

# Teachers' Views of Research in English Language Teaching

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# Starting Points

- Most teachers agree that doing research can help them develop professionally.
- Most teachers do not do research.
- Teachers are more likely to engage in research when certain conditions exist.
- To support teacher research we need to understand and create these conditions.

# A Study

**Why?** To understand teachers' views about research and its role in their professional lives.

**How?** A survey of 505 teachers in 14 countries.

# What is Research?

A university lecturer gave a questionnaire about the use of computers in language teaching to 500 teachers. Statistics were used to analyse the questionnaires. The lecturer wrote an article about the work in an academic journal.

**94% of the teachers said this was research.**

# Research Heaven?

“it begins with a university lecturer, who gives a questionnaire to other teachers about the use of computers in language teaching. The sample – 500 people. Statistics were used, writing an article in an academic journal – **what more could you want!** “. (Turkey)

# Or Not?

"I believe the lecturer can only make an analysis and apply it to a theory and write an article. He cannot write about the actual work and situations going on in schools as he does not do it himself. I believe **practice is very important here**, especially if you want to come to some verifying, objective conclusions." (Slovenia)

# What is Research?

A teacher noticed that an activity she used in class did not work well. She thought about this after the lesson and made some notes in her diary. She tried something different in her next lesson. This time the activity was more successful.

**52% of the teachers said this was not research**

# Different Views

"I feel that it represents a basic kind of research

"This is what a teacher does almost **everyday**, isn't it? It may be a starting point of research but I would call it **reflective teaching**". (Japan)

different (lesson) . (Japan)



# What is Research?

Mid-way through a course, a teacher gave a class of 30 students a feedback form. The next day, five students handed in their completed forms. The teacher read these and used the information to decide what to do in the second part of the course.

**70% of the teachers said this was not research**

# Size & Scope

“Although possibly of some small use for the

“This is definitely not research. Data collection is invalid since they’re **just five out of thirty**”.

(UAE)

students . (Switzerland)

# 'Good' Research

1	The researcher is objective
2	Hypotheses are tested
3	Variables are controlled
4	The results give teachers ideas they can use

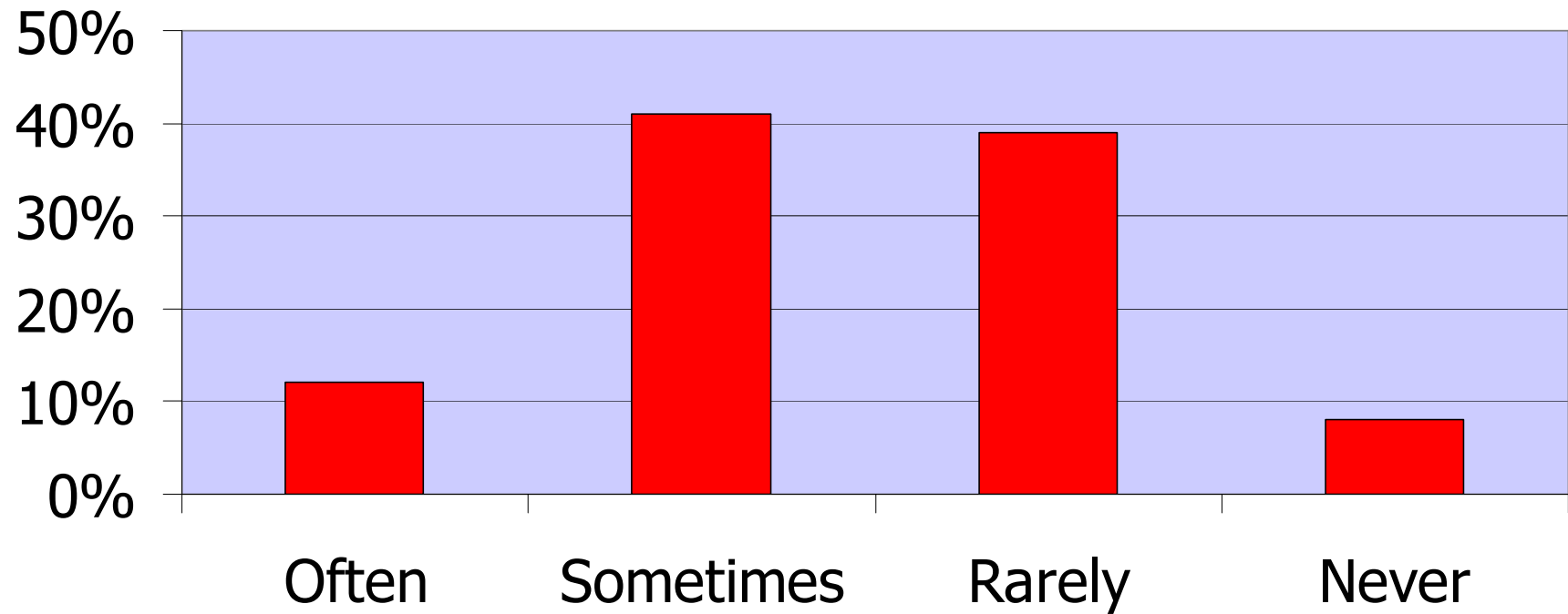
# 'Good' Research

"From what I can tell, **research is not good if it is done by anyone who is not important.** That is, your work is as good as your reputation, your university, the number of your publications. ... This study for example, is research. My polling all 125 teachers of my school to find out what they were looking for as language tasks was an annoyance to all concerned, and NOBODY cared about it".

# Reading Research

Often	15.6%
Sometimes	51.9%
Rarely	28.7%
Never	3.8%

## How often do you do research?



# Reasons for Doing Research

- |  |
|--|
| ■ to find better ways of teaching            |
| ■ to solve problems in my teaching           |
| ■ it is good for my professional development |
| ■ I enjoy it                                 |
| ■ It will help me get a promotion            |
| ■ my employer expects me to                  |

# Reasons for Not Doing Research

	Ranking
■ I do not have time to do research.	1 <sup>st</sup>
■ Most of my colleagues do not do research.	2 <sup>nd</sup>
■ I do not know enough about research methods	3 <sup>rd</sup>
■ My job is to teach not to do research.	4 <sup>th</sup>
■ I need someone to advise me but no one is available.	5 <sup>th</sup>



# Reasons for Not Doing Research

"I am about to retire from paid work and have no impetus to do research at present". (Australia)

# Research Culture

	Agree
Teachers feel that doing research is an important part of their job.	41%
Time for doing research is built into teachers' workloads	38%

# Conditions for Teacher Research

Awareness

Choice

Recognition

Motivation

Mentoring

Community

Knowledge

Resources

Dissemination  
Potential

Skills

Expectations

Stability

# Some Conclusions

- Teacher research is a **challenging** activity.
- It involves **planned, systematic, purposeful data collection, analysis and sharing**.
- Its primary purpose is understanding and improving teaching and learning **in the teacher's context**.
- Teacher research is more likely when certain **conditions** exist.

# Some Conclusions

- Identifying and understanding these conditions is important if we want to promote teacher research.
- These conditions cover both factors internal to teachers and those which are external.
- The challenges of teacher research may be best addressed collaboratively and at a departmental or institutional level.
- When appropriate conditions exist, the rewards are sustained, productive teacher research and professional development.

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