

## CHAPTER 5: TEACHER RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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### Abstract

Teacher research engagement in English language teacher training has gained importance in recent years because of its advantages in terms of reflective and professional practices. Firstly, teacher research offers several benefits, such as enabling teachers to investigate their practice, critically reflect on their teaching, and promote their professional growth. Further, it promotes teacher autonomy, encourages a sense of ownership, and creates a collaborative culture within the school community. It also enhances the relevance of research outcomes to the classroom context, and it can inform policies and practices. Despite its benefits, teacher research engagement has some challenges, such as time constraints, lack of support, and limited access to resources. However, there is a significant gap in the literature on teacher research engagement in English language teacher training. It is essential to fill this gap by providing insights into factors that affect teacher research engagement, including teacher beliefs, attitudes, and motivation, the impact of the program structure and design, and the role of mentoring and support. Therefore, this literature review argues that teacher research engagement is an essential aspect of English language teacher training and aims to contribute to the ongoing professional development of English language teachers by exploring the benefits and challenges of teacher research engagement. Finally, future research is suggested to investigate factors that affect teacher research engagement and develop strategies to promote and support teacher research engagement in the field of English language teaching.

*Keywords: teacher research engagement, English language teacher training, literature review*

### 1. Teacher Research Engagement

Teacher learning is a continuous process that requires teachers to engage in different teaching practices and experiences in various social contexts and circumstances. This view is also stated by Johnson (2015), “Teacher learning neither begins nor ends within a teacher education program. In fact, the duration of the typical teacher education program, whether pre-service or in-service, pales in comparison to teachers’ schooling histories, life experiences, and the accumulation of teaching experience” (p. 525). That is why teachers are expected to share their experiences about pedagogical and theoretical practices, resulting in productive and

positive learning outcomes. At this point, teacher research has become a significant construct shaping teachers' learning and teaching. In this regard, Burns (2021) notes that experiential knowledge of teaching and professional learning could be achieved and expanded through teacher research. Leat et al. (2014) claim that teacher research should mainly focus on changing the classrooms and schools with the help of systematic inquiry. However, there are a limited number of studies dealing with how and to what extent teachers engage with the research. Concerning this limited number of studies, Alhassan and Ali (2020) note that educational debate focuses on the professional development and training of novice and experienced language teachers.

Teacher research is defined by different scholars by referring to the features of the practice. To begin with, Borg (2009) states, "Teacher research—systematic, rigorous enquiry by teachers into their own professional contexts, and which is made public—is a minority activity in ELT" (p. 377). In line with this definition, Borg and Sanchez (2015) add that "Teacher research is a methodologically-flexible activity – a wide range of strategies can be used in collecting and analysing data as well as in reporting findings" (p. 2). So, they refer to the systematic nature of research, which includes self-study and aims for real-world impact. Therefore, Borg and Sanchez (2015) claim that "teacher research needs to be made public, as opposed to being a wholly private activity" (p. 2). Brooks (2021) says that research should be regarded as a means of "challenging assumptions about teaching, as a way of investigating and inquiring into practice, but also as a way of challenging issues of equity and justice that exist within education, and providing a range of ideas possible for transformation" (p. 14). At this point, Alhassan and Ali (2020) remark that teachers cannot transform research knowledge into pedagogical one straightforwardly. Likewise, Borg (2010) asserts that "While teacher research is necessarily reflective, reflecting on one's practice does not automatically constitute teacher research" (p. 394). Hence, teacher research should be regarded as an ongoing process helping teachers to improve their teaching and professional development. However, "research engagement as a transformative CPD model seems to have received less attention in the literature" (Alhassan & Ali, 2020, p. 1).

As to the difference between engagement in and engagement with research, Borg (2010) depicts engagement with research as the process of reading and making use of research, while engagement in research means conducting research. Borg (2009) asserts that institutional and organizational factors are influential on teachers' research engagement along with individual attitudes and beliefs. Engaging in and with research contributes to teachers' criticality, learning,

and professional development by enabling them to gain new experiences and teaching perspectives (Leat et al., 2014).

Concerning the origins of teacher research, the studies show that it originated from action research and dates back to Kurt Lewin's studies in the 1940s (Borg, 2010). The literature indicates that the emergence of teacher research in applied linguistics and language teaching dates back to the late 1980s (Borg, 2010; Burns, 2021; Sönmez Boran, 2018). Further, Medgyes (2017) states that teacher research emerged since the 1990s. Teacher research is also called by different names in the literature. To exemplify, Borg and Sanchez (2015) note that different terms refer to teacher research, such as practitioner research, action research, and classroom research. Similarly, Burns (2021) states that it has different forms, such as reflective practice, (collaborative) action research, exploratory practice, and exploratory action research. Even though these inquiry forms adopt different research approaches, they all intend to help teachers explore concerns and problems related to their profession by collaborating with their students and colleagues. So, the ultimate goal of these approaches is to enhance student learning and develop teaching practices.

When it comes to the characteristics and elements of teacher research, Sanchez and Borg (2015) list the characteristics based on the experiences of ELT practitioners, and these features are; *“messy and non-linear, collaborative, reflective, pedagogically-driven, exploratory, self-initiated, self-directed, ongoing, practical, and flexible”* (p. 186). As for the elements of teacher research, Burns (2021) specifies that information gathering, reflection, observation, and experimentation are crucial ingredients of teacher research. In addition, some factors influence teachers' research engagement levels and processes. According to Trent (2012), pre-service teachers' professional identities affect their research engagement, and the research shapes their identity positions. Therefore, it can be concluded that participants' opinions and practices about research would construct their understanding of themselves and their identity positions.

As per the role of research in teacher training, Menter et al. (2010) note that research engagement has gained world-wide importance in teacher education. In this vein, they mention four different forms of teacher professionalism, which are the *effective, reflective, enquiring, and transformative* teacher, adopting different teacher education approaches toward research in teacher professionalism. In line with these approaches, it is concluded that there is no common understanding about the role and place of research in initial teacher education (Brooks, 2021). It is also implied that research-informed teaching is not promoted in teacher education programs, and not all teacher educators are engaged with and in high-quality practice-based and

applied research. In this regard, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) remark that reflection, mentoring, teacher and action research are the common methods used in initial teacher education. They draw attention to the difference between the research studies conducted by university researchers and teachers. While the first one focuses on doing research and revealing findings, the latter is based on changing practices and enhancing institutions. That is why “the goal is understanding, articulating, and ultimately altering practice and social relationships to bring about fundamental change in classrooms, schools, districts, programs, and professional organizations” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 279). Since teacher education involves different paradigms, the roles of teachers, teacher educators, and teaching training programs for teacher research engagement will be discussed respectively.

To begin with the teachers as the practitioners in the research engagement process, it is seen that they have important roles such as gaining awareness and being critical about educational research. In this regard, Brooks (2021) specifies that teachers should be knowledgeable about research and not be regarded as ‘*passive consumers of research*’. Likewise, Borg (2010) notes, “teachers should be critical consumers of educational research, using it to inform their instructional decisions” (p. 410). Hence, teachers should be encouraged to conduct research by building a collaborative and supportive research culture, improving their skills and knowledge, and boosting teacher reflection and research literacy (Sanchez & Borg, 2015).

Furthermore, teacher educators should know their responsibilities and roles in teachers’ research engagement. In this vein, Brooks (2021) notes that teacher educators play a significant role in integrating research into teacher education programs. In this regard, research is recommended to be an integral part of teacher education programs as it can be used “as a form of pedagogy, as a form of challenge and as a useful guide to their practice” (Brooks, 2021, p. 22). Vu (2021) refers to the role of teacher educators in guiding teachers to engage in research by encouraging them and changing their beliefs about being the consumers of the research.

Along with teachers and teacher educators, teacher training programs are highly crucial to encourage teacher research engagement. In this sense, Dao et al. (2022) highlight the importance of teacher education courses and programs in promoting teacher research engagement. In parallel with this, Munthe and Rogne (2015) note that research is emphasized in teacher education programs. Likewise, Burns (2021) asserts that learning and teaching-related issues occurring in language classrooms are explored by means of organized and intentional inquiry processes. However, it is observed that there needs to be more systematic planning and coordination about the goals of research-based teacher education. In addition, they

claim that most of the initial teacher education programs put more emphasis on teacher-led research engagement rather than students' engagement with research (Munthe & Rogne, 2015). In this sense, Trent (2012) specifies that participants distinguish between real and individual research. Accordingly, pre-service teachers believe that real research would be beneficial for student learning, while individual research would be helpful for personal careers.

Despite all this, there are some criticisms about the role of teaching and teacher research within the scope of teacher education. To illustrate, Brooks (2021) remarks, "teaching itself is often viewed as a practice-orientated profession rather than a research-orientated one" (p. 13), as can be seen in teacher education policies. In this sense, the literature shows a gap between research and practice. For instance, Biesta (2007) indicates that there is a gap between research and practice, which causes a lack of connection between researchers and practitioners. Mehranirad and Behzadpoor (2022) suggest that the distance between teachers and academics increases because of opposing opportunities and conflicting assumptions. This view aligns with Borg (2010), who observes that teacher research is mainly conducted by university language teachers, and it is regarded as a requirement of their profession.

Borg (2010), in contrast, states that "research engagement has the potential to be a powerful transformative force in the work and professional development of language teachers" (p. 391); however, language teacher research engagement is not a common activity in the field of language teaching. Further, most of the present studies focus on the short-term effects of teacher research; however, the long-term effect of teacher research engagement is a neglected field of study (Sakarkaya & Bümen, 2022). Nevertheless, Sakarkaya and Bümen (2022) indicate that there has been a dramatic increase in teacher research studies, especially in Argentina, Australia, Chili, China, Finland, and the USA.

Further, the conceptions regarding teachers as technicians who practice the findings of academic research studies are highly criticized. Borg (2010) also specifies that classroom-based research ignoring teachers and their cooperation cannot meet teachers' needs and solve their problems. Based on the literature, Ball (2012) specifies that this research-practice gap is also named as 'knowledge-doing gap', and four different models were proposed to address this gap in the literature. These models are "1. *The Research Development Diffusion Model*, 2. *The Evidence-Based Practice Model*, 3. *The Boundary-Crossing Practices Model*, and 4. *The Knowledge Communities Model*" (Ball, 2012, p. 285). These models adopt different ways of addressing this research-practice gap, and the perspective of each model toward research is

illustrated in Figure 1 below. Despite the disparities among these four models, the ultimate goal of these models is to enhance the role of research in educational practices.

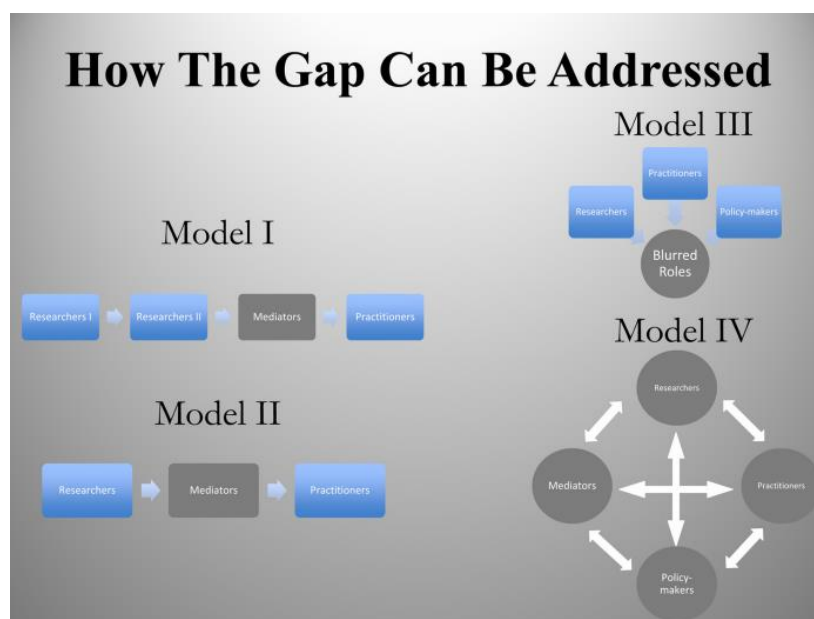


**Figure 1.** Four models that represent how the knowing–doing gap can be addressed (Ball, 2012, p. 286)

## 2. Benefits of teacher research engagement

When teachers’ research engagement reasons are investigated, it is observed that there are various factors influencing their research engagement motivation and interests. For instance, Borg (2010) specifies that teachers’ engagement in research depends on their attitudes, abilities, experiences, working conditions, collaboration skills, awareness, willingness, and confidence levels. It is also observed that “Teachers are more likely to be willing to engage with research and use it to explore and inform their practice when it is accessible – physically, conceptually, linguistically and practically – credible, useable, and interesting” (Borg, 2010, p. 419). In line with these, Borg and Alshumaimeri’s (2012) study has revealed that teacher educators do research because of intrinsic and instrumental reasons.

In light of these studies, doing research is connected to teachers’ motivation and interests such as being beneficial for professional development, getting promoted, and improving work and knowledge. Sönmez Boran (2018) reveals that there are some motivating factors influencing teachers’ engagement in research. To illustrate, being curious about the issues in ELT, developing oneself professionally, sharing research findings with colleagues, and solving teaching-related problems were the main reasons behind teachers’ engagement in research. In a similar sense, Borg (2007) notes that teachers are engaged in research to enhance

their teaching and learning. Likewise, Sakarkaya and Bümen (2022) remark that instructors engage in research to find solutions to the problems in their teaching contexts and improve their teaching methods. Dao et al. (2022) have also found that English teachers have positive attitudes toward research, and they value research for finding new ways of teaching and applying those methods in their classes. Further, mentoring opportunities provided to the teachers in their institutions also motivate them to conduct research as well. More interestingly, the data collected through a two-year-long university-school collaborative action research project reveals that teachers show various levels of research commitment, which does not necessarily indicate the quality of teaching (Liu & Wang, 2018).

Regarding the findings of these studies, engagement with research is beneficial for teachers in many regards, as Borg (2010) suggested. For example, many studies have revealed the contribution of research engagement on teachers' professional development (Alhassan & Ali, 2020; Cain, 2015; Liu & Wang, 2018; Savasci & Rets, 2021; Sönmez Boran, 2018; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016). To start with, Alhassan and Ali (2020) found that teachers stated that research engagement contributed to their pedagogical and professional development, and helped them to teach collaboratively. Accordingly, teachers regarded research as '*key to high-quality research-informed pedagogy*' and '*a teacher refresher tool*' which enabled teachers to "critically challenge their assumptions and revisit and update their traditional approaches to language teaching and learning" (Alhassan & Ali, 2020, p. 8). Liu and Wang (2018) indicated that research engagement was also beneficial for teacher growth, professional development, and student learning. Savasci and Rets (2021) showed that research would benefit participants' future professional development and research engagement. According to Sönmez Boran (2018), engaging in research could promote teachers' professional development. Likewise, Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2016) remarked that engaging in research developed teachers' continuing professional development. Al-Maamari et al.'s (2017) study revealed that the research support program contributed positively to teachers' research engagement and professional development. Yen et al. (2017) also stated that research engagement enhanced teachers' teaching practices and professional development. Cain (2015) asserted that research was influential on teachers' thinking, attitudes, and actions, affecting their pedagogical knowledge. He also found that research engagement contributed to teacher empowerment, questioning skills, and professional development. So, research enabled teachers to enhance their conceptual understanding, practical and context-specific knowledge.

Another benefit of teacher research engagement is related to teachers' personal growth, such as self-efficacy and self-confidence. To illustrate, the participants in Akyl's (2015) study noted that engaging in research during practicum contributed to their self-confidence, analytical skills, and classroom teaching. Sönmez Boran (2018) also found that teacher research contributed positively to teachers' perceptions regarding their self-efficacy, collaboration, and interactions with their students. Similarly, Savasci and Rets (2021) investigated pre-service teachers' attitudes toward research, and they found that the research methodology course contributed to student-teachers' self-efficacy and confidence. Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2016) also specified that engaging in action research practices would improve teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. Additionally, reflective research practices enabled teachers to develop positive beliefs about their self-efficacy and gain awareness about pedagogical practices.

Additionally, engaging in and with research enables teachers to come up with new ways of thinking, talking, knowing, doing, and seeing. In this regard, Gilliland (2018) asserts that teachers can gain awareness about student needs, teacher roles, and institutional policies with the help of teacher research by observing and reflecting on their teaching practices. Therefore, they can understand their practices in a better way and explore different concepts in the field.

Further, teacher research is also helpful for teachers' identity construction and pedagogical development. Woore et al.'s (2020) study indicated that the teachers regarded research engagement as a part of their professional identity. Engaging in research enabled teachers to improve their teaching skills and to grasp pedagogical issues in a better way. Research engagement also contributed to teachers' identity development and career progressions. Finally, Gilliland (2018) noted that teacher research is a way of connecting theory and practice through systematic and professional self-study.

In conclusion, it was observed that engaging in and with teacher research was quite profitable for the teachers. They were inclined to do research to solve problems in their teaching, develop themselves professionally, and come up with different teaching methods. So, it was concluded that pedagogical, personal, and professional reasons affected teachers' engagement in research, and the benefits of teacher research were illustrated by Sanchez and Borg (2015, p. 189) in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Benefits of Teacher Research

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|                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Promotes collaboration among teachers                         |
| Gives teachers insight into their own practices               |
| Promotes innovative solutions to teaching problems            |
| Extends teacher identities (to include teacher-as-researcher) |
| Creates a sense of achievement                                |
| Boosts teachers' self-esteem                                  |
| Creates a problem-solving mindset                             |
| Promotes more student-centred perspectives                    |
| Encourages flexibility in teaching                            |
| Raises teachers' awareness of ingrained habits                |
| Narrows the gap between theory and practice                   |
| Promotes reflective skills                                    |
| Creates a sense of community                                  |
| Makes teachers more open to feedback                          |
| Increases teachers' knowledge                                 |
| Develops 'adaptive expertise'                                 |
| Enhances teachers' repertoires                                |
| Enhances professional autonomy                                |
| Improves research skills                                      |
| Increases teacher motivation                                  |
| Leads to positive changes in what teachers do                 |
| Creates positive attitudes to professional development        |

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### **3. Barriers to teacher research engagement**

As per the rationale behind teachers' not engaging in and with research, the previous studies showed that many hindering and demotivating factors functioned as barriers and challenges for practitioners. To exemplify, Borg (2009) revealed the effects of conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal barriers on teachers' engagement with research. In his another study, Borg (2010) presented a summary of various barriers hindering teachers from engaging in research, and these factors include limited sources, non-collaborative school environment, demotivating factors, lack of teachers' beliefs, skills, and knowledge, political and economic issues. Likewise, Yen et al. (2017) stated that there are five barriers hindering teachers' engagement with and in research and these are limited sources, economic factors, demotivators, non-collaborative school culture, and lack of teachers' knowledge, awareness, skills, and beliefs.

Most studies revealed that lack of time is the most obvious reason for not engaging in research along with many other factors (Allison & Carey, 2007; Borg, 2009; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Sato & Loewen, 2018; Savasci & Rets, 2021; Sönmez Boran, 2018; Williams & Coles, 2007; Woore et al., 2020). Accordingly, in Borg's (2010) study teachers

reported that lack of time was the main factor for not conducting research. Another barrier to conducting research was the lack of research knowledge. (Borg, 2009; Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012; Sakarkaya & Bümen, 2022; Woore et al., 2020). Additionally, conditions in the workplace and institutional support were the challenges for teachers not to engage in research (Allison & Carey, 2007; Mehranirad & Behzadpoor, 2022; Sakarkaya & Bümen, 2022; Sato & Loewen, 2018; Savasci & Rets, 2021; Sönmez Boran, 2018). For example, Allison and Carey (2007) demonstrated that university language teachers refrain from engaging in research for reasons such as lack of time, incentives, expertise, and support. Lack of time, knowledge, and practical relevance were some of the reasons for not reading research mentioned by the English teachers (Borg, 2009). Similarly, lack of time and knowledge were reasons for not engaging in research (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012). Sato and Loewen (2018) remarked that lack of time, resources, institutional support, and teacher/researcher initiatives were the obstacles hindering teachers to engage with the research. Lack of time, resources, and research awareness along with heavy workloads and schedules were mentioned as the factors inhibiting teachers from engaging in research (Savasci & Rets, 2021). EFL teachers stated they were not engaged in research because of school culture, administrative problems, lack of time, loaded schedules, and inflexible curricula (Sönmez Boran, 2018). Even though teachers had positive attitudes towards research, they mentioned that lack of time and limited access to sources hindered them from engaging in research (Williams & Coles, 2007). Shortage of time, lack of research methods knowledge, colleagues' resistance, and the pressure to cover the required materials were the obstacles to engaging in research (Woore et al., 2020).

In addition, teachers reported a lack of familiarity with research, research directory, financial and intellectual incentives as the barriers to conducting research in Mehranirad and Behzadpoor's (2022) study. Sakarkaya and Bümen (2022) stated that the conditions in the workplace, economic factors, and teachers' lack of research knowledge, awareness, and skills were the reasons for not engaging in research. So, it can be concluded that conducting research would not be easy for teachers along with their daily routines, responsibilities, and workload (Leat et al., 2014).

Moreover, teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about their profession may affect their engagement in and with research. In this regard, Medgyes (2017) claims that "a very low proportion of practising teachers are in the habit of reading ELT-related research papers" (p. 491) since research and teaching may seem two distinct constructs with no connections. For example, EFL teachers regarded research as time-consuming and challenging because of the

procedures followed during research, such as literature review, data collection, and analysis (Sönmez Boran, 2018). Borg's (2007) study showed that teachers were not engaged in research because research and teaching were regarded as two distinct activities by the teachers. Teachers were also not aware of the professional and pedagogical benefits of research engagement. Additionally, some teachers considered research a university requirement and regarded it as a '*work pressure*' even though most English language instructors thought research was crucial (Vu, 2021). Savasci and Rets (2021) observed that some participants regarded research as an academic activity, so they believed they would not conduct research in their future professions. Similarly, the study conducted by Brooks (2021) indicated that student teachers perceived research as 'irrelevant' or 'inauthentic' in terms of displaying their teaching abilities. Further, it was observed that new teachers regarded research as a 'programme requirement' rather than perceiving it as a way of professional development. Tavakoli (2015) found that some teachers believed there is not much focus on research in pre-service teacher education, while experienced teachers asserted that integrating research into initial teacher education would not make sense since they thought that research could be useful for teachers who have some progress in their careers. Akyel's (2015) study also revealed that pre-service teachers observed that research was not regarded as one of the roles of teachers in Turkish schools. In another study by Allison and Carey (2007), the teachers believed that the professors, not the teachers, conduct the real and formal research, and they regard themselves as only teachers, not teacher-researchers. Besides, the findings showed that language teachers thought research was both an ambivalent and a complex process for themselves. So, personal beliefs, lack of time, and external pressure were the main reasons behind teachers not engaging in research (Borg, 2007). The barriers to research engagement mentioned in Marsden and Kasprowicz's (2017) study were negative beliefs about research practical, physical, and conceptual constraints.

When teachers' research engagement levels were investigated, it was reported that their levels were either moderate or low. More interestingly, Sato and Loewen's (2018) study revealed teachers did not report any interest in solving problems in their classrooms with the help of research. For instance, school-based practitioners did not read research as much as university-based teacher educators and professional development providers, according to the findings of Marsden and Kasprowicz's (2017) study. Additionally, Borg (2007, 2009) found that English teachers had moderate and low levels of research engagement because of procedural, attitudinal, institutional, and conceptual reasons. Likewise, teacher educators reported moderate levels of research engagement because their institution did not support them

(Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012). Hence, institutional support has become essential for practitioners' research engagement. Mehrani and Behzadnia (2013) found that teachers had low levels of engagement with and in research. Accordingly, there were four main reasons hindering teachers from engaging with research; which are, barriers related to the use of research, production of ELT research, educational system, and collaboration. To exemplify, teachers specified that they did not have enough time to read research because of their workload and duties. They also noted that accessing and understanding research is not an easy task. In addition, the teachers criticized some issues regarding the production of ELT research, such as the complexity and quality of the research papers, along with the generalizability and practicality of the findings. Similarly, Mehranirad and Behzadpoor (2022) showed that the research papers tend to use complicated and technical language, making it harder for teachers to understand the research.

The previous studies also showed that institutional culture has an influence on teachers' engagement in research (Borg, 2007). In this regard, different studies revealed the effect of institutional support. For example, Dao et al. (2022) stated that lack of time, resources, rewards, and institutional support were the barriers hindering teachers from engaging in research. Akyl (2015) also concluded that the administrations do not support teachers' research engagement. Likewise, Ahmed and Pervin (2015) drew attention to the importance of institutional support for practitioners' research-based knowledge development. According to Mehrani and Behzadnia (2013), lack of support, negative perceptions about research, and disparities between educational materials and research were the reasons related to the educational system hindering teachers from engaging with research. Lastly, lack of collaboration between practitioners and researchers was one of the primary barriers to teachers' research engagement.

Marsden and Kasproicz (2017) remarked that barriers to conducting research were referred to in the studies; however, there was no specific information about to what extent those barriers affect research engagement. Accordingly, Marsden and Kasproicz (2017) claimed, "We do not have data about (a) the extent to which FL teachers and teacher educators are exposed to material that directly reports or mentions research, (b) the nature of publications they read, or (c) what those publications, in turn, cite" (p. 616).

As a consequence, Sanchez and Borg (2015) provided a list of challenges in teacher research, as shown in Table 2 below (p. 191).

**Table 2.** Challenges in Teacher Research

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|                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A lack of research knowledge and skills (in teachers and facilitators) |
| Rigid conceptions of what ‘research’ is                                |
| Limited understandings of what teacher research is                     |
| Tensions between being a teacher and being a researcher                |
| Sustaining motivation                                                  |
| Knowing how to disseminate findings                                    |
| Knowing how to analyse data                                            |
| Finding time                                                           |
| Managing the threat to self-image                                      |
| Lack of institutional support                                          |
| Lack of co-operation from colleagues and students                      |
| Lack of a collaborative culture                                        |
| No prior experience of reflection                                      |
| Limited access to skilled facilitation                                 |
| Limited resources                                                      |
| Low teacher confidence in their ability to do research                 |
| Negative attitudes to professional development                         |

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#### **4. Suggestions to promote teacher research engagement**

Teacher educators perceived research as an individual activity rather than a collaborative act, and they did not think of research as a way of improving teaching and solving problems (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2012). However, Medgyes (2017) claims the opposite by saying, “it is not the practitioner who is in need of the theorist, but the other way round: for most researchers lassoing the teacher is a matter of life or death” (p. 496). Accordingly, the importance of collaboration is one of the leading suggestions for all stakeholders engaging in research. In this regard, Hargreaves (1999) specified that research does not provide enough information about practitioners’ and policy-makers’ decisions and actions because of the limited interaction among practitioners, teachers, and policy-makers. Therefore, the dialogue and communication among researchers, funders, policy-makers, and practitioners should be enhanced to make the most of research studies. So, the collaboration among teachers, academicians, and institutions should be enhanced to enable teachers to engage in research (Borg, 2010; Dao et al., 2022). Likewise, Sato and Loewen (2018) state that the researchers could sometimes report conflicting results and inconsistent implications. That is why, the dialogue and collaboration between teachers and researchers should be enhanced. In this regard, Sönmez Boran (2018) recommended providing collaborative and cooperative working conditions for teachers and researchers to find applicable and practical solutions for teaching-related and contextual problems.

Further, Yen et al. (2017) noted that the internal and external inhibitor factors of teachers' research engagement can be solved with collaboration among teachers, educational institutions, and the government. Tavakoli (2015) also suggested that joint projects should be conducted by collaborating with teachers, researchers, and mediatory communities. In this sense, Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2016) revealed collaborative and practical classroom research's contribution to teachers' self-confidence development. Similarly, Menter et al. (2010) suggested that collaborative activities between researchers and teachers would contribute to the development of teachers and curriculum. Consoli and Dikilitaş (2021) acknowledged that the main goal of collaboration among practitioners, researchers, and policymakers through research-practice partnerships is to address teaching-related problems experienced by the practitioners. They also underlined that research-practice partnerships should not be restricted to single projects or studies but should be long-term practices.

In addition, researchers should not be perceived as the only knowledgeable person in this research-practice partnership, and teachers and researchers should work together to find solutions to the problems. Further, collaborative activities and mutual interactions between teachers and researchers should be encouraged through communities of practice, online platforms, and web-based sources (Mehranirad & Behzadpoor, 2022). Consequently, Akyel (2015) suggested integrating teacher research into teacher training programs and enhancing collaboration and communication between partner schools and education faculties employing university-school partnerships.

Many studies also referred to the crucial role of providing opportunities and incentives for teachers to engage in research. To begin with, Sato and Loewen (2018) recommended that enabling teachers to participate in face-to-face conferences, meetings, and workshops would help them to engage with the research. In this sense, creating communities of practice is accepted as an influential way of promoting teacher research engagement in foreign language teaching. It was also suggested to provide resources such as time, incentives, funding, and access to research for teacher research engagement. In this regard, teacher educators and policy makers should encourage teachers to engage in research by addressing the barriers and providing necessary sources (Woore et al., 2020).

Furthermore, teachers' research awareness and literacy should be enhanced as well. Therefore, Alhassan and Ali (2020) suggest that teachers' awareness about research should be increased through training, hands-on activities, research forums, and groups. So, teachers should be trained on the process and product of research via experts and accredited institutions.

Sönmez Boran's (2018) study indicated that teachers were knowledgeable about the research as a general construct but did not know the details of conducting research. Teachers also preferred reading discussion forums to understand published research and share their opinions on study results through online platforms. Hence, it can be suggested to provide opportunities for teachers to engage with and in research by means of collaborative projects, formal instructions, and discussion activities. In line with these, Sakarkaya and Bümen (2022) recommend enhancing teachers' skills, knowledge, and awareness about research. Extra payments, reduced workload, seminars, collaborative research projects, and financial support were added as supporting mechanisms to encourage teachers to conduct research. It is also noted that increasing teachers' self-confidence, applying new activities, improving students, administrative pressure, extra payments, promotions, and holidays would motivate them to do research (Sönmez Boran, 2018).

Building a research culture or community is another significant piece of advice the studies provided. In this vein, Williams and Coles (2007) suggested building a research culture and developing an information culture by encouraging teachers and boosting their confidence in information seeking and using. In addition, Woore et al. (2020) recommend that schools create a research culture and enhance teachers' research literacy. Alhassan and Ali (2020) also commented that institutions should create and support a research culture with funding, rewards, and incentives. Consequently, Marsden and Kasprovicz (2017) stated that research engagement should be supported by dealing with research more, serving more international audiences, and incentivising researchers. Administrations should also support teachers in doing research by improving their work conditions and enhancing their professional development with awareness-raising and extracurricular activities (Sönmez Boran, 2018).

All in all, institutions were suggested to provide training, financial and physical resources for teacher educators to enable them to engage in research. Accordingly, self-study, practitioner research, and collaborative activities could encourage teacher educators to do research. Similarly, Sato and Loewen (2018) underscored the importance of institutional and financial support for teachers to access research and attend conferences. Finally, establishing national and international associations and distributing research findings via open-access summaries were suggested by Marsden and Kasprovicz (2017) to lessen the effects of hindering factors to research engagement.

Moreover, Borg (2009) remarked that large-scale and localized studies should be conducted to understand teachers' perceptions about research engagement and enhance their

engagement with the research. In this regard, teachers are recommended to engage in flexible research cycles to make sense of contextual problems and find practical solutions to those problems instead of following the challenging steps of an academic research cycle. At this point, Gilliland (2018) puts forward that teacher research could result in better context-specific knowledge and practical solutions than outside research. Lastly, Borg (2010) recommended thoroughly combining research-related and practical knowledge. He also suggested that teachers would be more inclined to engage with research if research studies are related to their beliefs, classroom applications, teaching contexts, and existing knowledge.

When it comes to the role of teacher training programs, Ahmed and Pervin (2015) stated that initial teacher education does not always result in effective teaching, so teachers' professional development should be supported through constant and dynamic strategies such as enhancing teachers' research literacy and acknowledging the practical value of educational research. That is why it is recommended to provide comprehensive summaries and simplified versions of research for practitioners. Sönmez Boran (2018) suggested that teacher education programs should provide training for undergraduate students on conducting research. Additionally, graduate students should engage in research using hands-on activities and syllabi integrating research skills. Consequently, the theory-practice gap could be narrowed down with the help of research activities and practices. Sakarkaya and Bümen (2022) also suggested guiding novice teacher researchers by encouraging them to pursue post-graduate studies and sharing research findings and experiences. Savasci and Rets (2021) assert that most studies emphasized in-service teacher research engagement; however, pre-service teachers' engagement with research is a neglected field of study. That is why policy-makers, researchers, and teacher educators are suggested to integrate research skills courses into pre-service teacher training programs to reshape student-teachers' perceptions about research and indicate that research is necessary for their future teaching careers.

Additionally, Al-Maamari et al. (2017) concluded that a research support program is beneficial for community and institution engagement. They also suggested that teachers should be encouraged to conduct research and share their studies' results with other practitioners via platforms and forums, which will also contribute to teacher agency, professional development, and institutional enhancement. Research engagement models should be based on bottom-up and practitioner-based approaches rather than adopting top-down and expert models.

Finally, there are some supportive organizations for teacher research like the British Council, Cambridge Assessment English, and Cambridge University Press, and professional

bodies such as IATEFL, ECML, ACTFL, CILT, and TESOL International, as mentioned by different scholars (Borg, 2010; Burns, 2021) which could enhance teachers' research engagement.

## 5. Conclusion

The literature on language teachers' research engagement revealed many advantages of engaging in and with research. However, it is also seen that various barriers and challenges hinder teachers from conducting research. In this regard, different solutions and suggestions are provided for practitioners, teacher educators, and institutions. For instance, individual or collaborative teacher research should be encouraged to help teachers solve their teaching problems and apply new and innovative ways in their own classrooms. As Medgyes (2017) states, teachers should narrate their classroom stories and share their experiences with their colleagues. Likewise, Marsden and Kasprowicz (2017) remark that "A crucial question, rarely empirically investigated yet tightly related to understanding and improving research–practice relations, is the extent to which academic research finds (or has the potential to find) its way into the hands and minds of practitioners" (p. 614). However, teachers conducting research and sharing their findings with their colleagues may not be sufficient for reaching effective teaching results. In this sense, Borg (2010) states that "What is then also required is a commitment by academics to make their work more accessible to teachers" (p. 412). Therefore, researchers and educators should be responsible for helping teachers engage in research by sharing their results, simplifying their language, or working in cooperation. Likewise, Biesta (2007) specifies, "It seems to be a huge waste of time and resources if the outcomes of educational research never reach educational practice" (p. 4).

Consequently, teacher research helps enhance teacher autonomy, reduce teacher isolation, and gain more reflective, analytical, and critical teaching approaches. As stated by Sönmez Boran (2018), "teacher-research has been accepted as the end-point of professional development" (p. 194). Therefore, Biesta (2007) remarks, "Educational research is, after all, never simply research on education but always in some sense also research for education" (p. 4). However, professional practices require teachers to critically analyse research findings and then integrate them into their teaching (Williams & Coles, 2007).

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