

Unlocking Research Potential: Insights from Aspiring Prospective English Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perspectives of prospective English teachers on educational research, focusing on its relevance to their future professional practice. Using a phenomenological design, data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 28 pre-service English teachers who had completed research methodology courses. A thematic analysis was conducted using MAXQDA 2022, revealing five main themes related to research engagement: conceptualizing educational research, purpose of research engagement, significance and contributions of research practice, challenges and mitigation strategies, and future research potential. Findings reveal that participants view research as a valuable tool for addressing classroom challenges, enhancing professional skills, and contributing to educational goals. Action research was particularly emphasized as relevant to classroom settings. However, participants highlighted challenges such as time limitations, procedural issues, and literature review difficulties. To address these, they suggested strategies like consulting experts, peer collaboration, and comprehensive literature reviews. The study highlights the need for research-oriented practices in teacher education programs to support prospective teachers in integrating research into their careers, fostering positive research attitudes, and enhancing their research skills.

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Statement of Publication Ethics

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Conflict of Interest

Reference

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Introduction

Educational research has long been recognized as a powerful tool for enhancing teaching practices and improving educational outcomes (Berces, 2023; Borg, 2013; Cheng, 2024 Eryılmaz, & Dikilitaş, 2016). By providing evidence-based insights into what works in education, research offers educators the opportunity to refine their teaching strategies and improve student learning (Hammami, 2024). However, despite the potential benefits, research often struggles to find its place in day-to-day classroom practice. Some scholars (Cain, 2017; Ion & Iucu, 2014) argue that the application of research in schools is often inconsistent, as the theoretical knowledge generated by research does not always align seamlessly with the everyday realities of classroom teaching. This inconsistency emphasizes the importance of equipping prospective teachers with the skills necessary to apply research meaningfully in their professional practices.

Prospective English teachers, currently in their training programs, are soon to assume responsibility for integrating research-informed strategies into their classrooms (Jonuzokova & Kizi, 2024). Their readiness to conduct research is critical for their professional growth and for the ongoing improvement of educational practices. However, further clarity is needed on how prospective teachers assess their preparedness to engage with research and its perceived value in their future careers (Perines & Ion, 2020). Exploring these perceptions is essential, as they will influence how prospective teachers engage with research in their careers.

Given the increasing emphasis on research-informed teaching in education, it is crucial to explore how prospective English teachers perceive the role of research (Xu, 2014). Teacher education programs play a pivotal role in shaping these perceptions by either encouraging a deep engagement with research or leaving future educators unsure about its practical value (Perines & Ion, 2020). In other words, the success of teacher education programs in fostering research literacy is crucial for ensuring that prospective teachers can confidently use research to inform their teaching strategies.

Although this study focuses on prospective teachers, it is also important to consider the challenges they may continue to face once they enter the profession. In addition to understanding their views on research, it is important to identify the barriers that prospective teachers might face when attempting to integrate research into their teaching practice. Common challenges can discourage teachers from engaging in research once they begin their careers (Ion & Iucu, 2016). Moreover, the demands of classroom management and curricular requirements may limit the time available for conducting or applying research, creating additional difficulties for teachers seeking to stay informed about the latest developments in educational research (Borg, 2006; 2009). Therefore, understanding these barriers can help teacher education programs provide more targeted support, ensuring that future teachers are better equipped to overcome such obstacles.

While previous research has investigated prospective teachers' general perceptions of educational research (Kaçaniku, 2024; Perines & Ion, 2020), few studies focus on how prospective English teachers in particular conceptualize research, understand its purpose, and foresee its role in their future professional practices (Korkut et al., 2019; Mermer Ülker & Soyer, 2021). This gap is especially evident in the context of teacher education

programs in Türkiye, where research engagement of in-service English teachers is increasingly emphasized (Altınsoy & Birgün, 2016; Beycioğlu et al., 2010; Kutlay, 2013; Wyatt & Dikilitaş, 2016) but not yet fully explored from the prospective English teacher perspective. As educational systems increasingly emphasize research-informed practices, it is vital to examine how prospective teachers view the role of research in their professional lives. Their approaches toward research and how well they feel equipped to engage with it will influence the extent to which they use research in their classrooms. Therefore, the relevance of this study lies in its potential to reveal how prospective English teachers might engage in educational research in their future teaching careers. By examining their attitudes, experiences, and perceived challenges, this study aims to uncover key insights into how teacher education programs can more effectively promote research literacy and its application in the classroom.

Literature Review

Research engagement in teacher education has been widely discussed as a crucial element in preparing prospective teachers for their future careers. Studies emphasize the importance of research competence, research literacy, and the development of a teacher-researcher identity in teacher education programs (Borg, 2009; Lankshear & Knobel, 2004; Winch et al., 2015). However, challenges such as the perceived gap between theory and practice, lack of relevance, and methodological difficulties often hinder prospective teachers' engagement with research (Borg, 2006).

Prospective teachers are commonly aware of the significance of education research, however, their perceptions of its relevance to teaching differ (Hattingh & de Kock, 2008; Willemse & Boei, 2013). While some view research as an essential tool for improving classroom practices, others see it as a primarily academic requirement with limited practical application (Gümüşok et al., 2024; Kaçaniku, 2024). Research competence, which refers to the skills, knowledge, and abilities required to effectively conduct research in a particular field or discipline, is a key factor influencing engagement (Jose & Salim, 2023, p.1). Studies have found that while prospective teachers may feel confident in designing and conducting research, they often struggle to connect it with real-world teaching scenarios (Gümüşok et al., 2024). Additionally, initial resistance to research can shift when prospective teachers engage in problem-solving research models. For instance, Kaçaniku (2024) demonstrated that although pre-intervention attitudes reflected skepticism, prospective teachers' perspectives changed when they actively applied research to address classroom challenges. Nonetheless, barriers such as limited access to academic literature and difficulties in applying research findings to real-world classroom settings remain significant obstacles (Elmas & Aydin, 2017; Kustati & Al-Azmi, 2018).

In addition to understanding the challenges of research engagement, it is also important to consider its broader impact on teacher development, particularly its role in shaping professional identity. Because, beyond skill acquisition, research engagement plays a fundamental role in shaping professional identity. Engaging in research encourages student teachers to critically reflect on their roles and develop a deeper sense of professionalism. Trent (2012) found that participation in research projects can challenge

and reshape student teachers' professional identities, sometimes leading to tensions between their roles as learners and emerging educators. Practitioner inquiry has also been recognized as an effective means of fostering professional growth, as it enables teachers to engage in critical reflection and make informed instructional decisions (Hulse & Hulme, 2012). However, despite the benefits of research participation, many student teachers do not see themselves continuing research in the long term (Savaşçı & Rets, 2021). While research methodology courses can enhance self-efficacy, sustaining engagement beyond teacher education programs remains a challenge.

To enhance research engagement in teacher education, various strategies have been proposed to bridge the gap between research and practice. One effective approach is integrating research with teaching practice through action research and practitioner inquiry, which allows student teachers to see its immediate relevance to classroom challenges (Akyel, 2015; Kaçaniku, 2024). Additionally, the development of research competency is essential for enabling student teachers to critically evaluate and apply research findings (Fürstenberg, 2024). Structural reforms in teacher education programs have also been suggested, emphasizing the need to embed research components throughout the curriculum rather than limiting them to isolated courses (Öztabay, 2015; Tavares de Sousa et al., 2020). Furthermore, interactive, workshop-based approaches have been found to enhance research engagement by providing student teachers with opportunities to discuss and explore the implications of research for their teaching practice (McCartney et al., 2018).

Research Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to explore perspectives of prospective English teachers regarding educational research, with a particular focus on how they perceive its role in their professional practice. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the views of prospective English teachers on the purpose and significance of educational research?
2. How do prospective English teachers anticipate integrating research into their professional practice?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. The primary objective of phenomenological research is to uncover the “essential structure” of a phenomenon by gathering insights from individuals who have personally experienced it (Fraenkel et al., 2012, pp. 432-433). In educational contexts, phenomenological studies often focus on participants' lived experiences, emotions, and perceptions related to a particular phenomenon. Accordingly, this study sought to investigate the phenomenon of research from the perspectives of prospective English teachers in a Turkish state university in Türkiye. To achieve this, semi-structured

interviews were conducted with 28 third-year students who had either completed a course on educational research or had prior experience in conducting research. These students had taken a 14-week Educational Academic Research. As part of this course, they were introduced to key research concepts and methodologies, engaged in the critical analysis of published research articles, and learned the procedural steps involved in conducting educational research. By the end of the term, each student had designed and carried out a small-scale educational research project, providing them with first-hand experience in applying research skills within an academic context. The selection of participants with this background was crucial in ensuring that they possessed a foundational understanding of the topic, thus enabling them to provide informed and meaningful responses regarding their views on educational research. This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of their experiences and perceptions within the context of their teacher education. The participants' ages and genders were not analyzed concerning the study's findings, as the research did not specifically examine differences based on these demographic factors. Furthermore, to ensure anonymity, the participants' names were not disclosed during the data analysis or presentation of results.

Data Collection Process and Analysis

Prior to the data collection phase, the participants were contacted, and the purpose of the study was explained in detail. It was emphasized that their participation was voluntary. Data were collected through six open-ended interview questions, which were developed based on relevant literature and expert consultation (see Appendix). To ensure clarity and appropriateness, the questions were piloted with four students before the main data collection process. The interviews were carried out individually and in person to facilitate a more focused and in-depth discussion. Each interview lasted approximately 8 to 12 minutes and was conducted in Turkish to allow participants to express themselves more comfortably and clearly. The data collection process was completed in approximately two months. Following data collection, all recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, each participant was allowed to review their transcript and confirm that their statements had been accurately recorded. The data were thoroughly read and then analyzed thematically using MAXQDA 2022. Thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research, involves identifying patterns or themes within the data. This study adhered to the six-phase guide by Braun and Clarke (2006): “familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, producing a report”. This approach was chosen due to its clear, structured framework, which is particularly effective in social science research. Following the thematic analysis, the identified codes, categories, and themes were reviewed and validated by a field expert to ensure accuracy and depth of interpretation. During the data analysis process, frequencies of the codes were also considered to support the interpretation of the findings. Reporting code frequencies in qualitative research enhances transparency and allows readers to assess the relative prevalence of themes, thereby contributing to the trustworthiness of the analysis (Sandelowski, 2001; Silverman, 2013).

Trustworthiness and Ethics

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the study, several strategies were employed, including expert reviews, intercoder reliability checks, and the use of thick descriptions (Nowell et al., 2017). After developing the research instrument, the researchers obtained ethics committee approval from Atatürk University, Educational Sciences Ethics Board, with decision number 14, which was approved on 30.10.2024. Informed consent forms were distributed to all participants before the study, guaranteeing confidentiality of both the data and the participants' identities. During the data analysis, the researchers conducted separate analyses of the collected responses and then compared their results to calculate intercoder reliability. An intercoder reliability score of 89% was achieved, indicating a high level of agreement between the coders. This score was calculated by dividing the number of coding agreements by the total number of coding decisions (agreements plus disagreements) and multiplying the result by 100, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Any discrepancies in coding and categorization were discussed, and consensus was reached. Additionally, the use of thick description, which involves detailed and rich reporting of the data, enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings. As a result, all findings are presented directly, without researcher interpretation or bias.

Results

To address the research questions, the findings are organized around five main themes that emerged from the data analysis. The first four themes, conceptualizing educational research, purpose of research engagement, significance and contributions of research practice, and challenges and mitigation strategies, respond to the first research question, which explores prospective English teachers' views on the purpose and significance of educational research. The final theme, future research potential, addresses the second research question, which examines how prospective English teachers anticipate integrating research into their professional practice.

Conceptualizing Educational Research

In the first theme, *conceptualizing educational research*, several significant codes emerged that illustrate how the prospective English teachers define and perceive research. As can be seen in the Table, one of the most prominent codes was *product* ($f=7$), where the participants often described research as something that results in a tangible outcome or contribution. For instance, one participant defined research as “*In my opinion, research is a final product that is the result of research and data collection on a specific topic, for example, to find the answer to a question or to illuminate and clarify a topic.*” (P11).

Table 1. Conceptualizing Educational Research

Theme 1: Conceptualizing Educational Research	Codes
	Product (f=7)
	Awareness of problems (f=7)
	Serving society and humanity (f=6)
	An organized study (f=5)
	Getting information (f=5)
	Experimental process (f=4)
	Presenting course material (f=4)
	Professional development (f=2)

Another equally frequent code was *awareness of problems* (f=7), with the participants frequently emphasizing that research begins with identification of a problem or becoming aware of a problem that needs to be addressed. As one of them noted, “*Therefore, if you ask me, these are studies in which we are aware of the questions related to our field of research, we examine them, we ask questions and we present the results.*” (P3).

The code *serving society and humanity* (f=6) also featured prominently, with a few participants perceiving research as a way to benefit society. As one participant defined, “*To better understand and develop any issue or situation that can be addressed for the development of humanity.*” (P21).

The participants also mentioned that research is *an organized study* (f=5), highlighting the structured nature of research activities. One participant remarked, “*A research project is a one-time, organized series of activities with a clearly defined purpose, scope, and budget and a clear beginning and end.*” (P9).

Additionally, *getting information* (f=5) was an important concept, with the participants often viewing research as a means of acquiring new knowledge. As one participant shared, “*A research is a process in which students or other people learn about a topic that they are curious about or have a purpose for.*” (P7).

Further notable code included *experimental process* (f=4), which underscores the participants’ view of research as involving experimentation and practical inquiry, and *presenting course material* (f=4), where they mentioned that research helps create or enhance instructional materials. For instance, one of the participants stated, “*It is possible to define research as a study that uses scientific process skills, controlled experiments, or various data collection tools to conduct in-depth research on the subject and use variables to make judgments.*” (P18) while another added, “*Eliminate resource shortages and create alternative resources and materials for students.*” (P2).

Lastly, *professional development* (f=2) was mentioned by a few participants, indicating that some see research as a way to advance their careers and improve their professional skills. One of them reflected, “*As a prospective English teacher, I believe that these studies shed light on our field. The results presented can help us a lot in teaching lessons, understanding our field better, and improving ourselves in our profession.*” (P13).

In conclusion, the prospective English teachers conceptualize research in varied but interconnected ways. They predominantly view it as a structured process that results in

tangible outcomes, addresses real-world problems, and serves societal needs. Additionally, they associate research with knowledge acquisition, the development of teaching materials, and opportunities for professional growth. These perspectives indicate that research is not only seen as an academic exercise but also as a practical and essential tool for their future careers in education.

Purpose of Engaging in Educational Research

In the second theme, the *purpose of engaging in educational research*, the participants were asked about their habits and frequency of reading research. This initial inquiry served as a means to uncover the underlying motivations driving prospective English teachers to engage with research. The responses varied considerably, revealing distinct patterns in their research reading behaviors. Ten participants reported that they rarely read research, while eight indicated that they frequently engage with it. Additionally, five participants stated they sometimes read research, and three mentioned that they only do so as part of their coursework or assignments. Notably, even though reading research articles is a common requirement in their courses, one participant reported never engaging with research.

Table 2. Purpose of Engaging in Educational Research

Theme 2: Purpose of Engaging in Educational Research	Codes
	Professional growth and advancement (f=8)
	Enhancing subject-matter expertise (f=7)
	Acquiring new perspectives and insights (f=6)
	Aligning with areas of personal interest (f=6)
	Keeping up with contemporary issues (f=3)
	Contributing to the development of future generations (f=2)

Building on these insights, several significant codes emerged that reflect the motivations of these prospective English teachers for engaging with research. As indicated in Table 2, one of the most frequently mentioned codes was ‘*professional growth and advancement*’ (f=8), with participants emphasizing that engaging in research is crucial for their continuous development as educators. As one participant articulated, “*My primary aim is to develop myself as a teacher.*” (P15).

Another important code was ‘*enhancing subject-matter expertise*’ (f=7), indicating that the participants viewed research as a means to deepen their knowledge of content relevant to their teaching. One participant remarked, “*I read these studies with the aim of developing myself academically and in my field.*” (P20).

Furthermore, the participants mentioned ‘*acquiring new perspectives and insights*’ (f=6), suggesting that engaging with research enables them to broaden their understanding and challenge their preconceived notions. One participant articulated, “*Reading various studies exposes me to different viewpoints that I may not have considered before.*” (P5).

The code ‘*aligning with areas of personal interest*’ (f=6) was also prevalent, indicating that several participants pursue research topics that resonate with their passions

and interests. As one participant expressed, *“I look at research articles about space that interest me.”* (P9).

Additionally, the code *‘keeping up with contemporary issues’* (f=3) highlighted participants’ desire to stay informed about current developments in the field of education and English language teaching. One participant shared:

“It’s crucial to stay updated on the latest trends and research findings to be an effective English teacher. I know that a teacher who stagnates and does not keep up with developments in their area is doomed to fall behind the times.” (P12).

Finally, *contributing to the development of future generations* (f=2) emerged as a motivating factor for two participants, who recognized the broader societal impact of their research efforts. One participant reflected, *“Generating different ideas on how to contribute to students in my field from many perspectives and contribute to their learning journeys.”* (P11).

Overall, the findings reveal that the prospective English teachers are motivated to engage in research primarily for professional growth, enhancing their knowledge, gaining new perspectives, and making a meaningful impact on their students and the field.

Significance and Contributions of Educational Research Practice

In the third theme, *‘significance and contributions of educational research practice,’* several key codes emerged that illustrate how the prospective English teachers perceive the value of engaging in research before their profession. As can be seen in Table 3, the most frequently mentioned code was *‘enhancing professional competence’* (f=12), with the participants frequently emphasizing how engaging in research contributes to their development as more skilled and effective educators. One participant noted:

“I think that English teacher candidates develop their professional skills more with research activities. Therefore, research activities enable them to gain not only field knowledge but also a wide range of knowledge and expertise in other areas within the profession.” (P28).

Table 3. Significance and Contributions of Educational Research Practice

Theme 3: Significance and Contributions of Educational Research Practice	Codes
	Enhancing professional competence (f=12)
	Strengthening problem-solving skills (f=11)
	Staying informed on emerging trends (f=8)
	Fostering personal growth (f=7)
	Understanding student readiness (f=2)
	Serving as a role model (f=1)
	Adopting an interdisciplinary approach (f=1)

Another prominent code was *‘strengthening problem-solving skills’* (f=11), where the participants highlighted the importance of research in improving their ability to navigate challenges in the classroom. As one participant explained, *“A teacher candidate’s participation in research activities helps him/her learn how to cope with the difficulties*

he/she may encounter in his/her professional life and how to put his/her ideas into practice.” (P4).

The code ‘*staying informed on emerging trends*’ (f=8) was also frequently mentioned, reflecting how research helps educators stay current with the latest developments in their field. One participant commented:

“I think English teaching is the field that contributes the most to research among other teaching fields. Because language is a living phenomenon, it always needs to renew itself. So, English teachers need to follow current information in order to keep research up to date.” (P19).

‘*Fostering personal growth*’ (f=7) was another notable code, with the participants expressing that research promotes their own self-improvement. As one participant shared, *“I believe that it improves us both in terms of cultural and self-realization.”* (P11).

Other less frequent but significant codes included *understanding student readiness* (f=2), where the participants mentioned that research helps them assess their students’ readiness for learning. One participant said, *“It is important because it makes it easier to analyze students’ needs and accordingly determine teaching methods and techniques in a more conscious and effective manner.”* (P6).

Consequently, two less emphasized codes were ‘*serving as a role model*’ (f=1) and ‘*adopting an interdisciplinary approach*’ (f=1). One participant pointed out that engaging in research can inspire their students and colleagues by setting an example of lifelong learning, while another highlighted the importance of integrating knowledge from various disciplines to enrich teaching and research practices.

Challenges in Educational Research and Mitigating Strategies

In the fourth theme, two main categories emerged: the challenges when conducting research and the strategies to overcome these challenges. As illustrated in Table 4, the first category includes several sub-categories with several codes regarding challenges.

Table 4. Challenges in Educational Research and Mitigating Strategies

Theme 4: Challenges in Educational Research and Mitigating Strategies	Categories		Codes
The challenges in conducting research			Reviewing related literature, and staying updated on current research (f=10)
			Designating a clear research problem (f=3)
			Lack of available research on certain topics (f=2)
			Lack of knowledge and experience (f=2)
			Data collection (f=8)
			Proving and presenting the truth (f=6)
			Challenge of data analysis (n=4)
			Obtaining ethical permissions (f=3)
			Individual issues (f=3)
			Economic and environmental conditions (f=12)
			Time-consuming process (f=4)
			Multi-staged nature of research (f=2)
			Maintaining stability and patience (f=2)
The strategies			Expert consultation (f=18)
			Identifying problems and seeking solutions (f=10)
			Extensive review of related literature (f=9)

Maintaining composure and perseverance (f=4)
Peer collaboration (f=2)
Teamwork and joint efforts (f=2)
Re-assessing and adjusting plans (f=2)
Abandoning the research (f=1)

One of the most significant challenges was reviewing related literature and staying updated on current research (f=10). The participants frequently mentioned the difficulty of navigating related literature, as well as the challenge of keeping up with new developments in the field. One of them:

“When conducting a research project, finding accurate and reliable sources can be difficult, depending on the subject of the research project. Because in today's world, countless sources and information can be accessed with technology, but it is very important for research that these are accurate and reliable. In this sense, I think the most important issue is finding sources and choosing the right ones.” (P25).

This task was seen as both time-consuming and complex for the participants with limited research experience, who had conducted their first educational research project as part of the course in which this study was embedded. In comparison, *designating a clear research problem* (f=3) also posed a challenge for some participants, who struggled with narrowing down their focus or identifying a specific problem area within the literature.

The participants also reported a *lack of available research on certain topics* (f=2) as a barrier to advancing their work, alongside their own *lack of knowledge and experience* (f=2) in research methodology, which limited their confidence in initiating studies. While they did not specify particular areas, this concern appeared to reflect general difficulties in locating studies related to topics they were curious about or considering as potential research interests.

Moving into the actual research process, one of the most frequently cited challenges was *data collection* (f=8). Many participants found it difficult to gather reliable, relevant, and sufficient data, particularly when working with human subjects or in complex study environments. One of them mentioned, *“For example, if one wants to work with more participants, s/he may experience problems in collecting participants and data.”* (P14). Closely related to this was the challenge of *proving and presenting the truth* (f=6), as the participants expressed concerns over ensuring the validity and credibility of their findings. This often intersected with *the challenge of data analysis* (n=4), where students struggled with interpreting their results and making meaningful conclusions from the data collected.

Another practical challenge involved *obtaining ethical permissions* (f=3), which was seen as a necessary but often bureaucratic and time-consuming hurdle. One of the participants underlined these challenges as: *“Issues such as obtaining official permits are among the problems that may be encountered while conducting research.”* (P13). Similarly, *individual issues* (f=3), such as personal biases, anxieties, or lack of confidence, impacted some students' ability to conduct their research smoothly. Ensuring reliability and validity (f=1) was a concern for only one participant.

Additionally, *economic and environmental conditions* (f=12) were seen as external factors that could either hinder or facilitate their ability to complete their research,

emphasizing the practical limitations they faced in terms of financial and environmental support. One of them explained these challenges in detail as:

“The greatest difficulty that can be encountered when conducting a study is the lack of resources. These problems can be in many areas, including financial and environmental conditions. If the necessary financial support is not found in the research conducted to develop a material, the research may not proceed as planned, or the expected results may not be achieved. The limitations in the environment where the study is conducted also create difficulties. Every study cannot be done in every classroom or school. The physical conditions of the school can be challenging.” (P1).

As a last remark, several participants noted that research is inherently a *time-consuming process* (f=4), requiring extensive effort, patience, and persistence. The *multi-staged nature of research* (f=2) made it difficult for students to maintain focus and energy across different phases of the study. *Maintaining stability and patience* (f=2) through the long process was another challenge identified.

In the second main sub-category, *mitigating strategies*, the participants expressed various strategies they may employ to overcome the challenges they may face in the future. The most frequently mentioned strategy was *expert consultation* (f=18), where participants emphasized the importance of guidance from experienced researchers or supervisors. As one participant expressed:

“Of course, first of all, I would consult someone who is an expert in the field and has enough experience to provide help. Because the problem experienced can be solved with the help of an external expert and through the exchange of ideas, new, creative ideas for the solution can be put forward.” (P9).

This illustrates the reliance on expertise to navigate complexities, especially when dealing with unfamiliar aspects of research. The next frequently mentioned strategy was *identifying problems and seeking solutions* (f=10). Several participants explained that, when faced with difficulties, they would examine them, seeking new angles to approach them. One participant remarked:

“First, we need to look at the source of the problem. Every problem has a reason. It is necessary to determine whether it is due to the participant, the data collection tool, or similar reasons, and develop solutions accordingly.” (P15).

Conducting an *extensive review of related literature* (f=9) was another prominent strategy used by the participants. They emphasized that going deeper into existing research allowed them to gain further insights and perspectives on how to tackle problems. One participant stated, *“In case of problems or difficulties, I prefer to refer to sources, that is, other research, to verify information that remains missing or questionable.” (P7).*

Some participants also highlighted the importance of *maintaining composure and perseverance* (f=4). They acknowledged the stress that comes with conducting research but emphasized the significance of maintaining composure and perseverance to successfully complete the process. One participant reflected, *“Sometimes research can be overwhelming, but we should stay patient and keep going. It is important not to give up when things get tough.” (P2).*

Additionally, a few participants mentioned *peer collaboration* (f=2) and *teamwork, and joint efforts* (f=2) as valuable strategies to overcome challenges. Collaborating with peers allowed them to discuss problems and benefit from diverse perspectives. *Reassessing and adjusting plans* (f=2) was another approach expressed by two participants if initial plans do not work out as expected. This involved going back to earlier stages of the

research to adjust or refine their approach. Interestingly, one participant reported *abandoning the research* (f=1) as a last resort, acknowledging that some challenges become overwhelming to continue.

Overall, the fourth theme highlights the multifaceted challenges prospective English teachers face in conducting research, including issues related to problem identification, data collection, and time management. However, the strategies they employ to mitigate these difficulties, such as consulting experts, collaborating with peers, and revising their plans, demonstrate their resilience and commitment to overcoming obstacles.

Future Research Potential

Addressing the second research question, the theme of future research potential comprises three distinct categories that demonstrate how prospective English teachers anticipate integrating research into their future professional practice and engaging with potential research initiatives. As illustrated in Table 5, the first category, *support for future research*, highlighted several positive sentiments expressed by the participants regarding their future involvement in research activities. Notably, the code *action research* (f=10) was the most frequently mentioned, indicating a strong inclination towards practical, classroom-based research endeavors. One participant remarked, “*I can do some research to reduce students' anxiety, motivate them for the lesson, and develop their creative thinking skills. Although these studies are not high-level ones, they can minimize students' anxiety levels and solve problems in my classroom.*” (P6). While this perspective reflects a basic awareness of how research can inform classroom practice, it primarily illustrates participants' willingness to conduct research in their future professional lives, rather than a fully developed understanding of research methodology, such as action research. Additionally, the *learning through experience* code (f=4) emphasizes the value participants place on experiential learning, where engaging in research is viewed as a vital avenue for personal and professional growth. A participant noted, “*Every research I undertake can teach me something new, which I can directly apply to my teaching. And the more research I do, the more experience I can gain.*” (P19). These expressions not only reveal their positive attitudes toward doing research in the future but also reflect how they begin to frame educational research as a tool for continuous professional development. Furthermore, the code *long-term solutions* (f=3) indicates that the participants perceive research as a pathway to developing sustainable strategies that can enhance educational practices. One of them stated, “*Thanks to research, we can get to the bottom of the problem, produce more permanent, realistic, and reasonable solutions, and increase success.*” (P5). Lastly, the code *sharing experiences with colleagues* (f=1) reflect the participants' desire to collaborate and exchange knowledge with peers, which can foster a supportive research culture: “*I plan to use this research to enlighten other teachers.*”.

Table 4. Future Research Potential

Theme 5: Future Research Potential	Categories	Codes
	Support for future research	Action research (f=10)
		Learning through experience (f=4)
		Long-term solutions (f=3)
		Sharing experiences with colleagues (f=1)
	Barriers to future research	Time-consuming (f=4)
		Potential procedural challenges (f=1)
	The indeterminate outlook	

In contrast, the second category, *barriers to future research*, identified several challenges that may hinder the participants' engagement in research. The most notable code in this category was *time-consuming* (f=4), where the participants expressed concerns about the extensive time commitment required for conducting research. One participant lamented:

"There are certain steps that need to be followed when conducting research, and the strength of each step will significantly support the next step. I think all of these will require a certain amount of time. I do not use it because conducting research in a classroom can be a bit difficult." (P11).

Additionally, the code *potential procedural challenges* (f=1) indicates that one of the participants perceives bureaucratic or procedural obstacles as deterrents to conducting research. A participant who found the literature review challenging indicated that she would not engage in research in the future for this reason. Another participant expressed that he would prefer to consult more experienced colleagues rather than conducting research in the future, as he found this approach to be easier and more practical.

Interestingly, the indeterminate outlook category revealed no specific codes, highlighting a participant who may be uncertain about their future research involvement or who did not express a definitive stance.

Consequently, while the findings indicate a positive inclination toward engaging in research through action-oriented approaches and collaborative efforts, they also reveal significant barriers, particularly regarding time constraints and procedural complexities.

Discussion

The study aimed to explore how prospective English teachers conceptualize and engage with research, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and future potential for research practice. The participants generally viewed research as a structured process aimed at addressing real-world problems, enhancing professional skills, and serving societal needs. They also acknowledged the difficulties they encountered in research, such as time constraints and a lack of experience, while suggesting strategies to overcome these obstacles. Additionally, the approach toward conducting research in the future varied, with some expressing enthusiasm for continued involvement, while others remained hesitant

due to perceived challenges. In line with the research questions, the discussion is organized around five key themes.

The current study's exploration of the first theme, conceptualizing research, aligns with and extends existing literature on how prospective teachers perceive research. Consistent with findings from previous studies (Altınsoy & Birgün, 2016; Perines, 2017; Perines & Ion, 2020; Perines & Murillo, 2017), the prospective English teachers in this study frequently described research as a way to identify and solve classroom problems, demonstrating an awareness of its potential to serve both educational practice and society. However, unlike the participants in Perines (2017) and Perines and Murillo (2017), who reportedly struggled to articulate what research entails, the participants in the current study were generally able to express more concrete and practice-oriented understandings of research. Their statements reflected not only a recognition of research's broader societal function but also an emerging ability to link research to their future teaching practices in meaningful and applied ways.

This study partially aligns with the findings of Yang and Kuo (2020), who emphasized that coursework and practical experiences shape prospective teachers' understanding of research. While participants in the current study did not provide detailed narratives about the research methods course, their comments suggest that engaging in a research project during the course may have played a role in how they conceptualized research. As noted in the methodology, all participants completed a research task as part of the course in which data collection took place. Although explicit references to the course were limited, the participants frequently emphasized the practical value of research, highlighting its potential to inform instructional practices, foster professional learning, and contribute to classroom problem-solving. While formal education may lay the groundwork for understanding research, this study suggests that prospective English teachers are equally motivated by the tangible benefits research can offer in practice.

The findings from the second theme, purpose of engaging with research, and the third theme, significance and contributions of research practice, also resonate with existing research while also offering new insights into how prospective English teachers view research. In line with Borg (2009) and Kowalczyk-Wałędziak et al. (2020), the participants frequently emphasized research as a means of professional development and enhancing subject-matter expertise. These motivations are well-documented in the previous studies that highlight how research engagement improves teaching practice and broadens content knowledge (Ulla, 2018; Xu, 2014). In both themes, the participants identified staying updated on emerging trends as critical, reflecting the findings of Wyatt and Dikilitaş (2016), who noted that language teachers often engage in research to remain informed about new developments in their fields. However, the current study expands on these ideas by showing a strong link between research and problem-solving skills, a key motivation in both themes. This connection is particularly evidenced by the strengthening of problem-solving skills in the third theme, where participants described research as a practical tool for addressing specific classroom challenges. These findings add to the growing body of evidence that suggests teachers use research to directly address classroom challenges (Perines & Ion, 2020).

Moreover, in both themes, the participants expressed that research fosters personal development and helps with understanding students' readiness, which aligns with a study by Xu (2014), who found that research engagement leads to broader personal and professional satisfaction. The less frequent mention of codes like serving as a role model or interdisciplinary approaches is also noteworthy, reflecting an interest in research as a way to enrich teaching beyond subject-specific knowledge. While these findings reflect the practical and professional benefits highlighted in previous studies, they also suggest that prospective teachers in this study see research as both a personal and professional tool for long-term development, positioning research not only as an academic endeavor but as a means to enhance the quality of education and student outcomes.

The findings from the fourth theme, which focus on the challenges of conducting research and strategies to overcome them, align with multiple studies in the field of teacher education research. Similar to the challenges noted by Figen Ersoy and Çengelci (2008) and Puustinen et al. (2018), the participants in this study highlighted difficulties such as reviewing related literature and data collection. These difficulties reflect broader issues, as identified by Reis-Jorge (2007), who found that prospective teachers often struggle to manage the volume of literature and find reliable sources. The difficulty in designating clear research problems and maintaining validity in data also echoes the findings of Van Katwijk et al. (2023), who reported that novice researchers frequently face obstacles when applying theoretical knowledge in practice.

In addition to these challenges, time constraints and the requirement to provide direct treatment or control efforts, as highlighted by Tisngati et al. (2020), were reflected in the participants' concerns about balancing time-consuming research tasks with other responsibilities. The use of expert consultation as a key strategy, supported by Uiterwijk-Luijk et al. (2019), and reliance on peer collaboration and extensive literature review underscore the importance of external support systems for research success. These findings also correspond with those of Niemi and Nevgi (2014), who emphasized that mentorship and collaboration are critical for guiding prospective teachers through the complexities of research. Overall, the strategies employed by the participants in this study reflect resilience and a collaborative approach to overcoming research obstacles, which is consistent with the literature. Regarding time constraints and procedural complexities, the findings also resonate with those of Van Katwijk et al. (2023), Griffioen (2019), and Mermer Ülker and Soyer (2021). The current study's participants, like those in Borg's earlier research (2009), frequently cited time as a limiting factor, given the extensive commitment required for rigorous research activities. Furthermore, similar to Griffioen's (2019) findings, the participants noted that while research holds theoretical appeal, the practical opportunity and support to engage in research are often lacking, which affects their disposition to incorporate it into their professional future. Moreover, the suggestion that in-service teachers' attitudes impact pre-service teachers' own research inclinations, as highlighted by Van Katwijk et al. (2023) and Willekens et al. (2017), suggests a broader, systemic influence on research dispositions. In the current study, the participants also expressed a preference for consulting experienced colleagues rather than conducting independent

research, reflecting Allison and Carey's (2007) findings that many teachers view research as an academic responsibility better suited to those with greater expertise.

The findings from the final theme, “future research potential,” align with existing literature that identifies professional development as a key motivation for research involvement among teachers. Similar to studies by Borg (2009), Korkut et al. (2019), Kutlay (2013), and Reis-Jorge (2007), the participants in this study viewed research as a means to improve their teaching skills and solve classroom challenges, rather than as a pathway to career advancement or meeting employer expectations. This emphasis on practical classroom applications, particularly through action research, suggests that prospective English teachers value research as a practical tool to address student needs, enhance learning experiences, and implement sustainable solutions. However, while there is enthusiasm for research that directly impacts their teaching, like the participants in Kutlay’s study (2013), they seldom saw research engagement as an external requirement. This perspective aligns with the practical and self-driven approach to research noted by Bulut (2011), where teachers felt their primary role was instructional, viewing research as supplementary rather than obligatory.

Conclusion

This study sheds light on the perspectives that prospective English teachers hold regarding educational research and its potential role in their professional lives. The findings reveal a positive, albeit nuanced, orientation toward research, where the participants largely view it as a valuable tool for addressing classroom challenges, enhancing their teaching effectiveness, and supporting their professional growth. Several participants expressed interest in action research, viewing it as a practical way to apply findings directly to their classrooms and address real-world teaching challenges. This perspective, although not frequently articulated, reflects a growing awareness of research as a tool for pedagogical improvement. This practical orientation highlights their preference for research that has immediate relevance and tangible benefits for student outcomes, aligning with their motivation to become adaptable and reflective practitioners.

Despite these positive approaches, the participants also identified several challenges in engaging in research, including time constraints, procedural complexities, and difficulty in reviewing literature. Such challenges indicate the need for a supportive framework within teacher education programs, where prospective teachers can be equipped not only with research skills but also with strategies for overcoming these practical challenges. Notably, one of the participants indicated that he would prefer consulting experienced colleagues over independently conducting research, which underscores the importance of mentorship and collaborative learning environments within the teaching profession.

These findings support teacher education programs to emphasize research engagement by integrating action-oriented, collaborative research models that resonate with prospective teachers’ goals and classroom realities. By providing structured support, access to resources, and practical training, these programs can encourage future educators

to view research as an integral component of their careers, fostering a culture of continuous professional development.

This study offers a nuanced contribution to the existing literature by exploring how prospective English teachers in Türkiye conceptualize educational research, articulate its perceived purposes, and anticipate their future engagement -dimensions that have typically been examined in isolation or within broader teacher education contexts. Unlike previous studies that address pre-service teachers' general attitudes toward research, this study adopts an integrated perspective, tracing participants' evolving understandings across three interconnected thematic areas: research conceptualization, perceived significance, and future intentions. Moreover, by grounding the analysis in participants' lived experiences within a research-oriented course, the study aligns with a phenomenological approach that reveals both the cognitive and affective dimensions of educational research engagement. Therefore, it responds to calls for more context-sensitive, discipline-specific, and practice-oriented investigations of teacher-researcher development in English language teacher education. The findings offer valuable implications for improving research literacy components in ELT programs and for promoting sustained research engagement beyond initial teacher education.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. Firstly, the sample consisted solely of prospective English teachers from only a state university and the same department, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other contexts or teacher education programs. Additionally, the qualitative nature of this study, while providing in-depth insights, limits the scope for statistically generalizable conclusions.

Further Research

Future research could build on these findings by exploring perspectives on educational research among a broader range of teacher candidates from diverse institutions and educational contexts. Longitudinal studies tracking teachers from their pre-service years through their early teaching careers would also be beneficial, allowing researchers to observe how engagement with research evolves over time and across varying professional stages. Additionally, further research might investigate the impact of specific research-focused interventions within teacher training, such as mentorship programs or collaborative action research projects, to assess how these approaches influence teachers' willingness and ability to engage in research post-graduation. Examining the role of institutional support, resources, and policy in shaping research engagement among teachers would also provide valuable insights into how to effectively bridge the gap between research and practice in education.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Have you ever read educational research article?

Yes: No: ...

2. How often do you read research studies in your field? What is your purpose in reading these studies?

3. As a prospective English teacher, what are your thoughts on educational research? In your opinion, what does educational research entail?

4. What do you think is the purpose of conducting educational research? Why might educational research be carried out?

5. How do you perceive the role of educational research in the professional careers of prospective English teachers? What potential benefits or contributions might engage in educational research offer to prospective English teachers?

6. Would you consider using research in your future classroom to address urgent or practical problems? Why or why not?