Hypothesis 2, which anticipated limited implementation due to contextual constraints.

Figure 2

Teachers' Engagement in Formal Action Research



Correlational Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships among personal motivation, training, institutional support, and AR engagement. The results reveal strong positive associations among all variables, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix Among Key Variables

Variable	Motivation	Training	Institutional Support	AR Engagement
Motivation	1.00	.96**	.91**	.91**
Training		1.00	.88**	.89**
Institutional Support			1.00	.81**
AR Engagement				1.00

Note: ** $p < .01$

Subgroup Comparisons

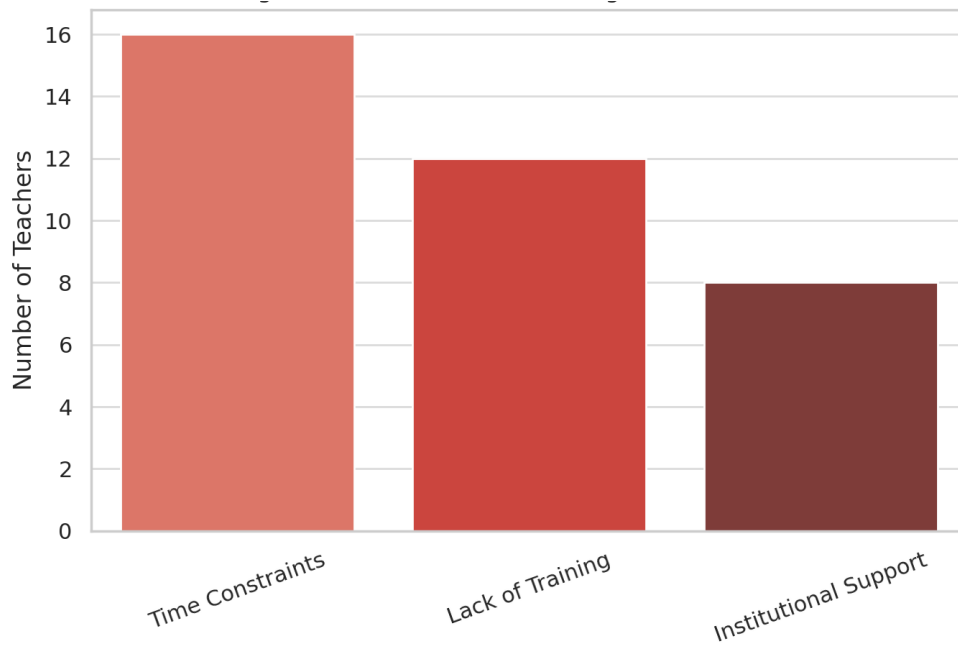
A chi-square test identified a statistically significant association between academic rank and AR engagement ($X^2(2, N = 24) = 6.87, p = .032$). Assistant professors reported the highest engagement (50%), while part-time lecturers reported none. This disparity highlights the structural inequalities within higher education institutions.

Barriers to Action Research

The most frequently cited barrier was time constraints (66.67%), followed by lack of training (50%) and inadequate institutional support (33.33%). Additional barriers included the absence of a research-conducive culture (29.17%), limited access to academic journals and resources (25%), and insufficient recognition or incentives for engaging in AR (20.83%). Some teachers also cited psychological barriers such as fear of failure, low research self-efficacy, and a perception that AR is overly complex or disconnected from classroom realities.

Figure 3

Barriers to Conducting Action Research

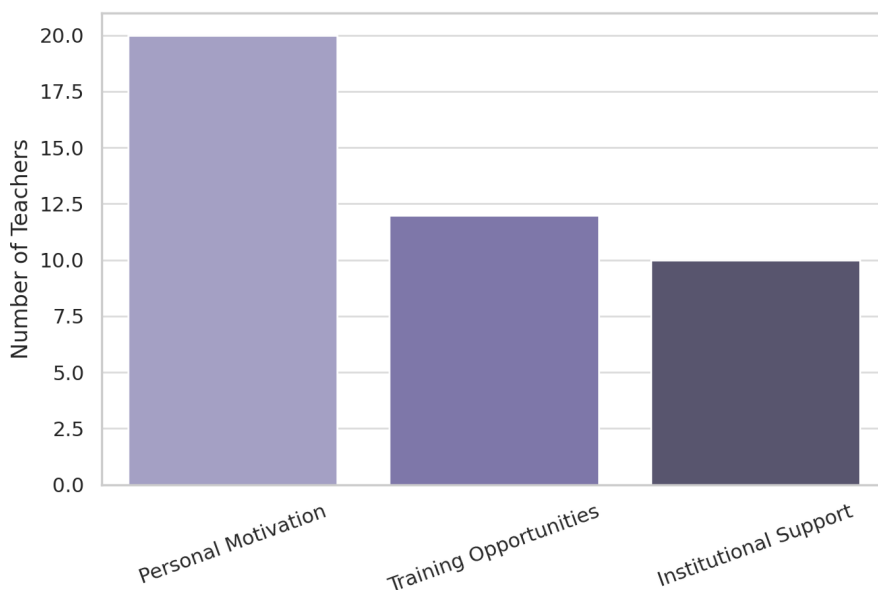


Factors Influencing AR Adoption

Personal motivation (83.33%) emerged as the most salient factor in AR adoption, followed by training opportunities (50%) and institutional support (41.67%). Although motivation is a necessary precursor to action, its effects are significantly amplified—or inhibited—by contextual conditions such as institutional support and access to resources.

Figure 4

Factors Influencing AR Adoption



Discussion

The findings provide comprehensive answers to the research questions and empirically support all proposed hypotheses. They confirm that while Algerian EFL teachers generally acknowledge the value of AR, their engagement is significantly hindered by systemic and structural challenges. Importantly, strong positive correlations between institutional support, personal motivation, and training reflect the critical role of enabling conditions in facilitating sustained AR practices.

In international contexts, comparable trends have been documented. For instance, Burns (2010) in Australia and Turkey both observed that although teachers valued the AR conceptually, implementation was often obstructed by insufficient training and institutional inertia. However, contrasting evidence from Scandinavian contexts (Johnson, 2005) illustrates how robust institutional frameworks—characterized by distributed leadership, time allowances, and integrated professional development—can democratize research engagement across academic hierarchies. Thus, while the Algerian findings echo global challenges, they also highlight uniquely localized constraints that merit context-specific solutions.

Unexpectedly, the intent to engage in AR informally emerged as a recurring theme among teachers who were not officially conducting AR. This suggests a tacit commitment to reflective practice that remains untapped due to the absence of formal scaffolding. In line with Borg (2010), this “latent engagement” could be nurtured through incremental interventions such as peer mentorship, accessible training, and institutional incentives. The pronounced interdependence of motivation, training, and engagement in the correlation matrix further suggests a compounding effect: gains in one domain can amplify results in others.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the small and context-specific sample ($N = 24$) restricts the generalizability of findings. Second, the use of self-reported data introduces the potential for social desirability bias, particularly concerning attitudes toward AR. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits insights into longitudinal dynamics. Future research could adopt a mixed-methods or longitudinal approach to more fully capture evolving perceptions and engagement patterns over time.

Theoretical implications of the study extend beyond individual engagement with AR. The findings affirm Schön’s (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner while also situating teacher research within Bronfenbrenner’s ecological framework, wherein multi-level environmental systems influence behavior. Likewise, Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory helps explain how institutional artifacts (e.g., workload policies, professional networks) mediate teacher agency. By combining these perspectives, this study underscores that AR must be understood as a socially situated, contextually embedded practice, not merely an individual methodological choice.

In conclusion, the findings strongly suggest that if Algerian universities are to harness the transformative potential of AR, they must cultivate enabling ecosystems. These should include professional development programs, policy reforms that prioritize research culture, and recognition mechanisms that validate teachers’ efforts as researchers. Only then can AR transition from a marginal endeavor to a sustainable, institutionalized practice that enhances both instructional quality and educator empowerment.

Conclusions

This study sought to examine the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding Action Research (AR) at Setif 2 University, Algeria, with particular attention to the barriers and enabling factors influencing its implementation. The findings confirm that while 67% of participants recognize AR as essential for improving teaching practices, only 25% actively engage in

formal AR processes such as systematic data collection and analysis. The disparity between positive perception and limited implementation reflects the persistence of structural and institutional barriers, most notably time constraints (66.67%), lack of training (50%), and insufficient institutional support (33.33%).

This study contributes to the underexplored domain of teacher-led research in North African higher education. It enriches the literature by contextualizing Action Research within Algerian EFL settings and empirically validating the role of institutional, psychological, and motivational factors in shaping AR adoption. The significant correlations found between institutional support, training, and AR engagement underscore the multifactorial nature of teacher development in resource-constrained contexts, offering theoretical insight for future comparative studies and research-based teacher education models.

To facilitate the integration of AR into EFL pedagogical practice, universities should adopt the following practical measures:

1. **Institutionalize AR Training:** Establish continuous professional development programs specifically focused on research methodology and reflective teaching.
2. **Allocate Research Time:** Reduce teaching loads or schedule designated AR hours within the academic calendar to enable teacher engagement in classroom inquiry.
3. **Recognize and Reward Engagement:** Introduce incentive structures such as promotions, research grants, and awards for AR participation to legitimize teacher research efforts.
4. **Foster Collaborative Inquiry:** Create departmental AR communities or mentorship networks that promote peer exchange, feedback, and collective problem-solving.
5. **Enhance Infrastructure:** Provide access to digital tools, academic journals, and AR documentation platforms to support evidence-based teaching innovation.

In conclusion, Action Research remains an underutilized yet highly promising mechanism for pedagogical reform and teacher empowerment in Algerian universities. By addressing the contextual constraints identified in this study, educational institutions can create an enabling ecosystem that transforms AR from an abstract ideal into a sustainable component of reflective, student-centered instruction. Such reforms are imperative if Algeria's higher education system is to meet the dual goals of quality education and global academic competitiveness.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on bridging the gap between the theoretical potential and the practical implementation of Action Research (AR) in EFL teaching. First, there is a need to design practical, scalable models for AR integration that address barriers such as time constraints, large class sizes, and administrative burdens. Longitudinal studies are also warranted to evaluate the sustained impact of AR on both teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

Further investigation into institutional support mechanisms is essential. Exploring how university policies, leadership, and departmental cultures influence AR engagement can inform strategies for creating research-conducive environments. Additionally, research should examine teachers' perceptions of AR training programs to determine which components effectively enhance research skills and confidence.

Understanding the motivational factors behind AR engagement is another key area. Identifying what drives or hinders teacher participation—whether intrinsic beliefs or extrinsic incentives—can help shape more effective professional development initiatives. Finally, given that time constraints remain a significant obstacle, future studies could explore the role of digital tools and institutional adjustments

(e.g., allocated research time) in streamlining AR processes. These investigations can collectively support the development of a reflective, research-informed teaching culture in Algerian higher education.

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Conflict of Interest

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