

On doing action research on/for my own teaching

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Abstract:

In this reflective piece, I share why I am so passionate about doing and promoting action research. I include a recent example coming from my own practice to make the writing more vivid and personal. I share a few tips that have worked for me

1. Introduction

I embraced action research (AR), minimally defined as research carried out by teachers to reflect on and enhance their practice (see also Burns & Dikilitas, 2025), when I was working full time as a teacher of English in secondary schools in Argentina, where I come from. I would use AR to make a direct impact on my learners, and make evidence-supported pedagogical decisions based on my own context.

2. An example

At Moray House School of Education and Sport (University of Edinburgh), I lead a mandatory course called Second Language Teaching Curriculum (MSc TESOL). When I became leader of the course, I first noted that it needed a common thread. Hence, I decided to redesign it around the notion of teacher agency (see definitions in Banegas et al., 2024) as I wanted my students to be in charge of their teaching. I wished to understand whether the focus on teacher agency proved beneficial to the students. With that aim in mind, I followed these steps:



- In one page, I drafted the aims of my AR, how I was planning to collect evidence, and what I needed to consider when implementing the course.
- I submitted an ethical application to my department before the course started.
- Once I obtained ethical clearance, I designed different course tasks that were aimed at helping me gather information about whether the course could help students understand teacher agency.
- When the course started, I communicated to the students that I would be merging teaching and researching the course to understand the effects of a change in it. I then asked students whether they would be happy to be part of the course by allowing me to use their answers to course tasks and assignments.

3. Conclusion

Here are some tips that have worked for me:

- Have a clear goal through which research is at the service of practice.
- Find information about what you wish to change in your practice.
- Keep a reflective attitude.
- Translate the goal into doable actions.
- Involve students and colleagues.
- Plan tasks with a dual educational-research purpose (e.g., an opinion activity that can also work as data for the AR)
- Keep a journal to document beliefs, situations, thoughts, concerns, etc.
- Be ready to make changes to your project in response to contextual circumstances.
- Share your AR outcomes with colleagues.
- Remain positive and practical.

References

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- Burns, A., & Dikilitas, K. (Eds.). (2025). *The Routledge handbook of language teacher action research*. Routledge.



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