

Exploring the Interplay between Iranian EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Research and their Academic Degrees

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the relationship between English language instructors' conceptions of research holding different academic degrees. To this end, from the population of teachers teaching in different EFL contexts both at Islamic Azad and state universities in Mazandaran province, Iran, a sample of fifty teachers were selected based on a purposive sampling method comprising 20 B.A., 20 M.A., and 10 PhD instructors respectively. To measure the targeted groups' attitude concerning the necessity of research for EFL instructors teaching in various academic settings, Borg's (2009) questionnaire was utilized. The prompts on the questionnaire represented different scenarios such as types of research, characteristics of high-quality research, teachers' opinions about necessity of research in academic environments, the need for teachers' engagement in reading related research studies and their commitment to conducting research, as well as their research profile over the last five years. The analysis and interpretation of the obtained data revealed that there was a significant difference among the samples under investigation in regard with their attitudes about the pre-specified scenarios addressed by the questionnaire. The results indicated that the EFL instructors' type of academic degree and their views about the need for teachers to have their hands on research were highly correlated and statistically significant. Notably, the findings transpired that there was a great need for raising EFL instructors' awareness and knowledge of research in foreign language teaching because the teaching self can turn into a meaningful process through teachers' direct involvement in research.

Keywords: *Academic degree, High-quality research, Teachers' perceptions, Teachers' self*

Introduction

Acquiring a second or a foreign language is a complicated process. It is a complicated process because different fields such as psychology, sociology, and linguistics. A language is viewed as a means to convey meaning, to transfer message and to express beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. The

history of language teaching and learning had gone through paradigm shifts in different fields of language testing, methodology, and curriculum. The appropriate methods, approaches and curriculum should be considered to facilitate the learning process. For carrying out this process, a research can be an appropriate and efficient way to create a relationship between theories, approaches and what happens in a classroom. Long (1983) acknowledged reason for a classroom research. He posited that research provides a great deal of information about how language instruction is conducted; and how a classroom research can develop self-monitoring by classroom practitioners. According to Godin (2003), the term research is an academic endeavor which deeply rooted in science. It is a systematic procedure to find answer for the questions. It replaced a number of the categories such as "investigation" and "inquiry". Godin declares that research is a useful and applicable tool for developing teaching and learning process. He mentions that it should be the cornerstone of education, universities and schools rather than an activity conducted on an educational setting by the outsiders. Rose (2002) mentions that although research can aid teachers improve the educational process, it is assumed to be neglected among teachers. Furthermore, Rose criticizes that "there is a widening gulf between researchers and classroom practitioners, and research often fails to focus on the real life experiences of most teachers" (p. 44). It may be based on teachers' view about doing research in the classroom.

In the area of English language teaching, some studies have been carried out to explore teachers' conception of research. McDonough and McDonough (1990) conducted a survey among English teachers to probe their conception of research. They conclude that teachers did not engage in research because there was not a relationship between teaching and researching among teachers' practices. Similarly, Brown, Knowles, Murray, Neu, and Violland-Sanchez (1992) conduct a study about the perceptions of teachers about educational research. The findings indicated that teachers were not involved in research because it was perceived that there is a big gap between researchers' and teachers' roles. This finding echoed McNamara (2002) who found that teachers' workload impeded productivity in research in his study. Similarly, Everton, Galton, and Pell (2002) probed the conceptions held by British teachers' views about research and asked them how research influenced their teaching. Everton et al. (2002) argued that the subjects acknowledged the influential effects of research on different aspects of their professional practice. More precisely, they believe that research promotes their perceptions about teaching. A similar study conducted by Kutlay (2013) in Turkey revealed that Turkish ELT teachers have a basic view regarding research. They believed that research should be explicit, systematic. The findings should be generalizable from a research context to other contexts. Similarly, Borg and Alshumaimeri (2012) conducted a study among Saudi Arabian teachers. The findings reported their technical perspective about research. Most of them were aware of the originality of research. Another study was investigated by Bills (2004) whose study on academic supervisors' perspectives of research released a similar result. Similar tensions were also reported by Barkhuizen (2009) who revealed that Chinese EFL teachers focused on the priority of practical and professional concerns as an important reason in doing a research. In the same vein, Nassaji (2012) reported that some teachers maintained that it is important to know about

research since it can pave the ground for their teaching practice. However, many teachers reported that the knowledge from teaching experience is more fruitful than the knowledge they gain from research. Within the EFL context of Iran a number of researchers (Mehrani & Khodi, 2014; Mirhosseini & Samar 2015; Samar, Mehrani, & Kiyani, 2012) probed Iranian EFL teachers' tendency toward reading or conducting research. These studies have focused on the ideological foundation and the content of Iranian research studies.

Literature Review

What is a Research?

The word "research" is applied to describe a number of similar and often overlapping activities involving a search for information and is done in a small set of logical step. Research has traditionally been recognized as an academic endeavor with an emphasis on rigorous methodology. Research is carried out by teachers, on the other hand, is perceived and valued in various and diverse manners. Different scholars made arguments about the nature of a research. Procter (1978) defines research as a serious study of a subject matter to find out new facts or to test new ideas. According to Stenhouse (1981), research is defined as "systematic self-critical inquiry" (p. 103). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) define research as a systematic and purposeful inquiry about anything that happens related to teaching and learning in a classroom environment as well as a tool to construct knowledge through interaction which in turn may provide a path for teachers for a more influential role in various contexts. Brown (2009) believes that research is based on knowledge and knowledge is based on facts. Facts are then based on research. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) define research as the steps taken to collect and analyze information to increase one's understanding of a topic or an issue. They mention that conducting a research involves the following steps: a. Pose a question, b. collect data to answer the question, and c. Present an answer to the question.

Who is a Teacher-Researcher?

Teacher-research has a great and high place in the educational arena. Rust (2009) posits that teacher-research is viewed as a bridge connecting research, practice, and education policy. Based on this view, engaging teachers as researchers in a practical way to construct knowledge and enhance classroom practice. Nunan (1997) refers to teacher-researcher in TESOL and cites some standards to be applied in research norms. Nunan mentions that for research norms the ethical consideration should be taken into an account, threads to internal and external reliability and validity should be minimized for data collection, research should allow for replication and critics.

From the past perspective, teachers and researchers were regarded to be different. Teachers are considered to be practice-based while researchers were theory-based. This view has been challenged recently because they are regarded as practitioners who should implement the research findings. Stenhouse (1981) posits that teachers cannot rely on theory without testing it in the educational setting because off the context-bound nature of many research. Authors in the

field propose action research as a type of research by practitioners which can promote professional development. Nunan and Baily (2009) assert that action research is conducted principally by the practitioners who are best placed to change and promote what goes on in the classroom, and aim to probe some aspects of their own practice. They assert the characteristics of action research as dynamic, non-linear, recursive, and cyclical which seeks to solve a problem by teachers as the agents and source of educational reform. Teacher-research is important for knowledge construction, classroom improvement, and educational reform.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) interpreted Knowledge construction as theory building. In teacher-research, theory building is achieved through interpretation and analysis of data constructed through observation of classroom behaviors. Hatch, Greer, and Bailey (2006) point out research helps teachers improve the pedagogical knowledge, depend on the understanding of their classroom, and expands their teaching repertoires.

Classroom improvement is the second advantage of teacher-research after knowledge construction. Kumaravadivelu (2001) states that practitioners are more possibly to start changes in the way they teach through research. Hatch et al., (2006) point out knowledge constructed by a teacher researcher should be utilized to affect learners' output. It means that teacher-research brings teachers to stand as experts in their classroom, utilizing their knowledge to enhance learning (Atay, 2008). Thus, teacher-researchers' attempts are dedicated to connecting theory to practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). In few words, the knowledge developed by teachers from their research serves primarily to solve problems they are experiencing on a daily basis (Firkins & Wong, 2005).

Another advantage of teacher research is educational reform. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) argue that teacher-research gives prominent power to the teacher to reform in schools. It can be a way to invite teachers to play the role of change agents by using their research findings. Wilhelm (2009) states that School curricula will be dealt with continuous revisions based on classroom inquiry output. Accordingly, there will be no more standard curricula but dynamic ones. Christianakis (2008) states that "teacher research is a form of emancipation to break the hierarchy and hegemony that place teachers at the bottom position in the educational system" (p. 102). Similarly, Firkins and Wong (2005) acknowledge that teacher research assists to bridge the knowledge gap between teachers and educational decision makers.

This Study

Reviewing L2 professional literature (Allison & Carey, 2007; McDonough & McDonough, 1990; McNamara, 2002) reveals that there is a gap between theory and practice. This can be associated with instructors' conceptions about doing research. Therefore, conceptions of teachers in teaching play an important role in language teaching and learning. On the other hand, learners, teachers, and scholars encounter different situations and educational problems as like as the gap between theory and practice in language teaching and learning and also the teachers and researchers' attitudes towards research (Watkins, 2006). To solve these problems, research is an efficient and advantageous tool and is a way to link between practice and theory (Shekedi, 1998).

The present study embarks upon probing Iranian teachers' perception of teaching. Since few studies have been conducted in EFL setting in Iran; the present was an attempt to investigate EFL instructors' conception of research according to their academic degree. Probably, different academic degrees (B.A., M.A., and Ph.D.) can be another factor in changing teachers' conception in doing research. More precisely, the main purposes of this study are as what follows: a) to find out the conception of English language instructors about carrying out research at different academic degrees b) to examine the possible difference of English language instructors' conceptions with different academic degrees in carrying out research. Accordingly, the following research questions are to be addressed:

RQ₁: Is there any significant difference between English instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing research?

RQ₂: What are EFL instructors' concepts of research according to their academic degrees?

RQ₃: What are EFL instructors' opinions toward the characteristics of a high-quality research?

RQ₄: there any significant between EFL instructors' opinions toward the characteristics of a high-quality research?

Method

Participants

In this study, the researcher intended to explore English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees. The participants of this study consisted of 50 English language instructors at three academic degrees, i.e., B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. The first group comprised of 20 B.A. instructors (8 males, 12 females) in an EFL language institute. Their age ranged from 23 to 42 with teaching English language experience from 2 to 20 years at different high schools. The second group comprised of 20 M.A. (10 males, 10 females) in an EFL language institute. Their age ranged from 27 to 48 with teaching English language experience from 5 to 23 years. Twelve teachers had experience in teaching high schools. The third group was 10 Ph.D. instructors in the university. Their experience was about 6 to 25 years in language teaching. Their age ranged 32- 48. Seven instructors were male and 3 instructors will be female. They will be chosen in a convenient sampling (quantitative method). The participants have been selected from different institutes and universities. The whole participants' first language was Persian.

Table 1

Participants' Demographic information

Type of Participants	Number	Age range	First Language
B.A.	20	23-42	Persian
M.A.	20	27-48	Persian
Ph.D.	10	32-48	Persian
Total	50	23-48	

Instrumentations

Research Conceptions Questionnaire

English Language instructors' conceptions of research questionnaire developed by Borg (2009). This questionnaire will be adopted to collect the data. The questionnaire comprised six sections: The first section, the different scenarios about the instructors' views about research will be asked. This part involves 10 scenarios and teachers will be asked and contains a scale from "definitely not research" to "definitely research". In the second part, 11 characteristics of a high-quality research will be asked. This section contains a scale from "unimportant" to "very important". In the third section of this questionnaire, some statements are given to participants to examine their opinions about the general attitude toward research in their academic settings. In the fourth section, teachers will be asked to rate their engagement in reading a research paper. This section includes 3 sub-sections. In the first sub-section, the participants will express their ideas to the researcher about reading published language teaching research based on the scale from "never" to "often". In the second sub-section, the different sources of published language teaching research will be asked and the participants will answer. In the third sub-section, the participants will state their ideas about the influence of research on their research. In section five, it aims to note instructors' commitment to conduct a research along with the justifications. The last section screens items requesting demographic information. For piloting this questionnaire, it was spread out among 10 EFL learners in two academic degrees (B.A. and M.A.). The reliability coefficient of English Language instructors' conceptions of research questionnaire is 0/78 that is based on Alfa Cronbach that indicates high and acceptable reliability coefficient. This questionnaire has been validated in the Iranian context and in the Tabatabaei and Nazem's study (2013).

Data Collection Procedure

This research embarks upon investigating English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees, to probe their attitude, the conception three levels will be sought. More precisely, 20 B.A., 20 M.A., 10 PhD. instructors were selected. EFL instructors were selected based on the available convenient sampling. Approximately, a sum of 50 participants was considered for the subject pool of the present study. In so doing, as the first step, the whole participants were informed the main objectives orally thoroughly. This was done to probe their attitudes toward research. In so doing, English language instructors' conceptions of research questionnaire developed by Borg (2009a) will be utilized. The survey questionnaire aimed to tap the participants' conception to uncover what research means to them and what role it plays in their life as professional English language teacher.

The questionnaire comprised six sections: Firstly, the different scenarios about the instructors' views about research were asked. This part included 10 scenarios and teachers were asked and included a scale from "definitely not research" to "definitely research". In the second part, 11 characteristics of a high-quality research were asked. This section involved a scale from "unimportant" to "very important". In the third section of this questionnaire, some statements were given to participants to examine their opinions about the general attitude toward research in their academic settings. In the fourth section, teachers were asked to rate their engagement in

reading the research. This section included 3 sub-sections. In the first sub-section, the participants expressed their ideas about reading published language teaching research based on the scale from "never" to "often". In the second sub-section, the different sources of published language teaching research were asked and the participants answered. In the third sub-section, the participants stated their ideas about the influence of reading the academic journal on their reading. In section five, it aimed at reporting instructors' commitment to do a research along with the justifications. The last section screened items requesting demographic information. The researcher will explain the different sections of a questionnaire to the participants and they will have 30 minutes to fill this questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed via email and print format. After collecting the data, it was run in the SPSS version 21 to seek their attitude toward research.

Results

To probe the first null-hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing a research a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The following Table indicates the descriptive statistics of English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing research.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of English language instructors' conceptions of research

Conceptions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
BA	20	22.6500	3.97724	.88934	20.7886	24.5114	16.00	30.00
MA	20	28.9000	2.84513	.63619	27.5684	30.2316	22.00	34.00
PhD	10	33.6000	2.45855	.77746	31.8413	35.3587	30.00	38.00
Total	50	27.3400	5.32461	.75301	25.8268	28.8532	16.00	38.00

As indicated in Table 2 the mean of three groups had a different mean score. More precisely, English language instructors at BA level had a mean score of 22.65 and SD=3.97, MA instructors has the mean score of 28.90 and SD= 2.8 and instructors with a Ph.D. degree had the mean of 33.60 and SD+ 5.32. To examine whether the variance in the scores is the same for each of the three groups, Levene's test for homogeneity of the variances was run. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	Df1	Df2	Df3
2.800	2	47	.071

Table 3 reveals that the sig. value is greater than .05 (Sig.>.05); thus, there is not a significant difference in the mean score on dependent variable for the three groups. In order to probe if the

three groups conceptions of research are difference a one -way ANOVA was run. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

One-way ANOVA for the instructors' conceptions of research

Conceptions	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	880.470	2	440.235	40.670	.000
Within Groups	508.750	47	10.824		
Total	1389.220	49			

As indicted in Table 4, the sig. value is less than .05, and then there is a significant difference somewhere among the mean scores on the dependent variables for the English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing research. In order to tap where the differences among the groups occur, the posttest Scheffe test was run for the multiple comparisons. The results are presented in the following Tables (Table 5 & 6).

Table 5

Multiple Comparisons Teachers' Conceptions of Research at Different Academic Degrees

(I) Degrees	(J) Degrees	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
BA	MA	-6.25000*	1.04041	.000	-8.8800	-3.6200
	PhD	-10.95000*	1.27423	.000	-14.1711	-7.7289
MA	BA	6.25000*	1.04041	.000	3.6200	8.8800
	PhD	-4.70000*	1.27423	.003	-7.9211	-1.4789
PhD	BA	10.95000*	1.27423	.000	7.7289	14.1711
	MA	4.70000*	1.27423	.003	1.4789	7.9211

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As Table 5 indicates, there are significant main effects for all three groups: the effects of both factors are significant beyond the .05 level. This Table illustrates, there is a significant difference among the groups. These results reject the first null hypothesis and confirm that there is a significant difference between English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing research.

Table 6

Homogeneous Subset for the EFL Instructors' Conceptions

Scheffe ^{a,b}				
Degrees	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
BA	20	22.6500		
MA	20		28.9000	
PhD	10			33.6000
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.; a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 15.000.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Table 6 indicates the results Duncan homogenous subset. As indicated in the Table, there is a significant difference between English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing research. Figure 1 indicates the means plot for the better schematic representation.

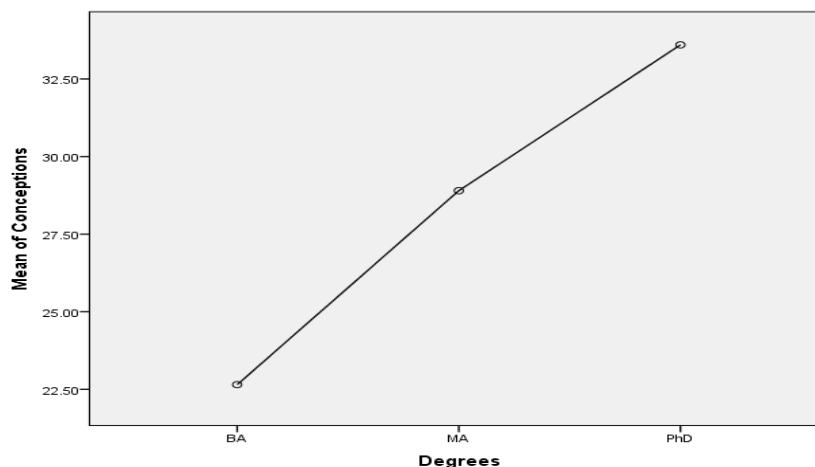


Figure 1. The means plots for the conceptions of research at different academic degree

As indicated in the means plot, instructors with the Ph.D. degree had the highest conception in doing research. In order to probe the second research question stating EFL instructors' concepts of research according to their academic degrees, English language instructors' conceptions of research questionnaire were utilized. Three groups of instructors, 20 BA, 20 MA, and 10 Ph.D., were asked to fill up section one in the questionnaire. This section aimed to uncover their perceptions on the activity types called research. There was no right or wrong answers. They were requested to read each description and choose one answer to determine to what extent they perceive the activity described is an instance of a research. The following Table provides a demonstration of EFL instructors' responses to each statement in the questionnaire for their conception of research.

Table 7

Instructor's conceptions of doing a research

Item	DNR	PNR	PR	DR
1	1 2%	6 12%	21 42%	17 34%
2	1 2%	2 5%	15 30%	21 42%
3	0	6 12%	19 38%	16 32%
4	0	12 24%	11 22%	22 44%
5	2 5%	9 18%	22 44%	10 20%
6	1	10	12	22

	2%	20%	24%	44%
7	1 22%	9 18%	24 48%	12 24%
8	1 2%	5 1%	18 36%	17 34%
9	0	12 24%	15 30%	18 36%
10	0	6 12%	17 34%	21 42%
11	1 2%	7 14%	18 36%	17 34%

1. DNR: Definitely not research; 2. PNR: Probably not research; 3.PR: Probably research; 4. DR: Definitely research

The result from Table 6 indicates that 42% of instructors consider the following activity as probable research. The item reflects an activity that a teacher 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.

Table 8

EFL instructors' Opinions about the General Attitude to Research

Item	SD	D	DN	Agree	SA
1	8 16%	28 53%	1 2%	13 26%	0
2	0	14 28%	24 48%	11 22%	0
3	24 48%	13 26%	0	13 26%	0 18%
4	0	19 38%	20 40%	11 22%	0
5	0 5%	11 22%	13 26%	16 32%	0
6	0 2%	10 20%	13 26%	27 54%	0
7	1 22%	8 16%	25 50%	16 32%	0
8	1 2%	15 30%	23 46%	9 18%	2 18%
9	0	12 24%	29 58%	9 18%	0

1. SD= Strongly agree; 2. D= Disagree 3. DK= Don't know 4. I= A= Agree; 5. SA= Strongly agree

This time the activity was more successful. 42% considers the following item as definitely a research. This definite research happens when a teacher reads about a new approach to teaching writing and settles on a plan of action for incorporating it in his class over a two-week interval. He video recorded some of his lessons and collected samples of learners' written work. He looked over this information then yields the findings to his colleagues at a staff meeting. 38 % consider item three as probably research. More precisely, a teacher was doing an MA course. She read a number of papers and books in grammar teaching for writing an essay in which she delved

into the main issues in those readings. 44% maintain that A university lecturer gave a questionnaire about the use of computers in language teaching to 500 teachers can be definitely a research. Thirty-six percent believed that a teacher wants his students to write an essay entitled how do you motivate young learners for learning the English language. After reading the assignments the students made up their minds to write an article on the teacher's ideas about motivation can be definitely a research. To investigate the third research question stating "What are EFL instructors' opinions about the general attitude to research?" they were asked to fill out the section three of English language instructors' conceptions of research questionnaire. The following Table shows the result of EFL instructors' opinions about the general attitude to research.

As indicated in the above Table, 32% of instructors agree that teachers have an opportunity to learn about research and 54% reported that teacher talks about research. The above Table also indicate that 53% of instructors were disagree for the item one. This indicates that teachers do not research by themselves. In addition, majority of the respondent, 48%, reported that teachers do not have access to books and journal. In order to check the last null-hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference among EFL instructors' opinions toward the characteristics of a high-quality research, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The following Table indicates the descriptive statistics of English language instructors' conceptions of quality of a good research.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of English Language Instructors' Opinion about the Quality of a Good Research

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
BA	20	19.7500	4.84361	1.08306	17.4831	22.0169	11.00	30.00
MA	20	27.3000	4.68031	1.04655	25.1095	29.4905	18.00	34.00
Ph.D.	10	35.2000	4.04969	1.28062	32.3030	38.0970	30.00	45.00
Total	50	25.8600	7.38175	1.04394	23.7621	27.9579	11.00	45.00

As indicated in Table 6 the mean of three groups had different mean score. More specifically, English language instructors reported the following mean respectively, BA $X=19.75$ and $SD=4.84$, MA instructors $X=28.90$; $SD= 2.8$, and Ph.D. instructors $X= 35.20$; $SD= 4.04$, degree had the mean of 33.60 and $SD= 5.32$. In order to check whether the variance in the scores is the same for each of the three groups, Levene's test for homogeneity of the variances was ran. The results are illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10

Test of Homogeneity of Variances for the quality of good research

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.686	2	47	.509

As indicated in the Table the sig. value is greater than .05 (Sig.>.05) then there is not a significant difference among the mean score on dependent variable for the three groups. In order to probe if the three groups conceptions of research are difference a one-way ANOVA was run. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

One-way ANOVA for the Instructors' Conceptions of Research

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1660.470	2	830.235	38.652	.000
Within Groups	1009.550	47	21.480		
Total	2670.020	49			

As indicted in Table 8, the sig. value is less than .05, then there is a significant difference somewhere among the mean scores on the dependent variables for English language instructors' conceptions of quality of good research. In order to tap where the differences among the groups occur, the posttest Scheffe test was run for the multiple comparisons. The results are presented in the following Tables (Tables 12 & 13).

Table 12

Multiple Comparisons English Language Instructors' Conceptions of the Quality of Good Research

(I) Degrees	(J) Degrees	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
BA	MA	-7.55000*	1.46560	.000	-11.0969	-4.0031
	Phd	-15.45000*	1.79498	.000	-19.7941	-11.1059
MA	BA	7.55000*	1.46560	.000	4.0031	11.0969
	Phd	-7.90000*	1.79498	.000	-12.2441	-3.5559
Phd	BA	15.45000*	1.79498	.000	11.1059	19.7941
	MA	7.90000*	1.79498	.000	3.5559	12.2441

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As Table 12 indicates, there are significant main effects for all three groups: the effects of both factors are significant beyond the .05 level. This Table illustrates, there is a significant difference among the groups. These results reject the second null-hypothesis and confirm that there is significant difference between EFL instructors' opinions toward the characteristics of a high-quality research.

Table 13 indicates the results Duncan homogenous subset. As indicated in the Table, there is significant difference between English language instructors' conceptions of instructors for the quality of good research. Figure 2 presents the means plot for the better schematic representation.

Table 13

Homogeneous Subset for a high-quality Research

Tukey HSD ^{a,b}

Degrees	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
BA	20	19.7500		
MA	20		27.3000	
PhD	10			35.2000
Sig.		1.000	1.000	1.000
Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.				
a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 15.000.				
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.				

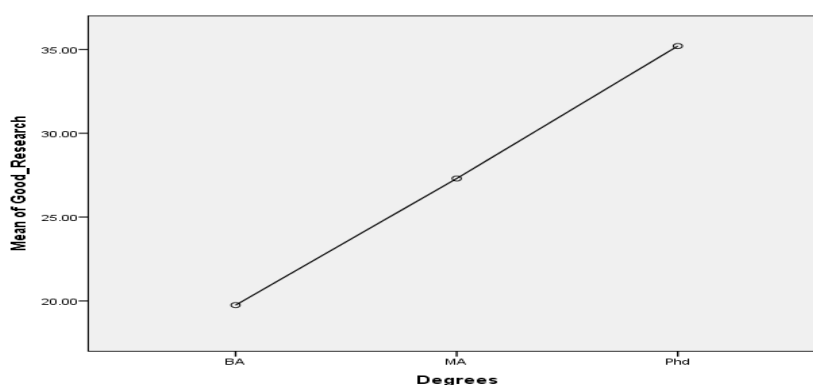


Figure 2. The means plots for the quality of good research

Discussion

The present study was an effort to provide more insights into the English language instructors' views of research at different academic degrees. The role of academic research in facilitating language teaching, learning, solving language learners' problems and so on is significant. Doing academic research can be based on the conceptions of the teachers. Therefore, conceptions of teachers in teaching play an important role in language teaching and learning. Generally, the perceptions of teachers in research are led by the scientific concepts like as the testing of hypotheses, gathering a lot of information, carrying out statistical analysis, the objectivity of the investigator. However, teachers reported that they were not self-assured regarding the significance of dissemination of research results. This is what Borg (2009) postulates as crucial factors of a research. Sharing the findings with colleagues should also be taken into account as making it public. It appears that the gap between practice and research is obvious in the conceptions as teachers rated using results to many ELT contexts. This finding can be interpreted in two ways. One possible elaboration is the belief that research is for carrying out science not for practice. Another interpretation can engage the issue of generalizability of the findings. If the latter is the case, teachers are quite aware of the fact that one study cannot explain every context and it does not have to do so. Burton (1998) maintains that in the tradition of a scientific research tradition, it should be clear, well-ordered, and methodical. In addition, the results should be generalizable in a similar context (Yin, 1993). In the first research question, the significant

difference between English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees in doing research a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The analysis of this question showed that there was no significant difference among three groups. It means that there was a significant difference in the conception of doing research among three groups B.A., M.A., and Ph. D. The outcome of this research question is consistent with Kutlay's (2013) study. She also pointed out although instructor's conceptions are important in doing research, other reasons such as teachers' instruments, knowledge, readiness and so on. Also, another important characteristic can be the experience of the teachers in the classroom context.

The second research question attempted to observe EFL instructors' concepts of research according to their academic degrees. The result indicated that 42% of instructors consider the following activity as probable research. The item reflects an activity that a teacher used in the class did not work well. 42% considers the following item as definitely a research. This definite research happens when a teacher read about a new approach to teaching writing and decided to try it out in his class over a period of two weeks. It is noticeable that the first step teachers' conception of research is to foster learners' motivation for conducting and reading research studies. Therefore, it is probable to raise teachers' awareness about research types with an emphasis on research designs which are easier to conduct. Of course, this does not mean that the quality should be sacrificed. Essential factors mentioned earlier are essential for research. As Nunan (1997) points out the basic difference should be not whether an activity is practitioner research or regular research but whether it is good research or poor research. The third question tried to answer the EFL instructors' opinions about the general attitude to research. The result showed that 32% of instructors agree that teachers have the opportunity to learn about research and 54% reported that teacher talks about research. Also, it indicates that 53% of the instructors disagreed for the item one. This indicates that teachers do not research by themselves. Furthermore, the majority of the respondent, 48%, reported that teachers do not have access to books and journal. The result of this question supports Igwebuiko, Okandeji, and Ekwevugbe's (2012) study. The last question attempted to examine the significant difference among EFL instructors' opinions toward the characteristics of a good-quality research. The result of this question indicated that there are significant main effects for all three groups: the effects of both factors are significant beyond the .05 level. This Table illustrates, there is a significant difference among the groups. These results reject the second null-hypothesis and confirm that there is a significant difference between EFL instructors' opinions toward the features of a high-quality research. The result of this question corresponds with Tabatabaei and Nazem (2013). They state that there was a significant difference among language instructors in giving opinions toward the characteristics of a high-quality research. It means that language instructors with high academic degrees have more positive opinions than other instructors. Ultimately, it can be stated that two facets were examined in the study based on research engagement. The first facet was research engagement by reading research. A great number of teachers announced that they read academic journals infrequently. Those who sometimes read academic papers maintained that they read on line research via the internet rather than books and academic journals.

Conclusion

This study investigated the English language instructors' conceptions of research at different academic degrees. Such studies shed lights the understanding that is necessary for decision making which can fill the gap between theory and practice. The findings reveal that some attitudinal, conceptual, and procedural building blockshinder teachers to be research engaged. Therefore, one straightforward conclusion for the present study teacher trainers should expand language teachers understanding of the principles of research by making them aware of different research types and designs. L2 professional literatureenriched with the arguments in favor of teacher research and the advantages it brings both to the teacher himself/herself and to the classroom practices. This study reveals that the main requirements for teachers' awareness and their conception of research should be revisited. As Allwright (1997) recommended that the research should be replaced by a research perspective that stresses local understandings rather than universal truths. Teachers should be motivated to reflect on their practices with the help of action research and essential support should be provided by the administration. Such empirical studies can expand the conceptions of teacher developers and language decision makers to incorporate research and practice, raise teacher awareness, and motivate action research as well as teachers' research engagement.

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