

Teachers' Insight on the Urgency of Research in ELT on the Excellence of English Learning

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ABSTRACT

To improve the quality of learning, teachers must have advanced knowledge of educational research. The purpose of this research is to investigate English teachers' insights on the importance of research in English Language Teaching and its impact on the excellence of English language learning. The survey method with a quantitative approach and Focus Group Discussion were applied in this study. The population in this research were EFL teachers from junior high schools and senior high schools in South Sulawesi. The survey was conducted by sending online questionnaires to 50 English teachers randomly selected as research samples. Only those with 10 years or more teaching experience were included in the sample. The survey data were analyzed by using descriptive statistical technique. Furthermore, 5 of those 50 teachers with master (S2) qualification were involved in the FGD to gain in-depth understanding. The survey results indicate that most respondents (72,2%) understand the concept of educational research in ELT. In term of interest in research activities, 85% respondents show high interest. However, the level of involvement in research activities varies. The FGD results identify resource limitations and resistance to innovation as challenges in integrating scientific research. Evaluation with various modes is considered important to measure the effectiveness of integrating research findings in ELT into English language learning practices. Overall, the research-based learning approach is received positively among teachers. However, practical challenges need to be addressed to increase teacher engagement in research, and integrate educational research into teaching activities.

Keywords: *educational research; English language learning; research in ELT; research-based learning; teachers' insight*

Introduction

Research in the field of education in an effort to improve the quality of teaching is increasing globally (Ippolito, 2021; Jao et al., 2022; Zubanova et al., 2021), and this is a special concern in the field of education. The concept of teacher professionalism must be strengthened to shape the teacher's identity as a professional educator (Roliak, 2020). Understanding about teacher professionalism will have an impact on changes in the way of thinking and acting, especially in three areas, namely teaching, research, and collaboration (Martínez, 2021).

Research in ELT is urgent to be chosen as a research topic because research is an important foundation in improving the quality of English language teaching. Many ELT teachers are not yet fully aware of the important role of research in addressing classroom learning challenges (Defianty & Wilson, 2024; Hajizadeh

et al., 2023; Lowe, 2020). With a good understanding of the urgency of research, teachers can design more effective and evidence-based teaching strategies (Cabaroğlu & Öz, 2023; Hınız & Çelik, 2024). Therefore, it is important to explore the extent to which teachers aware of the role of research in ELT practice.

Teachers should develop themselves in seven areas: pedagogical knowledge, digital competence, professional content understanding, communication skills, cross-disciplinary knowledge, technologies in learning, and materials design (Tsortanidou et al., 2021; Venn et al., 2020). Meanwhile, teacher interest consists of four concepts: pedagogy, didactics, subjects, and research (Leung, 2023; López-Gopar et al., 2022). Furthermore, at the policy level, there is a general claim that teacher education should be research-based (Escalié et al., 2023; Özmütlu, 2022).

Teacher training institutions basically

have the assumption that research conducted by educational practitioners makes an important contribution to the development of teacher professionalism, school growth, and the development of knowledge (Alda et al., 2020) which can be applied widely. The curriculum in teacher education program needs to be designed in such a way, especially in the research aspect, that it produces meaningful learning for students (Lu & Lin, 2025; Murphy & Parker, 2022). Teacher education program should focus on classroom action research and research-based learning strategies to produce teachers who are skilled in teaching and evaluating the learners' learning progress (Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2023; Perines, 2021). In addition, lecturers at teacher training institutions are also seen as potential intermediaries who are able to bridge the gap between research and learning practices, and accelerate the integration of the recent research results in the field of education (Griffioen, 2022; Kılınç, 2024).

In integrating research findings in the field of education, particularly in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), English teachers face procedural problems in completing research projects. This confirms that the alignment of teacher education programs that include elements of advanced knowledge in the field of research is very necessary to improve the quality of learning (Anor, 2024; Yun & Crippen, 2024). In addition, adequate teaching skills significantly influence the implementation of teaching strategies, managing classes, and activating students in every learning activity (AL-Sinani & Al Taher, 2023).

Research findings on ELT in particular are also useful for providing teachers with experience in bridging the perceived gap between theoretical knowledge and practical context (Tarrayo, 2021). Teachers can strengthen their teaching adaptation skills through lesson planning, implementing teaching in authentic situations using teaching scenarios, and feedback from qualified supervisors, and then can conduct structured reflection through repeated teaching practice (Chang et al., 2024). In practice, teachers are encouraged to allocate their attention to students' problems and teaching content to enhance students' learning experiences (Lähdesmäki & Maunula, 2022).

Furthermore, an excellent teaching and learning process can be realized through the use of technology-assisted active learning strategy (An et al., 2021; Yu & Trainin, 2022). Teachers' decisions to implement certain learning designs

and technology integrations influence teaching practices and learning performance (Bahari, 2022). The quality of education and learning experiences can be increased through the implementation of research-based teaching (Koski et al., 2023; Wang, 2022).

However, in practice, not all teachers have the ability to connect theoretical studies and learning practices (Ribaeus et al., 2022; Walker & Buch, 2024). Some previous studies have analyzed the effectiveness of research in teacher education program (la Velle, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022), and about research-based approach design in learning (Koski et al., 2023; Shieh et al., 2023; Valle et al., 2025). Experts argue there is a very close relationship between research and teaching in educational institutions (Cao et al., 2021; Maisano et al., 2023; Paulsson & Macheridis, 2022), but it is still unclear how research-based teaching can be actualized. To bridge this gap, this study specifically aims to analyze English teachers' perceptions of research in the field of ELT and its implications for the quality of English language learning.

This research produces a novelty because it provides a more in-depth and positive overview of English language teachers' attitudes toward educational research. Previous studies demonstrated minimal teacher involvement in research, on contrary, this study confirms a paradigm shift toward a stronger understanding, interest, and belief in the importance of research in teaching and learning practices. Therefore, this approach highlights the relationship between awareness of research and its impact on the quality of learning.

Based on the background explained previously, the objectives of this study are to investigate English teachers' insights on the urgency of research in English Language Teaching (ELT), and to elaborate its impact on the excellence of English language learning. Therefore, this research will reveal two research problems. First, what are English teachers' insights into the urgency of research in English Language Teaching (ELT)? Second, how does research impact toward the excellence of English language learning?

Method

This research applies a survey method through a quantitative approach and focus group discussion (FGD). The survey method is a kind of research method that involves individuals answering questions on an instrument, either through questionnaires, interviews, or tests (Gilakjani et al., 2020; Glastonbury & MacKean,

2020). The survey method was used in this research to collect data regarding teachers' insights into the urgency of research in ELT and its impact on learning excellence.

The survey method was chosen in this research because it allows for the efficient collection of quantitative data from a large number of respondents to reveal patterns of teacher insight. To ensure the reliability, the instruments are tested first, which is called a pilot test (Schwind et al., 2021), and its consistency is analyzed using a reliability test such as Cronbach's Alpha (van der Merwe et al., 2025). The validity of the instrument is maintained through consultation with experts and adjustments before implementation.

Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to English teachers who had been selected as respondents through purposive sampling techniques based on certain criteria. The questionnaire was designed to reveal their understanding of the urgency of research in ELT, and their perceptions of its impact on learning. It was distributed online in order that respondents were easy to answer. After all the answers were collected, the data were analyzed to identify teachers' insights into the urgency of research in ELT and its impact on the English language learning. The questionnaires covered the following questions.

Table 1
Questionnaire

No	Items
1	Understanding about the concept of research in the field of ELT
2	Interest in conducting research in the field of ELT
3	The belief that research in ELT improve the quality of English learning in schools
4	The belief that research in ELT helps in the development of English teaching skills
5	Involvement in research activities
6	The importance of learning theory and research in English language learning practice

The population in this study were English teachers who worked in junior high schools/equivalent and senior high schools/equivalent in South Sulawesi province. Based on data in the 2024/2025 academic year, there are 2.587 junior high schools/equivalent, and 1.103 senior high schools/equivalent in South Sulawesi province (Portal, 2025). Although the number of English teachers in junior high and senior high schools in South Sulawesi is not available in public data and can only be accessed through official portals such as *GTK Dashboard* (Akses, 2025), through a simple

random sampling technique, 50 teachers were selected as the respondents of this research.

The sample size was determined by considering time constraints, access, and it focused on teachers who had adequate teaching experience. Teachers with a minimum of 10 years of teaching experience were selected as a sample because they were considered to have mature insight into the practice and importance of research in ELT. Although the number is limited, this sample is considered quite representative.

The perception data obtained were analyzed by using descriptive statistical technique. Based on the descriptive statistical analysis, interviews in Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted with 5 teachers with master degree educational background (S2) to gain an in-depth understanding of perspectives and views on the implications of educational research into learning practice. Data collected from FGD were carefully analyzed using qualitative methods, to identify patterns, themes, and insights that emerged from the discussion. The results of the FGD provide in-depth insights into collective perspectives, differences in views, and important aspects that have not been revealed through the survey method.

Findings and Discussion

The survey involved 50 EFL teachers from junior high schools (*SMP*) and senior high schools (*SMA*) in South Sulawesi, whose at least 10 years of teaching experience. The questionnaire was sent via WhatsApp message to the teachers, and they answered the questions online. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the results are presented in the following chart.

Understanding about the Concept of Research in the Field of ELT

Teachers' understanding of research concepts in the field of ELT can be seen in chart 1 as follows.

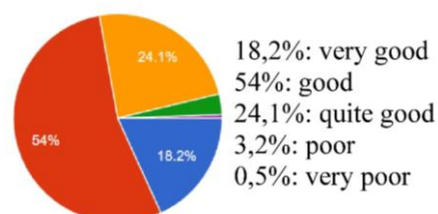


Chart 1. Understanding about the Concept of Research in ELT

A survey of 50 EFL teachers showed that most respondents had a good understanding of research concepts in education. Fifty-four percent

had a good understanding, and 18.2% even had a very good understanding, reflecting a relatively high level of research literacy among teachers. Meanwhile, 24.1% of respondents had a quite good understanding, indicating potential for improvement through further training. On the other hand, 3.2% of teachers had poor understanding, and 0.5% had very poor understanding, which requires attention, although the numbers are relatively small. These finding indicates that most teachers are on the right track in understanding the research concept, but their capacity still requires improvement. Understanding of research among teachers can be improved comprehensively to support the development of evidence-based educational practices.

Interest in Conducting Research in the Field of ELT

Data on teachers' interest in conducting research in the field of ELT can be seen in the following chart 2.

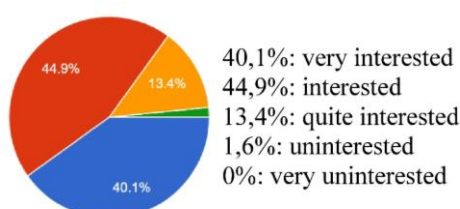


Chart 2. Interest in Conducting Research in the Field of ELT

The survey result shows that EFL teachers' interest in conducting research in education is high. 40.1% of teachers were very interested and 44.9% were interested, indicating that most teachers have positive motivations to engage in research activities. Meanwhile, 13.4% stated they were somewhat interested, indicating potential for further development. Only 1.6% were not interested, a very small number but still needs attention to ensure they are not left behind in professional development. This finding reflects significant opportunities to foster a culture of research among teachers through more intensive facilitation and support.

Research in ELT Improves the Quality of English Learning in Schools

Data on teachers' beliefs that research can improve the quality of learning can be seen in chart 3.

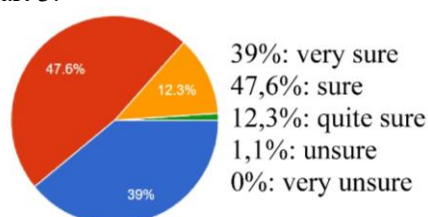


Chart 3. The Belief that Research in ELT Improve the Quality of English Learning

Based on the survey result, most EFL teachers expressed strong confidence that research-based teacher education programs can improve the quality of learning. Thirty-nine percent of respondents strongly believed and 47.6% believed, reflecting a positive view of the role of research in teacher professional development. Furthermore, 12.3% of teachers expressed somewhat belief, indicating some understanding, though not yet complete certainty. Only 1.1% did not believe, a very small number, but still important to understand further. Overall, this finding demonstrates strong support for an integrated research-based approach to teacher training.

Research in ELT Helps in the Development of English Teaching Skills

Data on teachers' belief that research in ELT helps in the development of English teaching skills can be seen in the chart 4.

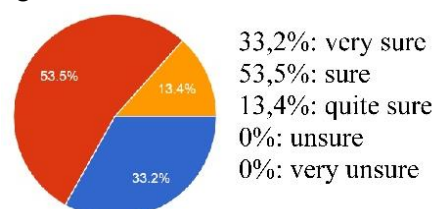


Chart 4. The Belief that Research in ELT Helps in the Development of English Teaching Skills

The survey result indicates that EFL teachers strongly believe that research-based teacher education can develop their teaching skills. A total of 33.2% strongly believe and 53.5% believe, indicating that most teachers see the research as an effective strategy for improving teaching quality. Meanwhile, 13.4% expressed somewhat belief, indicating an understanding that could be strengthened through direct experience and mentoring. Interestingly, no respondents expressed disbelief, reflecting strong support for the importance of integrating research into teacher education. These findings provide a strong foundation for developing teacher training programs that are more grounded in practice and scientific findings.

Involvement in Educational Research

Data on teacher involvement in research activities can be seen in the following chart 5.

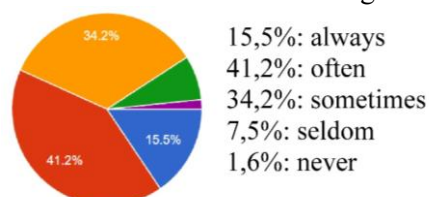


Chart 5. Involvement in Research Activities

The survey result shows that the level of EFL teachers' involvement in educational research varies considerably, but tends to be positive. A total of 15.5% of teachers are always involved and 41.2% are often involved, indicating a strong commitment to active participation in educational research. Another 34.2% are sometimes involved, possibly influenced by factors such as time and workload. Meanwhile, 7.5% are rarely involved and 1.6% are never involved, indicating a small group that needs to be encouraged to participate more actively. This finding highlights the importance of improving motivation and facilitation for more equitable teacher involvement.

The Importance of Learning Theory and Research in English Language Learning Practice

Data on teachers' beliefs about the importance of studying learning theory and research in learning practice can be seen in chart 6.

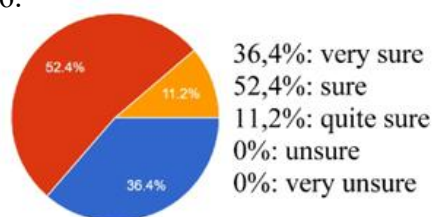


Chart 6. The Importance of Learning Theory and Research in English Language Learning Practice

Most EFL teachers believe in the importance of integrating learning theory and research findings into their teaching practices. 34.6% of respondents strongly believe and 52.4% strongly believe, reflecting a high level of awareness of the role of theory and research in improving teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, 11.2% expressed some degree of confidence, indicating that there is still room for further strengthening their understanding. No teachers expressed any distrust, indicating strong support for a theory- and research-based approach. These findings provide a strong foundation for encouraging the application of theory and research findings in classroom learning planning and implementation.

The data obtained from the survey results were combined with qualitative data obtained from focus group discussion interviews. This focus group discussion involved 5 of the 50 teachers. The teachers selected were all teachers with master degrees. Some of the

focus group discussion results are shown in the following data.

When they were asked about their perceptions of the integration of research findings into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning, they responded with a variety of answers.

Data 1

T1: Integrating empirical evidence and research findings into learning has significant implications. This approach ensures that the learning process is based on current facts, provides opportunities to improve learning effectiveness, and allows teachers to tailor learning strategies to students' specific needs.

Data 2

T2: Integration of empirical evidence and research findings can improve the quality of planning in current teacher education curricula

Data 3

T3: Empirical evidence and research findings in teacher education curricula can significantly improve the quality of planning, enabling adaptation of learning to students' needs.

Data 4

T4: Research integration opens up space for continuous evaluation and improvement. This integration not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also creates a dynamic learning environment that is responsive to student development.

Discussions about the main challenges teachers face in integrating knowledge from scientific research into teaching practice yielded a variety of answers.

Data 5

T5: Resource limitations related to administrative tasks and environmental limitations in supporting the integration of scientific research into teaching practices.

Data 6

T4: Teachers face challenges in the form of adapting to cultural values, community resistance to innovation, access to research literature, and students' specific needs.

Data 7

T3: Teachers sometimes have difficulty finding a fit with traditional teaching methods.

Regarding what efforts to measure the effectiveness of integrating the latest knowledge from scientific research in increasing student

engagement in learning, teachers also responded in various ways.

Data 8

T2: We use a variety of evaluative methods, such as direct observation, qualitative data collection, measurement of learning outcomes, and teacher reflective evaluation

Data 9

T5: To holistically understand the impact of integrating current knowledge from scientific research in increasing student engagement in the learning process, we provide a comprehensive framework for measuring the effectiveness of changes in teaching methods.

Data 10

T1: We continue to learn to gain a deeper understanding of the role of integrating current knowledge so that we can motivate students.

Based on the survey results, it can be seen that the majority of respondents demonstrated a good understanding of research concepts in teacher education, with approximately 72.2% considering their understanding to be good or very good. There was also significant interest in research activities, with approximately 85% of respondents indicating a high level of interest in research in education. This finding contradicts previous findings (López-Gopar et al., 2022) that the most significant role in carrying out research in schools is the role of the principal. However, this study strengthens previous research (Chang et al., 2024; la Velle, 2022; Tarrayo, 2021) that the direct training provided in teacher education programs is not sufficient to prepare pre-service teachers to teach well. A strong belief in the benefits of research programs in education was also evident, with more than 86% of respondents believing that research programs in education can improve the quality of learning in schools.

Teachers' understanding of research concepts in education is at a fairly good level. Most teachers have a good to very good understanding, while only a small percentage demonstrate poor understanding. This indicates that teachers generally have a strong foundation for engaging in educational research activities. However, there is still a need for capacity building, particularly for groups with a "fair" to "poor" understanding. Ongoing training and technical assistance would be very beneficial in bridging this gap in understanding.

In terms of teacher interest and confidence in research, the data shows a very

positive response. The majority of teachers expressed a strong interest in conducting research, and most believed that research-based teacher education could improve the quality of learning and teaching skills. This belief indicates that teachers not only understand the concept of research but also believe in its practical benefits in the classroom context. The absence of respondents who stated "no confidence" in the latter two aspects strengthens the potential for encouraging the strengthening of research-based programs. This indicates that evidence-based approaches are beginning to be accepted as an important part of teacher professional development.

In the term of teacher involvement in educational activities, the survey results revealed that most teachers are quite active, although some still participate only occasionally or even rarely. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity to increase teacher participation through better access, motivation, and support. Furthermore, almost all teachers believe that integrating learning theory and research findings into practice is crucial, indicating an awareness of the importance of a scientific approach to teaching. Overall, the survey results illustrate the significant potential among English language teachers for self-development through research. To maximize this potential, concrete steps are needed in the form of training, scientific forums, and ongoing mentoring programs.

This research finds a new perspective compared to previous research related to teacher education practice (la Velle, 2022; Menter & Flores, 2020), where this study found that teaching that takes into account the principles of a research-based teacher education approach has the potential to achieve the teacher qualifications targeted in the approach. In addition, this research is in line with the findings of previous research that these efforts must also be supported by capabilities in the field of research methods as an important element of various social science disciplines (Leung, 2023; Scheiner, 2022). Furthermore, around 86.6% of respondents believe that research in the field of ELT contributes greatly to the development of English language teaching skills in schools. This is also supported by scientific journals that have developed in line with advances in research trends in various fields of education, including English language teaching (Murphy & Parker, 2022; Zhang, 2021). The main obstacles to scientific publication are excessive workload, lack of funding, and lack of access to

international journals (Beiter, 2024; Lafarge, 2024). However, levels of engagement in research activities varied, with approximately 56.7% of respondents engaging regularly to occasionally. These findings underscore the need for in-depth program development to facilitate teachers' active participation in research activities and the importance of integrating research into pedagogical skill development.

Furthermore, the belief in the importance of integrating learning theory and research into instructional practice was strongly supported by most respondents, reflecting a push for evidence-based approaches in education. Experts believe that good teaching involves broad knowledge, a focus on student needs, the use of research-based teaching methods, a professional attitude, and consistency in delivering material (Griffioen, 2022; Kılınç, 2024). The integration of empirical evidence and research findings is considered to have significant implications. This not only increases the effectiveness of the learning process by ensuring that the approaches used are based on current facts, but also provides teachers with the opportunity to adapt learning strategies to meet students' specific needs.

Integrating knowledge from scientific research into teacher education curricula is considered capable of improving the quality of planning. However, interviews also revealed various challenges teachers face in integrating scientific research knowledge into teaching practices. Limited resources related to administrative tasks and an environment that does not always support the integration of scientific research are significant obstacles. Other challenges include adapting to cultural values, community resistance to innovation, limited access to research literature, and appropriateness to teaching methods. However, to measure the effectiveness of integrating current knowledge from scientific research in increasing student engagement in learning, the use of diverse evaluative methods such as direct observation, qualitative data collection, learning outcome measurement, and teacher reflective evaluation is considered essential. This approach provides a holistic understanding of the impact of integrating scientific research knowledge on motivating students and helps create a dynamic learning environment that is responsive to student development.

These findings represent significant novelty as they provide a more in-depth and positive overview of English language teachers' attitudes toward educational research. Contrary

to previous studies that demonstrated minimal teacher involvement in research, these data confirm a paradigm shift toward a stronger understanding, interest, and belief in the importance of research in teaching and learning practices. The fact that most teachers are not only interested in, but also believe in the direct benefits of research-based education indicates that the educational ecosystem is beginning to open up space for teachers as reflective and innovative practitioners. This novelty is important to serve as a basis for designing more relevant and applicable policies and training programs. Thus, the results of this survey provide a new contribution to the discourse on improving teacher professionalism through a research-based approach.

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be understood that most respondents in the research concept in the field of ELT showed a good understanding, and show a high interest in research activities in this field. Although there is confidence in the benefits of research programs in the field of ELT to improve the quality of English language learning, the level of involvement in research activities still varies. The integration of scientific research knowledge into teaching practices faces challenges such as limited resources, resistance to innovation, and difficulties in adapting to cultural values and teaching methods. A strong push for the integration of learning theories and research into educational practices was evident among most respondents, indicating support for an evidence-based approach to education. However, challenges faced by teachers in integrating scientific research knowledge into teaching practices include limited resources, resistance to innovation, and adaptation to cultural values and teaching methods. Various evaluation methods, such as direct observation and measurement of learning outcomes, are considered important in measuring the effectiveness of integrating scientific research knowledge in motivating students and creating a learning environment responsive to student development.

The limitation of this study lies in the small sample size, which may not fully represent the broader population. Additionally, the use of questionnaires as the sole data collection tool may restrict the depth of insights into teachers' perceptions. However, this research contributes to increasing English teachers' awareness of the importance of the role of research in developing effective learning strategies. As an implication,

teachers are encouraged to be more active in conducting research-based reflection to improve the quality of teaching in the classroom. For further research, it is suggested to involve a larger number of respondents to ensure more representative results. Furthermore, the use of mixed methods is recommended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher perceptions. Further research could also explore factors influencing teacher engagement in ELT research.

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