Researching the Research Culture in English Language Education in Turkey

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Abstract

The field of language teaching utilizes research studies precisely therefore language professionals feel urged to conduct research studies and share their findings with enthusiastic colleagues. Although actualizing this is highly appreciated among, it is also a quite demanding process which might be problematic due to inexperience in research studies and academic writing. Virtually little is known about such problems since there is very limited amount of research on research culture of ELT professionals worldwide and almost none in Turkey. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the research culture of English language professionals at the university level in Turkey which remains as an untouched study field. To enable this, a scale consisting of 40 five-point Likert scale items along with 9 ordering items on researching and academic writing was developed by the researchers of the present study. The scale was delivered to a total number of 159 participants either professionals or post graduate students at the ELT departments in 27 Turkish universities. The data were analysed by frequency and descriptive statistics, T-test, and ANOVA. The findings revealed researching and academic writing habits of ELT professionals and post-graduate students indicating the significant contribution of research skills course to their research skills in practice. The results also highlighted that constituting the methodology of the study, reporting its findings and discussing them were considered to be the most problematic aspects of conducting research studies. The conclusions will help both the professionals and the students at the department of ELT realize their weak points in research. Suggestions will offer views on how to promote the research culture in Turkey as well as in similar countries. The implications may lead to reassess the syllabus of Research Skills Course for both undergraduate and post-graduate courses at ELT department.

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ELT PROFESSIONALS' RESEARCH CULTURE IN TURKEY

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Introduction

- Research has an undeniable impact on language teaching.
- Language teachers and teacher trainers conduct research studies for their professional development.
- Little is known about ELT professionals' aspirations and beliefs about research.
- Despite its importance, very limited publication about ELT professionals' thought and beliefs about research.
- This study mainly investigates the research culture of ELT professionals who work at universities or who are studying at postgraduate programs in Turkey.


Aims of the study

- This present study aims to investigate;
  - the participants' knowledge of writing a research report,
  - the experiences of participants in research and writing a research report, and
  - the participants' choices of difficult parts of and academic paper.

Literature Review

- "If we knew what we were doing it wouldn't be research" (Einstein).
- Research: "To see what everybody else has seen and to think what nobody else has thought" (Szent-Gyorgy).
- Research is a process which involves
  - defining a problem,
  - stating an objective, and
  - formulating a hypothesis.
- It involves gathering information, classifying, analysis, and interpretation to see what extent the initial objective has been achieved.
- Researcher can be seen as a builder to make building stones out of stumbling blocks (Nunan,1992).

Types of Research (Razı, 2010)
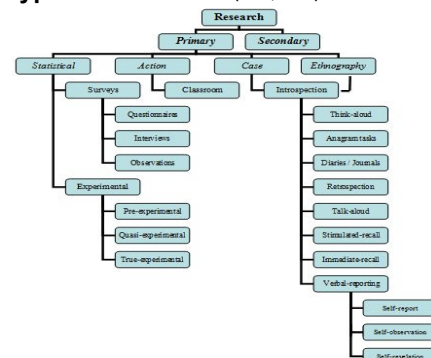
Organization of a research report in language teaching

- The title page (Mackey & Gass, 2005)
- Abstract (Best & Kahn, 2006).
- Literature review (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Nunan, 1992).
- Methodology
  - Setting and participants
  - Instrumentation
  - Findings and Discussion
  - Conclusion and Implications
- References
- Appendix

Teachers as Researchers

- "The teacher is a person and research is a process and teacher takes on a process that is different from teaching [in this process]" (Freeman, 2008:6).
- Blurred roles of the teachers (Boles & Anderson,1996).
- The blurred frontier between being a researcher and a teacher, requires choosing one of them instead of maintaining two of them (Freeman, 2008).
- While researchers originate knowledge, teachers apply this knowledge in terms of education. (Freeman, 2008).
- Teachers' uneasiness of collaboration and sharing their ideas with each other keeps them away from research.
- Reasons: "pressure of work, lack of motivation, or reward for professional development, natural difference, professional insecurity and so on" (Wallace, 1998: 208).

Methodology

Setting

- Conducted in 34 Turkish universities.

Participants

- ELT professionals or ELT MA/PhD students in Turkey.
- A total of 159 participants
- 103 females and 56 males
- 84 staff and 75 students
- Ages vary from 21 to 68.
- 49 BA, 77 MA, and 33 PhD holders.

Instrument

- The questionnaire was developed by the researchers in three sections.
  - Demographic questions: age, gender, degree, affiliation, research course background.
  - *Section 1: 15 questions on beliefs and thoughts about the process of research.*
  - *Section 2: 24 questions on participants' experience in research.*
  - *Section 3: Difficulty of different parts of research paper.*
- Semi-constructed 20-minute session interview at ÇOMU with 5 colleagues aimed to find out the difficulties and rewards while writing an academic paper.
- α = .939 over 39 items.

Procedures of data collection

- Data was collected by questionnaire and interview.
- Questionnaires were posted to the heads of department in each university and they were distributed to participants. Having answered questionnaires, the head of each university sent them back.
- Posting: about a month.
- Interview: about 20 minutes for each participant.

Procedures of data analysis

- SPSS 15.0 data editor.
- Descriptive and Frequency Statistics
- ANOVA Post Hoc Scheffe Test, and Independent Sample T-test.

Findings & Discussion

- Findings aim to find out participants'
  - knowledge of writing a research report,
  - experiences in research and writing a research report, and
  - perception of difficulty in different sections of a research report.

I. Analysis of knowledge of writing a research report (1)

- Participants reported that they were aware of plagiarism.
  - The impact of research methods course.
- However, there is a stark contrast in participants' answers to different questions.
  - They report it is not easy to write a research report, but they do not need any more experience in writing research reports.

Part I		Mean	Std. Deviation
5	Know what plagiarism is	4,5786	,93716
14	Research M. Course is useful	4,0377	,99293
6	Feel confident in using supportive materials	3,9623	,87791
11	Internet is easy to find information	3,8994	1,03847
9	Do not feel confident taking notes	3,7233	,96070
3	Confused about what information to include	3,4969	,94047
7	Read books & articles for research	3,4528	1,08906
8	Books & articles are easy to find information	3,4403	1,07085
10	Blending my ideas with the experts is easy	3,3962	,98095
15	Get help from the statisticians in analysing.	3,3459	1,19061
4	Locating information in the library is easy.	3,2642	1,03394
1	Have a lot of experience	3,2516	1,06122
13	Need more experience in critical reading	2,5535	1,17273
2	Writing research paper is easy.	2,3836	,99237
12	Need more experience with writing a research paper.	2,2642	1,11635

I. Analysis of knowledge of writing a research report (2)

- No significant gender differences
- No significant impact of taking Research Method Course
- ELT professionals who did not take course develop their research writing on their own by using other ways such as books, articles or seminars.

Table 3: T-test for gender of participant for Part I

Gender	N	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Female	103	3,4330	,54672	,986	157	,326
Male	56	3,3488	,44857			

Table 4: T-test for taking research methods course for Part I

Research Skills Course	N	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Received	121	3,3967	,47382	-,290	157	,772
Did not receive	38	3,4246	,63348			

I. Analysis of knowledge of writing a research report (3)

- Significant difference between staff and students'
- Participants who are taking part in teaching process actively, feel more confident and knowledgeable in terms of writing research paper.
- It is possible to claim that these participants expose to real world teaching and learning process and it enables them to think factors which affect teaching and learning process positively or negatively, reasons which cause failure in this process and solutions to this situations more critically, closely and objectively.

groups	N	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Staff	84	3,5143	,48447	2,947	157	,004
Student	75	3,2791	,52169			

I. Analysis of knowledge of writing a research report (4)

- Significant differences between the sets of BA-PhD (p <.005) and MA-PhD (p <.022).
- Participants holding PhD degree place higher rank in terms of knowledge of writing a research report than the others (MA and BA degree holders).
- Their training, experience in research make them feel that they are well-qualified to research and report their findings by writing a research report.

Condition	Condition	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
BA	MA	-,07866	,09127	,690
	PhD	-,37015(*)	,11247	,005
MA	BA	,07866	,09127	,690
	PhD	-,29149(*)	,10392	,022
PhD	BA	,37015(*)	,11247	,005
	MA	,29149(*)	,10392	,022

II. Analysis experience in academic research (1)

Part II		Mean	Std. Deviation
18	identifying a problem	3,8742	,97268
14	writing research questions.	3,7862	1,10445
22	collecting data	3,7170	1,09158
20	reviewing relevant literature.	3,6667	1,02294
13	writing research questions.	3,6604	1,01775
18	developing a plan	3,6541	,99992
17	identifying a problem	3,6164	,98597
5	conducting multisite / multiscale / large scale studies.	3,5597	1,05897
21	selecting appropriate procedures.	3,5409	,99201
15	adapting instruments	3,5031	1,07252
24	interpreting the data.	3,3522	1,12023
16	preparing my own instruments	3,2830	1,15360
12	conducting classroom centred research	3,1069	1,24571
6	conducting survey studies.	3,0566	1,17595
2	conducting quantitative research	2,9686	1,11617
1	conducting qualitative research	2,9623	1,12445
23	using software such as SPSS, MATLAB and others.	2,8868	1,22206
8	conducting experimental studies.	2,8239	1,21455
10	conducting empirical studies.	2,7610	1,19312
4	conducting correlational studies	2,7547	1,12349
3	conducting both qualitative & quantitative	2,7484	1,07308
11	conducting action research.	2,7296	1,18901
9	conducting case studies.	2,5786	1,20328
7	conducting ethnography studies.	2,0881	1,03351

- **Highest ranks:** ELT professionals believe they are experienced in constructing the skeleton of a research by identifying the problem, writing its research questions and hypothesis and collection data.
- **Lowest ranks:** ELT professionals do no prefer longitudinal studies which are especially conducted with an individual or a small group of participants due to natural difference, pressure of work or lack of motivation for such a long process.

II. Analysis experience in academic research (2)

- Significant difference between staff and students in terms of their experiences in writing a research report.
- Participants who take part in teaching process actively feel more experienced and in terms of academic research.

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Staff	84	3,4097	,64247	4,227	157	,000
Student	75	2,9544	,71579			

Table 10: T-test for gender of participants for Part II

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Female	103	3,1970	,70935	,049	157	,961
Male	56	3,1912	,72691			

- No significant gender differences
- No significant impact of taking Research Method Course

Table 11: T-test for taking research skills course for Part II

Research Skills Course	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	df	Sig.
Received	121	3,1990	,70114	,128	157	,898
Did not receive	38	3,1820	,76028			

II. Analysis experience in academic research (3)

Table 12: Post Hoc Scheffe Test Results of different degree holders for Part II

Condition	Condition	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
BA	MA	-,29576	,12047	,052
	PhD	-,79829(*)	,14845	,000
MA	BA	,29576	,12047	,052
	PhD	-,50253(*)	,13716	,002
PhD	BA	,79829(*)	,14845	,000
	MA	,50253(*)	,13716	,002

- Significant differences between the sets of BA-PhD (p <.000) and MA-PhD (p <.002).
- It can possible that their training, motivation, and involvement in academic field provide them with opportunity to take an active role in academic research and in this way that they have enough experience to research and write a research paper.

III. Analysis of choices of difficult parts of an academic paper (1)

- The most difficult part: discussion
- ELT professionals have some difficulties in compounding literature on the research topic and their results of study argumentatively in discussion part regardless age, gender, degrees, and received research methods course.

Table:15 Participants' order of difficult parts in writing a research report with all variables

The order of parts in research report	All participants	Female	Male	BA	MA	PhD	Staff	Students	Received course	Did not receive course
	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion
	Finding	Findings	Methodology	Implications	Methodology	Methodology/Findings	Methodology	Findings	Findings	Methodology
	Methodology	Literature review	Findings	Literature review	Findings	Introduction	Findings	Literature review	Literature review	Literature review
	Literature review	Implications	Literature review	Findings	Literature review	-	Literature review	Findings	Methodology	-
	Implications	Methodology	Implications	Methodology	Implications	Conclusion	Implications	Implications	Implications	Findings
	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Implications	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Implications/Introduction
	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Literature review	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion
	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract
	References	References	References	References	References	References	References	References	References	References

III. Analysis of choices of difficult parts of an academic paper (2)

Table:15 Participants' order of difficult parts in writing a research report with all variables

The order of parts in research report	All participants	Female	Male	BA	MA	PhD	Staff	Students	Received course	Did not receive course
	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion	Discussion
	Finding	Findings	Methodology	Implications	Methodology	Methodology/Findings	Methodology	Findings	Findings	Methodology
	Methodology	Literature review	Findings	Literature review	Findings	Introduction	Findings	Literature review	Literature review	Literature review
	Literature review	Implications	Literature review	Findings	Literature review	-	Literature review	Findings	Methodology	-
	Implications	Methodology	Implications	Methodology	Implications	Conclusion	Implications	Implications	Implications	Findings
	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Implications	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Implications/Introduction
	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Literature review	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion
	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract	Abstract
	References	References	References	References	References	References	References	References	References	References

- Writing references is the easiest part in reporting a research paper. Secondly, all participants appoint abstract as another easy part invariably. In the third place, all participants, except for PhD degrees, score conclusion as the third easiest part.

Analysis of interview (1)

- Interview questions: the average number annual research report, and the number of research papers they have published so far.
- Obstacles which prevent them from research.
- Encouragement/rewards for their research studies.
- Interview results show that no matter how much ELT professionals are eager to research and report it, there are some problems and obstacles which prevent them to research.
- Among them, their pressure of work, lack of motivation, professional insecurity and feeling forced to research appear in the first place.

Analysis of Interview (2)

- Research should not be done only for professional development, also for other educationalists' benefit from different experiences and develop the quality of education in language teaching.
- ELT professionals also believe that doing research is not encouraged both physically and morally in academic field.
- If ELT professionals are encouraged sufficiently, the number of research reports will increase in academic field.

Conclusion (1)

- Results show that there were significant differences between staff and students and also between PhD degrees and MA, BA degrees in terms of knowledge in reporting research and exposing to research.
- Results also show that ELT professionals in this study had enough knowledge to write a research report. Secondly, this study investigates the experiences of ELT professionals in writing a research report.
- At the same time, the results show that ELT professionals had experiences that constructs the skeleton of a research paper but they were lack of experiences in case studies or action research which take long time, long-running motivation.
- When this result is considered with interview answers, it is clear that ELT professionals' overload work could cause that they stand far from case studies or action research.

Conclusion (2)

- Furthermore, this study found out ELT professionals' order of difficult parts in writing a research report.
- Results showed that ELT professionals experienced difficulty in discussion part of writing a research report and they thought that the easiest part of writing a research report is references.
- According to ELT professionals, it is difficult to combine literature review, results of the study, analyses and the research questions of the study each other in a research report.

Suggestions (1)

- With the results, it is certain that even though ELT professionals named some basic parts of writing a research paper as difficult, and they even just a bit differ in difficult parts, they have enough knowledge and experience to write a research report.
- In that case, that is the question why there are not many studies about research in language teaching. The reasons were enlightened by the interview done with ELT professionals.
- They stated that if they were eager to research and report it, due to some reasons such as pressure of work, lack of motivation and time, feeling forced and professional insecurity they were getting far from research.

Suggestions (2)

- Moreover, it was found that being encouraged and rewarded both physically and morally would affect ELT professionals positively to do research.
- In this respect, apart from developing and enriching the curriculum of research methods course, some training related to rewarding and encouraging research attempts should be given in institutions to all ELT professionals invariably.
- The other possible solution is to lessen the work load of ELT professionals and make them have enough time to feel the need of research and realize themselves.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH