

## USING THE “ACTION RESEARCH” METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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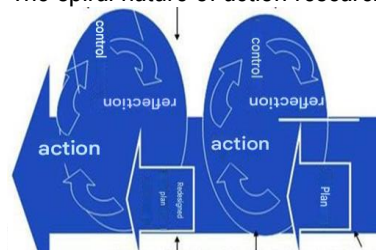
**Abstract:**

This article explores the application of Action Research methodology in teaching English as a foreign language. It presents Action Research as a systematic, reflective, and collaborative process designed to improve teaching practices and meet the diverse needs of mixed-ability learners. Drawing on the foundational works of Kurt Lewin, the article emphasizes the cyclical nature of action research—planning, acting, and evaluating—and its relevance in real educational settings. It also discusses practical differentiation strategies for mixed-ability classrooms, offering tools to engage students with varying language proficiency, learning styles, and intelligences. Through instructional scaffolding, individualized support, and learner-centered tasks such as graphic organizers, cooperative learning, and open-ended assignments, the article demonstrates how Action Research enables teachers to adapt content, process, and outcomes to ensure student engagement and progress. The work concludes by highlighting the potential of action research to bridge theory and practice, empower educators as change agents, and create inclusive, motivating learning environments.

**Key words:** Action Research; Kurt Lewin; English language teaching; mixed-ability classroom; differentiation; learner engagement; reflective teaching; educational innovation; cooperative learning; classroom strategies.

"Action research" The introduction of the scientific application of the category of action research is often associated with the name of Kurt Lewin (1946), and although he was the first to formally publish a work using this category, it can be assumed that he introduced it earlier in Germany, in a work published in Vienna in 1913 (Altrichter H. & Gstettner P., 1992). In fact, Buckingham's 1926 book "Research for Teachers" uses a familiar research process. In addition, Rogers' (2002) description of John Dewey's (1930) notion of reflection also confirms the similarity of their views. It can be assumed that the ancient Greek empiricists had previously used the research cycle in practice. However, Lewin was the first to describe this research as a spiral process that developed in stages, including the steps of planning, acting and evaluating the results of this activity (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990:8). Lewin argued that in order to adequately capture and transform social practice, sociologists must involve practitioners working in real, authentic situations at all stages of their research (MacKernan 1991:10). Figure 1 below illustrates the spiral nature of action research in the context of school practice.

The spiral nature of action research



The pursuit of my research interests is undermined by the need to implement corrective measures to align the specific expectations of the students in the classroom with their own.

Figure 1. An example of a teacher researcher using the Kurt Lewin cycle in practice.

Pedagogical activity as praxis

Action Research is a systematic research process that allows people to find effective solutions to real-world problems they encounter in their daily lives [1, 121]. It has a long history spanning more than 50 years on several continents [2, 256]. Historically, the term “action research” has long been associated with the work of the German social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who developed the idea of action research. He first discovered that experimental methods were inadequate and unsatisfactory in many cases. He then sought to find a

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method based on the experiences of real people, and since then, scientific research has entered the world of researchers.

According to Kurt Lewin, Action Research is the comparative study of the conditions and consequences of various forms of social action and the research that leads to social action. This type of research uses a "spiral step", each of which consists of a cycle of planning, acting, and facts about the outcome of the action [3, 43] .

A brief definition of Action Research was given by Thomas Gilmore: "Action research... is designed to help people solve practical problems in immediate problem situations, and at the same time to contribute to the achievement of social science goals. Thus, there is a dual commitment in the research activity to study the system and at the same time to cooperate with the members of the system when changes are deemed necessary. To achieve these dual goals, the researcher and the client need to actively collaborate, and this highlights the importance of collaborative learning as a key aspect of the research process" [4, 160] .

O'Brien states that "action research is a natural way of doing and researching at the same time" [5, 153] . To clarify the situation, B. Dick states that action research is the true embodiment of its name, since it is designed to achieve both action and research at the same time [6, 37] . This is particularly important for educational situations where teachers want to act in the form of changes or improvements in their knowledge, while at the same time developing an understanding that informs these changes and is additional to what is already known.

The role of research in education was clearly recognized when Hutchinson and Lomax stated that action research is "research that is concerned with broader issues of curriculum and often with the management and control of school and institutional change" [7, 85].

Carr and Kemmis focus on the goals of action research, as they define it as "a form of self-reflective inquiry conducted by participants in social situations with the aim of increasing the rationality and fairness of their own experiences and understanding the contexts in which these experiences are carried out" [8, 203].

Action research has limitations as it is descriptive and lacks experimental methods. In mixed-ability classes, varying proficiency and learning styles create challenges. Differentiated instruction adapts to all students, and grouping students of different levels fosters collaboration. In these settings, both high- and low-ability students contribute, enhancing skills through shared efforts. Pairs or groups can be formed in different ways:

- comparing questions and answers;
- pictures and topics;
- vocabulary categories currently being taught.

Ability grouping is a way to differentiate activities by assigning different tasks to strong and weak students. Strong students tackle complex tasks, while weaker students receive simpler tasks or additional support from the teacher. The teacher asks questions based on each group's linguistic level. Grouping students by learning style is another effective method, making task grouping a valuable tool in mixed-ability classrooms.

Ways to help weak students:

- give clear instructions;
- making sure they understand the task;
- otherwise ask strong students to explain in their native language;
- giving yourself time to think and take notes;
- reduce the number of words in the productive service;
- Provide examples as models before writing assignments;
- preliminary study of vocabulary using visual aids;
- provide a variety of linguistic and visual stimuli;
- allow the use of dictionaries in reading comprehension tasks;
- voice over the script on a tape recorder while performing the listening comprehension task;
- correct your mistakes so as not to disappoint you.

Teachers should observe and communicate with students to address their needs and ensure effective learning. Involving students in setting goals makes them more engaging. Personalizing tasks allows students to express their ideas and interests, boosting comfort and confidence. Interest-based learning helps students explore topics deeply, fostering a positive, diverse classroom environment. Understanding individual student characteristics allows teachers to adapt materials, making them more relevant and engaging for everyone.

A mixed-ability classroom should provide appropriate tasks to help all students progress in their context. The teacher will usually need to assess and adapt the materials that provide activities to suit the different needs of the students. The purpose of doing this during some parts of the lesson is to complete the task. Tasks for different levels can be given at the beginning of the lesson, in group lessons or during individual

assessments. Adapting tasks to two or three different levels of linguistic complexity allows the student to choose a more or less complex option that they can work on to their maximum potential. Here are some ideas for how to differentiate tasks: (strong students - weak students)

- Fill in the blanks - multiple choice
- Writing a letter - filling in the missing words in the letter
- Descriptive images - images that accompany a list of words
- Guess the word according to its transcription - match a word to its transcription
- Confidential letter-Information letter
- Impromptu speech - prepared speech
- Writing words - filling in the missing letters
- Thesis letter - modeled letter
- Sentence transformation – word order, etc. [19, 43].

To address mixed abilities, teaching should engage all senses, learning styles, and intelligences (linguistic, logical, visual, etc.). Teachers can use tools like cognitive style tests to select suitable methods. A multisensory approach, involving tasks that engage multiple intelligences (e.g., research, classifying, discussions, and presentations), is essential. Visual aids support all learners. Open-ended tasks, unlike traditional exercises, offer multiple answers, allowing students to work at their own level and demonstrate their abilities. ESL teachers can choose from a wide range of open-ended lessons:

- write a letter
- the end of history
- reaction to the picture
- guessing by name
- final sentences with a certain grammatical basis
- brain attack etc. b.

Games, talk shows, quizzes, competitions, and debates help maintain student interest by encouraging language use in a fun, low-pressure environment. These activities focus on message and fluency, reducing the fear of failure. Tests based on general knowledge rather than linguistic expertise encourage participation in mixed-ability classes. Simple vocabulary and structures in questions promote fluency while motivating students and enhancing their skills.

Encouraging students to reflect on their abilities through self-assessment tools like portfolios, "I know" sheets, and diaries is effective for mixed ability groups. By keeping a record of their activities, including extracurriculars and self-study, students can track their progress and identify areas for improvement. Portfolios highlight successes, boosting motivation and confidence, while helping students address weaknesses. This tool supports long-term growth, enhances time management, and helps students develop strategies to become more competent learners.

The following tasks can be used in action research because they bring together students with different levels of English proficiency.

1. One-minute report - individual reflection and collaborative review. (Time: 1 to 5 minutes)

Use: at the end of a lecture or to check understanding. (Cooperative learning).

Method: Ask students to write down for one minute what they think the main point of the lecture is. They also describe areas of uncertainty. Students then discuss their notes with the person next to them. Questions or areas of uncertainty can be posted on the discussion board.

Variations (types):

1. Key points: Students try to list three to five key points covered in the lecture. They then compare their lists with others, working in small groups of no more than five students.
2. Most Confusing Moments: Students write down the moments that confused them the most.
3. Collaborative review: Students work together to summarize a lecture in three to five paragraphs.

Notes: This is a useful strategy to allow students to reflect on the lesson. It is also useful as a method of peer support and guidance. Linking this lesson to a discussion board means that students can ask their own questions during the discussion, led by their peers, who are moderated by the teacher.

1. Time to create graphic organizers: 5 minutes

Application: To allow students to reflect on what they have learned and to fill in gaps in their knowledge. (Cooperative learning.)

Method: At the end of a lecture or topic, give students a graphic organizer that contains the missing information. A graphic organizer can be a flowchart (processes), a branch diagram (hierarchies and categories), a mind map (ideas), or a table (relationships). Students should fill in the graphic forms. Working

with the person next to them, they compare their organizers. After returning to the larger group, the teacher can complete the table with the students or show them the completed table.

Notes: Graphic organizers are a great way to simplify complex topics: students can see categories and subcategories, the flow of a process, or the connections between ideas.

Students can also identify gaps in their knowledge.

2. Multiple choice time: 5 to 10 minutes

Application: checking personal knowledge and filling gaps in knowledge. (Cooperative learning.)

Method: At the beginning of the lecture, present students with multiple-choice questions (no more than five) on the content you are covering and ask students to discuss the answers. Using electronic voting (EV) systems works well here (see Strategy 10 below).

Post multiple-choice questions at the end of the lecture so that students can check their understanding of the lecture content.

Notes : if you use EVS, you can quickly see if there are any problems in the group.

Thus, it is assumed that the content, process, and product of the core curriculum should be modified to meet the diverse academic needs of mixed-ability classrooms. Differentiated instructional strategies that make the classroom a welcoming and stimulating place for English language learners to be motivated, engage all students, and ensure their progress include a variety of group work types, consideration of student intellectual preferences, leveled materials, and choice of presentation formats.

The theoretical analysis conducted showed that it remains relevant at the current stage of social development.

It was determined that the main aspects of action research of students are: the work of teachers (S.D. Yakusheva, O.M. Krasnoryadtseva, I.V. Atamanova), the influence of the family (Judith Meece, T.N. Karapunkina), the personal inclinations and orientations of the student (Y. Korczak, I.Yu. Kulagina, P.M. Jacobson). Many scientists emphasize that it is the family that sets the most important personal guidelines necessary for the formation and development of a person who can establish his own position in life.

An analysis of his own pedagogical experience showed that a student's successful acquisition of a foreign language directly depends on the degree of his enthusiasm for this activity.

Action research is a qualitative research methodology. In research, a researcher can be a teacher, a practitioner who wants to change their practice or environment, or a researcher. Action researchers often become part of the research process as participants, interacting with others. It consists of cycles such as identifying a problem, searching for a solution, reflecting on the information obtained, and applying new solutions.

In this process, the researcher uses an action plan to guide the implementation of new practices. The results of the research are shared with others, such as colleagues, school leaders, and community members. Through these actions, the researcher can build a foundation of knowledge that is useful to society and provide an opportunity to review and change established norms in practice and the environment.

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