NEEDS ANALYSIS OF ELT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY TEACHING FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: PERSPECTIVES FROM LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the needs of undergraduate students in learning English Language Teaching (ELT) research methodology, focusing on learners' perspectives. Employing a quantitative method, data were collected from surveys with 90 undergraduate English education students enrolled in the second-level research methodology course, particularly in instrument design and data analysis. The findings reveal key areas where students face challenges, including limited familiarity with research concepts and a lack of practical experience for conducting research. Students strongly preferred applying more real-world case studies into the curriculum to make research methodology more engaging and relevant. These findings underline the need for a student-centred approach to teaching ELT research methodology, emphasizing practical skill development and support from the teachers and peers during the project. This study contributes to the field by offering actionable insights for curriculum designers and educators aiming to enhance research methodology instruction for undergraduate ELT students.

Keywords: challenges, ELT, needs analysis, research methodology teaching

INTRODUCTION

Research methodology serves as the cornerstone of scholarly inquiry in English Language Teaching (ELT). It provides educators with the tools necessary to investigate, analyze, and improve teaching practices. In the field of ELT, where innovations in pedagogy and language acquisition theories frequently emerge, the ability to conduct methodologically sound research is critical for advancing knowledge and addressing practical challenges. Research methodology equips educators with skills to systematically explore issues such as language learner motivation, instructional strategies, assessment techniques, and classroom management (Pandey, 2024). These skills enable them to base their teaching decisions on empirical evidence rather than intuition and further allow them to enhance the quality of language education (Hanks, 2022).

Moreover, research methodology fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for ELT educators navigating the complexities of classroom conditions and dynamics (Song & Zhou, 2022). It empowers practitioners to identify their students' challenges and devise tailored interventions to improve learning outcomes. For instance, through action research, teachers can experiment with new teaching methods, assess their effectiveness, and refine their approaches based on data-driven insights. This iterative process strengthens the link between theory and practice and promotes professional development among educators (Chen, 2020).

In addition to its practical applications, research methodology plays a pivotal role in the academic development of ELT students, particularly those pursuing a career in the academic field. Understanding the principles of research design, data collection, and analysis is fundamental for producing high-quality academic work. These competencies also prepare students to contribute to the broader academic community by publishing research articles and presenting findings at conferences. As ELT increasingly adopts interdisciplinary approaches, a strong foundation in research methodology allows practitioners to engage with insights from linguistics, psychology, and education, thereby enriching the field with diverse perspectives (Nashruddin & Mustaqimah, 2020). Additionally, research skills enable students to critically evaluate published studies, fostering an evidence-based mindset essential for academic and professional decision-making. In the context of educational leadership and policymaking, research skills empower ELT graduates to contribute to the design and evaluation of language education programs. Whether developing curriculum frameworks, assessing the impact of language policies, or exploring strategies to enhance teacher training, the ability to conduct and interpret research is crucial for driving innovation and improvement in the field.

Beyond the classroom, research skills are equally significant in professional contexts, as they equip ELT graduates with the ability to identify and solve real-world problems in language education. For instance, teachers with strong research competencies can conduct classroom-based investigations, such as identifying the factors affecting students’ language proficiency or testing the effectiveness of new teaching methodologies (Chen, 2020). This approach, often referred to as action research, allows educators to make informed adjustments to their practices, leading to

improved learning outcomes. Moreover, research skills enable ELT professionals to stay updated with the latest advancements in pedagogy and linguistics, ensuring their teaching methods remain relevant and effective in diverse and dynamic classroom environments.

However, teaching research methodology presents several challenges. According to Gratton and Jones (2010), one of the primary difficulties lies in making abstract methodological concepts accessible and relevant to students, many of whom may have limited prior exposure to research practices. Students often find it challenging to connect theoretical knowledge with practical application, leading to a disconnect that hampers their ability to conduct independent research. Moreover, the traditional lecture-based approach to teaching research methods has been criticized for its passive learning environment, which may not effectively engage students or address their diverse learning needs (Ssemugenyi, 2023).

In response to these challenges, conducting a needs analysis in the context of ELT research methodology teaching is essential for identifying the specific areas where students require additional support or resources (Sari et al., 2020). Needs analysis serves as a cornerstone for designing instruction that is both relevant and effective. By systematically identifying and understanding learners' specific requirements, goals, and challenges, educators can tailor instruction content, methods, and delivery to meet those needs. This process ensures that the curriculum is aligned with the learners' academic and professional objectives and responsive to their diverse backgrounds and learning styles. Without a thorough needs analysis, instructional design risks being generic or misaligned, leading to disengagement and suboptimal learning outcomes (Park, 2022).

In the ELT field, needs analysis allows instructors to pinpoint the skills and knowledge that students need to excel academically and professionally. For example, in a research methodology course, understanding whether students struggle with theoretical concepts, practical applications, or both enables educators to balance the focus of the course accordingly. Such targeted instruction enhances learners' competence and fosters their confidence in applying these skills in real-world contexts. Moreover, it ensures that the instructional materials and activities are directly relevant to the learners' future careers, increasing their motivation and engagement.

Another significant benefit of needs analysis is its role in inclusivity and learner-centered education. Educators can create a more inclusive learning environment by considering the varied needs of a diverse group of students—such as their prior knowledge, cultural contexts, and personal learning preferences. This approach respects and addresses individual differences, ensuring all learners have equitable access to meaningful educational opportunities. Furthermore, needs analysis provides a framework for continuous improvement in instructional design. Educators can adapt their strategies to keep pace with evolving academic and industry demands by periodically reassessing learners' needs and gathering feedback. This iterative process ensures that instruction remains relevant and effective over time, ultimately equipping learners with the competencies required to succeed in a dynamic and competitive world (Ibrahim, 2020).

Several studies have emphasized the importance of understanding learners' perspectives to tailor the curriculum effectively. For example, Generoso and Arbon (2020) argue that a well-conducted needs analysis can reveal discrepancies between students' expectations and the actual content delivered in the course, enabling educators to make informed adjustments. This process is particularly critical given the diverse students background knowledge, their learning preferences and challenges. Therefore, this study would like to investigate three research questions: 1) what challenges do undergraduate students face in learning ELT research methodology? 2) what are students’ perceptions of effective teaching strategies for research methodology courses? 3) how can the research methodology course be improved to meet the needs of ELT students better?

METHOD

The study employed a descriptive quantitative design, focusing on 90 students from the English Education Program at the Faculty of Adab and Bahasa, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta. Participants, comprising 18 males and 72 females aged 19 to 22 years (average age 20), were enrolled in the research methodology course series, particularly in the areas of instrument design and data analysis, following a prior course in quantitative research. Conducted in June 2024, the research gathered data through a survey addressing four key aspects of the course: 1)

students' perspectives on the ELT research methodology subject, 2) instructional methods, 3) classroom environment and engagement, and 4) the teacher's role. The survey included 12 questions designed to provide comprehensive insights into these dimensions. The collected responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which transformed the raw data into clear, interpretable information. This analysis revealed trends and patterns that were instrumental in identifying areas for improvement in the course. The statistical approach ensured that findings were accessible and actionable, laying the groundwork for meaningful discussion and recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In capturing students' perspectives of challenges and needs in the ELT research methodology course, the researcher discussed four main aspects: 1) students' general perspectives on the ELT research methodology subject, 2) instructional methods, 3) classroom environment and engagement, and 4) the teacher's role.

Students' General Perspective of ELT Research Methodology Subject

1. *I find the ELT research methodology course challenging.*

   In the pie chart in Figure 1, a significant portion of the students (43%) reported facing moderate difficulty in the course. This suggests that while they encounter some challenges, these are manageable, though they may still require extra effort and support.

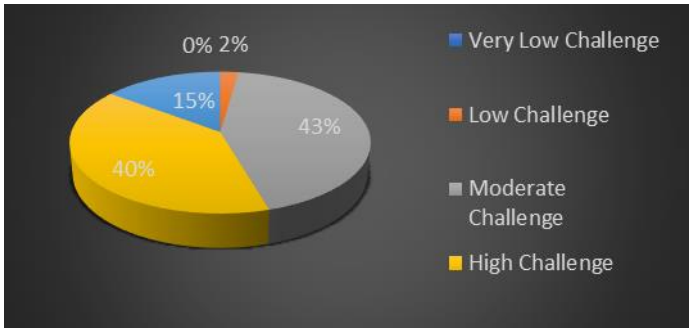

Figure 1

Perspective on ELT Research Methodology Course

Nearly 40% of students reported experiencing a high level of challenge in the course, while 15% indicated facing a very high level of difficulty. Together, these groups represent over half of the students, suggesting that a significant portion finds the course demanding and potentially overwhelming. To support these students, more intensive interventions, such as personalized tutoring, peer collaboration, or simplified explanations of complex material, may be necessary to enhance their understanding and performance. This finding aligns with Altakhaineh and Alnajjar (2021), who noted that many students struggle in courses requiring a solid theoretical foundation, critical thinking, and a thorough application of concepts in practical settings.

2. *I find the research methodology course I have taken is effective in preparing me for conducting real research.*

A significant portion of the respondents, 50 out of 90, expressed neutrality regarding the effectiveness of the lecturing method (see Figure 2). This suggests that while the method is not perceived as particularly ineffective, it also does not stand out as highly effective. The neutrality may reflect a sense of indifference among students, indicating that the current lecture format moderately impacts their learning. It might also suggest that the method lacks sufficient engagement or relevance, leading students to view it as neither beneficial nor detrimental.

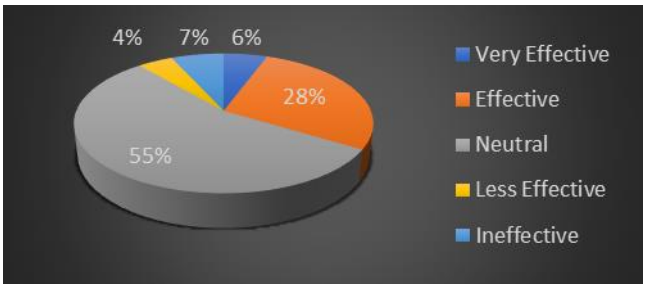

Figure 2

Students' Readiness for Conducting Real ELT Research

The learning process in the research methodology course appears to have had a limited impact on improving students' research skills. This limitation may be attributed to several ineffective factors within the learning process or not adequately

aligned with students' needs. One significant factor is the instructional methods employed, such as a heavy reliance on lectures and a lack of practical, hands-on activities. As discussed in the instructional methods section, these methods likely contributed to the course's ineffectiveness in enhancing students' research capabilities.

3. *I feel confident applying the research methods I have learned in previous courses to a real research project.*

Figure 3 shows that most students, 50 out of 90 respondents (55%), report having moderate confidence in their ability to conduct EFL research. This indicates that while these students generally feel somewhat prepared, they still have reservations or uncertainties that may affect their performance.

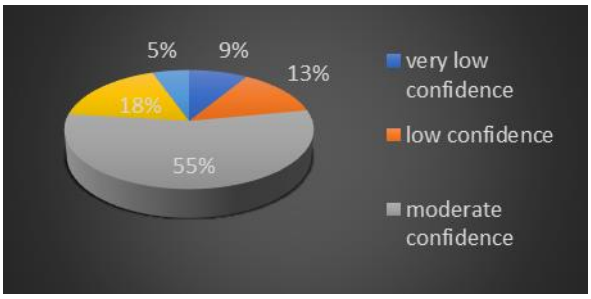

Figure 3

Students' Confidence on Applying Their Knowledge for Conducting Real Research

A significant portion of students, 20 out of 91 respondents (22%), reported having low to very low confidence in conducting research. This indicates that these students may feel underprepared or overwhelmed by the demands of the research process. They likely face challenges with fundamental aspects of research methodology, such as study design, data analysis, and result interpretation, which can impede their ability to conduct effective research without substantial guidance. This finding supports Pavlova et al. (2021), who emphasized that incorporating more practical experiences and research projects within real-world contexts can significantly enhance students' confidence and competence in conducting research.

Instructional Methods

4. What teaching methods are most frequently used by instructors?

The lecture method is the most commonly used teaching approach, as indicated by 41 respondents, as seen in Figure 4. This suggests a heavy reliance on traditional, instructor-centered delivery of content. The dominance of lectures in this course might imply that the course content is largely theoretical, requiring a structured explanation by the instructor. However, this method may also indicate a potential lack of student engagement or interaction if not complemented with more interactive teaching strategies.

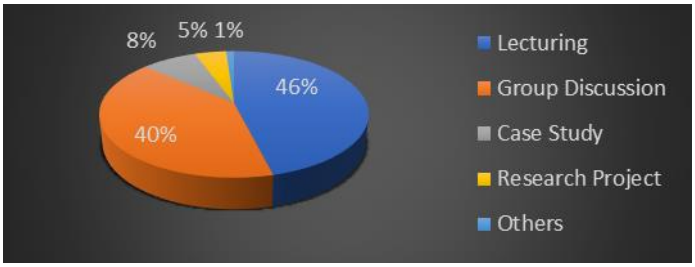

Figure 4

Teaching Methods Used in ELT Research Methodology Course

Group discussions are also popular, with 36 respondents indicating its use. This method allows students to engage with their peers, discuss concepts, and deepen their understanding through collaborative learning. The relatively high use of group discussions suggests that the course does attempt to incorporate interactive elements, promoting critical thinking and active participation among students.

However, when comparing the results related to students' confidence and the perceived effectiveness of the course, it appears that the current reliance on lectures and group discussions does not significantly contribute to improving students' research skills. While these methods provide essential theoretical foundations, they fail to equip students with the practical abilities needed for real-world research challenges. The course could benefit from a more balanced approach to address this gap, incorporating practical projects and case studies to complement the theoretical components and better prepare students for applied research tasks (Pavlova et al., 2021).

5. *I intend to engage more in practice-oriented and applied learning activities.*

A significant majority of students (67 out of 90 respondents) believe there is a need for more practical elements in the course, see Figure 5. Specifically, 17 students strongly agree, and 50 students agree. This overwhelming support indicates that students feel the course could be enhanced by more hands-on activities, real-world applications, or practical research exercises. The high level of agreement suggests that the current curriculum's theoretical focus may not fully meet students' learning needs or expectations.

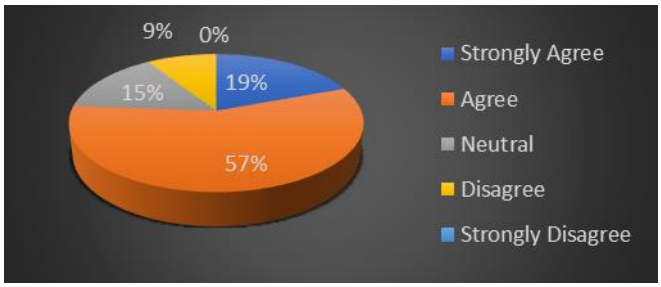

Figure 5

Students' Preferences for Engaging in More Practice-Oriented and Applied Learning Activities

The strong consensus among students favouring more practical elements implies a need to rethink the course structure. Integrating practical exercises, such as research projects, case studies, or fieldwork, could enhance students' understanding and application of research methodologies. This approach would likely increase engagement and provide students with the skills necessary to conduct research independently.

6. *What are your expectations for the ELT research methodology course?*

Figure 5 shows that the highest number of students (32 out of 90 respondents) needed more practical experience in conducting real research. This suggests that students strongly desire to engage in hands-on research activities that allow them to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical context. The demand for real research practice reflects the students' recognition of the importance of experiential learning in mastering research methodologies.

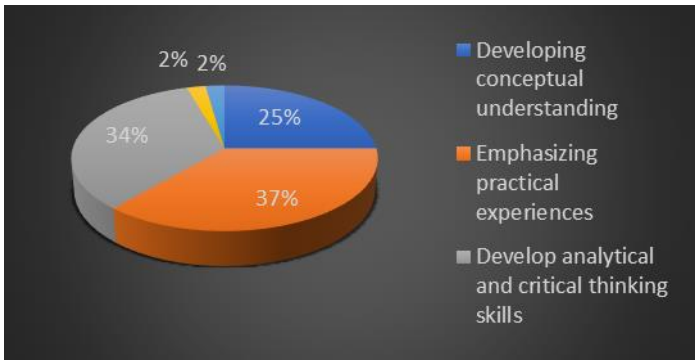

Figure 5

Students' Preferences of Research Methodology Course Teaching Strategies

A close second in priority, 30 students indicated the need to develop their analytical and critical thinking skills. This highlights students' importance on critically analyzing and evaluating research data and methodologies. Enhancing these skills is crucial for students preparing to conduct independent research and engage in scholarly discourse. While practical experience is highly valued, the need for improved conceptual understanding should not be overlooked. A balanced approach that reinforces key concepts while providing practical applications could enhance overall student learning and confidence in conducting research (Heikkilä et al., 2023).

Classroom Environment and Engagement

The study highlights students' preferences regarding teaching approaches and classroom dynamics in an ELT research methodology course, emphasizing collaborative learning, practical activities, and active participation. The analysis of statements 7 to 10, shown in Table 1, provides valuable insights into students' preferences for engagement, instructional strategies, and peer support in the research methodology course. A majority of students (72%) express a strong preference for group discussions as a means to enhance understanding and exchange ideas. However, 27% remain neutral, suggesting variability in comfort levels or interest in collaborative learning. Similarly, the overwhelming majority (83%) favor practice-oriented activities, reflecting a strong desire for hands-on, experiential learning to

bridge theory and practice. The minimal disagreement on both counts highlights the overall receptiveness to these approaches while underscoring the need to address individual learning preferences.

Table 1

Students' Preferences for Classroom Engagement and Environment

No	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I like to engage in group discussions during the research methodology course.	44%	28%	27%	1%	0%
2	I like to engage in more practice-oriented and applied learning activities.	60%	23%	16%	1%	0%
3	I like the instructor to encourage student participation in class.	51%	23%	19%	6%	1%
4	I like my classmates to support me and each other in participating in class.	56%	13%	18%	9%	4%

Students also value instructor-led encouragement and peer support to foster active participation. A combined 74% appreciate instructors' efforts to motivate engagement, though 19% remain neutral, and a small group (7%) disagrees, potentially indicating a preference for self-directed learning or alternative methods. Additionally, peer support is essential, with 69% agreeing that classmates should support one another in participation. However, 18% remain neutral, and 13% express dissatisfaction, which may reflect gaps in peer dynamics or varying comfort levels with collaborative activities.

To enhance the course experience, structured and inclusive group discussions and practice-oriented tasks like simulations and real-world projects should be prioritized. Varied instructional strategies, including small group discussions and anonymous feedback tools, can address the diverse needs of neutral or disengaged students. Finally, fostering a collaborative classroom culture through peer mentoring and team-building exercises can strengthen peer relationships and ensure all students feel supported in their learning journey. By addressing these areas, the course can

promote student engagement and develop essential research skills more effectively (Groothuijsen et al., 2020).

Teachers' Role

The findings emphasize the importance of instructor-student interaction and support in ELT research methodology courses. Table 2 shows the results for Statement 11, revealing that 70% of respondents (36% strongly agree, 34% agree) feel confident in their ability to ask questions or engage in discussions with the instructor during the research methodology course. This indicates a positive perception of the course environment as open and accessible, fostering effective communication between students and instructors. However, 25% of respondents remain neutral, potentially signalling uncertainty about their capacity to interact effectively. This neutrality might reflect a preference for passive learning, a lack of confidence, or insufficient opportunities for meaningful engagement. Meanwhile, 5% of respondents expressed disagreement, highlighting the need for more interactive teaching strategies, such as structured Q&A sessions or digital platforms, to ensure all students feel supported.

Table 2

Students' Preferences for Teachers' Role in A Research Methodology Course

No	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I can ask questions or discuss with the instructor during the research methodology course.	36%	34%	25%	5%	0%
2	I like the instructor's support and straightforward approach when I need help with research-related issues.	61%	22%	14%	2%	1%

Statement 12 demonstrates that an overwhelming majority of 83% (61% strongly agree, 22% agree) value having approachable and supportive instructors when they need assistance with research-related issues. Nevertheless, 14% of respondents expressed neutrality, suggesting that some students may rely on

alternative resources like peer collaboration or independent study or feel sufficiently supported by the current instructional methods. To address these findings, fostering open communication and enhancing instructor accessibility are critical. Structured opportunities for interaction, such as consultations, group discussions, and tailored feedback, can bridge gaps for neutral and dissatisfied students. Additionally, alternative engagement methods, such as online forums or peer mentoring, could accommodate diverse learning needs. By prioritizing an inclusive and supportive learning environment, educators can ensure that students receive the guidance they need to develop confidence and competence in research methodology (Kim & Han, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical importance of understanding learners' perspectives in designing and delivering research methodology courses for undergraduate ELT students. The findings reveal that students face significant challenges in mastering research concepts and applying theoretical knowledge in practical contexts. Moreover, the study highlights the necessity of adopting a student-centered approach to teaching research methodology, incorporating practical learning strategies so that students experience the real research application. By identifying ELT students' specific needs and preferences, this research provides actionable insights for curriculum developers and educators. Addressing these needs improves students' research competencies and empowers them to apply these skills effectively in both academic and professional contexts. As ELT continues to evolve, fostering research proficiency among students will ensure their ability to contribute to language teaching and learning advancement.

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