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Promoting excellence in language education
European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe



Exploring the potential of action research in language education: Opportunities and challenges in local and global contexts

Tuesday 21st of May 2024

Dr. Jane O'Toole

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Key Questions

- 1 Why Action Research (AR)?
- 2 How does an action research methodology support language education both in terms of research and practice?
- 3 What are the opportunities and challenges that arise in conducting action research in the sphere of language education?
- 4 How might I go about integrating action research into my practice as a language educator?

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1 Why Action Research?

Reflecting on our understandings of action research as an approach, a methodology, a 'way of life'..... We consider one's journey to action research and *with* action research/ or as action researchers. We look to define action research and consider some reasons why action research can support educational practice more generally.

01 Why Action Research?

Why indeed?!



Let's firstly consider:

Discovering action research:

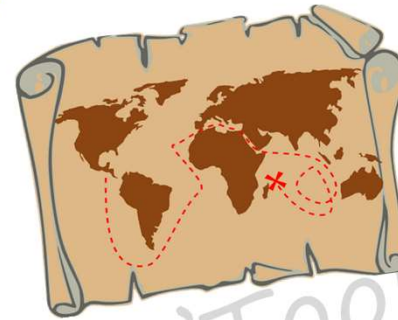
1. **Where** did you make the discovery?



2. **What** is action research?

Methodology and/or approach?

Some definitions and categorisations of AR



Action Research

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EDITORIAL

Why action research?

Mary Brydon-Miller
University of Cincinnati, USA
Davydd Greenwood
Cornell University, USA
Patricia Maguire
Western New Mexico University, USA
and members of the editorial board of *Action Research*!

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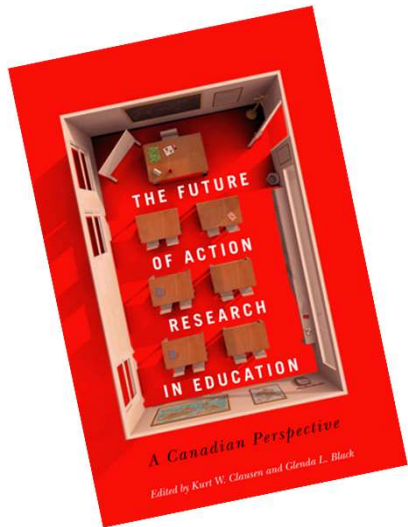
01 Why Action Research?

Action research is difficult to define! (Clausen & Black, 2020)

A 'family of practices' (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p.1)

A 'broad church' (McTaggart, 1994, p.318)

Action research has the same root- from which different philosophical stances emerge over time. (Clausen & Black, 2020)



01

Positivist approach
to Action Research
1920s-1950s

02

Interpretive Action
Research
(‘Contemporary’ AR)

03

Critical Action
Research

(Clausen & Black, 2020)



01 Why Action Research?

1

John Elliot describes action research as “the study of a **social situation** with a view to **improving** the quality of action within it” (Elliot, 1991, p.69)

3

Action research is an investigation, where, as a result of **rigorous self-appraisal of current practice**, the researcher focuses on a ‘**problem**’ (or a **topic** or an **issue** which needs to be explained) and **on the basis of information** (about the up-to-date state of the art, about the people who will be involved and about the context), **plans, implements, then evaluates** an action then **draws conclusions** on the basis of the findings. (MacIntyre, 2000, p.1)

2

Bassey succinctly describes educational action research “as an **enquiry** which is carried out in order **to understand, to evaluate and then to change**, in order to **improve** educational practice” (Bassey, 1998, p. 93)

4

Action research is a term which refers to a **practical way** of looking at your own work to check that it is as you would like it to be..... it is often referred to as practitioner based research;.....it can also be called a **form of self-reflective practice**.

The idea of self-reflection is central.....Action research is an enquiry conducted by the self into the self.

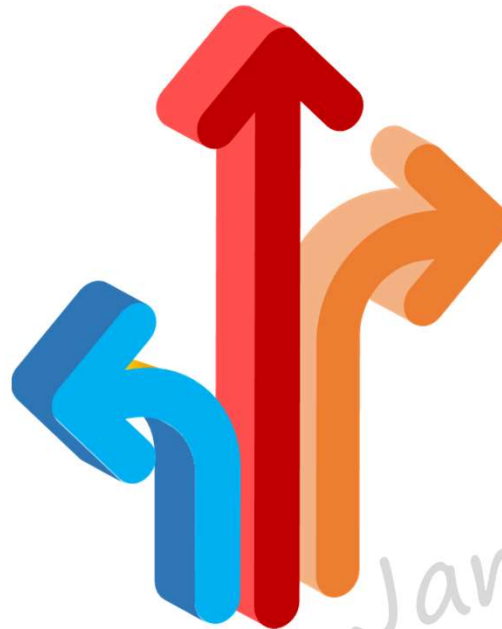
(McNiff, 2002, p.3)



01 Why Action Research?

Participatory Action Research (PAR) can be defined as “principles and frameworks to enable teacher and/or school-based practitioner inquiry to become more participatory, collaborative, and democratizing in ways that meaningfully engage students, families, and other educators in the full range of the action research cycle, from problem identification to making project results and implications public”
(Brydon-Miller & Maguire, 2009, p.82-83).

Action research provides a means whereby research can become a systematic intervention, going beyond describing, analysing and theorizing social practices to working in partnership with participants to reconstruct and transform those practices
(Somekh, 2005, p. 27).



An idea inherent in action research is that researchers work with people
(McNiff & Collins, 1994, p.10).



01 Why Action Research?

Action Research Broadly Speaking-

- Addresses a concern
- Systematic & rigorous
- Responsive & flexible

Self-study Action Research

- Addresses a concern about one's practice
- Reflective and reflexive self
- Informed by values of the action researcher

Participatory Action Research

- Addresses a shared concern
- Importance of the community
- Informed by shared values
- Participation throughout the process



01 Why Action Research?

- Challenges and complements positivistic-only views of practice & language education. Provides another approach to (language) education research which complements (and can actively draw upon) alternative methodologies and forms of research
- Provides an approach to navigate the complexities of teaching and learning, and of the lived experience of students and teachers at local level; "the commonplaces created through action research practices continue to be important places for a better understanding of the complexities of educational experience" (Sumara, 2020, p.xii)
- Provides a framework and principles where all stakeholders in education- students, parents, teachers, school management, school community etc. can meaningfully participate and contribute to improving an area of concern

Values a bottom-up approach. Empowers practitioners to engage with literature/ practice of research/research partnerships.





01 Why Action Research?

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Primary teacher, language specialism
European Language Label
M.A. in Language Education (French)

Why AR then?

Postgrad Dip in Ed. Leadership **Action research project**: Oral language teaching and learning

Why AR for PhD path?

PhD in Language Education (2023)
Irish language in Primary Schools:
Engaging Student and Parents with
the **Is Tusa an Múinteoir** Project.
An action research Irish language
project enriched by student &
parent participation and voice

Why AR now?

Language Education in Ireland at
primary level-Irish (Gaeilge) as L2
Introduction of MFL in 2025
Provides voice for all stakeholders
Illuminates school-level policy
engagement
(national/ European(language)
education policy)



● Integrity

● Dignity

● Learning

● Community

● Integrity

● Dignity

● Learning

● Community

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01 Why Action Research?

My concern was centred around (lack of) student engagement with the Irish language - in terms of Irish language usage, attitude and motivation towards the language and attainment as experienced in my practice as a primary teacher in an English-medium education over a number of years.

- First official language in the Republic of Ireland. (Also a minority language, heritage language, endangered language)
- In Ireland, 40% of the population claim knowledge of the Irish language (1.8 million people)
- Only approximately one third of the population therein speaks Irish daily (Central Statistics Office, 2023), inclusive of the education system
- The ever-decreasing figure of 71,968 of daily speakers of Irish outside of the education system (ibid.) is an ongoing cause for concern.



Figure 1.1 Corca Dhuibhne Gaeltacht, County Kerry, and the other Gaeltacht districts, Ireland. Map by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institution

(Smith-Christmas & Ruiséal, 2024, p.28)



01 Why Action Research?

The capacity of primary schools to reproduce a basic competence in Irish in each new generation has always been a crucial strategic component of the larger language revival effort. (Harris, 2008, p.181)

- Despite growth and development of and the Irish-immersion education (IME), the Irish language continues to struggle in the English-medium school sector
- EME accounts for 92% of schools nationwide
- Attainment in the Irish language amongst English-medium primary school goes has witnessed a steady decline since the 1980s and out-of-school use opportunities remain challenging to find and to facilitate (Harris, 2008; Ó Duibhir and Harris, 2023)

L2 learners of Irish make up the vast majority of those who claim competence (Bartardière et al., 2022, p.4)

- **Inspectorate Report (2022)** expressed concern in relation to Irish teaching and learning- reflected in its inclusion as one of four key messages
- “Pupils’ learning outcomes, motivation and engagement in Irish needs to be improved” (Inspectorate, 2022, p. 103)
- Scope to improve the quality of pupils’ learning in approximately 1/3 of lessons observed (2016-2020) (ibid.).
- Overarching necessity to foster more engaging and enjoyable Irish language learning experiences
- Findings mirrored outcomes from the previous two Inspectorate reports (Inspectorate, 2018, 2013).



01 Why Action Research?

- Current prognosis for Irish language in EME aligns with previous studies (Harris & Murtagh, 1999; Harris et al., 2006; Harris, 2008; Hickey & Stenson, 2016)



- Excess disengagement with Irish language compared to general school engagement (Devitt et al., 2018)
- Relatively positive attitudes to Irish in general do not translate into Irish language use outside the classroom or school (Ó Duibhir & Ní Thuairisg, 2019; Devitt et al., 2018)

Ó Duibhir, P., & Harris, J. (2023). *The acquisition and use of Irish as a minority language*. In J. Cenoz & D. Gorter (Eds.), *The minority language as a second language: challenges and achievements*, pp. 39-59. New York; Oxford: Routledge.



Celtic languages and sociolinguistics: a very brief overview of pertinent issues

John Edwards
Pages 13-31 | Received 17 Dec 2015, Accepted 01 Jun 2016, Published online: 22 Sep 2016
Cite this article | <https://doi-org.glucksman.jdm.oclc.org/10.1080/07908318.2016.1230618> Check for updates



01 Why Action Research?

Why **Action Research** in the case of The teaching and learning of Irish at Primary level in English-medium education?

Consideration of contextual, pedagogical and methodological elements of the study

Contextual Elements (reflecting on 4.5 Research Context & 4.4 Statement of Positionality)

- Educational research setting
- Primary school setting: fourth class
- Class-based study; practitioner inquiry; participatory study
- Study carried out by teacher-researcher; 'insider research'; questions surrounding positionality, bias
- Study addresses teacher's concern regarding Irish language teaching and learning

Pedagogic Elements (reflecting on C2 C3 Literature Review)

- Seeks collective input to improve teaching and learning of Irish, engagement with the language as an L2.
- Seeks to review a range of interventions that could be piloted in sync with term/ half-term calendar
- Seeks to address research questions (RQ1,2 & 3) but also engage with arising findings/ themes/ ongoing feedback

Methodological Elements (reflecting on 4.2 Philosophical Roots of Research)

- Seeks to address a concern (Chapter 1), research questions (RQ1 & 2) but also engage with arising findings/ themes/ ongoing feedback during study
- Seeks to construct and enact interventions with participants to investigate if engagement can be improved via periodic review and termly cycles
- Seeks an inclusive methodology that involves participants in the co-construction and collaborative review of interventions (RQ4)
- Seeks to improve practice and language engagement, seeks to initiate change (RQ4)

(O'Toole, 2023)

O1 Why Action Research?

Why **Action Research**? Why Action Research and not X?

What was my criteria for finding the optimum methodology for my study?
 What methodologies were considered?

Table 4.4. Methodology Criteria & Associated Considerations

<i>Is this/Does this/Has this methodology</i>	Ethnography	Case Study	Grounded Theory	Design-Based Research	Action Research	Cooperative Inquiry
1. used in educational research settings?	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Orange
2. evidenced a methodology utilised in primary school classroom-based setting?	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red
3. compatible with the role of practitioner/teacher-researcher i.e. 'insider' research?	Green	Orange	Orange	Red	Green	Green
4. often feature a declaration of positionality of the practitioner-researcher at the outset for validity purposes?	Green	Red	Red	Orange	Green	Green
5. address a concern identified at the outset by the (teacher-) researcher?	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Orange

(O'Toole, 2023)



O1 Why Action Research?

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Why **Action Research**? Why Action Research and not X?

What was my criteria for finding the optimum methodology for my study?

What methodologies were considered?

What about Language Education and Action Research???

Is this/Does this/Has this methodology	Ethnography	Case Study	Grounded Theory	Design-Based Research	Action Research	Cooperative Inquiry
6. supports a solution-focused pedagogical and methodological approach to addressing concern?	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Orange
7. iterative approach to addressing concern identified?	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Orange
8. enables systematic review of interventions with all participants?	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green
9. allows for emergent research questions to emanate from the data and action?	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green
10 supportive, in principle, initiating informed change?	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green

(O'Toole, 2023)

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2

How does an action research methodology support language education both in terms of research and practice?

Reflecting on and exploring literature which brings action research and language education together. Looking at how action research can support both (i) practice and (ii) research in language education. How can action research be applied to the language education in Ireland- focus on Irish teaching and learning in English-medium primary schools



Key
Questions



O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

- Longstanding association between the applied linguistics and quantitative approaches (Filipović, 2019)
- Instances of application of participatory research approaches are few in applied linguistics (Ahmadian & Takavoli, 2011) less so in the sociolinguistic context (Bodó et al., 2022).
- Criticisms of PAR in this context (Brumfit & Mitchell, 1989; Jarvis, 2001)
- In support of PAR in language study: (Ahmadian & Takavoli, 2011; Bodó et al., 2022; Banegas, 2019) Specific to minority language contexts: Ortega et al., 2019; Ní Loinsigh, 2015)

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES IN EDUCATION
2019, VOL. 32, NO. 5, 493–509
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1597209>

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

 Check for updates

Transdisciplinary qualitative paradigm in applied linguistics: autoethnography, participatory action research and minority language teaching and learning*

Jelena Filipović 

Department of Iberian studies, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Beograd, Serbia

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Educational Action Research
Vol. 19, No. 2, June 2011, 121–136

Exploring the utility of action research to investigate second-language classrooms as complex systems

Mohammad Javad Ahmadian* and Mansoor Tavakoli

Received: 10 February 2021 | Revised: 10 March 2022 | Accepted: 12 April 2022
DOI: 10.1111/inc3.12451

REVIEW ARTICLE

WILEY

Participation in sociolinguistic research

Csanád Bodó¹  | Blanka Barabás²  | Noémi Fazakas³  |
Judit Gáspár⁴  | Bernadett Jani-Demetriou²  |
Petteri Laihonon⁵  | Veronika Lajos⁶  | Gergely Szabó^{2,7} 



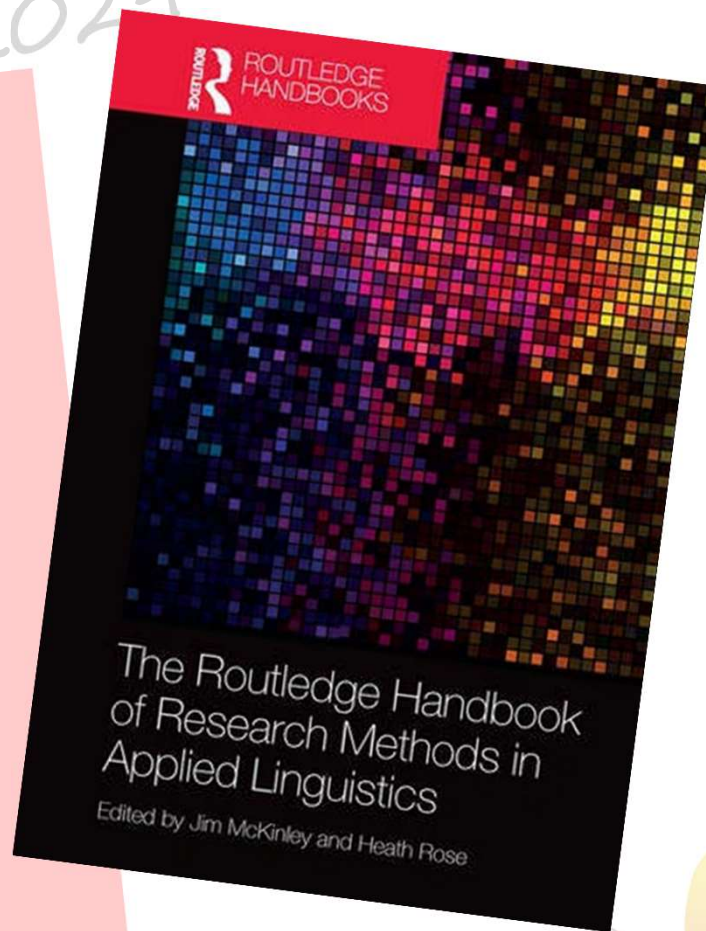
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O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

- In language education, action research contrasts with other forms of research and inquiry given that it is “context-driven, practical, collaborative, cyclical, ecological, and transformative” (Banegas & Consoli, 2020, p.179)
- Broadly speaking, the focus of AR in LE generally relates to two domains (ibid.) :
 - (i) learners' (language) development (Banegas (2017)
 - (ii) teachers' professional development (Wyatt and Dikilitaş, 2016)

Are there other issues in LE explored through AR?
(Note Ushioda 2020; 2023)





O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

- Bridging AR & the Language Classroom
- Applied linguistics- reductionist? Does not consider dynamical nature of human behaviour and its interaction with its environment- seeks replicability
- Complex-theory perspective requires teachers to be dynamic and complex in their approach
- CT helps in identifying action research as a suitable research approach for L2 classrooms
- Fundamental links between AR & CT

Educational Action Research
Vol. 19, No. 2, June 2011, 121-136



Exploring the utility of action research to investigate second-language classrooms as complex systems

Mohammad Javad Ahmadian* and Mansoor Tavakoli

“In order for us to be able to solve SLC [second-language classroom] problems, we need research traditions that are responsive to the unpredictability and dynamism of the behaviour under investigation”
(Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011, p.123)



O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

Jane O'Toole 2024

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REVIEW ARTICLE

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Participatory research aims at dissolving the unequal relationship between the researcher and the researched parties as much as possible (Bodó et al., 2022, p.5)

Participatory research "involves joint process of knowledge production that leads to new insights" (Bergold & Thomas, 2012, p.196)

Through engaged participation, the transformative effects of research can be realised by drawing on the linguistic expertise of all participants.....

Participation approaches include reflection on the positioning of all actors in the research process, and a continuous negotiation between participants on how to create shared knowledge.....

Idea of joint endeavour in sociolinguistic inquiry (Cameron et al., 1992; 1993) Calls for emancipatory and democratic research on, for and with non-linguists....

Alternative to empowerment: Accompaniment (Bucholtz et al., 2016) Research, in this approach is understood as a joint activity, in which scholars and local participants work in partnership (Bodó et al, 2022)

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O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

Considerations for Practice

★ Supports LE practice (locally)

★ Supports community of practice

Supports collaboration amongst stakeholders

Supports connection for school- & HE-based educators

- Supports language teachers and LT educators in developing their practice at institution level
- “A form of teacher/practitioner research, a form of professional development” (Banegas & Consoli, 2020)
- Supports teachers in becoming reflective practitioners and taking action (O’Sullivan et al., 2016)

Action research presents as an approach which can be enacted collectively within a community of practice relating to language education/ revitalisation/ pedagogy

Can be utilised to explore an area of concern/ achieve a collective objective

N.B. endangered language contexts (Flores Farfán & Olko, 2021).



O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

Considerations for Practice

Supports LE practice (locally)

Supports community of practice

Supports collaboration amongst stakeholders

Supports connection for school- & HE-based educators

- PAR actively supports collaboration, co-decision making, co-design, collective evaluation and planning amongst stakeholders (O'Toole, 2023)
- Envisions potential of all participants as active contributors to the project at hand (Bodó et al., 2022)

In relation to school-university partnerships, readily enables HE-based educators sustained access and experience of the language classroom over the term of a project as opposed to a more short-term endeavour- lesson observation etc.

Can inform the practice and research of HE-based teacher educators (Gallagher-Brett & Lechner, 2023; Banegas & Consoli, 2020))



O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

What is the context of the LE concern?
What does the research say?

Enables a pathway to explore research emanating from school/local context. Can generate awareness of LE research which can have practical outcomes for practitioners and learners

Exploring LE issue can build a culture of inquiry supported by research. AR may be preceded /succeeded by Reading Group/ CoP

AR (in LE) generates actionable knowledge (Coghlan, 2007) which informs next action cycle/ teaching and learning/ school context. (Transferability vs. replicability)

EFL Language assessment literacy in Iran (Babaii & Asadnia, 2019)

Dissemination: Forums informed by all participants in order to connect with all members of lang community

Considerations for Research

Supports (team) exploration of LE research, literature



Supports the creation of actionable knowledge and dissemination



Supports critical engagement with LE policy

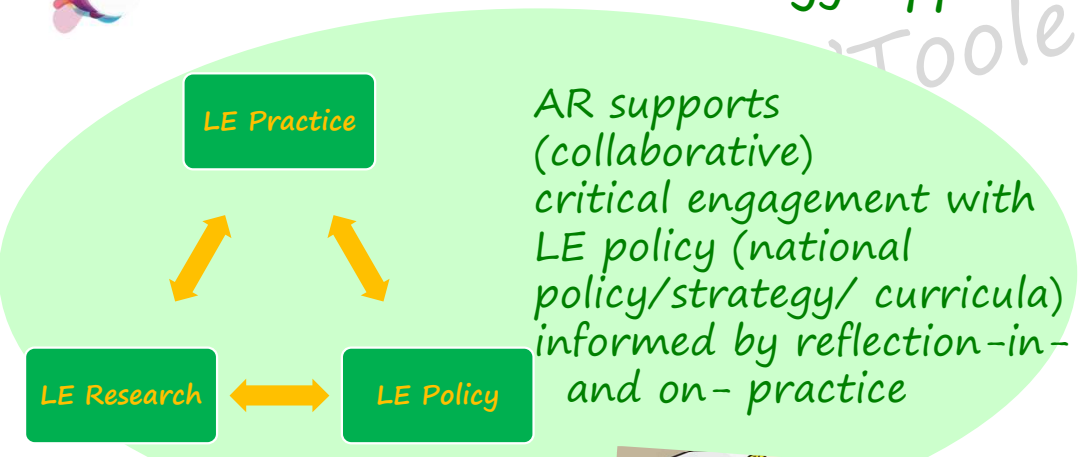
Bridges divide of 'research-practice' / 'practice-research' gap





O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

Considerations for Research



Supports (team) exploration of LE research, literature

Supports the creation of actionable knowledge and dissemination

Supports critical engagement with LE policy

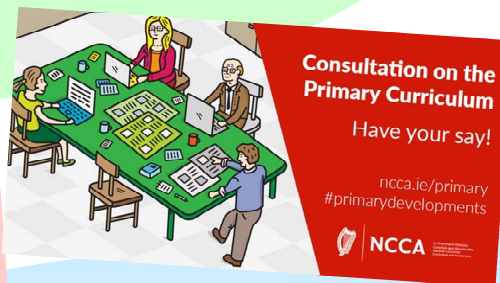
Bridges divide of 'research-practice' / 'practice-research' gap

Language policy in the crossfire in Ireland: can Languages Connect deliver in the Republic of Ireland?

Ursula Lanvers

To cite this article: Ursula Lanvers (2023): Language policy in the crossfire in Ireland: can Languages Connect deliver in the Republic of Ireland?, Irish Educational Studies, DOI: 10.1080/03322315.2023.2202654

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03322315.2023.2202654>



School-community-university partnerships exploring LE practices inform both research and practice.

⇒ Educational Action Research journal is "concerned with exploring the dialogue between research and practice in educational settings" (EAR Editorial Board, 2024)





O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

School Context

- School-based study
- Class **fourth class pupils** (n=20) and their **parents** (n=20) 10 boys & 10 girls. 8 children spoke English as a second/additional language.
- English-medium primary school in Dublin.
- **Teacher-researcher: dual role of class teacher & researcher**
- Over half of the parents involved in the project were learning the Irish language for the first time.

Conceptual Framework & Language Pedagogy

- **Sociocultural theory-informed conceptual framework**
- SCT recognises the interdependence of social and individual processes in the co-construction of knowledge. (Lantolf, 2002; John-Steiner & Mahn 1996)
- SCT-informed (second) language theory contends that language development and language learning are mediated, relational, and social processes (Lantolf 2002)
- Relatedly language acquisition is situated in people engaged in the activity, as opposed to concentrating primarily on processes
- Learners are foregrounded in the learning process in 'real-world' settings

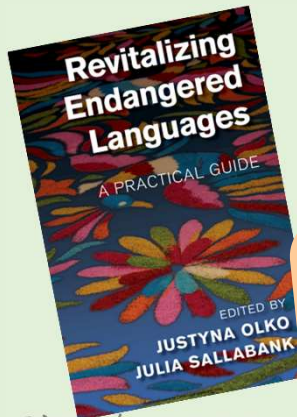
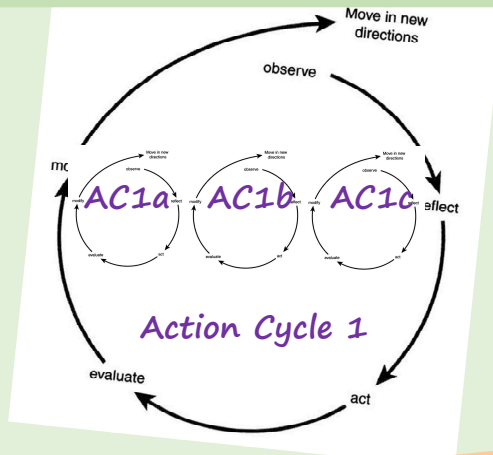




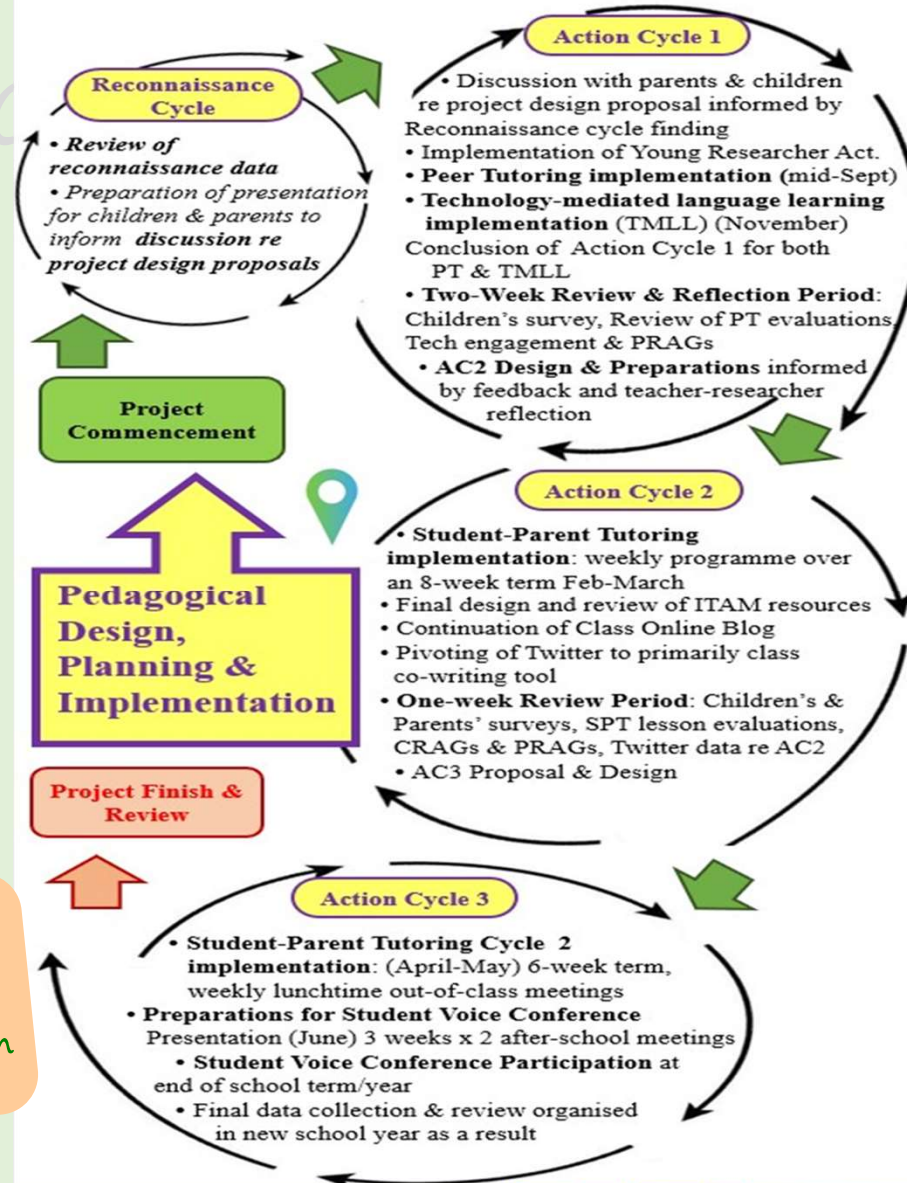
O2 How does an AR methodology support LE?

SCT-informed Pedagogical Approaches

- Peer Tutoring (Term 1)
- Student Parent Tutoring (Term 2 & 3)
- Technology Mediated Language Learning (Term 1 & 2)



In dealing with different communities we must be sensitive, flexible, and open to discussion and deep reevaluation of related attitudes in order to start any revitalization project (Olko & Sallabank, 2021)



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3 What are the opportunities and challenges that arise in conducting action research in the sphere of language education?

Reflecting on firstly potential challenges in action research. Then reframing these as opportunities. Exploring further opportunities when utilising action research in language education.



03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE

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03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE

Professional & personal vulnerability

► Vulnerability as a practitioner/ researcher/ practitioner-researcher/ language educator- new role/ status- insider vs. outsider research

- What if exploring your concern in LE reveals practice could be improved within an organisation? Outcome of project and implications for teaching and learning
- Victory narratives vs. tales of woe vs. 'warts and all' - implications? Sanitised reporting vs. accounts of messiness in AR.
- When we undertake action research, we are "literally putting our personal and professional identities on the line" (Sumara, 2020, p. xiv)

Ongoing negotiation of AR project/study parameters

► Frameworks, principles, values. Seeking rigor and validity. To what extent can the teacher-researcher/ action researcher exercise flexibility and responsiveness while maintaining a systematic and rigorous approach?

► To what extent can an action researcher facilitate participant/stakeholder involvement in the project to encourage ownership while not overburdening participants to the point that project participation is strained/ excessive?

► How can a project timeline be honoured to enable constructive outcomes for language learning practice, and for research & dissemination? Note: accreditation/ grant report deadlines etc.



03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE

AR as part of (language) education accreditation

- ▶ Choice or by stipulation? Choice within project? Grounding in AR methodology? Parameters to ensure agency?

▶ Research ethics- Does process support AR as a methodology?
 (Note: Discussion at Spring NEARI Meet March 2024

<http://www.eari.ie/2024/04/11/notes-from-nearimeet-9th-march-2024/> with Professor Sarah Banks

▶ Is the action research project a new undertaking/ established practice at host institution? Does recommended ethical practice align with school safeguarding practice and policy?

Navigating ethics: requirements and processes

▶ Navigating the associated practice and values of chosen AR approach- once-off ethical approval by accreditation body vs. Continued negotiation and check-in with project participants

▶ What are the guiding ethical principles/ frameworks when undertaking a (P)AR research project in LE practice independently/ funded project?

▶ Challenges in initiating a (P)AR project in a new setting- gatekeepers etc.

www.bera.ac.uk

www.childethics.com





03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE

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03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE

01



Opportunity for individual language educator reflection and action

Supports individual educators in exploring LE practice. Enables individual agency which may lead to gradual departmental/ subject-specific/ local small-scale professional collaboration

02



Supports professional LE development

Provides an avenue for reflective & reflexive practice, leading to informed action in relation to LE pedagogy and practice.

“One’s thinking, one’s practice, and, indeed, one’s sense of self can move into a place of **greater clarity and precision** – ironically emerging from the often unruly and unpredictable processes of action research practices” (Sumara, 2020, p. xv)

03



Encourages and complements Institution-level collaborations and participatory practices

Can be a chosen project approach for an LE community of practice (CoP)/ could lead to a CoP; can support, complement and encourage other forms of participatory practice within an LE setting

(Participatory Action Research; Emancipatory Action Research; Cooperative Inquiry; Student Voice; Pedagogy Empowerment ; Dialogue Conference; Communicative Spaces; Research Circles)



03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE 2024

Cúrsaí teagaisc

Say Yes to Languages bolsters enthusiasm for teaching modern foreign languages within the curriculum

Languages Connect are delighted to bring you the eighth article in a series focusing on schools and teachers who have taken part in Say Yes to Languages (SYTL), which is rolling out for a third year.

The teachers and management of Scoil Chríonáin Senior National School, Dublin outline how the module has supported the teacher agency with the creation of an in-school Community of Practice (CoP), shining a light on teachers' skills and providing rich opportunities for integration of modern foreign language education across the curriculum.

A whole-school approach to languages

Our school, Scoil Chríonáin, is proudly located in the vibrant and historic community of Swords in Dublin. A progressive co-educational senior primary of 554 pupils and almost 50 staff, we currently have six streams from third to sixth class in addition to three integrated classes that empower pupils with additional needs. Home to long-standing achievements in music, choir, STEM and sport, Scoil Chríonáin has also more recently deepened its engagement with literacy and language at a whole-school level through an organic, grassroots approach initiated by teachers. We were thrilled to be part of SYTL for 2023 whereby a community of nine participating teachers has grown to 12 since September 2023, with French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Sign Language being taught across class levels from third to sixth. We are delighted to have established an evolving Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) CoP among our staff in our first year.

Enthusiasm for SYTL

Our school is fortunate to have many teachers who are proficient in a modern language. Scoil Chríonáin SNS also has a longstanding connection with MFL engagement, both in terms of previous involvement with the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI), and through in-house designing and teaching language sessions for sixth class pupils in their final term. The energy and success of the sixth class module, which



was implemented by the school team, was an important impetus to become involved with SYTL this year. We were also motivated by the opportunity to further celebrate and explore the rich linguistic repertoires of our school community, which include languages from every

continent of the world.

Teacher collaboration

As we progress through the spring term, so far five classes have begun the sampler module in September 2023 (third and fifth classes) and two classes have fully



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completed their programme in French and Japanese. We believed a staggered uptake across the three terms would enable greater collaboration and support within our school team. Our engagement so far has visibly generated awareness amongst pupils and teachers, not only the languages taught, but of the range of languages spoken by our pupils.

Class enthusiasm, active learning, celebration of songs, building language awareness and integration of communicative language into school life are but a few common threads across our developing practice and pupil experience. Teachers have negotiated the teaching time creatively and differently which is reflective of teacher agency and of the rich opportunities for integration of MFL across the curriculum. Participating teachers have also identified how the project can elevate the status and role of the Irish language, as it has been seen that the use of Irish as a vehicle of instruction can bring more life and purpose to Irish language engagement in class.

Pupils' voices

Both participating pupils and their parents have also indicated the positive impact of SYTL on pupils' language engagement. The development of language awareness, as seen by a third class pupil "It's interesting to see how the order of the words can be the same in Italian as it is in Gaelic"; the value of language learning for communication in "y'all" life by a fifth class pupil: "Now when I go to France I will be able to say some phrases like 'Comment ça s'appelle?' and 'Ça va!'", and the appreciation of the cultural value of learning a language, "My favourite part was when the Japanese Ambassador came in and told us about Japan", identified by another fifth class pupil. Parents have acknowledged how their pupils have shared their SYTL language learning at home, which has enriched our school-home partnerships.

Taking part in SYTL has also enabled our school to develop partnerships with many supporting organisations. Our partnership with Languages Connect has added insight into establishing our MFL CoP. The Embassy of Japan in Ireland has also been extremely supportive both in terms of hosting a cultural event, and in honouring our school with a visit from the Japanese Ambassador, Mr Norio Manyama in 2023. In addition, the school is now a member of the Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI), and



a school delegation presented at the LAI Conference in November 2023 about our SYTL participation and evolving MFL practice.

Building on momentum

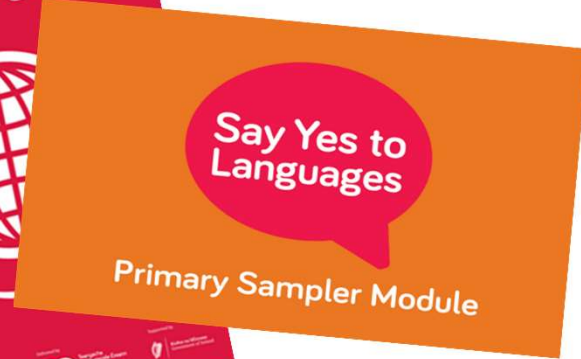
While we are empowered by the MFL capacity and enthusiasm school, we are also deeply cognisant of the range of challenges in introducing MFL as a curriculum subject. Our senior management team encourage teacher agency and readily engages with emerging challenges. This balance of support and creative space for our staff to engage with MFL adds further vitality to our language journey. A rich and fulfilling experience, our SYTL engagement created momentum to further navigate language education. Our MFL CoP seeks to support the development of pupils' plurilingual abilities, and more broadly, the language-learning agency of our school community - ourselves as staff included. We would highly recommend schools to get

involved. We look forward to more pupils experiencing the sampler module of French, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Sign Language as 2024 unfolds.

JANE O'TOOLE, LORETO DESMOND, principal, CHARLENE SMALL, SARAH BYERS, SUZANNE DOYLE, deputy principal, CATHAL GALLAGHER, AMY ROBINSON, PATRICK NEARY AND GRAIGNE FINN, Scoil Chríonáin Senior National School, Swords, Dublin. More information email primary@ppli.ie or visit www.languagesconnect.ie. Languages Connect promotes the personal, social, professional and economic benefits of foreign language skills to principals, teachers, guidance counsellors, parents and students. Funded by the Department of Education and facilitated by PPLI, this is a key objective of Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026.



INTOUCH 61 MARI/APRIL 2024



Next steps for MFL Community of Practice?

- AR can support a pedagogical focus
- Reflection in moderation!



www.ppli.ie
www.ncca.ie

Jane O'Toole 2024

<https://www.into.ie/media-centre/publications/intouch/>

03 Challenges and opportunities for AR in LE

04

- ✓ Provides democratising and relationship-equalising potential in fostering school-home-community collaborations

05

- ✓ Provides a framework to further explore school-university LE partnerships
Supports collaboration between higher education and other LE institutions within a community of learning (Banegas & Consoli, 2020)

Actionable knowledge: knowledge that is useful to both the academic and practitioner communities (Coughlan, p,293, 2007)

06

- ✓ Demonstrates potential to support language revitalization/ EL settings
Further research of AR approaches in LR/ LE settings recommended. Complements current qualitative approaches such as ethnography/ participatory practices. Scope for development in the future



Jane O'Toole 2024



4 How might I go about integrating action research into my practice as a language educator?

Reflecting on practical ways to integrate AR into practice. How to start, how to network, how to give and receive support, writing, joining networks, seeking opportunities



04 How do I integrate AR into my practice?

1

Consider own field

Consider your own discipline/ field/ area of interest in LE/ What is your area of concern?



2

Consider action research

Why Action Research? And not X approach/methodology?



3

Why AR for this LE focus?

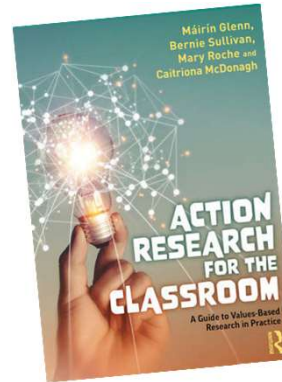
Why AR for chosen field of study/concern?
Precedent? Literature?





O4 How do I integrate AR into my practice?

How to prepare for educational action research projects in relation to your practice
Getting 'action research-ready'



Glenn, M., Sullivan, B., Roche, M., & C. McDonagh. (2023). *Action Research for the Classroom*. Oxford: Routledge.



1. Initial Tasks



Stop, pause and reflect on your work as a teacher



Develop awareness



Professional Reading



Invite some people to become critical friends



2. Reflection Tasks



3. Writing Tasks

Tasks to help prepare for your educational action research project

Initial tasks	Yes	No	Under way
Stop, pause and reflect on your work as a teacher	—	—	—
Develop a heightened sense of awareness	—	—	—
Do some professional reading	—	—	—
Develop some critical friends	—	—	—

Reflection tasks	Yes	No	Under way
What is important for you in your school work? Why?	—	—	—
What values do you hold? What connections can you make between your values and your work?	—	—	—
Can you see contradictions, inconsistencies or 'mess' in your work?	—	—	—

Writing Tasks	Yes	No	Under way
Begin to write a reflective journal	—	—	—
Write a short synopsis of your current favourite educational article and explain why it is important to you. (As draft writing for a literature review for a report)	—	—	—
See if you can write down what your values are.	—	—	—
What might draw you to action research?	—	—	—

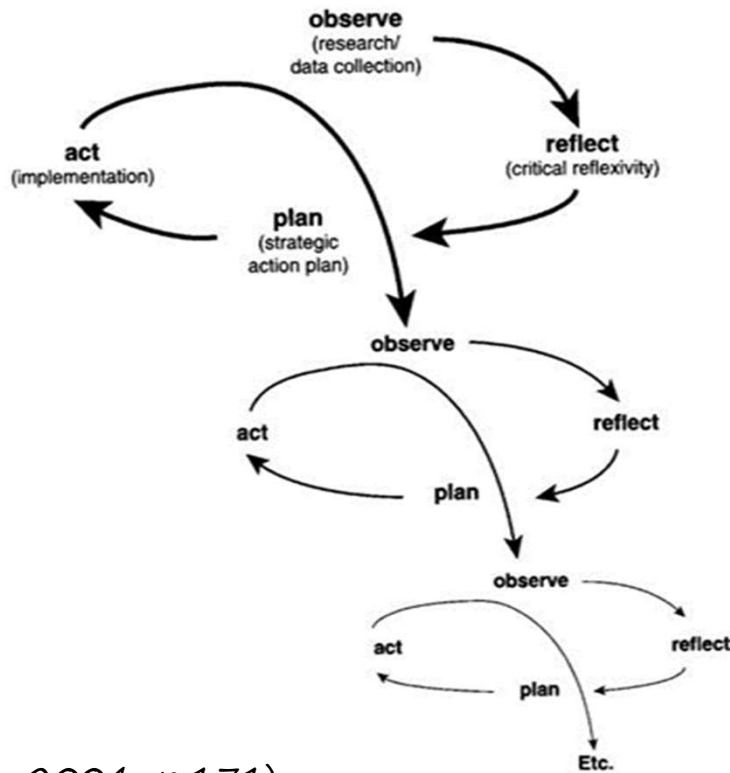
Figure 1.1 Tasks to help prepare for an educational research project

(Glenn et al., 2023, pp. 8-12)

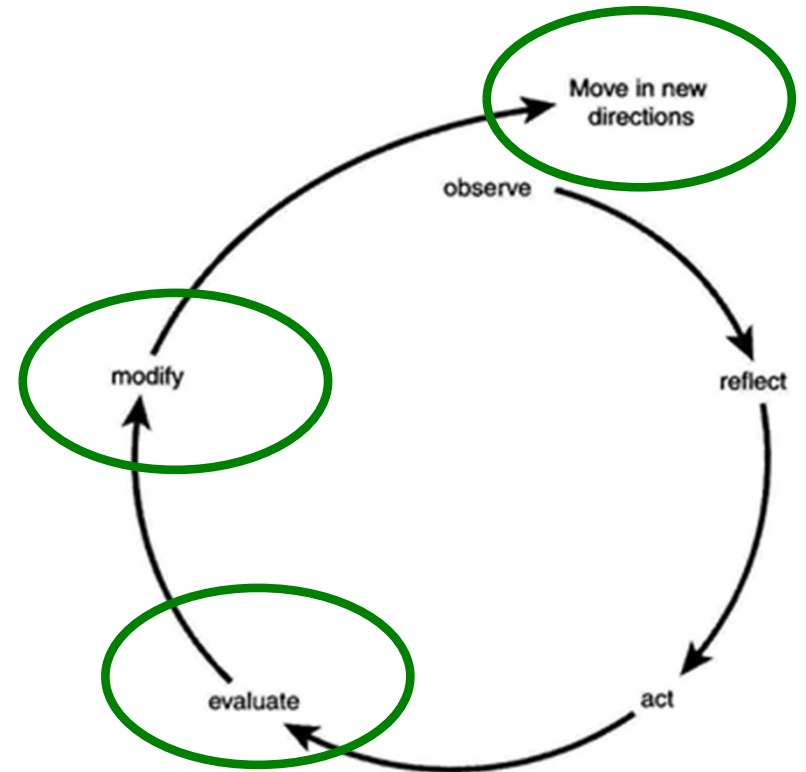


O4 How do I integrate AR into my practice?

Action Research Frameworks & Cycles-
find one that aligns with your (shared)
objectives/ values/ way of working



(O'Leary, 2004, p.171)



McNiff & Whitehead, 2011, p.9)





O4 How do I integrate AR into my practice?

What is my concern?

Why am I concerned?

What do I think I can do about it?

What kind of evidence could I collect to help make some judgement about what is happening?

How will I collect such evidence?

How would I check that my judgement about what has happened is reasonably fair and accurate?

Whitehead (1993) in (McNiff & Collins, 1994, p.11)

What is my concern?

Why am I concerned?

How do I show the situation as it is and as it develops?

What can I do about it? What will I do about it?

How do I test the validity of my claims to knowledge?

How do I check that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?

How do I modify my ideas and practice in light of the evaluation?

(McNiff & Whitehead, 2011, p.9)

- When undertaking AR, write regularly if possible utilising chosen framework as point of departure
- Be circumspect with time in relation to the 'doing' and the 'writing' of the project - honour the practical, pedagogical, reflective and academic responsibilities
- Prioritise regular writing which will capture the essence of your AR lived experience, as well as support dissemination at a later date

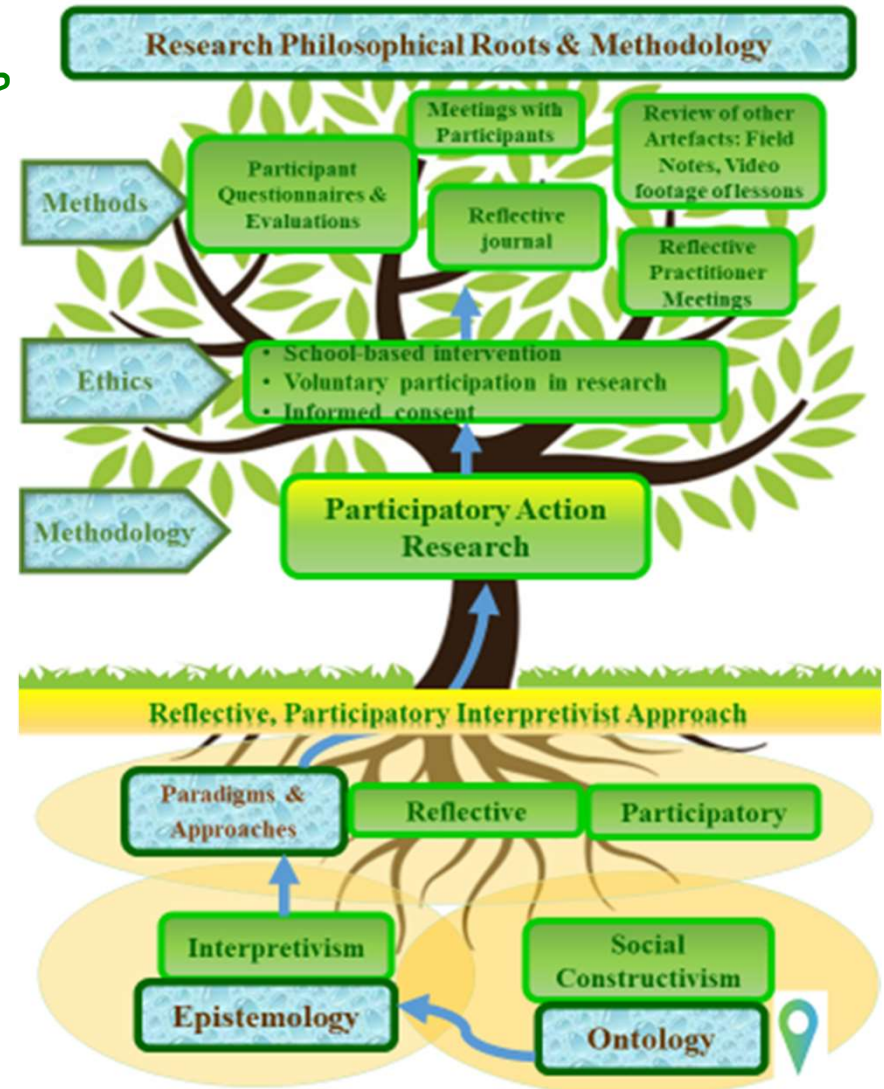




O4 How do I integrate AR into my practice?

✍️ Reflect upon, articulate (and write about) your positionality—Your role in (language education), professional context, experience, educational setting, research context, values.

✍️ Situate potential action research within the broader realm of (educational) research? Where does it fit/ align in the broader scheme of things. Come up with a visual that assists your own understanding of your theoretical grounding



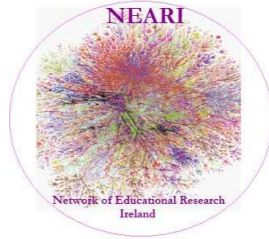
(O'Toole, 2023a)



O4 How do I integrate AR into my practice?



IRAAL
Cumann na Teangeolaíochta Feidhmi
Irish Association for Applied Linguistics



**National AR Networks/
Education/
Language/AP Associations**



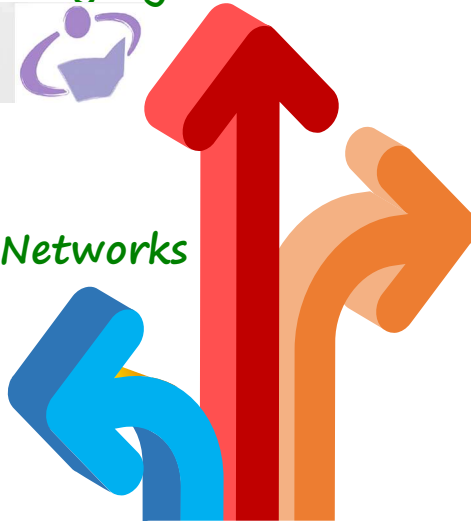
**LITERACY
ASSOCIATION
OF IRELAND**



**International
Networks**



**Local AR Networks
LE CoPs**

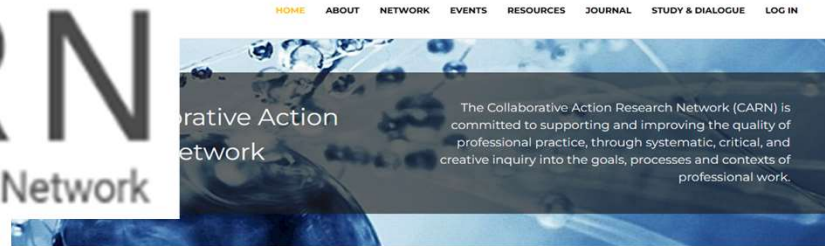


f-2-f • online • hybrid • asynchronous networks

- Share your emerging AR practice/ ideas/ challenges at local/ national AR events and meetings- AR is a work in practice
- Critically engage with the work of fellow language educators
- In addition to AR circles, present your research to language and AP (community) events / conferences
- Investigate support for LE research endeavours at your institution time- not just funding!; institution membership
- Explore AR funding opportunities in your sector- be proactive



04 How do I integrate AR into my practice?



CARN Website
www.carn.org.uk

LATEST UPDATES FROM CARN

CARN Conference 2024
CARN Conference 2024 save the date! The next annual CARN Conference will be held at Malmö University in Sweden on October the 24th to 26th.

CARN Study Day: Edinburgh University
The next CARN Study Day will be held on the 12th June at Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

ARNA Conference & International CARN Study Day at on 6th June 2024
The annual hybrid conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) will be held on the 7th-8th June with a CARN Study Day on the 6th June.

CARN on X :

@CARN_Intl



Just ask!

Enquiries to CARN
secretary
Charmian Wilby

info@carn.org.uk

The header of the CARN Praxis website. It features the CARN logo and name at the top, followed by "CARN Praxis" and the tagline "A new way of publishing your work". Below this is a navigation menu with links for "Welcome to CARN Praxis", "About the journal", "Author guidelines and support", "Editorial procedures", "FAQs", and "Issues". The main heading "Welcome to CARN Praxis" is followed by a paragraph: "A new concept in publishing, designed as a collaborative and supportive space for newcomers to share their accounts of undertaking Action Research".

CARN Praxis Website
<http://carnpraxis.org>



04 How do I integrate AR into my practice?



CARN Spring Conference 2024

@CARNonline24

Welcome to the agenda page for the CARN online conference 2024. Access all the information (incl. individual collections) below. If you're on socials please remember to use the hashtag #CARNonline24

Daily Agendas



CARN 2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The next annual CARN conference will be held at the Malmö University in Malmö, Sweden. The conference theme is "Action Research for Citizen Health, Social Sustainability and Education." More information will follow soon.

Conference Website

24th Oct-26th Oct 2024
Malmö University, Sweden



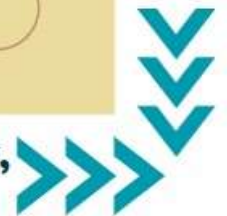
CARN Conference 2024

SAVE THE DATE!

**24th-26th of
October 2024**



**Malmö University,
Sweden**



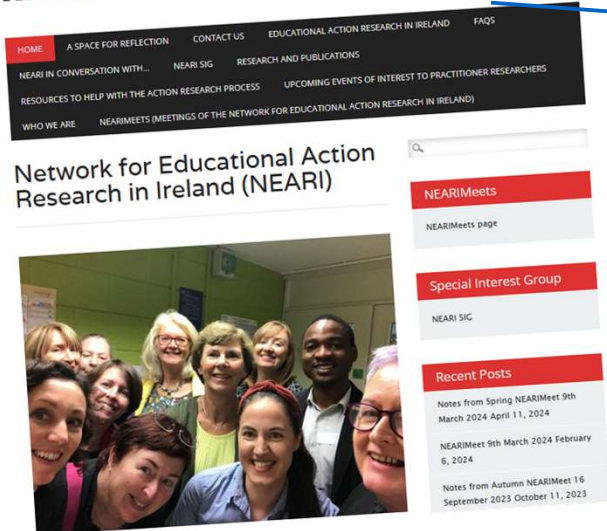
CARN Website www.carn.org.uk



04 How do I integrate AR into my practice?

NETWORK FOR
EDUCATIONAL
ACTION RESEARCH
IRELAND

NEARI Website
www.eari.ie



NEARI on X :
[@info_NEARI](https://twitter.com/info_NEARI)

Three NEARI Meets per year
(next- Autumn 2024)

Guest speakers/lectures & discussions
Critical engagement
Round Robins
ESAI SIG



www.ecml.at

Action Research Community



04 How do I integrate AR into my practice?



Foundation for Endangered Languages

- **Seek opportunities internationally for local implementation**
- Empowering parents to (re-)engage with the Irish language: Adult community Irish language engagement to support children's Irish language learning journeys
- June-December 2024
- Foundation for Endangered Languages Research Grant
- This Irish language engagement research study seeks to revitalise parents' engagement with the Irish language within the local community in order to potentially support and enrich (i) their own — and by extension — (ii) their child's'/children's Irish language journey.
- Proposes a participatory action research (PAR) approach
- Facilitated exploration of Irish language learning opportunities and services for learners within the local area of North County Dublin with parents.
- Invitation to parents to reflect on their Irish language engagement to date (June 2024)
- This informs a series of four Irish language workshops (September-October 2024)
- Debrief and planning session (November 2024) will reflect on participant feedback and review, exploration of project outcomes, and how the parent community of learners may intend to progress their Irish language engagement within the local community in the new year (2025)



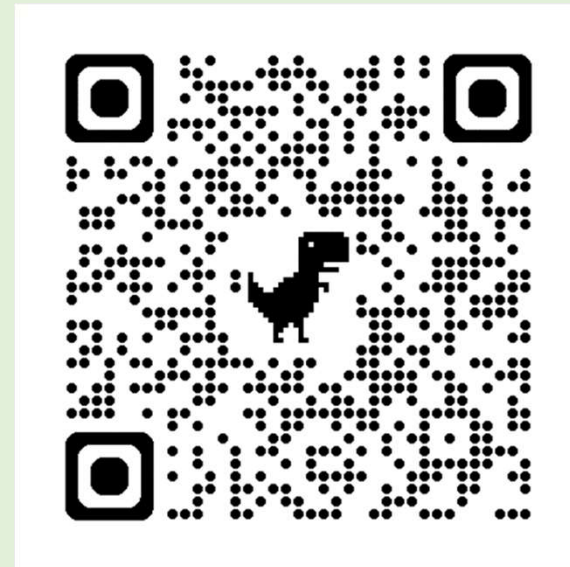
Míle buíochas!

ResearchGate:

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jane-Otoole-3>

E-mail: otooleja@tcd.ie

X: @JaneO_Toole



Teaching and learning Irish at English-medium primary school level: Identifying creative and democratic approaches to respond to existing challenges and evolving imperatives (O'Toole, 2023)



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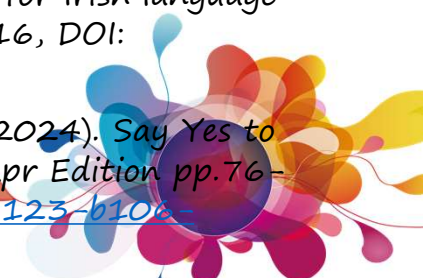
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