

## Action Research Communities for Language Teachers

### Planning teaching & planning action research: Two sides of the same coin?

Action research is an adventure and a way of finding out about how to do things in a better way in the classroom. I start with what I am good at, I start with the strengths in my teaching and with something I am interested in. And then I think about what I want to know.....

However, action research implies a clear teaching plan. Teachers embarking on action research very often experience the difficulty of finding a question and the problem may lie in a lack of clarity of the teaching plan. This is the starting point for the adapted action research spiral to be seen as a “pre-spiral” for getting into action research. The aim is to lead teachers towards a well thought through plan.

### **Is it lesson planning or action research planning?**

Questions asked when planning teaching units:	Questions asked when planning action research:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What will the unit be about?</li><li>• What is the general topic?</li><li>• What is the theme of the lesson(s)?</li><li>• How does the topic fit into the curriculum?</li><li>• What will I have to consider concerning the learners' age &amp; language level?</li><li>• Which other factors may play a rôle?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What is the current mood in the class?</li><li>- Exam stress, end-of-term, relationships between students, general levels of interest.....</li></ul></li><li>• What will the learning aims be?</li><li>• What competences will be reached?</li><li>• How will I assess learning outcomes?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do I want to know?</li><li>• What am I interested in finding out?</li><li>• Why am I interested in this?</li><li>• Is the question something that can be answered through action research tools?</li><li>• Does the scope of the question fit with the possibilities that I have? Is it feasible?</li><li>• Which action research tools will I use?</li><li>• At which point will I employ which tools?</li><li>• How will I know when I have found something out?</li><li>• How will analyse and interpret the findings?</li><li>• How will I share my findings?</li><li>• Where will this lead me?</li></ul>

**How can I plan a possible focus for future action research as I plan my lessons?**

<p><b>The teacher as a professional</b>          “a capacity for autonomous professional development <i>through systematic self-study</i>”          (Lawrence Stenhouse)</p>		<p><b>Action research</b>          Action research is the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it.          (John Elliott)</p>
<p><b>10 features of good lesson planning</b>          Meyer, Hilbert (2004). Was ist guter Unterricht?.          Berlin: Cornelsen</p>		<p><b>10 features of action research</b>          Posch, Peter. Einführung in die Aktionsforschung</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear structure for a lesson</li> <li>2. Large proportion of actual learning time</li> <li>3. Classroom climate conducive to learning</li> <li>4. Clear content</li> <li>5. Meaningful communication</li> <li>6. Variety of methods</li> <li>7. Individual support</li> <li>8. Intelligent practice</li> <li>9. Transparent performance expectations</li> <li>10. Prepared environment</li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Research through those involved</li> <li>2. Questions that evolve from practice</li> <li>3. Relationship between action and reflection</li> <li>4. Long-term research &amp; development cycles</li> <li>5. Confrontation of different perspectives</li> <li>6. Integration of individual research in a professional community</li> <li>7. Ethical rules for collaboration</li> <li>8. Publication of practitioner knowledge</li> <li>9. Aspect of value of pedagogical action: actions as an expression of values</li> <li>10. Aims of action research: realisation and development</li> </ol>
<p><b>Teaching &amp; learning processes at school:          Project categories (PC)</b>          Maier, Uwe (2014). Lehr-Lernprozesse in der Schule:          Praktikum. UTB, Bad Heilbrunn: Julius Klinkhardt</p>		<p><b>Characteristic features of action research</b>          Posch, Peter: Einführung in die Aktionsforschung</p>
<p><b>PC 1</b>          Clarify curricular and subject requirements and formulate learning aims  <b>PC 2</b></p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Starting point/Research question</b>              Hypothesis, Bases, Context</li> <li><b>2. Methods:</b>              Information and data collection</li> </ol>

<p>Pay attention to learning pre-requisites and level of knowledge acquisition</p> <p><b>PC 3</b> Design of teaching &amp; learning processes</p> <p><b>PC 4</b> Organisational aspects of teaching &amp; learning processes</p> <p><b>PC5</b> Evaluation and reflection of teaching &amp; learning processes</p>		<p><b>3. Results:</b> Securing results</p> <p><b>4. Discussion of results:</b> Evaluation and reflection of the results</p> <p><b>5. Outlook:</b> Increase in understanding and open questions</p>
<p><b>ARC-Spiral – Getting into action research</b></p>		<p><b>Typical starting point for action research</b> Posch, Peter: Einführung in die Aktionsforschung</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A language teacher plans a teaching unit together with other language teachers at the school or at a partner school in the same or another country;</li> <li>2. Action research tools are discussed and analysed in the team taking the usefulness for various points of focus into account;</li> <li>3. Within the framework of the implementation of the planned lesson the language teachers observe the phases in the classes and link observations to the focus of a potential action research project;</li> <li>4. Teachers describe their experiences and present their results within the team; the process will lead to a focus for an action research project;</li> <li>5. Together the team reflects and analyses the observations and discusses the following questions:</li> </ol>		<p><b>Interest</b> For example, trying out a promising idea; building on a strength; carrying out a day-today task in a more considered and economical way.</p> <p><b>Difficulty</b> For example, improving a difficult situation, solving a problem, correction a lack (e.g. of appropriate learning materials).</p> <p><b>Unclear situation</b> Solving a riddle that is not necessarily clearly positive or negative, giving pleasure or pressure but something that needs to be understood in order to gain control of the situation.</p>

- What do the observations mean for us?
- What consequences will they have for our team?

On the basis of the discussion and reflection in the team the group decides upon a focus for action research.

**The action research in the classes can begin!**