

The Interface between Second Language Acquisition Research and Second Language Pedagogy: Iranian EFL Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Despite the existence of a vast growing literature on second language acquisition (SLA) research and a heated debate among second language (L2) researchers about the applicability of research to practice, there is scanty empirical evidence in this area (Nassaji, 2012). Accordingly, this paper reports on a study investigating in-service teachers' perspectives on the interface between SLA research and L2 teaching. A total number of 119 English language teachers responded to a questionnaire which collected both qualitative and quantitative data. The results revealed teachers' familiarity with SLA research. Although they held positive views towards the relevance of SLA research to language teaching practice, a low percentage of them indicated that they seek insights from research articles. Lack of time and ability were the most frequently reported reasons for not conducting SLA research. Similarly, teachers' lack of time and the difficulty associated with SLA research articles were the most frequently reported reasons for not reading these articles. Majority of the teachers appeared to conceive of teachers' and researchers' works as related and connected. However, in almost all cases a considerably higher percentage of MA teachers than their BA counterparts viewed SLA research as more relevant and useful for teaching purposes. Teachers also expressed their expectations from SLA research to address practical issues. Further, they highlighted practical aspects of SLA research as more relevant to their practice.

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1. Introduction

For long, there have been debates on the interface between research and practice in general education and other disciplines which are more practice-centered such as law, business, medicine, so on. Such debates have often evolved around the 'how' and 'what' of researchers' and teachers' interaction and how they may influence and contribute to each other's work (Nassaji, 2012). Likewise, the divide between research and language teaching practice has been vastly discussed in the literature (e.g., Allwright, 2005; Belcher, 2007; Erlam, 2008; Nassaji, 2012; Stewart, 2006; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012). Scholars such as Vanderlinde and van Braak (2010) argue that while teachers and researchers agree that practice and research complement each other, there is not much agreement among them about the interaction of research and practice or their relationship.

The gap between research and practice has been discussed in terms of the distinction between 'practical knowledge' and 'technical knowledge'. Researchers are said to be equipped with technical knowledge and teachers with practical knowledge. As Ellis (2009; as cited in Ellis, 2010, p. 184) puts it

Technical knowledge is explicit; it exists in declarative form that has been codified. There are established procedures, such as the 'scientific method', for determining it and disputing it. Technical knowledge is also generalized in the sense that it takes the form of laws that can be applied to many particular cases. For this reason, it cannot be rapidly applied when immediate decision-making is required. Practical knowledge, I contrast, is procedural; it is readily

available to handle specific cases in concrete situations. It is not acquired scientifically but experientially and is fully expressible only in practice. Thus, there is a world of difference between studying and acquiring technical knowledge and developing and using practical knowledge.

Scholars such as Belcher (2007) argue that teachers have been doing their jobs successfully for thousands of years without being asked whether research can make their efforts more fruitful. Likewise, Block (2000) claims that SLA research cannot be applied to the routine teaching and learning processes and is not especially applicable for language teachers. While teachers are supposed to assume the 'teaching' role researches are found to be fond of 'learning' (McDonough, 2006). Allwright (2005) prefers to call the divide between researchers and practitioners as a 'damaging split'; and attributes this 'damaging split' to the hierarchy of putting researchers at the top and teachers at the bottom. Allwright (2005) asserts that "academic research has its own ultimate value for practice, but it is of negligible value to current classroom participants, who need their understandings now". Tavakoli and Howard (2012) also maintain that all seminars and plenary speeches which seek addressing the gap between SLA research and practice, though sometimes indirectly, reveal the existence of a big gap between SLA research and second language teaching practice. Iran has been no exception and the gap between research and practice has been widely witnessed in the Iranian ELT community (Mehrani, 2015). Gurney (1989) notes that when teachers read and do research they can move out of their positions at the bottom of the hierarchy and assume more important roles in curriculum development. Encouraging and promoting teacher research in ELT requires

exploring their perspectives towards research, their reasoning for reading/not reading research and their problems in conducting research. In order to find answers to such questions there is a need to conduct local research in ELT contexts (Zare-ee, Mohd Don, & Shu Sim, 2015).

As Mehrani and Behzadnia (2013) contend, the gap between research and practice has been an 'endemic feature' of Iranian ELT programs and calls have been made for empirical studies aiming at improving the relationship between research and practice. Furthermore, despite the existence of a huge literature addressing the relationship between research and practice, there is scanty empirical evidence on teachers' views and understandings of SLA research and how they may judge the effectiveness of such research for their teaching practice (Nassaji, 2012). Therefore, this study was launched to investigate teachers' familiarity with SLA research, their easy access to it, their reading of SLA research articles and the reasons for reading/not reading them, their evaluations of the applicability and usefulness of SLA research for teaching purposes, their views of the relationship between teachers and researchers, their expectations of SLA research, and their perceptions of the aspects of SLA which are more relevant to their practice. Studies such as this one can be significant in that they may bring about insights and understandings which can lessen or fill the gap between SLA research and practice because they allow us to hear the voice of teachers who have extensively been ignored in academic research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

2. Review of Literature

Research conducted by practitioners, individually or cooperatively, in their classrooms is called practitioner research or teacher research and aims at connecting research and practice (Ellis, 2012). It aims at solving problems

that teachers have confronted in their classrooms. Ellis (2012) argues that practitioner research should

be evaluated not in terms of whether it contributes to our general understanding of some issue of theoretical significance but in terms of the contribution it can make to teachers' practice of teaching and through the reflection that it can promote, to teacher development. (p. 26)

Borg (2007) also points out that educational policy in the UK has moved towards engaging teachers with research and making the teaching profession 'evidence based'. Despite the doubts cast on teacher research, Borg (2007) argues that, on the whole, teachers' engagement with research and their informed use of research can increase the quality of education.

Although a vast growing literature exists on SLA and most teacher educators attempt to inform pre- and in-service teachers about SLA research and its findings, a crucial concern addressing the extent to which SLA research has actually influenced second language teaching has remained an important question which has received little empirical attention (Nassaji, 2012). In addition, despite Borg's (2007) call for more research into language teachers' research engagement, limited attention has been awarded to this issue (Gao, Barkhuizen, & Chow, 2010).

In his study, Barkhuizen (2009) attempted to uncover the research background and experiences of 83 English teachers in Chinese universities. The results of this study led to pinpointing professional and practical issues as factors behind teachers' incentives for conducting research. In another study, Borg (2009) explored teachers' conceptions of research. In so doing, a questionnaire was distributed among 505 teachers from 13 countries. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted. The results of this study

indicated that teachers perceived research in line with traditional conceptions of scientific research. They mentioned lack of time, knowledge, and hard access to resources as the main reasons preventing them from doing research. In addition, Borg (2009) found that teachers were mainly engaged with research to solve 'practical' and 'professional' concerns. In a mixed method research Gao et al. (2010), in a Chinese context, attempted to investigate the research engagement of 28 primary school English teachers and the 'how' and 'why' of their research engagement. They administered a modified version of Borg's (2007, 2009) questionnaire and conducted focus-group interviews. The results indicated that teachers were interested in empirically testing the use of methods or approaches of teaching in their classrooms. Contrary to academic research which aims at publishing the findings, most of the teachers engaged in research to enhance the teaching and learning process. It is worth mentioning that teachers expressed huge difficulties they faced in planning and carrying out research.

In their study, Tavakoli and Howard (2012) tried to investigate teachers' beliefs and perspectives on the interface between SLA research and pedagogy. The data of this study, both qualitative and quantitative, were collected by distributing a questionnaire among 60 teachers. The results of this study revealed that teachers held positive views towards research. However, they cast doubts on the pedagogical relevance of second language research. Teachers did not put time into reading or doing research, instead they expected teacher trainers to take the responsibility of bringing research and practice together and share them with teachers at teacher training programs. Finally, in his study, Nassaji (2012) attempted to examine how English language teachers perceive the relationship between SLA research and language teaching and to what extent they believe the findings of SLA are useful and relevant for L2 pedagogy. A questionnaire collecting both

qualitative and quantitative data was distributed among 201 English as a second language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The findings showed that most teachers found SLA research courses as useful in improving second language teaching. Most teachers mentioned lack of time and interest and the difficulty of research articles as the main reasons for not reading them.

Some studies have addressed the gap between research and practice in the Iranian context which has suffered from the gap between research and practice as well (Mehrani, 2105). Zare-ee et al. (2015) attempted to probe university English language lecturers', 30 Malaysians and 38 Iranians, perceptions of teacher research. They concluded that teachers in both groups commonly perceived research through traditional lenses. Teachers in both groups reported low research engagement and moderate research reading. They mentioned lack of time and poor skills as the reasons preventing them from doing or reading research. The results revealed that the social and cultural contexts influence teachers' perceptions of research. In their study, Mehrani and Behzadnia (2013) aimed at investigating English teachers' research engagement. They collected the qualitative data from high schools and private language institute teachers. The results indicated teachers' poor levels of doing or reading research. Along these lines, Mehrani and Behzadnia (2013) mentioned some barriers hindering them from reading or doing research including "barriers related to the production of research, barriers related to the use of research, barriers related to the lack of collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and barriers related to the educational system" (p. 17).

In another study, Mehrani (2014) attempted to probe the strategies that could be used to narrow the gap between ELT researchers and practitioners. The results of focus-group interview with a group of practitioner-researchers

revealed the importance of a reshaping the teachers and researchers evaluation or rewarding systems in persuading researchers to move toward 'problem-based research' and teachers towards 'evidence-based practice'. In addition, they argued for restructuring current teacher education programs which focus on memorizing the content of a book and do not prepare teachers for reading research papers, encouraging cooperation and collaboration between teachers and researchers by establishing an organization capable of providing research needs and also research orientations for academics, redirecting research towards the problems teachers face in their practice, revising and editing the current textbooks and educational materials, and finally supporting teachers' research. In a more recent study, Mehrani (2015) tried to explore the extent to which teachers read and do research and also to find factors which can trigger and boost teachers' motivation for doing research. The data for this qualitative study were gathered through conducting interviews with 24 teachers. The findings revealed teachers' moderate levels of involvement with research. Teachers mentioned professional, instrumental, institutional, and pedagogical concerns as the incentives for conducting research.

3. The Purpose of the Study

This study aims at extending the previous literature in three ways: first, it attempts to find out to what extent teachers' academic degrees would cause a difference in their perspectives and views towards the relevance and usefulness of SLA research; second, it seeks teachers' perspectives on the aspects of SLA research which they think is more relevant to their practice; third, the results of this study provide data from an EFL context which would allow for cross-contextual comparisons and may explain why reading and doing (SLA) research is not a widespread endeavor in Iran (Borg, 2007,

2009). More specifically, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what degree are teachers familiar with SLA research?
2. Do they find access to SLA research easily and what sources do they use more?
3. How much do they read research articles and what are their reasons for not reading them?
4. What is their assessment of the applicability and usefulness of SLA research for teaching practice?
5. What is their perception of the relationship between teachers and researchers?
6. What do they expect from SLA research?
7. What aspects of SLA do they find more relevant to their practice?

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

A slightly revised version of Nassaji's (2012) (See Appendix) questionnaire eliciting both quantitative and qualitative data was distributed among 213 Iranian EFL teachers. Teachers' participation was on a voluntary basis and was solicited by personal contact or email. The researchers personally contacted groups of teachers teaching in different schools and language institutes in Tehran, Karaj, and Kermanshah, told them about the purpose of the study and asked if they could participate in the study. Then they were asked to seek their colleagues' willingness to participate in the study ($n = 87$). The rest of the questionnaires ($n = 126$) were sent to teachers electronically. A total of 119, producing a response rate of 55.86%, teachers filled out the questionnaires and returned them. The participant teachers came from a range of different regions (within Iran), teaching experience, age groups and educational backgrounds.

As Table 1 shows, 54.6% of participants were males and 45.4% were females. Teachers' age ranged from 23 to 45 with the average age of 28.4 and

their experience ranged from 1 to 23 with the average experience of 7.6 years. 9.7% of participants held BA degrees, 40.3% held MA degrees. 51.3% of the teachers were teachers of adults and only 16% of them were teaching children. 32.7% were teaching both children and adults. As Table 1 shows, the participants were teaching different levels ranging from beginner to advanced levels.

Table 1
Teachers' Demographic Information

		BA	MA	Total
Gender	Male	43(60.6)	22(45.8)	65(54.6)
	Female	28(39.4)	26(54.2)	54(45.4)
Age	Mean	27.7	29.5	28.4
	SD	3.7	4.5	4.1
Experience	Mean	7.3	8.08	7.6
	SD	4.8	3.5	4.3
Degree		71(59.7)	48(40.3)	119(100)
Age groups taught	Adults	38(53.5)	23(47.9)	61(51.3)
	Children	15(21.1)	4(8.3)	19(16.0)
	Adults + Children	18(25.4)	21(43.8)	39(32.7)
Levels taught	Beginner	7(9.9)	1(2.1)	8(6.7)
	Lower intermediate	7(9.9)	6(12.5)	13(10.9)
	Higher intermediate	17(23.9)	5(10.4)	22(18.5)
	Advanced	1(1.4)	3(6.3)	4(3.4)
	Beginner + Lower intermediate	6(8.5)	8(16.7)	14(11.8)
	Higher intermediate + Advanced	10(14.1)	21(43.8)	31(26.1)
	All four levels	3(4.2)	3(6.3)	6(5.0)
	Lower intermediate + Higher intermediate	20(28.2)	1(2.1)	21(17.6)
	Total	71(100)	48(100)	119(100)

4.2 Instrumentation

To collect data, the questionnaire developed by Nassaji (2012) was slightly revised and distributed among 213 Iranian EFL teachers. The questionnaire has been designed to collect data on teachers' familiarity with SLA research, their easy access to SLA research, sources they use, the degree to which they read research articles, their reasons for reading/not reading them, their judgment of the relevance of SLA research for teaching purposes, their conception of the relationship between teachers and researchers, and their expectations of SLA research. As mentioned before, another section was added to the questionnaire in order to explore teachers' perception and evaluation of the aspects of SLA research which they think is more relevant to their practice. It should be noted that the introductory section of the questionnaire collected teachers' demographic information such as degree, age, teaching experience, and levels and age groups taught.

Prior to the start of the study, the questionnaire was distributed among a small ($n = 15$) representative number of EFL teachers. These teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaire and leave their comments on the wording and clarity of it. Accordingly, some very minor changes were made to the questionnaire. For example, following teachers' comments, a brief definition of SLA research was included in the introductory section of the questionnaire on the grounds that teachers, especially BA holders, may not be familiar with SLA research.

4.3 Data analysis

In order to analyze the data, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis procedures were conducted. Using SPSS 19, the quantitative data were analyzed to obtain descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages. To analyze the qualitative data a method of thematic analysis was employed

(Plano Clark & Creswell, 2014). In so doing, following Plano Clark and Creswell (2014), adopting an inductive approach to data analysis, students' answers to the two open ended questions were read several times to develop an initial impression of the data. Next, readings and moving back and forth among the data helped assigning codes to the parts depicting 'text segments'. Later readings helped finding redundancies and pinpointing initial themes. Finally, these initial themes were refined and clustered and main themes emerged.

In order to make sure that the emerged themes were a close representation of teachers' views, a PhD student of applied linguistics experienced in using thematic data analysis analyzed the data by going through the same procedure. Calculating the number of agreements over disagreements indicated 91% inter-rater reliability. Finally, areas of disagreement were resolved by consensus.

5. Results

5.1 Teachers' familiarity with SLA research

As Nassaji (2012) argues teachers' familiarity with SLA research was explored through four questions, including: whether teachers had had any SLA courses before, whether they had had any courses on research methods in SLA, whether they had done any SLA research, and whether they had any publication related to SLA.

As the data in Table 2 suggest, a high percentage (Total = 86.6%; BA = 84.5%; MA = 89.6%) of the teachers noted that they had previously taken courses in SLA. More than one fourth (Total = 27.7%; BA = 19.7%; MA = 39.6%) of teachers reported that they had previously taken courses in SLA research methods. A considerable percentage of MA (39.6%) teachers showed that they had already had SLA courses; in contrary, a smaller

percentage of BA (19.7%) teachers indicated that they had already taken courses in SLA. While a noticeable percentage of MA (54.2%) teachers and a smaller percentage of BA (19.7%) teachers said that they had conducted SLA research before, a negligible percentage of both MA (14.6%) and BA (1.4%) teachers said they had already published research on SLA.

Table 2
Teachers' Familiarity with SLA Research

Items		Yes	No	Total
taken any course(s) in second language research methods	BA	60(84.5)	8(11.3)	68(100)
	MA	43(89.6)	3(6.3)	46(100)
	Total	103(86.6)	11(9.2)	114 (100)
taken any course(s) in SLA	BA	14(19.7)	57(80.3)	71(100)
	MA	19(39.6)	29(60.4)	48(100)
	Total	33(27.7)	86(72.3)	119(100)
conducted any SLA research	BA	10(14.1)	59(83.1)	69(100)
	MA	26(54.2)	17(35.4)	43(100)
	Total	36(30.3)	76(63.9)	112(100)
published any research on SLA	BA	1(1.4)	70(98.6)	71(100)
	MA	7(14.6)	41(85.4)	48(100)
	Total	8(6.7)	111(93.3)	119(100)

If teachers reported that they had previously taken SLA research methods or SLA courses, they were required to evaluate the usefulness of the courses. As Table 3 shows, a higher percentage of MA (73.7%) teachers found SLA research methods courses very useful or useful than BA (42.4%) teachers. Similarly, a higher percentage of MA (77.7%) than BA (49.9%) teachers judged SLA course as very useful or useful.

Table 3
Usefulness of SLA Courses

Items		Very useful	Useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful at all	Total
SLA research methods courses	BA	0(0.0)	12(20.0)	33(55.0)	15(25.0)	60(100)
	MA	8(19.0)	23(54.7)	10(23.8)	1(2.3)	42(100)
	Total	8(8.16)	35(34.3)	43(42.1)	16(15.6)	102(100)
SLA courses	BA	6(42.8)	1(7.1)	6(42.8)	1(7.1)	14(100)
	MA	5(27.7)	9(50.0)	4(22.2)	0(0.0)	18(100)
	Total	11(34.3)	10(31.2)	10(31.2)	1(3.1)	32(100)

Teachers were also required to report their previous experience in conducting SLA research. As the data in Table 4 suggest, more than one fourth of the participants reported they had previously conducted SLA research. A considerably higher percentage of MA (54.2%) than BA (7.0%) teachers reported they had conducted SLA research before.

Table 4
Conducted Any SLA Research

		Yes	No	Total
Conducted SLA research before	BA	5(7.0)	64(90.1)	69(100)
	MA	26(54.2)	17(35.4)	43(100)
	Total	31(26.1)	81(68.1)	112(100)

If participants noted that they had not previously conducted research, they were asked to indicate the reason. As Table 5 shows a very high percentage of participants pointed to their lack of ability (48.7%) and also lack of time (45.4%) as the main factors for not conducting research. Interestingly, while BA participants put more emphasis on their lack of ability (71.8%) than lack of time (62.0%) as the main reason for not conducting SLA research, MA participants put more emphasis on their lack of time (20.8%) than their lack of ability (14.6%) as the main reason for not conducting research.

Table 5
Reasons for Not Conducting SLA Research

	Lack of time	Lack of ability	Not interested	Research is not needed	Not useful for teaching	Total
BA	44(62.0)	51(71.8)	10(14.1)	0(0.00)	1(1.4)	71(100)
MA	10(20.8)	7(14.6)	5(10.4)	1(2.1)	1(2.1)	48(100)
Total	54(45.4)	58(48.7)	15(12.6)	1(0.8)	2(1.7)	119(100)

Note. Throughout the article wherever percentages are greater than 100 it is because of checking more than one option by some teachers.

5.2 The Extent to Which Teachers Read Research Articles and their Reasons for not Reading them

In order to explore the extent to which teachers read SLA research articles they were asked to show how often they read SLA research articles. If their answer to this question was positive they were asked to show how useful they have found such articles. If, however, their answers to this question were negative then they were asked to indicate the reason by choosing the options provided. The results related to these parts are presented in Table 6, 7, and 8.

Table 6
Teachers' Reading and Evaluation of SLA Research Articles

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
BA	2(2.8)	6(8.5)	23(32.4)	16(22.5)	24(33.8)	71(100)
MA	5(10.4)	13(27.1)	18(37.5)	7(14.6)	5(10.4)	48(100)
Total	7(5.9)	19(16.0)	41(34.5)	23(19.3)	29(24.4)	119(100)

As Table 6 shows, less than one fourth of the participants (21.9%) indicated that they always or often read SLA research articles. More than one third (34.5%) of teachers noted that they sometimes read research articles. In responding to how much they have found such articles useful, as shown in Table 7, a very high percentage (85.0%) of the participants, who had checked always, often, and sometimes, showed that they have found such articles

useful, while only 14.9% of them noted that they have not found such articles useful.

Table 7

Usefulness of SLA Research Articles

		YES	NO
If yes, how useful was it?	BA	25(80.6)	6(19.35)
	MA	32(88.8)	4(11.1)
	Total	57(85.0)	10(14.9)

It is of note that higher percentage of MA teachers (37.5%) reported they always or often read SLA research than BA teachers (11.3%). In addition, a higher percentage of MA teachers (88.8%) judged such courses as more useful than their BA counterparts (80.6%).

Table 8

Reasons for not reading SLA Research

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
How often do you read SLA research articles?	BA	2(2.8)	6(8.5)	23(32.4)	16(22.5)	24(33.8)	71(100)
	MA	5(10.4)	13(27.1)	18(37.5)	7(14.6)	5(10.4)	48(100)
	Total	7(5.9)	19(16.0)	41(34.5)	23(19.3)	29(24.4)	119(100)

As the data in Table 8 suggest, teachers' lack of time (43.7%) was the most frequently reported reason for not reading SLA research. The difficulty of SLA research articles (24.4%) was the second most frequently reported reason for not reading SLA research articles. It is worth mentioning that a substantially larger proportion of BA teachers (38.0%) than MA teachers (4.2%) considered the difficulty of research articles as a reason for not reading SLA research. Moreover, BA teachers (19.7%) put more emphasis on their experience than MA teachers (2.1%).

5.3 Teachers' Easy Access to SLA Research Articles and Sources they Use to get Information for Their Classes

In order to find out the ease with which participants had access to research articles they were asked to answer a 'yes' or 'no' question asking whether they

could find access to SLA research easily. As Table 9 shows a smaller percentage of MA (22.9%) than BA teachers (47.9%) indicated they had easy access to SLA research articles.

Table 9
Easy Access to SLA Research Articles

		Yes	No	Total
Easy access to SLA research articles	BA	34(47.9)	35(49.3)	69(97.2)
	MA	11(22.9)	35(72.9)	46(95.8)
	Total	45(37.8)	70(58.8)	115(96.6)

The teachers were asked to tick one of the options regarding the sources which they mostly use to get information they need for their language teaching issues. Table 10 shows the results of analyzing their answers.

Table 10
Sources Teachers Use to Get Information

Items	Talk to your colleagues	Read books	Read journal articles	Attend conferences or workshops	Do empirical research	Internet	Total
BA	41(57.7)	48(67.6)	17(23.9)	4(5.6)	2(2.8)	23(32.4)	71(100)
MA	34(70.8)	33(68.8)	34(70.8)	15(31.3)	11(22.9)	20(41.7)	48(100)
Total	75(63.0)	81(68.1)	51(42.9)	19(16.0)	13(10.9)	43(36.1)	119(100)

Overall, as Table 10 shows, the teachers noted that they mostly read books (68.1%), followed by talking to colleagues (63.0%), reading journal articles (42.9%) and the Internet (36.1%) to get the necessary information they need for dealing with issues they face in their classes. A smaller percentage mentioned attending conferences or workshops (16.0%) and doing empirical research (10.9%) as the sources they use to get information for the issues they face in their classes. Interestingly, a considerably higher percentage of MA teachers than their BA counterparts maintained that they read journal articles (70.8%), attend conferences or workshops (31.3%), or do

empirical research (22.9%) as the sources they use to get information for the issues they face in their classes.

5.4 Teachers' Perception of the Relationship between Teachers and Researchers

In order to explore the teachers' viewpoints on the relationship between SLA researchers and teachers, they were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with seven Likert scale statements on the relationship between teachers and researchers. These statements included their stance on considering 'university professors or academics' responsible for conducting research not teachers, giving teachers the responsibility of conducting research besides that of teaching, considering good teachers as those who are also good researchers, assigning researchers the sole responsibility of conducting research and teachers teaching, having teachers and researchers work together, expecting teachers to seek advice from researchers on the issues of teaching and learning, and expecting researchers to seek advice from teachers on the areas they want to conduct research on.

As Table 11 shows, more than two third of the participants (Total = 72.2%; BA = 67.7%; MA= 79.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that university professors and academics should assume the responsibility of conducting research not teachers. About half of the teachers (Total = 47.9%; BA = 38.1%; MA= 62.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with giving teachers the responsibility of conducting research beside that of teaching. Likewise, a considerable percentage of the participants (Total=29.4%; BA = 32.4%; MA = 25.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that good teachers are also good researchers. More than two third of the participants (Total = 67.3%; BA = 63.4%; MA= 70.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers should teach and researchers should conduct research.

Similarly, more than two third of the participants (Total = 64.7%; BA = 66.2%; MA = 62.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that researchers and teachers should cooperate with each other. Over half of the participants (Total= 56.3%; BA = 47.9%; MA = 65.8%) agreed or strongly agreed that teachers need to seek advice from researchers. Likewise, more than half of them (Total = 52.9%; BA = 71.8%; MA = 25.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that researchers need to seek advice from teachers on topics they intend to research.

Table 11
Teachers' Relationship with Researchers

Items		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Researchers should be university professors or academics, not teachers.	BA	3(4.2)	4(5.6)	4(5.6)	12(16.9)	30(42.3)	18(25.4)	71(100)
	MA	0(0.0)	1(2.1)	6(12.5)	3(6.3)	23(47.9)	15(31.3)	48(100)
	Total	3(2.5)	5(4.2)	10(8.4)	15(12.6)	53(44.5)	33(27.7)	119(100)
A teacher should also be a researcher	BA	16(22.5)	11(15.6)	14(19.7)	21(29.6)	6(8.5)	3(4.2)	71(100)
	MA	13(27.1)	17(35.4)	15(31.3)	2(4.2)	1(2.1)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	29(24.4)	28(23.5)	29(24.4)	23(19.3)	7(5.9)	3(2.5)	119(100)
A good teacher should be a good researcher.	BA	8(11.3)	15(21.1)	27(38.0)	11(15.5)	6(8.5)	4(5.6)	71(100)
	MA	8(16.7)	4(8.3)	15(31.3)	7(14.6)	14(29.2)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	16(13.4)	19(16.0)	42(35.3)	18(15.1)	20(16.8)	4(3.4)	119(100)
Researchers should research and teachers should teach.	BA	3(4.2)	5(7.0)	2(2.8)	16(22.5)	45(63.4)	0(0.00)	71(100)
	MA	0(0.0)	1(2.1)	0(0.0)	13(27.1)	23(47.9)	11(22.9)	48(100)
	Total	3(2.5)	6(5.0)	2(1.7)	29(24.4)	68(57.1)	11(9.2)	119(100)
Teachers and researchers should work together.	BA	21(29.6)	26(36.6)	9(12.7)	4(5.6)	5(7.0)	6(8.5)	71(100)
	MA	12(25.0)	18(37.5)	9(18.8)	6(12.5)	2(4.2)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	33(27.7)	44(37)	18(15.1)	10(8.4)	7(5.9)	6(5.0)	119(100)
Teachers should consult researchers ...	BA	15(21.1)	19(26.8)	22(31.0)	11(15.5)	2(2.8)	2(2.8)	71(100)
	MA	14(29.2)	19(39.6)	6(12.5)	6(12.5)	1(2.1)	1(2.1)	48(100)
	Total	29(24.4)	38(31.9)	28(23.5)	17(14.3)	3(2.5)	3(2.5)	119(100)
Researchers should consult teachers ...	BA	4(5.6)	47(66.2)	4(5.6)	6(8.5)	9(12.7)	1(1.4)	71(100)
	MA	2(4.2)	10(20.8)	27(56.3)	7(14.6)	0(0.0)	1(2.1)	48(100)
	Total	6(5.0)	57(47.9)	31(26.1)	13(10.9)	9(7.6)	2(1.7)	119(100)

5.5 Teachers' Evaluation of the Pertinence and Usefulness of SLA Research for Teaching

In order to find out teachers' evaluation of the pertinence and usefulness of SLA research for teaching purposes, they were asked to show their agreement or disagreement with six Likert scale statements, including: teachers' acquaintance with SLA can help them in their teaching practice and can provide them with practical ideas for enhancing their practice, SLA helps teachers in coming up with ideas for their teaching practice, SLA can improve teaching practice, and SLA is not related to teaching practice, teachers' experience is more precious than their SLA knowledge.

As the data in Table 12 indicate, a very high percentage of teachers (Total = 72.2%; BA = 62.8%; MA= 91.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that teachers' acquaintance with SLA research can enhance teaching practice. Similarly, a substantial proportion of teachers (Total = 58.0%; BA = 43.7%; MA = 79.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that SLA can enhance teaching practice by providing teachers with practical ideas. More than two third of the participants (Total = 72.2%; BA = 64.4%; MA=83.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that SLA research findings can assist teachers in coming up with ideas for their teaching practice. A very high percentage (Total = 74%; BA = 61.9%; MA = 91.6%) of participants agreed or strongly agreed that SLA research contributes to second language teaching. Similarly, a great percentage of teachers (Total=71%; BA=61.6%; MA=87.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that SLA is not related to teaching practice. A smaller percentage of participants (Total=25.2%; BA=12.7%; MA = 43.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that teachers' experience is more precious than their SLA knowledge. As the data in Table 12 suggest, both BA and MA teachers showed a highly positive attitude towards the pertinence and usefulness of SLA research. It is worth mentioning that, in all cases a higher

percentage of MA teachers than BA teachers appeared to view SLA research positively.

Table 12
Pertinence and Usefulness of SLA Research for Teaching

Item		Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Knowing about SLA research improves teaching practice.	BA	11(15.5)	31(47.3)	14(19.7)	6(8.5)	7(9.9)	2(2.8)	71(100)
	MA	32(66.7)	12(25.0)	4(8.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	43(36.1)	43(36.1)	18(15.1)	6(5.0)	7(5.9)	2(1.7)	119(100)
SLA research provides teachers with practical suggestions ...	BA	11(15.5)	20(28.2)	21(29.6)	12(16.9)	5(7.0)	2(2.8)	71(100)
	MA	20(41.7)	18(37.5)	3(6.3)	2(4.2)	1(2.1)	4(8.3)	48(100)
	Total	31(26.1)	38(31.9)	24(20.2)	14(11.8)	6(5.0)	6(5.0)	119(100)
Teachers can use SLA research in developing ideas ...	BA	18(25.4)	28(39.4)	21(29.6)	5(5.6)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	71(100)
	MA	20(41.7)	20(41.7)	8(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	38(31.9)	48(40.3)	29(24.4)	4(3.4)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	119(100)
SLA research contributes to pedagogy	BA	5(7.0)	39(54.9)	3(4.2)	20(28.2)	3(4.2)	1(1.4)	71(100)
	MA	22(45.8)	22(45.8)	2(4.2)	1(2.1)	1(2.1)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	27(22.7)	61(51.3)	5(4.2)	21(17.6)	4(3.4)	1(0.8)	119(100)
SLA research is not relevant to teaching	BA	4(5.6)	5(7.0)	1(1.4)	18(25.4)	30(42.3)	13(19.3)	71(100)
	MA	1(2.1)	2(4.2)	0(0.0)	3(6.3)	27(56.3)	15(31.3)	48(100)
	Total	5(4.2)	7(5.9)	1(0.8)	21(17.6)	57(47.9)	28(23.5)	119(100)
Teachers' experience is more relevant than SLA	BA	19(26.8)	13(18.3)	14(19.7)	16(22.5)	7(9.9)	2(2.8)	71(100)
	MA	5(10.4)	1(2.1)	10(20.8)	11(22.9)	21(43.8)	0(0.0)	48(100)
	Total	24(20.2)	14(11.8)	24(20.2)	27(22.7)	28(23.5)	2(1.7)	119(100)

5.6 Teachers' Expectations of SLA Research

Following Nassaji's (2012), this study attempted to explore teachers' expectations from SLA research. To do so, teachers were asked to answer a question seeking their expectations of second language acquisition research. A total number of 53 (44.53%) participants provided answers to this question. The results of the data analysis, using a method of thematic analysis (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2014), led to the emergence of the following themes (see Table 13).

Table 13
Teachers' Expectation from SLA Research

Themes	Frequency & Percentage
1 Efficient ways and techniques for teaching language skills and sub-skills	36 (67.92) ^a
2 Be related to and focused on practical issues	31(58.49)
3 Useful teaching and learning strategies	27(50.94)
4 Efficient ways for motivating students	23(43.39)
5 Inform teachers of findings of SLA research (in simple words)	20(37.73)
6 Efficient ways for putting SLA findings into practice	15(28.30)
7 Practical ways for dealing with students' heterogeneity	13(24.52)
8 Simple steps for to putting new approaches (i.e., CLT, TBLT) into practice	10(18.86)

a. frequency refers to the number of teachers' (n = 53) comments contributing to that theme. And percentage is calculated based on the total number of 53 teachers who answered this question.

As Table 13 shows, providing efficient ways for teaching language skills, especially grammar and vocabulary, was most heavily elaborated on by more than two third of the teachers who answered this question(36; 67.92%). The following are samples of the participants' answers:

I like to learn how L2 vocabulary can be learned and processed in the mind more effectively and so on (MA teacher).

How to go with language skills has always been a big question to me. I like to find good ways to teach them. Sometimes I get puzzled. I do not know when to teach language skills discretely and when to teach them integrative (BA teacher).

Some of my colleagues are for teaching grammar explicitly and some for teaching it implicitly. I expect to SLA research to help me here (BA teacher).

The second most frequently reported theme referred to the need to focus on practical issues teachers face in teaching and learning processes rather than theoretical ones (31; 58.49%).

I desperately believe that SLA research shall be targeted toward real classroom practice (BA teacher).

Second acquisition studies should be related to the practical needs of teachers, students, test takers, policy makers, and etc. These studies would not be valuable, unless they improve the current situation of educational settings (MA teacher).

I expect that the focus of studies go to the real world problem of language learning. I think nowadays most of the studies offer not very helpful and practical ideas (MA teacher).

More than half of these teachers expressed their need for getting familiar with strategies which facilitate teaching and learning process (27; 50.94%).

Sometimes I feel like I am not doing the right thing. I feel there may be better ways for teaching my classes. I want to know how to get best out of my classes. I don't know if SLA studies can be useful or not (BA teachers).

A good teacher is one who facilitates learning for students. I need workable strategies to facilitate learning for my students. I expect research to helpful to me (BA teacher).

Second language research should address issues related to different learning and teaching styles useful to teaching (MA teacher).

Efficient ways for motivating students was the fourth theme reported by participant teachers (23; 43.39%). They referred to students' lack of motivation as a big problem in their classes and expected SLA to provide them with efficient ways for dealing with this problem.

My students are not very active. I guess they are not motivated to learn English. Their parents push them to my institute. I expect research to find good ways for motivating students (MA teacher).

My job is hard in that my students are not eager enough. I want to help them find the value of learning, to help them to want to learn English. I think, SLA research should come in here and assist me (BA teacher).

SLA can study motivation which is a big barrier. It is so hard to motivate demotivated students (BA teacher).

Many of the participants expressed their inability to read SLA research articles and wished for receiving the findings of SLA research in simple and understandable terms (20; 37.73%).

The Interface between ...

I suppose research in the realm of SLA would rather be manifested through practical material. There are really virtuous books titled "from theory to practice" which have great usage for both teachers and teacher educators. I expect that SLA research involves more material of this kind (MA teacher).

Research articles are way beyond my head. To tell the truth, I can't understand them. They are all Greek to me. If they are useful there should be a way to make them more understandable (BA teacher).

The reason for not welcoming research for me and my colleagues is their language. they are not written for us, otherwise we would have read them (BA teacher).

The teachers also noted that the results of SLA findings are not easily translatable into practice for teachers at classroom level; they expressed their need for easier ways of putting those findings into practice (15; 28.30%).

I have read some articles. Oftentimes, they are not easily applicable to what happens in my classes. I do want SLA research to see what happens in classes and then research to help (MA teacher).

There is a big gap between what researchers do and what we do. I think, most of the findings of research are not easily workable in class. There should be more cooperation between us. So that we can use research in classes easily (MA teacher).

There should be researchers invited to our workplace to help us and guide us in putting research findings into practice. It is hard for me to do so alone (BA teacher).

Students' heterogeneity was an important factor which teachers expected SLA research to address (13; 24.52%).

There are many bitter stories in my teaching experience. Many of them are related to differences in students' abilities. Is there a way out (BA teacher).

I have taught in many language institutes. There is a big problem of having students with different proficiencies. They are giant hurdles to my teaching. I do need help in keeping the balance (BA teacher).

SLA research should equip me with reliable techniques to destroy the differences which exist between my students' proficiencies (MA teacher).

Finally, teachers pointed to their need for simple and practical strategies for putting approaches such as CLT or TBLT into practice (10; 18.86%).

It is fantastic if research could aid me in mastering communicative and task based language teaching. They are good techniques but hard to apply (BA teacher).

I have found tasks very useful. There should be studies or courses or strategies which would help teachers use them effectively (MA teacher).

I need simple steps to put up to date methods of language teaching into practice. I think we need to know to teach language using communicative language teaching (BA teacher).

5.7 What Aspects of SLA Research is Useful

In order to explore teachers' perspective on what aspects of SLA research which they think is relevant to their practice, they were asked a question seeking their attitude on aspects of SLA which they think is more relevant to practice. The analysis of 39 (33.77%) teachers' answers to this question led to the emergence of the themes shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Relevant Aspects of SLA Research to Practice

Themes	Frequency & Percentage
1. Instructed SLA findings	25(64.10)
2. Types and ways of giving feedback	24(61.53)
3. Studies related to teaching language skills, especially grammar.	19(48.71)
4. Input, output, and interaction	17(43.58)
5. Individual differences and students learning styles and strategies	14(35.89)
6. Studies related to CLT and TBLT	12(30.76)

As the results of Table 14 show, the most frequently reported theme, regarding teachers' judgments of the aspects of SLA which are more relevant to their practice referred to findings of the instructed SLA. Participants, considering their contexts of teaching which was EFL, argued that such studies provide more applicable and useful findings to their teaching practice (25; 64.10%).

The Interface between ...

The aspects that include results from classroom studies and action research. These aspects would provide data which are more likely to be applicable in my classroom practices. Results of laboratory research, on the other hand, provide more support for the data noted above (MA teacher).

Since we are dealing with learners from a FL [foreign language] context, instructed SLA findings prove to be more useful and relevant (MA teacher).

I believe studies which cover teaching and learning issues in the classroom are greatly helpful (BA teacher).

Around two third of teachers answering this question referred to the effectiveness and usefulness of studies conducted on types of feedback and appropriate ways of giving feedback (24; 61.53%).

I have read stuff explaining types of feedback. They were unbelievably helpful to me(MA teacher).

Works that are done on explicit and implicit feedback (MA teacher).

Almost all aspects especially those which summarize error correction and feedback (BA teacher).

About half of the teachers pointed to studies which have addressed different language skills, in terms of the most efficient and appropriate ways of teaching them (e.g., explicit versus implicit grammar teaching), as an important avenue of research which is more relevant to their practice (19; 48.71%).

There are countless areas of SLA research that can prove helpful for practitioners in their practice. For example, how explicit knowledge would benefit L2 learners? What is the role of grammar teaching and rule explanation? (MA teacher)

Aspects which help us in teaching language in general. I mean language skills (BA teacher).

Research is useful. I think teaching language skills and components is an integral part of our job. Studies addressing such areas are more relevant (BA teacher).

Interestingly, a considerable number of teachers pointed to the role of input, output, and interaction and the considerable changes studies addressing such issues have brought about in their practice (17; 43.58%).

A lot of aspects among which the role of input, output and interaction, can be mentioned (MA teacher).

How much exposure? How much input? How much output to expect? When? How? etc. (MA teacher).

It is a broad question. Since it involves a wide range of topics, deciding on specific ones is difficult. But teacher-student interaction in the classroom is more relevant to my practice (BA teacher).

Students' individual differences and their learning style were the fifth theme elaborated on by the teachers (14; 35.89%).

The findings of SLA research which direct the practitioners' and teachers' attention learners and their individual differences are more relevant (MA teacher).

When I read Brown (Teaching by Principle) and got familiar with students different styles and strategies and their individual difference I felt like gaining new insights (BA teacher).

To me, learners and their differences should be put in the center (BA teacher).

Finally, some teachers referred to the importance and efficiency of studies which have put TBLT and CLT into practice (12; 30.76%).

Some studies which operationalize new approaches such as TASK BASED and COMMUNICATIVE teaching are very help (MA teacher).

Last year we had this TTC course where I got familiar with communicative language teaching. I think it was a useful course (BA teacher).

Aspects which directly address teaching and learning matters. Aspects which make us familiar with tasks easily applicable to classroom practice (MA teacher).

6. Discussion

In line with the findings of Nassaji (2012), majority of the participant teachers appeared to be aware of the relevance and usefulness of SLA

research, despite the existence of some differences among BA and MA holders.

Most teachers appeared to be familiar with SLA research. While a high percentage of them reported that they had previously taken SLA research methods, a smaller percentage of them indicated they had taken SLA courses before. While a high number of teachers indicated that they had previously conducted SLA research, a smaller number of them reported they had had any SLA publications before. In almost all cases MA teachers appeared to enjoy a higher familiarity with SLA research than their BA counterparts. In addition, a higher number of MA teachers than BA teachers judged SLA research methods courses and SLA courses as useful. These findings may indicate that MA teachers are in a better position to lessen the gap which exists between research and practice. They seem to be more familiar with SLA research and judge it in more positive terms in that they have had more courses which discuss theory and practice. BA teachers' lower familiarity with SLA research and their less positive evaluation of SLA research may be due to their low communication with researchers and this can be explained in terms of what Markee (1997; as cited in Tavakoli & Howard, 2012) argues for that less than enough communication between teachers and researchers can widen the gap between theory and practice.

A higher percentage of MA teachers than their BA counterparts reported they had previously conducted SLA research. This finding is in line with Tavakoli and Howard (2012) indicating that teachers with higher academic degrees are more willing to conduct research. Lack of time and ability were the most frequent reasons for not conducting SLA research. While BA teachers put more emphasis on their lack of ability as the main reason for not conducting research, most MA teachers highlighted their lack of time as the main reason. To ameliorate this, managers and authorities should provide BA

teachers with more in-service courses or persuade them to continue their studies to gain the ability for conducting research. Providing both BA and MA teachers with time to conduct research or consult the literature may help them improve their practice (Nassaji, 2012). This finding is in line with those of Barkhuizen (2009) and Borg (2009) indicating factors such as lack of time and resources to do research as the main factors keeping teachers from doing research.

Some teachers indicated they read SLA research articles and a considerable percentage of them judged such articles as useful. A higher percentage of MA teachers than their BA colleagues reported their readings of SLA research and showed a considerably more positive judgment of such articles. Teachers' lack of time and the difficulty of SLA research articles were the most frequently reported reasons for not reading SLA research articles. A substantially higher percentage of BA teachers reported the difficulty of research articles as the main reason for not reading them. This can be attributed to the different discourses of teachers and researchers (Ellis, 2010) which as Pennycook (1994; as cited in Ellis, 2010) put it are 'incommensurable'. Teachers do not read research articles in that they lack the time to read them or do not have the 'technical knowledge' to understand them. BA teachers have had less contact with university professors and researchers and for this reason they may suffer more from lack of 'technical knowledge' (Ellis, 2010). Ellis (1997, 2010) suggests preparing simplified summaries of research particularly written for teachers as a way to bridge this gap between researchers and practitioners. This way not only the gap between the discourses of these two groups is ameliorated but also saves teachers' time (Erlam, 2008).

In addition, BA teachers put more emphasis on their experience as a better source than research. This finding is in line with Ellis (1997, 2001)

arguing that teachers possess more practical knowledge and researchers more technical knowledge. This is not to say that BA teachers enjoy more practical knowledge than MA teachers. It seems that MA teachers are less inclined toward the practical knowledge extreme and appear to keep more balance than BA teachers who are more inclined toward practical knowledge.

Surprisingly, in contrast to other parts, a higher percentage of BA teachers reported their easy access to SLA research than MA teachers. It can be argued that BA teachers may enjoy less academic literacy and may not be able to judge the credibility of journals they come across. Hence, their claim for their easy access to SLA research articles may refer to their using of less prestigious or predatory journals which are mostly open access. But the findings and claims of such journals may not be as reliable as those reported in better-accredited journals.

Teachers noted that they most often read books, talk to colleagues, read journal articles, and browse the Internet to get ideas for their teaching. A higher percentage of MA teachers than BA teachers reported reading journal articles, attending conferences or workshops, or doing empirical research as the sources they use to get information for the issues they face in their classes.

The participants of this study appeared to conceive of teachers and researchers not as separate entities but as having related and connected duties. They argued for more cooperation between the two. Previous literature reveals that what researchers address in their investigations may not be related to what teachers in classrooms need and want (Han, 2007). In this study, the majority of participants, both BA and MA teachers, disagreed with giving researchers the responsibility of conducting research unilaterally. They noted that teachers and researchers should seek advice from each other in their teaching and researching issues, respectively. This finding, if realized in

practice properly, would probably solve the problem reported by teachers in Tavakoli and Howard (2012), in which they claimed that SLA research is impractical and that their wants and problems are not addressed by researchers. Nassaji (2012) highlights the same point by arguing that hearing teachers' voices can facilitate the teachers and researchers communications and also increase the possibility of using research findings by teachers through enhancing the relevance of conducted researches to classroom practice.

It is of note that a considerable percentage of teachers argued for teachers' research. Borg (2009) argues that while a considerable attention has been awarded to the benefits of teachers' research, they are not widespread in ELT. He noted that many interacting reasons are at work for this. He argues that they are mostly discussed with reference to "teachers' unfavorable working conditions" (p. 377). However, Stewart (2006) argues for and praises an increase in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) teachers' will to conduct research in their classrooms and asks for more support for teachers' research. Belcher (2007) rightly views the real research conducted by teachers as a significant effort to lessen or terminate the existing gap between research and practice. The same point is highlighted by Ellis (2012) noting that practitioner research makes "a direct connection between research and practice" (p. 26).

Both BA and MA Teachers held positive attitudes towards the relevance and usefulness of SLA research for their practice. However, in all cases a higher percentage of MA teachers than their BA colleagues viewed SLA research positively. This can be attributed to the higher amount of time MA teachers have spent continuing higher education. This finding is in line with Tavakoli and Howard (2012) claiming that teachers with higher academic

degrees hold more positive attitudes towards research in assisting them in their practice.

Additionally, the participants of this study seemed to expect SLA research to address practical issues which would, similar to what teachers in MacDonald, Badger, and White's (2001) study asked for, provide them with "instant panaceas, rigid rules of thumb, clear statements of practice and absolute generalizations" p. 950).

7. Conclusions

This study aimed at adding to the scanty literature on teachers' perspectives and perceptions of SLA research and its relevance and usefulness to second language teaching. The results revealed teachers' familiarity with SLA research. Despite teachers' positive views towards the relevance and usefulness of SLA research, a low percentage of them indicated that they read SLA research articles. They reported lack of time and ability as the main reasons for not conducting research. As to the reasons for not reading SLA research articles, they most frequently mentioned time and difficulty of research articles. A larger percentage of BA than MA teachers highlighted their experience as a reliable source. Most of them believed that teachers and researchers' work should be connected. In almost all cases a substantially higher percentage of MA than their BA colleagues viewed SLA research as relevant and useful for teaching purposes. Teachers expressed their expectations from SLA research to address practical issues. In addition, they highlighted practical aspects of SLA research as more relevant to their practice.

Some special measures should be taken to lessen the gap between theory and practice. Teacher educators and authorities can encourage teachers to try to make their practice more evidence based. The evidence can come from

teachers' research in their own classrooms, or it can come from researches carried out by university professors or researchers. However, as they participants of this study argued for, teachers can seek advice from researchers and vice versa. Research conducted by researchers to solve some pedagogical problems cannot be effective enough if not grounded in a classroom environment. Nassaji (2012) highlights the same point by arguing that researchers need to be well familiar with the classroom practice in order to conduct pedagogically relevant researches. As teachers mentioned lack of time, ability, and difficulty of research articles are very important reasons preventing them from reading and conducting research. Providing them with pre- and in-service courses to increase their abilities to conduct research or understand research articles might help filling the gap. In addition, special steps should be taken to provide a space for teachers to be able to save some time for reading or conducting research. It is worth mentioning that providing teachers with good summaries of research findings in a language which is understandable to them might be of help (Ellis, 1997).

In this study questionnaires were used to collect the data. Further investigations can gain richer data by adding focus group interviews. It is also recommended to replicate the same study investigating the effect of teaching context (private versus public) on teachers' reading and doing of research. Future studies are required to explore Iranian teachers and also researchers' perspectives and viewpoints on appropriate ways for bridging the gap between SLA research and practice.

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Appendix

Dear teachers

This questionnaire is to understand your precious views and perspectives on the relevance and usefulness of Second language acquisition (SLA) research to your language teaching practice in classrooms. Before you start filling it out, we would like to provide a simple definition of SLA here.

"Second-language acquisition ... is the process by which people learn a second language. SLA is also the scientific discipline devoted to studying that process" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-language_acquisition). **In other words**, SLA refers to the "the study of how learners create a new language system" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 1). It is worth mentioning that **"Second-language acquisition classroom research** is an area of research in SLA concerned with how people learn languages in educational settings (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second-language_acquisition_classroom_research).

Please complete this questionnaire as *honestly* as you can. Also, we ask you to answer the questions *carefully*. *Your anonymity will be fully observed.*
Thank you very much.

A. Background Information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. Age: _____
3. Degree: BA in ... MA in ... Other
4. Do you hold an additional teaching certificate?

The Interface between ...

Yes No

If yes, please specify the kind of certificate.

5. Do you currently teach English as a second and foreign language?

Yes No

If yes, please answer the following questions:

Years of teaching experience: _____

Age group you are teaching: Adult Children

Level(s) you are teaching: Beginner Low intermediate High intermediate Advanced Other

6. Have you previously published any SLA research article?

Yes No

If yes, please mention the name of the journal:

C. Please kindly check your position regarding the following statements using the scale provided. Please indicate what you believe rather than what you should believe.

1. Researchers should be university professors or academics, but not teachers.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

2. A teacher should also be a researcher.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

3. In order to be a good teacher, one should also be a good researcher.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

4. Researchers should carry out research and teachers should teach.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

5. Teachers and researchers should work together.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

6. Teachers should consult researchers for advice on teaching and learning issues.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

7. Researchers should consult teachers for advice on issues they want to research.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree
Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

8. Knowing about second language acquisition research improves second language teaching practice.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

9. Second language acquisition research provides teachers with practical suggestions for improving second language instruction.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

10. Second language acquisition research contributes to second language pedagogy.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

11. Second language acquisition research is not relevant to language teaching.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

12. The knowledge that teachers gain from teaching experience is more relevant to their teaching than the knowledge they gain from second language acquisition research.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

13. Teachers can make use of second language acquisition research findings in developing ideas for teaching.

Strongly agree Agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

D. Answer the following questions by checking the options provided.

14. How often do you read second language acquisition research articles?

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

a. If your answer to question 14 is positive (i.e., if you have chosen 'Always,' 'Often,' or 'Sometimes'), have you found the information useful for language teaching purposes.

Yes No

b. If your answer to question 14 is negative (i.e., if you have chosen 'Rarely' or 'Never'), could you please indicate why? Please check all the options that apply.

Because:

- don't have time.
- Research articles are very difficult to read and understand.
- cannot easily access them.
- am not interested in reading them.
- do not find them very useful to read.

- My experience is the most useful source.
 Others
-

15. If you want to find information about issues related to language teaching, you usually (You can check more than one option):

- Talk to your colleagues Read books Read journal articles Attend conferences or workshops Do empirical research Browse the Internet Please specify if others _____

E. Please kindly write your answers to the following two questions

1. What would you expect from second language acquisition research?

2. What aspects of SLA research do you find more relevant to your practice?

2. Please add any other comments you have about the role of second language acquisition research in second language teaching.

Thank you very much