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CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AS A TOOL FOR INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract. The article offers a practical guide to conducting classroom action research (CAR) as a tool for continuous professional development of English language teachers. Key features, stages and methodological techniques of CAR are described. The role of reflection and collaboration in improving pedagogical practice is emphasized. Special emphasis is placed on the relevance of CAR in the context of Uzbekistan.

Key words: classroom action research, continuous professional development, English language teachers, reflection, innovation in ELT, Uzbekistan, collaboration, teacher autonomy

Classroom action research (CAR) represents a powerful tool for English language teachers (ELTs) seeking continuous professional development (CPD). In an era of rapid globalization and sustainable development, where language education must adapt to diverse learner needs and technological advancements, CAR enables teachers to systematically investigate their own practices, identify issues, and

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implement improvements directly in the classroom. Although numerous professional development programmes exist, many remain one-off events with limited long-term impact. Classroom action research (CAR) offers a practitioner-led, context-sensitive alternative that directly links reflection, innovation and classroom improvement (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

This article outlines how to run CAR specifically for ELTs' CPD, drawing on established literature to provide a practical guide. By integrating theory and practice, it aims to empower educators to foster innovation in foreign language teaching, thereby contributing to the conference goal of integrating sustainable development objectives into foreign language teaching.

The Necessity of CAR in Uzbekistan's Educational Context

In Uzbekistan, where educational reforms emphasize improving English language proficiency as part of broader globalization efforts, CAR is particularly vital for addressing local challenges in ELT. The Network of English Teacher Researchers in Uzbekistan (NETRUZ) exemplifies the relevance of CAR in this context. As an independent network of teacher-researchers and mentors, NETRUZ supports ELTs in conducting practitioner-led action research to tackle issues such as integrating ICT, adapting to resource constraints, and enhancing student motivation. Through webinars, festivals, and publications like "The Teacher Research Journey," NETRUZ fosters a community where teachers share stories of exploratory action research, leading to localized innovations in English teaching and sustained professional development (Menglieva and Alimova, 2022). Local studies further highlight the value of collaborative CPD activities, including CAR, which enable joint problem-solving and enhance pedagogical competencies by addressing real

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classroom challenges like student engagement in multilevel classes (Umarova, 2024). This demonstrates how CAR remains a key tool for empowering Uzbek educators amid ongoing reforms.

Key Features of Conducting Classroom Action Research

Conducting CAR has several distinctive features that make it an effective method for CPD in language teaching. First, its cyclical nature allows for repeated iterations of planning, action, observation, and reflection, enabling ongoing adaptation to classroom dynamics (Richards and Farrell, 2005). Second, CAR is practitioner-oriented, focusing on real, context-specific problems rather than abstract theories, which ensures relevance and immediate applicability. Third, it promotes collaborativeness, involving teachers, colleagues, and sometimes students in joint problem-solving and data analysis, fostering a supportive professional community (Vadivel, B., Namaziandost, E. and Saeedian, A., 2021). Fourth, a reflective approach is central, encouraging educators to critically examine their practices and assumptions for deeper insights. Fifth, CAR emphasizes qualitative methods, such as observations, interviews, and journals, to capture nuanced classroom experiences, though quantitative data can complement them. Sixth, it is systematic and contextual, treating the classroom as an interconnected system influenced by social, cultural, and institutional factors. Finally, sharing results—through publications, conferences, or professional networks—is key, contributing to broader educational improvements (Yildirim, 2022).

These features align with collaborative professional development practices, where activities like peer coaching and informal discussions foster collegiality and lead to more effective teaching than individual efforts (Umarova, 2024).

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All of them distinguish CAR from conventional research, making it accessible and transformative for ELTs pursuing CPD.

Steps to Run Classroom Action Research for ELTs' CPD

The most widely used model remains Kemmis and McTaggart's cycle (cited in Richards and Farrell, 2005). Below is a step-by-step guide tailored to English language teaching contexts.

- 1. Planning Phase: Identifying the Problem and Setting Objectives.** Begin by reflecting on classroom challenges. For ELTs, common issues might include low student engagement in speaking activities or difficulties in integrating technology for vocabulary building. Conduct initial observations, surveys, or journal entries to identify the problem. Set clear, achievable objectives, such as "Improve students' oral fluency through gamified activities." Literature supports this: Yildirim (2022) demonstrates how planning in CAR fosters positive attitudes toward CPD among ELTs, encouraging them to align goals with sustainable development principles like inclusive education.
- 2. Acting Phase: Implementing Interventions.** Design and execute targeted interventions. For example, introduce role-playing exercises with digital tools in English classes. Ensure actions are feasible within the classroom environment and involve collaboration with colleagues or students for feedback. Pinninti (2025) describes an exploratory action research project where ELTs implemented interventions to build research competencies, resulting in enhanced teaching strategies. This phase should be documented meticulously to track changes.

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3. **Observing Phase: Collecting Data.** Gather evidence on the intervention's impact using multiple methods: student feedback forms, audio recordings of lessons, or pre/post-tests on language skills. Quantitative data (e.g., test scores) and qualitative insights (e.g., reflective journals) provide a comprehensive view. According to Vadivel, B., Namaziandost, E. and Saeedian, A. (2021), effective observation in CPD-focused CAR reveals teachers' perceptions of their practices, allowing for data-driven adjustments in English teaching.
4. **Reflecting Phase: Analyzing and Revising.** Analyze collected data to evaluate outcomes. Ask: What worked? What didn't? Why? Reflect individually or in professional learning communities. Based on findings, revise the plan for subsequent cycles. Cakir and Kocaman (2024) found that professional development training emphasizing reflection and action research skills significantly improved ELTs' ability to sustain CPD, leading to long-term pedagogical innovations. Moreover, incorporating collaborative elements, such as peer feedback during reflection, can further enhance the process by promoting shared insights and solutions to pedagogical issues (Umarova, 2024).

This cyclical process can be repeated multiple times, promoting sustained growth. For instance, an ELT might start with one class and expand to department-wide initiatives, fostering a culture of inquiry.

Benefits of CAR for ELTs' Continuous Professional Development

Engaging in CAR brings numerous benefits for CPD. It empowers teachers by building research skills, boosting confidence, and encouraging lifelong learning.

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Al Asmari (2016) reports that ELTs involved in CPD through action research exhibit higher motivation and adaptability, essential in globalized education systems.

Moreover, Yildirim (2022) notes that action research helps ELTs integrate innovative practices, such as AI-assisted language learning, addressing globalization's demands.

Challenges include time constraints and lack of institutional support, but these can be mitigated through collaborative networks (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

Real-world applications illustrate CAR's effectiveness. In Vadivel, B., Namaziandost, E. and Saeedian, A. (2021), ELTs in non-native contexts used CAR to enhance feedback mechanisms, resulting in improved student perceptions of English lessons. Similarly, Pinninti (2025) details a project where teachers explored vocabulary teaching methods, leading to refined curricula.

In Uzbekistan's higher education, where English is key for diplomacy and economics, ELTs can apply CAR to localize global methodologies, such as blending communicative language teaching with cultural elements, as seen in NETRUZ projects where teachers conduct research on student motivation and group work (Menglieva and Alimova, 2022).

Conclusion

Classroom action research is not an additional burden but a realistic and powerful mechanism for sustainable professional growth of English language teachers. The presented framework, methodological tools and real examples make CAR accessible even for busy university lecturers. Joining or creating local communities similar to NETRUZ dramatically increases the chances of successful and enjoyable research. Future studies may explore the potential of artificial

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intelligence in automating data analysis within CAR cycles and creating national digital storage of teacher research.

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