


*International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*  
 Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 93-110, April 2025  
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.4.5>  
 Received Feb 18, 2025; Revised Mar 29, 2025; Accepted Apr 9, 2025

## Research Engagement in Practice: From EFL University Lecturers' Perceived Effects to Strategies for Integration into Teaching

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**Abstract.** Research engagement is crucial in higher education, fostering lecturers' professional growth, institutional development, and pedagogical advancements. However, university lecturers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Vietnam face various challenges that affect their participation and involvement in research-related activities, and there is limited literature addressing these challenges in the Vietnamese context. This study explored EFL university lecturers' frequency of research engagement, their perceived effects on teaching practices, and strategies for integrating research into teaching. Using a convergent mixed-methods approach, the research data were collected from 97 EFL lecturers across five public universities in the south of Vietnam through a structured questionnaire and open-ended responses. The findings reveal that lecturers engage in research-related activities to various extents, ranging from occasionally to usually, with the most frequent activity being the application of research findings in their teaching. This aligns with the high level of agreement among lecturers regarding the positive impacts of research on teaching and learning outcomes. As for qualitative findings, lecturers employed strategies across the four dimensions of the research-teaching nexus, with challenges from heavy workloads, limited training, and inadequate resource access demanding further support. The study implicates the need for training program justification and enhanced support systems to cultivate a sustainable research culture in EFL education.

**Keywords:** EFL lecturers, research engagement, frequency, effects, teaching practices

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## 1. Introduction

Research engagement is widely recognized as a fundamental component of professional development in higher education, contributing to lecturers' academic growth, institutional advancement, and overall educational improvement. The National Center for Education Research emphasizes that research engagement fosters evidence-based teaching practices, enhances student learning outcomes, and strengthens the academic environment (Dean & Hubbell, 2012). Similarly, previous studies have highlighted that participation in research not only refines instructional methods but also reinforces professional identity and fosters pedagogical innovation (Lakshmi et al., 2024; Sato & Loewen, 2018).

Recognizing these benefits, higher education institutions worldwide, including those in Vietnam, have made research engagement an essential faculty responsibility. The Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (VMoET) has institutionalized this expectation through Circular No. 20/2020/TT-BGDĐT, which requires university lecturers to allocate a substantial portion of their workload to research-related activities (VMoET, 2020). This policy reflects the government's commitment to fostering a research-driven academic culture. However, despite these formal requirements, studies indicate a gap between policy expectations and actual research engagement among EFL university lecturers. Many reported low levels of motivation as well as struggling to integrate research into their professional routines, suggesting that cognitive factors of understanding, beliefs, and attitudes play a crucial role in shaping their engagement with research.

Given this context, understanding how EFL university lecturers engage with research is essential, particularly concerning their teaching practices. While prior research has examined barriers to research participation, less attention has been given to determining how lecturers perceive its impact on their instructional approaches. Investigating this relationship is particularly relevant in Vietnam, where research output serves as a key performance metric for academics. This study examines the extent of EFL university lecturers' engagement in research-related activities and their perceptions of its impact on their teaching practices. It explores how frequently lecturers participate in research and how they integrate research-related activities into their instructional approaches. By analysing these aspects, the study aims to provide insights into the role of research engagement in shaping teaching practices and how institutional policies and support mechanisms can enhance lecturers' research involvement. To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. Which research-related activities do EFL lecturers engage in the most and the least?
2. What are EFL lecturers' perceived effects of research-related activities on their teaching practices?
3. What strategies do EFL lecturers suggest to integrate research-related activities into their teaching practices?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Research Engagement in Practice

Research engagement in higher education involves various activities that contribute to knowledge production, dissemination, and application (Queirós et al., 2022). However, the extent to which university lecturers engage in research is influenced by multiple cognitive factors, including knowledge, beliefs, and self-efficacy (Feng et al., 2024). Knowledge of research methodologies, academic writing conventions, and disciplinary trends significantly impacts their confidence and willingness to engage in scholarly activities (Balle et al., 2020). Regarding affective factors, beliefs about the value of research shape motivation; lecturers who perceive research as integral to professional growth and academic contribution are more likely to participate actively in research endeavours (Nicholson & Lander, 2017). Specifically, self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to conduct research successfully, also determines persistence and resilience in overcoming research challenges (Livinți et al., 2021). Lecturers with high levels of self-efficacy are more inclined to undertake research initiatives, whereas those with low confidence may experience hesitation, avoidance, or disengagement (Gu & Xu, 2021). These psychological components collectively influence the frequency and depth of research engagement among university lecturers, making it essential to investigate practices as evidence of their impact in higher education contexts.

Research engagement manifests through a range of scholarly activities, encompassing both independent and collaborative efforts that contribute to academic discourse and professional development (PD) (Perkmann et al., 2020). Perkmann et al. (2020) pointed out that research-related activities include reviewing literature, identifying research gaps, designing studies, collecting and analyzing data, and disseminating findings through peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations. Beyond research production, lecturers engage in reviewing academic manuscripts, participating in dissertation defence committees, mentoring junior researchers, and contributing to university research and training committees (Wong et al., 2021). Furthermore, some lecturers apply research findings to teaching, curriculum development, and instructional design, integrating research-based practices into classroom pedagogy (Yuen & Wong, 2022). Institutional engagement in research projects, securing research grants, and collaborating with national and international academic networks further enhance professional expertise (Smith et al., 2022). It could be contended that while research engagement is often framed as a voluntary scholarly pursuit, institutional policies and facilitations increasingly formalize research expectations, making it an essential component of academic roles.

The frequency of research engagement among university lecturers varies depending on institutional policies, workload distribution, and access to research resources (Huynh et al., 2019). In higher education contexts worldwide, research productivity is often a core performance indicator, with institutions setting specific publication targets and funding mechanisms to encourage scholarly output (Ocampo et al., 2022). In Vietnam, national policies require lecturers to allocate a portion of their workload to research-related activities as research could

offer benefits for enhancing their subject expertise, improving teaching quality, and fostering professional ranking (Nguyen, 2021). Active research engagement keeps lecturers updated with academic advancements, enabling them to integrate new knowledge into their teaching, enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and expand professional networks for collaboration and career growth (Tran, 2024). Despite policy expectations, research engagement among EFL university lecturers remains inconsistent owing to heavy teaching and administrative workloads, limited funding, and challenges in academic writing in English (Le, 2023). These supporting and limiting factors directly shape research engagement frequency and indirectly impact teaching practices, as research engagement serves as a means to enhance pedagogical effectiveness and professional development.

## **2.2 Impact of Research Engagement on Teaching Practices**

Globally, research engagement among EFL university lecturers has been linked to improved pedagogical practices and curriculum development. Recent studies have consistently demonstrated the crucial role of research engagement in enhancing teachers' professional learning and pedagogical practices, ultimately leading to improved student learning outcomes and more effective school restructuring (Alhassan & Ali, 2020; Crain-Dorough & Elder, 2021). Research-informed teaching enables lecturers to remain updated with linguistic theories, teaching methodologies, and assessment frameworks, enhancing the overall quality of education (Treffinger et al., 2021). Regarding teacher autonomy, engaging in research fosters high-order analytical skills, encouraging lecturers to evaluate and adapt their teaching materials based on empirical findings (Trinh & Le, 2022).

Countries with strong research cultures have established structured systems that integrate research with teaching, encouraging lecturers to align their classroom practices with ongoing studies in applied linguistics and TESOL (McKinley, 2019). In Asian higher education institutions, the application of research engagement in teaching varies depending on institutional priorities and national education policies. Research in Chinese contexts suggests that lecturers who engage in systematic inquiry are more likely to implement innovative teaching approaches, such as corpus-based learning, task-based language teaching, and data-driven learning (Li et al., 2023). In many Southeast Asian countries, research engagement is often seen as a requirement for career progression rather than a tool for improving classroom instruction. Studies indicate that while lecturers acknowledge the importance of research, they often perceive it as a separate academic duty rather than an integral part of their teaching practice (Cheng & Li, 2020; Heng et al., 2022; Ngo, 2024). Their research engagement was mainly driven by institutional requirements or policies considering promotion, rather than their intrinsic motivation for professional development (Gironzetti & Muñoz-Basols, 2022).

In Vietnam, research engagement among EFL university lecturers has gained increasing attention as part of national education reforms aimed at improving higher education quality (Vu, 2021). While existing Vietnamese literature has explored various benefits and constraints on lecturers' scholarly activities, such as

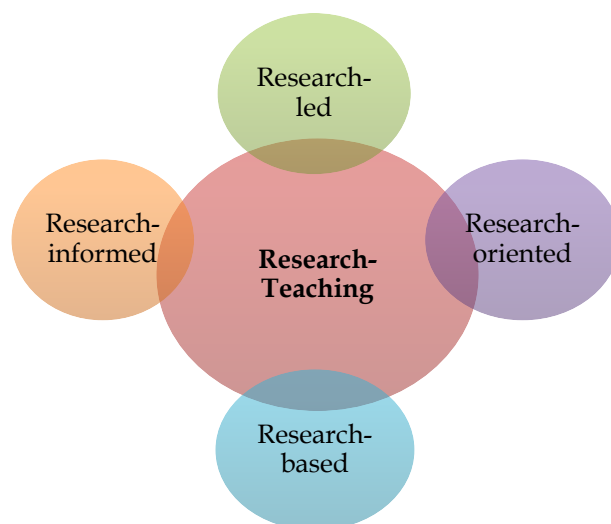
publication challenges and conference participation (Le et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2021; Pho & Tran, 2016), the practical application of research in teaching remains underexplored. This underrepresentation of studies about researching-teaching dynamics in the Vietnamese context lags behind international studies on English language teaching, where research-informed pedagogy is more extensively examined. As a result, further studies are needed to investigate how EFL lecturers perceive and assess the impact of research engagement on their role as teacher educators. This study collected and synthesized previous findings to develop a list of effects of research engagement on EFL university lecturers' teaching practices (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Effects of research engagement on EFL lecturers' teaching practices**

Teaching Component	Research-Teaching Activity
Designing curriculum and materials (Shawer, 2017)	Integrating research-based principles into curriculum development
	Selecting instructional materials based on research evidence
	Aligning teaching objectives with research-informed learning outcomes
Implementing teaching strategies and engaging students (Mitchell et al., 2017)	Applying research-informed teaching methodologies
	Employing strategies to enhance student motivation and engagement
	Using differentiated instruction approaches based on research
Assessing learning and managing classrooms (Pardede, 2019)	Incorporating technology-enhanced learning from research for better student outcomes
	Evaluating student learning needs using research techniques
	Designing authentic assessments aligned with research insights
Developing professional teacher identity (Rahimi & Weisi, 2018)	Applying research findings on learner variables to improve classroom management strategies
	Building an immediate inclusive and supportive classroom environment through action research
	Building teacher self-efficacy and confidence in teaching through research
	Enhancing teachers and students' inquiry and critical thinking skills through research
	Gaining empowerment and autonomy in teaching due to research engagement

Adopting the Teaching-Research Nexus of Brew and Weir (2004) as a framework, the study examined the extent to which EFL lecturers integrate research into their teaching, whether through research-led content, research-oriented skill development, research-based student participation, or research-informed pedagogical strategies (see Figure 1). Research-led teaching emphasizes the inclusion of contemporary research findings and theoretical advancements within the course content, ensuring that students engage with current disciplinary knowledge. Research-oriented teaching prioritizes the development of students'

research competencies by fostering analytical skills, methodological awareness, and an understanding of research design. Research-based teaching involves students directly in the research process, enabling them to participate in data collection, analysis, and dissemination to cultivate deeper engagement with scholarly inquiry. Finally, research-informed teaching applies insights from existing research to refine pedagogical practices, enhancing instruction, classroom management, and assessment methods based on empirical evidence.



**Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study**

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design and Participant Recruitment**

This research adopted a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to simultaneously explore multiple aspects of the current participant group in educational research (McCrudden et al., 2019). By combining survey responses with open-ended questions and answers (OQA), the study aimed to identify overarching patterns related to research engagement frequency and the collective effect of lecturers' involvement in research-related activities on their teaching practices.

The research took place at five public universities in the south of Vietnam, all overseen by the VMoET and home to the Department of Foreign Languages. Given that research engagement is one of the three mandatory responsibilities academic staff must fulfil each year, these institutions provided a suitable setting for the study. A purposive sampling method was applied to recruit full-time EFL lecturers from these universities, ensuring that participants held at least a master's degree in English teacher education or a closely related field (Zirkel et al., 2015). This selection criterion guaranteed that all participants shared similar professional obligations and were actively engaged in teaching. Ultimately, 97 EFL lecturers from the five universities participated in the survey, as summarized in Table 2. These lecturers have been actively working as full-time teachers and researchers for a minimum of one year.

**Table 2: The demographic information of the participant lecturers**

Demographic features		Number (N=97) (%)
Gender	Male	34 (35.05)
	Female	63 (64.95)
Academic degree	Master's Degree	83 (85.57)
	Doctoral Degree	14 (14.43)
Years as a full-time lecturer	1-10 Years	36 (37.11)
	11-20 Years	23 (23.71)
	Over 20 Years	38 (39.18)

### 3.2 Research Instrument and Data Collection

This study used a questionnaire as the main instrument, comprising three sections designed to assess participants' research engagement frequency and its perceived impact on teaching practices. The questionnaire included two clusters with categorical Likert scales: a seven-point frequency scale ("Never" to "Almost always") measuring the extent of engagement in research-related activities and a five-point agreement scale ("Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree") evaluating the perceived effects of research on teaching practices. An open-ended question was included to capture participants' qualitative insights, allowing for the sharing of actionable strategies in research-related activity application on teaching practices. To maximize data collection, the questionnaire was administered electronically via both Google Forms and in a paper-based format. Participants received a survey invitation with clear introductions and an explanation of its purpose before inputting their responses.

**Table 3: Summarization of the questionnaire components**

Items	Components	Aims	Response format
I, II, III	Demographic Background	Collect participants' demographic information	Fill-in short answers
1-15	Frequency of research-related activities	Measure the extent of engagement in research-related activities	7-point Likert scale (1 = <i>Never</i> → 7 = <i>Almost Always</i> )
16-29	Perceived effect of research-related activities on teaching practices	Evaluate how research-related activities influence teaching practices	5-point Likert scale (1 = <i>Strongly Disagree</i> → 5 = <i>Strongly Agree</i> )
30	OQA	Explore strategies for applying research-related activities to teaching practices	Fill-in paragraph

### 3.3 Data Analysis

To analyze the quantitative data, this study used SPSS Version 26 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to identify patterns and relationships among variables (Trafimow & MacDonald, 2017). The first phase, data cleaning, involved converting raw data into numerical values and entering them into an SPSS dataset. In the second phase, descriptive statistics were applied to summarize the dataset's main characteristics, calculating measures such as mean, standard

deviation, and frequency distributions for all variables. The final phase, inferential statistics, employed various statistical tests to examine relationships among variables and test the study's hypotheses. Pearson correlation, independent t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze how participants' demographic factors (gender, academic degree, and years of experience) influence their responses (Tashakkori et al., 2020). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed through Cronbach's alpha of 0.941 (Cluster 1) and 0.967 (Cluster 2), indicating strong internal consistency among the survey items. The data were interpreted using Oxford's rating scale (Oxford, 2001), which classifies response frequencies into five levels: Always (4.5–5.0), Usually (3.5–4.4), Sometimes (2.5–3.4), Rarely (1.5–2.4), and Never (1.0–1.4), providing a structured framework for analysis. For qualitative data from the open-ended responses, thematic analysis was conducted based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The first and second steps, familiarization and generating initial codes, required the researcher to immerse themselves in the data through multiple readings and note-taking, identify patterns, and assign labels to relevant data segments for better organization. In the third and fourth steps, searching for and reviewing themes, related codes were grouped into broader themes, which were then refined for consistency and alignment with the research objectives. The fifth step, defining and naming themes, involved articulating their significance to ensure they accurately reflected the data's meaning, while the final step, producing the thematic report, presented emerging themes with illustrative quotes to depict how participants' experiences shaped their research integration in teaching activities. To enhance credibility, member checking gathered participant feedback, and finding triangulation ensured consistency across data sources.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 EFL Lecturers' Frequency of Research-Related Activities

Cluster 1 examined EFL lecturers' frequency of taking part in research engagement activities through Cluster 1, with 15 items in the questionnaire. The overall mean score for Cluster 1 was relatively moderate (MF=3.63, SD=1.734) (as shown in Table 4):

**Table 4: Descriptive statistics Cluster 1 – Frequency of research-related activities (N=97)**

Items	Mean	SD
<b>Cluster 1: Frequency of research-related activities</b>	3.63	1.734
1. I read studies published in scholarly work.	3.04	1.732
2. I initiate research studies from research gaps.	4.42	1.560
3. I conduct research studies.	4.25	1.614
4. I write and publish scholarly work.	3.97	1.765
5. I am a presenter at a symposium.	3.72	1.539
6. I build connections with other researchers.	4.32	1.538
7. I apply research findings in the classroom.	4.79	1.594
8. I develop curriculum materials based on research evidence.	3.36	1.883
9. I supervise students to do research work.	4.30	1.763
10. I compile coursebooks for university curricula.	3.66	1.785



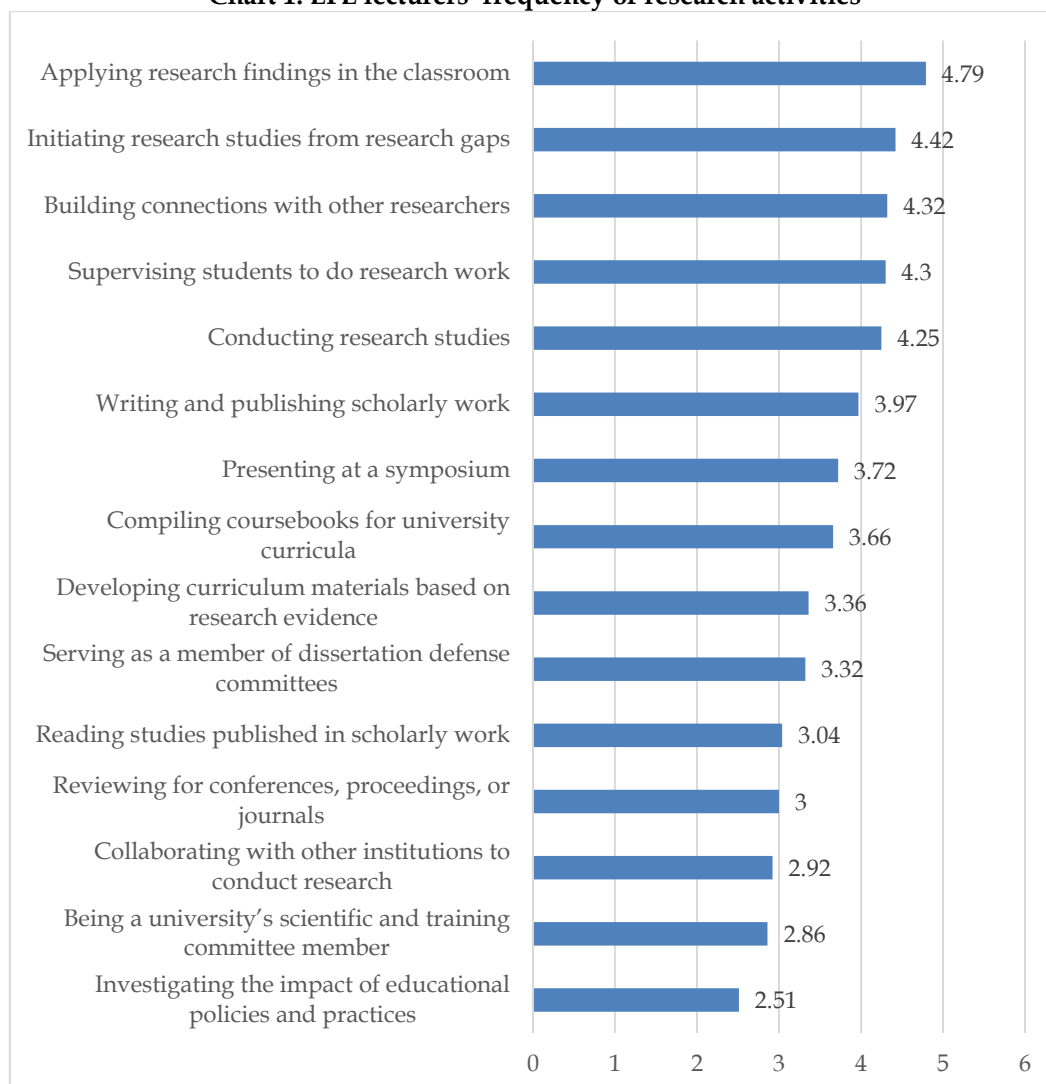
Items	Mean	SD
11. I am a reviewer (for conferences, proceedings or journals).	3.00	1.915
12. I am a member of dissertation defense committees.	3.32	1.945
13. I collaborate with other institutions to conduct research.	2.92	1.868
14. I investigate the impact of educational policies and practices.	2.51	1.763
15. I am a university's scientific and training committee member.	2.86	1.750

The overall mean score of 3.63 suggests that participants sometimes engage in research-related activities, with the frequency varying across specific activities. The high frequency of applying research findings in the classroom ( $M = 4.79$ ) (Item 7) highlights the usual presence of integrating research into teaching, reflecting a practical approach to academic work. In addition, the frequent initiation of research studies from research gaps ( $M = 4.42$ ) (Item 2) and conducting research studies ( $M = 4.25$ ) (Item 3) indicate an active engagement in scholarly inquiry.

Presenting at symposiums ( $M = 3.72$ ) (Item 5) and developing curriculum materials based on research evidence ( $M = 3.36$ ) (Item 8) emphasize lecturers' efforts to contribute to academic discourse and improve educational practices, echoing findings from Pho and Tran (2016). The substantial engagement in building connections with other researchers ( $M = 4.32$ ) (Item 6) suggests a strong academic networking culture, aligning with the collectivist nature of Vietnamese academia. Writing and publishing scholarly work ( $M = 3.97$ ) (Item 4) and supervising students in research ( $M = 4.30$ ) (Item 9) occur at relatively high frequencies but may still be constrained by time and institutional support (Behforouz et al., 2023; Truong et al., 2021).

Less frequent activities include compiling coursebooks ( $M = 3.66$ ) (Item 10), reviewing for conferences or journals ( $M = 3.00$ ) (Item 11), serving on dissertation defence committees ( $M = 3.32$ ) (Item 12), and being part of a university's scientific and training committee ( $M = 2.86$ ) (Item 15), indicating that while these tasks are undertaken, they may not be a central focus of lecturers' research engagement. As non-native English users, Vietnamese lecturers may find it more difficult to carry out academic writing activities owing to strict language standards (Canli & Yağız, 2024). The least frequent activities, including collaborating with other institutions for research ( $M = 2.92$ ) (Item 13) and investigating the impact of educational policies ( $M = 2.51$ ) (Item 14), suggest that large-scale or institutional-level research initiatives are more challenging or less prioritized. These activities often require higher levels of administrative responsibility or cross-institutional collaboration, demanding additional resources and support that may not be readily available or prioritized within the institutional setting.

In conclusion, EFL lecturers tend to engage more in research activities that directly enhance their teaching practices and student learning ( $M = 4.79$ ), with a strong focus on practical classroom-related outcomes. In contrast, more peripheral activities, such as investigating the impact of educational policies ( $M = 2.51$ ), are the least frequently undertaken. This pattern showed an emphasis on research with immediate, tangible benefits for teaching and student engagement, while broader institutional or policy-related research remains less prioritized (Chart 1).

**Chart 1: EFL lecturers' frequency of research activities**

#### 4.2 Perceived Effect of Research-Related Activities on Teaching Practices

Cluster 2 examined EFL lecturers' perceived effect of research-related activities on their teaching practices through the next 14 items of the questionnaire. The overall mean score for Cluster 2 was relatively high ( $ME=3.82$ ,  $SD=0.901$ ) (as shown in Table 5).

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics Cluster 2 – Perceived effect of research-related activities on teaching practices (N=97)**

Items	Mean	SD
<b>Cluster 2: Perceived effect of research-related activities on teaching practices</b>	3.82	.901
16. I can incorporate principles found in literature into my curriculum development process.	3.61	.798
17. Research findings can significantly influence my instructional materials selection.	3.81	.808
18. I can apply research-informed teaching strategies in my classroom.	4.01	.743

Items	Mean	SD
19. Research-related activities can guide my choice of teaching methodologies.	3.94	.814
20. I can align my teaching objectives with learning outcomes based on research evidence.	3.69	.882
21. Research can accommodate me to assess student learning needs.	3.96	.877
22. I can develop and adapt authentic teaching or assessing materials through academic resources	3.89	.828
23. I can employ strategies found in literature to increase student motivation and engagement.	3.91	.914
24. Research-related activities can inform my development of differentiated instructional approaches.	4.03	.822
25. I can utilize technology-enhanced learning based on research findings to improve student outcomes.	3.99	.761
26. Research findings can inform me to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.	3.91	.879
27. Research-related activities can boost my teaching self-efficacy.	3.90	.835
28. Research can help me develop inquiry and critical thinking skills in teaching and guiding students.	3.84	.886
29. Research engagement makes me feel more empowered and autonomous in my teaching practices.	3.90	.930

The overall mean score for Cluster 2 ( $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = 0.901$ ) suggests that lecturers generally recognize the significant role of research in shaping their teaching approaches. While the mean values across individual items indicate a positive perception, some areas show stronger endorsement than others, reflecting variations in how research informs different aspects of teaching. Among the highest-rated items, applying research-informed teaching strategies in the classroom ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.743$ ) and developing differentiated instructional approaches based on research ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.822$ ) show that lecturers perceive research as a crucial tool for enhancing instructional effectiveness, concurring with numerous existing studies (Nguyen et al., 2021; Vu, 2021). Similarly, research is acknowledged for its role in guiding teaching methodologies ( $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 0.814$ ) and assessing student learning needs ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.877$ ), accentuating the contribution of research strategic interventions to pedagogical decision-making. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of evidence-based teaching practices (Heng et al., 2022).

Mean scores for using technology-enhanced learning ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 0.761$ ) and strategies to boost student motivation ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.914$ ) were fairly high, indicating lecturers' recognition of the need to adapt teaching strategies to contemporary trends, especially in integrating technology for engagement (Ocampo et al., 2022). Research is also seen as instrumental in creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.879$ ). The findings suggest that engaging in research enhances teaching self-efficacy ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.835$ ), promotes empowerment and autonomy in teaching practices ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.930$ ), and develops inquiry and critical thinking skills ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.886$ ). On the lower end, incorporating principles found in literature into curriculum development ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.798$ ) and aligning teaching objectives with research-based learning outcomes ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 0.882$ ) have relatively

lower mean scores. This suggests that while lecturers see value in research, its direct influence on curriculum design and alignment with institutional learning goals may require more external support or collaborative professional development, as proper divisions of labour could ease the burden lecturers have to carry (Trinh et al., 2025).

Two independent t-tests and one one-way ANOVA were run to compare EFL lecturers' research engagement frequencies and their perceived effect on teaching practices, regarding research engagement between demographic groups. The results showed that varying genders, highest academic qualifications, and years of full-time lecturing do not impact their responses.

### **4.3 EFL Lecturers' Suggestions to Integrate Research-Related Activities into Teaching**

#### *4.3.1 Applying task-based or inquiry-based language learning*

Many lecturers reported using task-based or inquiry-based learning as an effective strategy to introduce students to research principles. Through problem-solving tasks and exploratory activities, students develop a habit of critical thinking before being introduced to any kind of tasks. L25 noted the importance of guiding students to develop critical thinking, *"At first, my students just agreed with everything I said, but now they are bolder. They dare to disagree and explain why. And I am happy for that."* L43, a senior lecturer, added, *"I realize that my students often neglect how to give credit or citations, so I lead them to cite properly by incorporating citation exercises into tasks."* These approaches are not solely academic reflections from lecturers themselves but further inspire their students to engage with research materials and avoid plagiarism.

Under the lens of Brew and Weir's nexus, lecturers emphasized the role of academic notes and research materials in their teaching, not only to enhance the professionalism of classroom discussions but also to instil a habit of engaging with credible sources. This strategy was underpinned by a research-oriented dimension since it fosters students' familiarity with academic discourse, research methodologies, and structured inquiry. Echoing findings from Bedeker and Kerimkulova (2024), insights from this study suggest that through research-informed tasks and guidance in methodological awareness, lecturers equip students with foundational skills for independent academic exploration, ensuring they actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information.

#### *4.3.2 Integrating research-based language teaching*

About 51.55% of participants mentioned research-based teaching techniques through student-led research projects as a more advanced step following task-based learning. These opportunities allow students to transition from EFL learners to becoming "amateur" researchers. L41 shared. Through mini-research projects, students analyze language learning issues, justify their viewpoints, and engage in scholarly discourse. Incorporating student-led research projects aligns with the research-based principle within the researching-teaching nexus. By analyzing language learning issues through mini-research projects, students can question prevailing assumptions, identify gaps in the literature, and propose innovative solutions. Beyond conducting research, some lecturers encourage

students to co-publish their work. By mentoring students in research writing, they lay the foundation for deeper engagement in research-based learning. Such activities, in turn, stimulate reflective practices, prompting both students and teachers to evaluate and refine the learning process continually. L13 additionally supported this idea, *"Only when learners uncover language issues on their own will they truly be convinced by the results. If we, as instructors, always provide the answers, they won't fully internalize or believe in the outcomes."* It could be inferred that research-based activities could support learners' intellectual development and cultivate a sense of ownership over their learning.

#### 4.3.3 *Conducting needs analysis and action research on learners' learning process*

A few lecturers reported the value of collaborative action research, such as lesson study, critical friend groups, and school rounds, in refining teaching practices and engaging students' language learning outcomes. These approaches stem from the research-led aspect of teaching, where educators actively participate in research processes alongside their colleagues to explore and address specific challenges in the classroom. By engaging in collaborative inquiry, lecturers can continuously refine their teaching strategies based on firsthand research experience (Cravens & Hunter, 2021). At the same time, they integrate research-informed techniques, such as needs analysis and psychological assessments. L90, a novice lecturer, shared that, *"My learners are Gen Z, they are addicted to the MBTI test. I also combine with multiple intelligences and learning style inventories to better communicate and group them."* L33 elaborated, *"When I analyzed my students' learning styles, I realized that many of them struggled with traditional lecture-based lessons. It helped me adjust my approach."* These responses demonstrate how research findings can be applied directly and easily to teaching practice, allowing lecturers to adapt their methods to better align with student needs. Such interventions suggest that research can be viewed as practically accessible rather than a complex, burdensome task. By reconceptualizing research engagement in this way, lecturers can find it enjoyable and manageable to enrich teaching and learning experiences with emotional connections with students.

#### 4.3.4 *Formulating research interest groups and communities of practice*

In addition to individual research efforts, some lecturers suggested the creation of research interest groups as a way to enhance collaboration and collective inquiry within the teaching community. These groups can provide a platform for lecturers to share ideas, explore common challenges, and discuss emerging trends in language education research. As L22 highlighted, *"By collaborating with colleagues who share similar research interests, we can pool our resources, exchange feedback, and develop more robust research questions, or introduce potential participants and researchers to know each other."* The formation of these groups helps establish a sense of academic community and accountability, encouraging the development of more focused, collaborative research projects that can directly inform teaching practices across contexts (Trinh & Le, 2022). By working together, lecturers can share research findings, bringing valuable insights to a wider readership. These groups provide a space for continuous professional development, allowing lecturers to remain updated on recent research advancements and to apply these insights to their classroom activities. Regarding collaborative PD, there should be more opportunities for peer mentoring, where more experienced researchers can

guide novices, thus creating a supportive environment for the entire teaching staff (Mullen et al., 2020). In this way, research interest groups help establish a culture of shared inquiry and reflection that bridges the gap between research and teaching, empowering lecturers to become both researchers and practitioners in a dynamically interconnected process.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, quantitative findings show that lecturers engage in research-related activities to varying degrees, mainly applying research in teaching, while qualitative insights present challenges in workload, training, and resource accessibility across the research-teaching nexus. Since Vietnam adopted the Renovation policy in 1986 and opened to the global market in 1990, the demand for English learning has surged, especially after the U.S. lifted its trade embargo in 1995. To meet this demand, EFL lecturers have prioritized teaching over research, limiting their research identity. As research requires higher-order thinking skills, professional training has lacked a focus on developing these abilities. As a result, many lecturers primarily see themselves as classroom practitioners, with only a few engaging in research to inform their teaching.

To bridge the research-teaching gap, training programmes should foster research habits through classroom-based action research, making inquiry more applicable to teaching. Professional development in research skills and academic writing can further support lecturers in strengthening their research identities, refining teaching, and preparing students for global competition. This study shows that lecturers engage in research-related activities but struggle to balance both roles. Findings align with the strong belief, as stated by L45, that “teaching and learning are the ultimate goals and the most crucial targets that teachers aim to achieve.” Research should be dedicated to learners’ development, linking directly to teaching innovations. Early and ongoing training should provide hands-on experience, encouraging frequent engagement. Additionally, logistical support, technology, and access to international networks are essential to easing apprehension and promoting sustained participation in research.

## 6. Limitations and Implications

Although this study has brought considerable insights into its current contexts, several limitations should be noted. First, the reliance on self-reported data might introduce biases, such as social desirability or personal perspectives, rather than accurately reflecting lecturers’ actual engagement extent with research. To enhance the findings, future research could include document analysis, such as reviewing research output, course syllabi, and institutional policies, or outsider comments from colleagues and leaders, which would provide a more objective view of lecturers’ involvement in research. Additionally, increasing the sample size and including participants from different institutions and geographical areas would potentially improve the external validity and make the results more applicable to broader contexts. In this study, the use of statistical tests such as the independent t-test and ANOVA did not yield significant results, likely owing to the limited sample size, which may have restricted the ability to detect meaningful differences.

Future comparative studies among institutions with different research expectations, resources, and academic cultures could offer a clearer understanding of how these factors influence lecturers' research engagement in practices. By addressing these limitations, future research could provide a more holistic and data-driven understanding of research engagement among EFL lecturers in more varied circumstances.

**Author Contributions.** Author 1: overseeing the study, conceptualizing the study, ensuring the quality; Author 2: reviewing literature, collecting and interpreting data, writing the dissertation draft; Author 3: consulting on the data collection and interpretation procedure, reviewing the final manuscript.

**Conflicts of Interest.** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Funding.** The researchers received no funding for this project.

**Ethical Approval.** Research objectives and data collection using classroom observations and interviews for the project were assessed to meet ethical standards.

**Data Availability Statement.** Data is available by the corresponding author upon official request.

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