



Investigating and analyzing the usefulness of Action Research for ESL pedagogical development in Pakistan

Abdul Hameed Panhwar, Associate Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan, Hameed.panhwar@usindh.edu.pk

Shah Nawaz Barich, PhD Scholar (Applied Linguistics), Institute of English Language and Literature University of Sindh Jamshoro Pakistan, shahnawazbarich@yahoo.com

Dr. Samina Sarwat, HoD, Humanities & Social Sciences Department Khawaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology, Rahimyar Khan, Pakistan, Samina.sarwat@kfueit.edu.pk

Syed Khuram Shahzad*, PhD Scholar (Applied Linguistics), Institute of English Language and Literature University of Sindh, Jamshoro Pakistan, Khuramshahzad83@gmail.com

Abstract- This paper critically studies and explores the objectives and methods of action research. It mainly aims to present action research as one of the effective approaches to investigate and improve teaching of English as second language (ESL) in general and in the Pakistani higher education in specific. For this study, firstly, the works of advocates of action research are reviewed closely and the relevant ideas and the texts have been studied critically with specific focus on why traditional research has not been so effective in the fields of education and social sciences and, how the ineffectiveness of traditional research has given rise to action research. Secondly, the empirical research studies have been reviewed in order to justify the argument that why and how action research is useful in the context of Pakistan or other developing countries. Overall, findings of the empirical action research projects and the author's argument suggests that the greater use action research by of ESL teachers in Pakistan is likely to help them to develop their professionalism. Additionally, action research offers the researcher and teacher to be the same person, and permits teacher-researchers to investigate their own practice through reflection. Thus, this paper is an attempt to promote action research as an insider research model through which the university teachers, who want to bring change in their ESL teaching methods, may improve their own teaching practices.

Keywords: Action research, ESL, traditional research, education, teacher-researcher

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates action research by reviewing literature and presents a critique on how action research might be a suitable approach in the context of Pakistani English as Second Language (ESL henceforth) classes at the higher education level. The paper mainly attempts to answer the following research question: *How can action research be an effective approach for Pakistani ESL teachers to improve their teaching?* Pakistan is a country where teachers are recruited to teach without any formal training; therefore, they use the methods they are taught with and they know very little about reflective and innovative teaching (Shamim, 2011; Bughio, 2012; Panhwar, 2016). This paper aims to direct Pakistani ESL teachers' attention towards action research so that they may take it as a model or conceptual framework for the improvement of their teaching.

II. CRITICAL REVIEW AND BACKGROUND

The term *Action Research* has become quite commonplace in educational circles of western countries. Although it is defined differently by various scholars (e.g., Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988), the definitions have a common theme: researching one's own practices for improvement. Action research is a reflective inquiry into research projects. In this process, academic practices of participants are studied by the participants themselves systematically and carefully using the empirical research methods. The unifying theme of action research is that it is a form of *reflective inquiry* directed by rigorous principles of processes (Mckernan, 1991, p. 31). Elliot (1991, p. 69) defines action research as 'the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it.' McNiff and Whitehead (2010), more functionally, defined it by stating that in action research, educators and practitioners engage in a process to explore the problematic situation; monitor and record diverse stages of the investigation; examine the data gathered through various instruments, and to finally make germane choices aimed for improving the circumstances.

Action research (Zuber-Skerrit, 1996) empowers participants to decide and carry on with research themselves; it collaborates through participation with those required for the process; it makes the participants/practitioners/researchers acquire knowledge for their professional betterment and it focuses on social change which should bring positive changes. It is cyclical process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting which is adopted by researchers to accomplish the above motifs (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Zuber-Skerrit, 1996). The cyclical steps of observation and reflection in action research usually overlap each other. These steps are carried on with quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Thus, Action research achieves its target through the application of the cyclical process for identifying problems, collecting data systematically, reflecting, analysing, taking action, and, lastly, re-defining the problem.

The history of action research is usually traced back in 1940s and 1970s. It is said to begin in the USA during the 1940s through the work of a social scientist, namely Kurt Lewin (McNiff, 2002). However, the methods and concepts that underpin action research are found in several other historical records (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). It was also used by others in other places, but Lewin's work is usually considered as the starting point. Kurt Lewin is the most cited figure of this period and is generally considered to have introduced the phrase *action research* (Adelman, 1993). Lewin is also credited with inventing the cycle which he described as a spiral of steps that is to plan, act and to find fact about the result of the action conducted (Lewin, 1946; Carr, 2006). It continued to be used in the USA for some time. However, later positivistic trends of research in social science caused its decline in 1950s remained obscure until 1970s (Carr, 2006). Later, during the 1970s and 1980s, it revived in the UK in the works of Lawrence Stenhouse, John Elliot and his colleagues and Jack Whitehead. Action research paradigms used today, seem to be different from the ones used in the 1940s and 1970s (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). The reason for its revival was to break the overall dominance of positivistic research in every field especially in education. Educational research needed to be social, subjective and context-based for the improvement in educational practices and curriculum (Elliot, 1991; Carr, 2006).

III. ACTION RESEARCH VS TRADITIONAL RESEARCH

Action research's insider perspective makes it unique and different from traditional research. Traditional research is frequently done from an outsider-authorized researcher who observes what other people are doing in a certain setting where s/he does not belong to. The researcher then describes and explains what those other people do or did and consequently s/he produces theory about those other people (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). Although conventional research is usually outsider research, various research settings require the researcher to be an insider researcher within the setting.

In traditional research, the theory is usually the researcher's theory, and is propositional. It is supposed that the theory can be applied to participants' practices. People who do action research carry out their investigations in the complex 'psycho-sociological climate' of on-going activities (Corey, 1957, p. 377). Corey (1957) argues that because of the diversity of variables involved in these real settings, action research is often deficient in accuracy, but in return it is realistic. The findings signify practice because they are a result of investigation under life-like circumstances. Traditional research is limited in its range in terms of bringing positive change through action because it attempts to test the prevailing theories. Conversely, action research draws theories from the action conducted to bring change (McTaggart, 1997; McNiff, 2008; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010).

Controlled traditional experiments are not difficult to conduct in educational research, but they often have restricted applicability as they are far removed from the real-life situations (Norton, 2009). Due to the unpredictability attached to teaching and learning processes, positivist approach might be unsuitable for educational research (Whitty, 2006). This exercise results in a more conclusive experiment of the specified hypotheses. But this accuracy is obtained with an equivalent loss in 'applicability of findings'. The traditional educational researcher tries control a situation in order to rule out many of the variables involved in real-life instruction; it, therefore, usually represents an uneven power relationship between researchers and practitioners, 'which positions the official researcher as the 'one who knows' whereas the practitioner is positioned as an aspirant' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, p. 18). Hence, action research, unlike the traditional research, involves people to participate, develop and improve their skills. It does not aim to find out why we do particular actions during teaching and learning processes, but rather to find out about the ways of making these actions work better and changing them positively.

Action research is usually criticised on the grounds that its findings are not generalizable to larger populations and are (Corey, 1954) limited to particular contexts or organisations. However, the researchers like Gustavsen, Hansson and Qvale (2008) argue theory claims are often created by action research to validate its generalisability. For example, despite the fact that any organisation it is carried out in could have resident patterns, the methods and process used to address the problem are subject to generalization (Gustavsen, Hansson and Qvale, 2008). Moreover, McNiff and Whitehead (2010) by supporting the argument state that results action research produces are not only bound to be used in specific contexts. For example, Somekh (2006, pp. 27-28) puts the argument forward in the following words:

If it is no longer possible to establish truths which are generalisable across contexts, it is no longer a disadvantage to have a methodology which always generates contextualized knowledge. Because of its contextualized nature, knowledge generated from action research is cautious in its claims, sensitive to variations and open to reinterpretation in new contexts. It is, therefore, not only more useful than traditional forms of knowledge as the basis for action but also more open than traditional forms of knowledge to accepting the challenge of its own socially constructed nature and provisionality.

Educational Research

The educationists in higher education are credited for developing action research. McNiff (2002) argues that the educationists aimed to enhance professionalism in education, primarily, teacher education. According to McNiff (2002), these educationists took initiatives of observing and clarifying action research's steps. They emphasised the roles of democratic aspects, reverence and care for the individual and the need for organised research approaches in action research (McNiff, 2002). For action-researchers in education, action research is an operable framework which they adopt to adapt, transform, and improve their pedagogical processes. Action research in education setting is named according to its context. For example, many educators call it practitioner-research and many others label it as teacher research or classroom research. Researchers using this research are teacher-researchers. According to Efron and Ravid (2013), action research and practitioner-research are often named interchangeably. In both types of research, practitioners conduct inquiries in classroom settings. They adopt it as an investigation that may enhance their capability to become effectively reflective in their professional practices (Efron and Ravid, 2013, p. 2). The action researchers adopt it empirically and critically by employing methods that are appropriate for their practice. Since practitioner-researchers are insiders and acquainted with the situation, they are naturally personal and directly engaged (Efron and Ravid, 2013). Hence, a majority of people take action research as educational research (McNiff, 2002) because it is the practitioner-oriented and many teachers as practitioners use action research all over the world. McNiff and Whitehead (2010) contend that the main reason for action research popularity is because it allows practitioners to control their own practices.

Practitioner-based

The first feature of action research that attracted the researchers is that it is practitioner-based. This feature may also attract teacher-practitioners to improve their own teaching practices. The conductors of action research are always practitioners and they are regarded researchers. It, therefore, is named differently such as practice-based, practitioner-led and practitioner-based research (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). All people in all settings who are probing a situation can become researchers, regardless of their age, status, social setting, or social status. McNiff and Whitehead (2010, p. 17-18) argue that since action research is always conducted by practitioners within a specific social context, it is called insider research where the researcher is inside the situation, and will inescapably have impact on 'what is happening by their presence'.

Improvement through Collaboration

Action research is always a collaborative process in educational research. It co-generates knowledge of practices, and improves these practices through the participation of all those involved and affected. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) state that action research is mostly a collective activity among the people of educational institutes such as university/school/college who aim to discover solutions to the difficulties encountered by them in their everyday experience. The discovered problems are collaboratively solved by bringing positive transformation for development instead of tackling with

detached theoretical issues (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Elliot, 1991). Practice, hence, becomes the home for the co-production of knowledge of practice.

Improvement First, then Knowledge Creation

The central goal of action research is to enhance practice 'rather than to produce knowledge'. The creation and use of knowledge is secondary to, and conditioned by this central goal (Elliot, 1991, p. 49). The action research approach is empirical and academic, and it functions in a specific context and gives the staff instant feedback to improve their teaching by providing clear evidence for the improvement of their academic accountabilities. It aims at recording the context, change in processes, subsequent learning and assuming that the staff members would enhance their pedagogic skills (Fisher and Phelps, 2006). Action research is made of two components: *action* (what you do) and *research* (how you learn about and explain what you do)' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, p. 5). The first component is about enhancing practice; the second is about generating knowledge about your understanding of your practice.

Change and Innovation

Since improvement and new knowledge always need change in the old system, initiation of change and innovation is an essential requirement of action research (McTaggart, 1997). Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that comprehension of any human action requires observing it in historical and social perspectives. It is believed that some features of a practice need to be altered when its goals and ideals are to be more entirely understood. This process activates a form of reflective inquiry.

Educational action research in the UK arose when teachers became discontented with old-fashioned curriculum provision and started to initiate sweeping changes in both the content and the processes of curriculum (Elliot, 1991). Elliot thus, argues that action research incorporates teaching and curriculum development research and theoretical reflection into a unified idea of a contemplative educational exercise (Elliot, 1991, p. 54). Action researchers recognize that actions, the knowledge about them and organizations are adaptable, and the changing circumstances with specific socio-historical contexts do require the productive change in actions, their knowledge and the organisation in which these actions are practiced (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Thus, practitioners are made mindful of the ways socio-cultural situations and circumstances which aggravate rational change may be controlled (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 206). Their main target of being engaged in action research is to effect a change, cure a prevailing problem, and thus improve a day-to-day practice of teaching and learning in natural settings of an educational institution (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010).

Naturalistic Research

The justification for action research is primarily based on its focus on naturalistic research. It is the research of social aspects because it is carried out in natural social situations with the purpose of addressing real problems. It believes that naturalistic settings can best be investigated by those who are experiencing the problem. Secondly, attitudes are highly affected by the naturalistic environment in which it happens (Mckernan, 1991). Mckernan (1991, p. 7) argues that 'Naturalistic research refers to investigations of phenomena within and in relation to their naturally occurring contexts.' The postulation is that there is some motivating natural theory in the research situation which generates the orderliness that is monitored and is free from theorizing. Action research can serve its purpose in three ways: firstly, it can help enhance problematic social settings; secondly, it can improve the personal knowledge of the researcher; and thirdly, it can assist to vitalize the researcher's settings and conditions in which s/he works (Mckernan, 1991). These all aspects mentioned above differentiate action research from the traditional research.

IV. DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALISM IN PAKISTANI UNIVERSITY ESL TEACHERS

Professional Development

Most importantly, action research is very useful for professional development of teachers. For example, Mashhadi, Biria and Lotfi (2020) conducted a study in which thirteen male and female Iranian EFL teachers used action research in their EFL classes. (Since Iranian educational context is very similar to Pakistani education, this study has been cited as evidence).The results of this study demonstrate the

teachers reported ‘...a lasting effect on their professional development’. These teachers reported to have developed an improved insight of research, and the experience of action research motivated to continue their EFL teaching through action research. Mashhadi et al. (2020) further discovered that action research projects enhanced teachers’ sense of critical inquiry because of reflective nature in which they reflected and improved their practice. Hence, action research enables the teachers of language to reflect on their teaching methods, and begin their self-directed professional development (Mashhadi et al., 2020). Bughio (2013) implemented group activities for a whole semester in two large ESL classes of over 100 students at a Pakistani university. He found that the implementation of group work within the framework of action research developed his ESL teaching skills because the process of working in groups enhanced student engagement by providing students with more opportunities for participation, and by increasing interaction with other students and with the teacher, interest in learning, cooperation and competition among students.

In the author’s own case, in his PhD action research project (Panhwar, 2016), the regular feedback on the intervention from the students and observers helped him reflect and plan for the next cycle. The use of action research in his PhD project, in collaboration with students and colleagues, created a new knowledge about pedagogical practices for him. In his endeavour, he enjoyed a considerable degree of success, as evidenced by the various types of data collected from my students and the observers, both during my intervention and in the final evaluation. Panhwar (2016) has shown that, even in the environment of the university, where the pedagogical possibilities for teachers are highly constrained for economic, cultural and political reasons, the action research methodology could train a teacher and thus make his professional practices effective. He has developed skills that will help him to engage more of his ESL students more of the time with the material they are studying. However, the author of the present paper does not consider his doctorate as the end of his research and professional development, but for him it is a step towards further development in his professionalism. As an action-researcher, he plans to continue using action research for the improvement in his own pedagogical practice in his own context. He hopes that he may be able to have some influence on his colleagues in a variety of ways.

Reflection necessary for professional development

After a closer review and understanding of action research, it can arguably be concluded that it could be an effective approach for the ESL teachers of Pakistan. The research on English language teaching and learning Pakistan suggests that most of teachers in Pakistan do not get opportunities to get training (Shamim, 2011), therefore they do not know how to use the methods fit to teach language. These teachers hence rely on their own learning and teaching experience (Bughio, 2012). For example, the authors’ personal experience suggests that he started to teach ESL classes the way his teachers taught him. The author’s his own PhD project (Panhwar, 2016) is evidence that how action research helped him to reflect on his own teaching and how he improved his own teaching of ESL teaching through a reflective enquiry conducted within the framework of action research. The researcher was inspired by his own colleague who also used action research in his PhD project (Bughio, 2012) three prior to his own studies in order to improve his ways of teaching English in the same university. By building his research on Bughio (2012), the author reflected on his teaching methods and the context which lead him to select appropriate methods for improving his teaching. Hence, action research is an established model which may help teacher-researchers not only to train themselves and improve their teaching practices, but it also gives opportunities to develop skills in educational research and publish their findings.

In this regard, action research may be most appropriate methods to experiment one’s teaching practices. For example, the ESL teacher-practitioners in Pakistan could carry out action research in their classes to answer the questions: ‘What is happening with their teaching? What is challenging about it? What can they do to overcome these challenges and difficulties?’(cf. Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 7). These questions evidently suggest that only practitioner-based naturalistic-self-reflective enquiry could address them. Carr and Kemmis (1986) argue that reflection and action rest in dialectical state in the action research process, in which each step of cycle updates other step and is dependent. Thus, steps in a sequence of planned change, observation, reflection and adjustment continue depending and updating one another. In the process of investigating, the ESL teachers in higher education of Pakistan may continuously reflect (cf. Schön, 1995). The reflective nature of action research enquiry may guide them at every stage of their practice-based research. Critical reflection on their teaching may assist them to evaluate their teaching methods, in respect of their effectiveness in attaining the goals of the study. Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 162) also argue:

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

Perhaps, action research is the most suited approach to conduct educational intervention in Pakistani context because it gives flexibility of reflections and repetition of the cycles of intervention (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Zuber-Skerrit, 1996). Pakistan is a country which is not very research oriented. Teachers in Pakistani universities are appointed on the basis of a master's degree (Bughio, 2012). In the university where the author teaches, there are more than 35 ESL teachers, and majority of these teachers' Mphil and PhDs except two (both completed and in progress) are based on traditional research methods in which they only attempt to find the problem, but rarely attempt to give the practical solution to the problem. Two teachers i.e., the author and his colleague Bughio have used action research. They both suggest the extensive use of action research in their teaching because in action research, teacher-researchers may perform both as trainee and master-trainer by exploring the problems with their teaching and thus training themselves (Kasi, 2010) how to solve these problems. Traditional research, conversely, gives teacher-researchers little control of variables. Researchers in action research are given a far more flexibility and freedom to manipulate variables according to the need of improvement in the process (Kember, 2002; 2003). Kember (2003, p. 100) also supports the use of action research in the naturalistic educational setting by stating: 'There is evidence that the more reflective or action research formats for their introduction bring additional benefits through engaging in the process'. A meta-analysis of 90 action research innovations carried out by Kember, (2002) witnessed that the participants improved their teaching skills, and developed their capability to observe and reflect upon their own teaching and collaborative skills. Approximately half of the teachers reported that they influenced others in their institutes. In contrast, it is difficult to witness similar advantages when experiment-control designs have been conducted.

How Contextual, Innovative and Collaborative nature of Action research can help

Action research, being practice-based, naturalistic and collaborative, could be an effective approach to improve ESL teachers' pedagogical practices and simultaneously, students' learning in Pakistan. As the aim of action research, unlike the traditional research, is to focus on innovation and to implement better change (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010), the teachers in Pakistan may be encouraged to use this approach both to improve their practices and professionalism. Instead of focussing on the traditional research for their professional development, they may involve action research processes in their teaching practices. For example, many of colleagues have conducted traditional forms of research such as experimental and co-relational designs for their doctoral degree. The traditional research is conducted through outsider perspectives and therefore, not so useful because it is based on firmly defining and manipulating variables that do not allow you to improve or change the design (Norton, 2009).

Since Action research is collaborative or participatory, it might be used to plan and test any communicative language teaching methods such as group/pair work in ESL classes in higher education of Pakistan. Since ESL teaching and learning require communicative/collaborative methods, action research may further be effective. In Pakistani context, teachers mostly use teacher-centred methods which very little help students improve their language skills (Panhwar, 2016; Shamim, 2011). With the use of action research, for example, both Panhwar (2016) and Bughio (2012) quite successfully improved their English language practices by collaborating with their own students in a Pakistani public university. Shamim, et al. (2007) also suggests that when using new western interactive methods teachers need to take the sociocultural approach into account by considering culture, situation and resources of the target context. The sociocultural approach to innovation emphasises the involvement of students' views in teaching methods. Innovations work effectively when these are devised using bottom-up approach, because it familiarizes all participants to the changes, and offers them with an chance to recognise the nature of the setting more thoroughly (Kuchah and Richard, 2011). Collaboration and reflection on the part of teachers is possibly the first factor they should deliberate while attempting to make large English language classes more communicative (Naidu et al., 1992). Hayes (1997) argue that to make student-centred activities such as group successful, teachers need to work in collaboration in order to exchange their thoughts and experiences, and to formulate action plans based on their reflection. Hence, since the views and results of various studies direct towards innovation and collaboration with students for developing better ESL teaching methods, action research which encourages collaboration and innovation may help ESL teachers in Pakistani educational institutions in order to make their teaching effective.

For better classroom management, Kuchah and Richard (2011) suggest teachers to have a dialogue with learners on pedagogical methods, and be open to recommendations for refining their teaching. Learners may also feel valued and give many suggestions, specifically for forming rules for the improved class management. The use of collaborative activities is not likely to be effective when implemented in a single round. They need an approach i.e., action research that offers educators and investigators flexibility to implement them and then deliberate on the shortcomings of the process before going further with it. Therefore, diverse research studies (Shamim, et al., 2007; Renaud, Tannenbaum, and Stantial, 2007) have stressed the adoption of action research for effective implementation. Teachers, therefore, need use action cycle i.e., planning the pedagogical, implementing it, observing it and reflecting on it and use the cycle again after the essential modifications until it gives the desired results.



Figure 1: Action Research Cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988)

Cycles – Guiding principles

Figure 1 above delineates the steps of action research cycle. These steps of the cycle are used by McNiff (2002, p. 56) to refer to natural, self-re-generating techniques of investigation. The process of observing, describing, planning, acting, reflecting, evaluating, and modifying in action research ensures that it is a systematic approach to discovering and solving the issue (McNiff, 2002). The cyclic process in action research is likely to encourage the ESL teachers in Pakistan to use action research methodology in order to improve their pedagogical practices. The action research cycle i.e. planning, adopting, observing and reflecting seems to assist them (Pakistani ESL teachers) in formulating the research methodology of their projects and thus help them to adapt two any suitable methods for their implementation. The well-stepped cycle of action research might help them to examine their classes stepwise (cf. Panhwar, 2016; Bughio, 2012). For example, both Panhwar (2016) and Bughio (2012) found action research to be very effective in training and improving their practices of teaching English language support classes. Action research, because of its cyclical nature, aims to introduce change and refine the next cycle of research based on experience and reflection' (Norton, 2009; McNiff and Whitehead, 2010). Thus, during their teaching, the university teachers in Pakistan could employ cycles (cf. Carr and Kemmis, 1986; McNiff, 2002).

Well-Organised nature

Another benefit of action research that may attract the attention of Pakistani ESL teachers is that action research is a well-stepped and well-organised approach. In order to keep their research manageable and coherent, they may divide their projects into two main stages following action research cycle i.e. Reconnaissance and Intervention. Reconnaissance Stage may help in planning the action (intervention stage) by identifying the problem and the solution (cf. Panhwar, 2016; Bughio, 2012). Reconnaissance may include identification of the Problem through personal experience, the review of literature and needs analysis.

For example, the review of literature in Reconnaissance may assist the ESL teacher in Pakistan to select and adapt the research methods and instrument to conduct the needs analysis (cf. Panhwar, 2016). Teachers could conduct the investigation planned with the help of Reconnaissance and to explore

the present context of the project where the implementation of the certain method is to be carried out. They may thus observe the process of investigation, reflect and evaluate the process. They may get an opportunity to investigate the teaching and learning environment and the real problems faced by them and learners both from their perceptions and through live observation of their classes. Investigation teachers' and learners' perceptions through class observation, interviews and questionnaires might enable teachers to understand the socio-cultural and teaching-learning environment of their classes. Thus, it may allow them to study the socio-cultural situation-based teaching and learning in the classes. Hence, the results of reconnaissance are likely to assist them in selecting and adapting teaching-learning methods for the intervention in Intervention Stage through the action research cycle.

Intervention may help the ESL teacher to implement the selected teaching-learning method and reflect on the process of intervention. The structured nature of action research with the stepped cycle is likely to help teacher-practitioners to look into the flaws in their practices and improve these through scientific methods (Kasi, 2010; Bughio, 2012; Panhwar, 2016). With the help of students and teacher-colleagues, the teacher-researcher may plan the intervention. Thus, they may implement the chosen method in their ESL classes; observe the implementation process and its impact and reflect on the course of action. With the help of the process of observation and reflection, they may change or improve the line of action when necessary and repeat the same process (See Bughio, 2012; Panhwar, 2016). Furthermore, as already mentioned, action research is best suited to the educational context because educational researchers often encounter too many variables (Kember, 2002; 2003; Norton, 2009) which can easily be managed through the well-designed approach of action research. Action research may help teachers carry on with the process of conducting research through its repeatable cycle.

V. CONCLUSION

The paper describes, explains and discusses the action research and its methods and processes by arguing that how these methods could easily be adapted and adopted by the teachers of Pakistani higher education. Action research is a motivating approach. Once teachers use it, they feel that it is very flexible, organised and collaborative. These elements i.e., flexibility, structured nature and collaboration appear to be very encouraging for teachers. For example, in the case of Panhwar (2016), it was very encouraging when he found action research very organised and well-structured. Moreover, its flexibility in revising and re-implementing is very encouraging for teachers. Action research, being a flexible research approach, seems to equip new teacher-practitioners in Pakistan with easy and fluid methods. These methods could easily be used by them giving them two-fold benefits. Firstly, they would improve their teaching skills and secondly, they are likely to develop the skills of research. Hence, it is argued in this paper that action research could be a useful approach for ESL teachers to self-train. Based on the ramifications of this study, it is suggested that action research should be integrated in teacher education programme syllabus. This recommends that syllabus designers and material developers should incorporate the subject of action research in existing syllabi. Incorporation of action research in the existing syllabi may compensate for the deficiencies of the teacher education and training materials. Pakistani education system and the training institutes in Pakistan may consider establishing a system which may help English language teachers continue their professional development through carrying out action research projects. It is likely to be very beneficial if ESL/EFL teachers are encouraged to create action research communities and share knowledge about their results

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