

# The Trend of Mixed Methods Research Employed in the *Journal of NELTA* (2009-2022)

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## Abstract

This research trend analysis aims to understand the prevalence of Mixed Methods Research (MMR) in English language teaching (ELT) research within the *Journal of NELTA* from 2009 to 2021, identifying the extent to which MMR is employed in the ELT field and assessing adherence to the International Journal of Mixed Methods Research (IJMMR, 2018) guidelines. A two-stage screening process was conducted, initially involving the manual screening of 176 articles and subsequently assessing 20 shortlisted articles against the checklist of IJMMR. The analysis confirms a limited utilization of MMR in ELT research, with only 20 (approximately 11%) of the 176 reviewed articles incorporating MMR, while qualitative and quantitative methodologies take precedence. Adherence to the International Community of Practice guidelines, as established by IJMMR, is lacking in most articles, emphasizing the need for better alignment with established guidelines to enhance MMR quality in ELT research. This study highlights a substantial gap in the adoption of MMR in ELT research, possibly due to methodological conservatism and a lack of awareness and training within the ELT community, presenting an opportunity for scholars to explore MMR's potential to bridge gaps in traditional ELT research and enhance the understanding of language teaching and learning processes.

**Keywords:** *Trend analysis, mixed methods research in ELT, research methodologies, NELTA*

## Introduction

The Nepal English Language Teaching Association (*NELTA*) has been a prominent name in advancing English language teaching and learning since its establishment in 1992. Collaborating with the government of Nepal and an array of national and international organizations, it has also established itself as a reliable source for sharing pedagogical success through research in English language teaching (ELT), both within Nepal and globally. With

the primary goal to enhance the teaching and learning of English in both private and public schools in Nepal, *NELTA* serves as an essential platform for educators to exchange knowledge and best practices in ELT. While the Journal has made significant contributions, it is noteworthy to explore research trends and invite innovative pedagogical approaches and methodologies. Informed by the pragmatist perspective to comprehend the world of knowledge, this study specifically focuses on analyzing the practice of Mixed Methods

Research (MMR) within the context of ELT research and thereby identifying room for alternative effective research, teaching strategies, and interventions enhancing the quality of language education both in Nepal and globally. Hence, to examine the research trends followed by contributors of the NELTA Journal, this study analyzes and highlights the ongoing trend in research approaches.

### ***The Emergence of the Third School of Thought: Mixed Methods Research***

There are three widely acknowledged types of research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The most prominent difference between quantitative and qualitative research is that the former employs numbers to test hypotheses involves huge populations, and uses statistics to analyze its results, which may then be generalized to even larger populations. In contrast, qualitative research is concerned with the type and quality of the researched subject and often works with smaller sample sizes. The researcher attempts to comprehend the participants and the subject of their study in depth before presenting their findings in narrative descriptions, allowing the audience to understand their research experience.

The history of mixed methods research can be traced back to the 1800s. According to Hesse-Biber (2010), quantitative and qualitative methods of research were already employed in the 1850s when studying poverty throughout European families (Le Play, 1855, as cited by Beaver, 1962). The term ‘mixed methods’ was first coined by Greene et al. in 1989, highlighting the explicit amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single research endeavor. Since then, mixed methods research has been firmly established and widely accepted in sociology as an important approach to studying intricate social

phenomena and tackling research inquiries that benefit from the integration of qualitative and quantitative perspectives (Morgan, 2017). DuBois (1899) emphasized the importance of combining statistical and observational data in his influential work, *The Philadelphia Negro*. Campbell and Fiske (1959) furthered the advancement of mixed methods research by proposing the multitrait, multimethod matrix, which recommended the integration of diverse quantitative and qualitative methods. This approach aimed to achieve a comprehensive and robust understanding of research findings while enhancing their validity.

Both approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Qualitative research provides researchers with a unique opportunity to engage closely with participants and gain an intimate understanding of the community under study. This insight allows researchers to delve deeper into the participants’ perspectives, beliefs, and underlying assumptions, thereby enriching their comprehension of the topic. Because of the contact participants have with the researcher and the use of broad questions, more topics can be raised than expected, and the researcher has an immediate opportunity to ask follow-up questions (Choy, 2014). Since the data cannot be objectively verified, ensuring reliability and validity are the biggest challenges in qualitative research. Furthermore, the rapport between the researchers and participants could raise the question of participant anonymity and confidentiality, which may generate ethical concerns (Burns, 2000). According to Harwell (2011), the major strength of quantitative research is the ability to replicate and generalize quantitative research findings.

When conducting research, following appropriate methods ensures the measurement of study findings and ensuring the reliability

as well as the validity of the research as stressed by Jang et al. (2014). However, they also argued that researchers should go beyond hypothetico-deductive or inductive reasoning alone and recover flexibility in human reasoning through multi-method designs. Multi-methods research requires explicit reasoning based on practical dialectical argumentation, including the consideration of potential counterarguments (Jang et al., 2014).

While it may be challenging to make absolute claims due to opposing opinions, *The Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* emphasize that statements about validity be specific to particular interpretations and uses, cautioning against using the unqualified phrase ‘the validity of the test’ (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014).

Although appropriate sampling and research design can provide some level of control, it is crucial to acknowledge the boundaries when dealing with the human component, as it is impossible to account for all factors (AERA, APA, & NCME, 2014). In quantitative research, bias and objectivity are of less concern since the researcher has minimal involvement with the participants. However, this limited involvement also means that the researcher may miss out on valuable contextual and background knowledge that could aid in interpreting the data more accurately (Burns, 2000).

### ***Professional Advancement and the Emergence of Advocates for Mixed Methods Research***

Significant progressions have been evident in the mixed methods in recent decades. In 1997, the National Science Foundation published the “User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Methods

Evaluation” written by Frechtling and Sharp (1997). This handbook was released alongside Greene and Carcelli’s publication on mixed methods in the journal “New Directions for Evaluation”. Subsequent editions of the Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research were published in 2003 and 2010, edited by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, 2010). Another notable contribution was the publication of the second “*New Directions for Evaluation*” in 2013, which focused on enhancing the credibility of evidence through mixed methods, authored by Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2013).

Organizationally, *The Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, a peer-reviewed journal, was also launched in 2007. Oxford University Press also contributed to the field by publishing a handbook on mixed methods edited by Hesse-Biber and Johnson in 2015. In 1997, the National Science Foundation published the “User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Methods Evaluation” by Frechtling and Sharp, which coincided with the publication of Greene and Caracelli’s work on mixed methods in the journal *New Directions for Evaluation* (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997; Greene & Caracelli, 1997).

In 2013, the Mixed Methods International Research Association (MMIRA) was officially founded. Annual conferences have been held since 2005 in the UK and the US, with regional conferences extended to other continents, fostering a network of researchers and evaluators interested in mixed methods, leading to the creation of MMIRA. Similarly, within the realm of ELT, there is an evident inclination toward embracing diverse methodologies and broadening research viewpoints (Manchón & Matsuda, 2016). This motivation has spurred our investigation into the application of MMR within the context of ELT research in Nepal.

## ***Mixed Methods Research in Social Sciences***

Norman Denzin's contributions to social science research have been instrumental in advancing the development of mixed methods research. One significant contribution is his work on triangulation which has further contributed to developing mixed methods research in social science. By comparing results obtained from different methods, Denzin recognized the value of integrating diverse approaches to enhance the credibility and comprehensiveness of research findings. This expansion led to the development of typologies by Greene et al. and other researchers, which categorized the motivations behind MMR (Denzin, 1970; Greene et al., 1989). Since the early 2000s, mixed methods research has experienced significant growth and recognition within sociology. Textbooks and handbooks dedicated to mixed methods have provided guidance and support for researchers interested in adopting this approach (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003;). The establishment of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* and the organization of international conferences focused on mixed methods have solidified their place within the discipline (Morgan, 2017). As a result, MMR has become an integral part of the sociological research landscape, offering a powerful means to explore social phenomena comprehensively.

## ***Mixed Methods Research in Education***

Mixed methods research (MMR) has gained significant recognition for its valuable contribution by integrating qualitative and quantitative methods within a single study (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). Researchers increasingly opt for the use of multiple research

strategies instead of relying solely on one method due to the benefits of methodological pluralism and the provision of higher-quality data (Creswell & Garrett, 2008). This approach is gaining popularity across various academic fields, including linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT). MMR acknowledges the complexities inherent in the research and compensates for the limitations of relying solely on qualitative or quantitative approaches, providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of language teaching and learning (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

In the social and behavioral sciences, MMR has emerged as a powerful approach to comprehending complex human behavior (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). By incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods, researchers can triangulate data from multiple sources, leading to a more holistic understanding of the intricacies involved in language education (Creswell, 2014; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The application of MMR in language education offers valuable insights into the behavior, perspective, and attitude of learners, teachers, and policymakers (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Moreover, it allows for a thorough comprehension of the social and cultural contexts that influence language learning and usage, thereby informing the development of more impactful instructional practices (Norton, 2013; Pennycook, 2010).

In the realm of STEM education, MMR has gained attention for its potential to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods. Researchers like Smajic et al. (2022) conducted studies on the mixed methodology of scientific research in healthcare, highlighting the relevance of mixed methods in STEM fields.

Similarly, Guetterman et al. (2015) explored the integration of quantitative and qualitative results in health science mixed methods research. These studies demonstrate the value of combining different research approaches to understand complex phenomena in STEM disciplines comprehensively.

Johnstone (2004) discussed the application of mixed methods in health services research, providing insights into how mixed methods can be effectively employed in STEM-related studies. Additionally, Creswell et al. (2011) offered valuable guidance on best practices for conducting mixed-methods research in the health sciences. Their recommendations encompass the rigorous design and implementation of mixed methods studies in STEM fields, ensuring the validity and reliability of research findings.

### ***Mixed Methods Research in English Language Teaching (ELT)***

Within the field of language education, understanding the complexities of language learning and human behavior is crucial for researchers. Scholars such as Johnson and Golombek (2011) and Norton (2013) emphasize the importance of exploring variables such as attitudes, beliefs, prior knowledge, and language proficiency among teachers and students through mixed methods research. This multidisciplinary approach employs research methods derived from both (post)positivist and constructivist paradigms to investigate language teaching and learning (Riazi & Candlin, 2014).

Prominent reviews and discussions have contributed to the understanding of research methods in applied linguistics, including language teaching and learning. Davis

(1995) and Lazaraton (1995, 2000, 2005) have published notable reviews on research methods in applied linguistics. Ortega and Iberri-Shea (2005) and Richards (2009) have also contributed to the understanding of research methods in the field of applied linguistics, including language teaching and learning. Cumming (1994) and Yihong et al. (2001) have provided broader discussions on research methods in applied linguistics, encompassing various subfields within the discipline. Riazi and Candlin's (2014) review specifically examined the trends, issues, and opportunities related to mixed-methods and quantitative and qualitative approaches in ELT research from 2002 to 2011, adding to the existing literature.

Acknowledging the importance of mixed methods research in the field of ELT and its potential to enhance language teaching and learning outcomes, researchers have increasingly recognized the value of incorporating diverse perspectives and approaches in understanding the complexities of language education (Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, researchers can understand the challenges and opportunities in language teaching and learning, allowing for the development of more effective teaching approaches tailored to individual needs and learning styles (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Despite the growing recognition of the benefits of mixed methods research, there is a noticeable gap in the ELT research field. While research on methodological trends and analytical gaps in ELT has been conducted in various contexts worldwide, limited information specifically focuses on the Nepalese ELT context or has been published in the *Journal of NELTA*. The

insights gained from the existing literature on trends in ELT and classroom discourse (Awasthi, 2021) provide a foundation for further exploration of the methodological trend gap. Given the widespread acceptance of mixed methods research in social science, it is pertinent to determine its standing within the specific field of ELT. Hence, the question to be addressed is: What is the prevalence of mixed-methods research in ELT research published in the *Journal of NELTA*, a community-oriented journal dedicated to ELT practices from 2009 to 2021, and is there any potential gap between the research and the guidelines for mixed-methods research in the *Journal of NELTA* compared to the established practices within the broader community of mixed research? By addressing these gaps, this research contributes to the discourse on the application of MMR in the context of ELT, fostering advancements in methodological rigor and innovation within the ELT research.

## Review Process

This research trend analysis involved 176 journal articles, encompassing the total number of articles published in the *Journal of NELTA* from 2009 to 2021. To conduct this study, we initiated the process by gathering the PDFs of journal issues accessible through NepJol and the NELTA website. Throughout this phase, we undertook a manual examination to identify quantitative and qualitative research trends, shortlisting articles that incorporated both methods. Setting aside time each week, we reviewed around four articles, maintaining this pace consistently for about 44 to 48 weeks. This dedicated manual effort to scrutinize articles spanned over nearly a year. The decision to focus exclusively on a particular journal was purposeful, aiming to ensure a precise and unbiased exploration of the specific research methodology utilized

within this particular context. The objective of centralizing the analysis on a singular journal was to mitigate any potential publication bias, a concern highlighted by Molina-Azorin (2012). This approach diverges from the more prevalent practice where researchers typically consider multiple journals. The selection of the *Journal of NELTA* as the subject of investigation was an intentional choice, designed to lend validation to the study to add credibility as a double-blind peer-reviewed, refereed, ISI-accredited publication. Notably, it has a high impact factor, placing it in the top 25 percent of international journals and earning recognition through citations in 95 journals globally. Only double-blind peer-reviewed articles published in the *Journal of NELTA* after 2009 were chosen for analysis from NepJOL, ensuring the highest level of scientific rigor by confirming that these articles had undergone external evaluation.

Proceeding to the next phase, we adhered to the guidelines provided in the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research (IJMMR)* to identify the prevalence of mixed methods studies within the identified shortlist of 25 articles. A study is technically classified as a mixed methods study if it involves both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. However, recognizing such studies can present challenges because authors do not label their work as mixed methods. To determine whether a study fits this category, specific attributes were examined following the guidelines outlined in the leading resource on mixed methods, the *IJMMR*, renowned for its presentation of impactful studies. Adhering to these transparent guidelines can significantly impact the author selection process for submissions to their respective subject-focused journal, including ELT, encouraging inventive methodological approaches or applications that enhance the publication of impactful mixed methods studies across various fields.

Building on these guidelines, it is essential to conduct a study that measures the rigor of mixed methods research published in the *Journal of NELTA* annually, using a checklist to ensure that the research meets the highest quality standards and contributes to the growing body of rigorous mixed methods research. This study has the potential to promote the use of rigorous mixed-methods research in various fields and contribute to advancing the methodology as a whole.

First, the title, then the abstract, with summaries, followed by keywords, were reviewed to see if they explicitly used words like ‘quantitative and qualitative, mixed methods,’ or other related words to signify the analysis and collection of quantitative as well as qualitative data. Next, the introduction section was reviewed to understand the purpose, research questions, or other phrases indicating whether the researchers intended to gather quantitative and qualitative data during the study. Finally, the methodology section was evaluated to determine how the data collection and analysis were carried out. This section usually provided the most insight into the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, and most mixed methods studies were identified in this part. This validated methodology, adopted from Molina-Azorín and Font (2015), effectively identified mixed-method studies.

**Results**

The results of the analysis, which breakdown the research methodologies employed in papers published in the *Journal of NELTA* during the period from 2009 to 2021, offering insights into the prevalent approaches within the ELT research community, are presented in *Table 1*.

**Table 1: Number of Research Articles**

Number of Research Article					
Year	Reviews Articles	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed Methods Research	Total Articles
2009	9	5	3	0	17
2010	9	4	3	1	17
2011	6	1	2	3	12
2012	3	2	4	1	10
2013	1	5	6	0	12
2014	1	6	4	2	13
2015	3	3	2	1	9
2016	5	5	5	0	15
2017	8	3	1	4	16
2018	5	5	1	3	14
2019	1	9	1	2	13
2020	0	10	1	0	11
2021	1	13	0	3	17
Total	52	71	33	20	176

From Table 1, it can be analyzed that between 2009 and 2021, the *Journal of NELTA* published a total of 176 articles encompassing various research methodologies (Table 1). Among these publications, qualitative articles made up the largest category (n=71), followed by review-based, book reviews, and practical pedagogical articles (n=52). Quantitative articles also found reasonable representation with 33 published pieces. However, mixed methods research was markedly underrepresented, accounting for only 20 articles over the 13 years might greatly benefit from a more diversified methodological approach.

Table 2. *IJMMR Guidelines, (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2019, p. 416)*

Questions	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Title</b>		
Does the title directly indicate or sufficiently allude to the methodological contribution of the article?	0	0.0
<b>Abstract</b>		
Does the abstract include an explicit statement about a methodological challenge or issue in the field that will be addressed in the article?	11	55.0
Does the abstract indicate the methodological/theoretical contribution of the article to the field of mixed methods research?	8	40.0
<b>Main Text of the article</b>		
Does the article have a clear writing style with sufficient headers and sub-headers such that the reader can readily follow the flow and argumentation?	7	35.0
Does the text in the background reiterate and expand upon the methodological challenge or issue as identified in the abstract?	5	25.0
Does the background contain a rigorous review and citations of relevant and recent mixed methods literature to support examining the methodological aim?	3	15.0
Does the background include an explicit methodological aim?	1	5.0
Does the background contain an explication of the article's structure and methodological points that will be addressed?	10	50.0
In the body of article, are each of the methodological points identified in #8 addressed persuasively in the order specified?	11	55.0
Does the article include a strategy to convey the overall complexity of the topic or study phenomenon such as a figure or illustration?	1	5.0
In the discussion, are the explicit points made in #8 synthesized together to logically support the overarching methodological aim?	2	10.0
Does the discussion section include a specific subsection "Contribution to the Field of Mixed Methods Research" that reviews the points made and extant literature to articulate the articles novel contribution(s) to mixed methods?	12	60.0
Does the article have a discussion of the methodological limitations?	8	40.0
Does the discussion section include recommendations for future mixed methods inquiry based on the paper's unique contribution or limitations?	5	25.0
Have the references been cited according to the current American Psychological Association style?		
<b>Additional elements for empirical methodological articles only</b>	1	5.0
Does the background of the article include explicit statements of both the methodological aim and purpose of the empirical study separately?	8	40.0
Does the description of the methods include sufficient detail about the procedures used and present these in a logical order?	7	35.0
Does the submission include a procedural diagram of the data collection and analysis procedures as a figure?	0	0.0
Does the submission include a table, matrix or visual structure, e.g., joint display, to illustrate integration and interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative findings?	2	35.0
Does the discussion articulate how the use of a mixed methods approach advanced a greater understanding of the substantive topic compared to using a monomethod approach?	0	0.0



Table 1 serves as an extensive checklist, delineating various crucial components for assessing the methodological advancements in submissions aimed at propelling the domain of mixed methods research forward. This checklist, adapted from the guidelines outlined by the International Association of Mixed Methods (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2019, p. 416), offers a systematic framework for evaluating the quality and rigor of mixed methods studies. The criteria outlined in this study provide valuable insights into the methodological dimensions of mixed methods research within the ELT field. These insights offer a clearer understanding of areas that require improvement and further development in ELT research. Researchers and practitioners can use these findings as a guide to enhance the quality and effectiveness of mixed methods research in the context of English Language Teaching.

Concerning the title and abstract section, it's worth noting that none of the titles directly convey or sufficiently allude to the article's methodological contributions. However, 55% of the abstracts explicitly mention a methodological challenge or issue within the field that the article will address. Additionally, 15% of the abstracts published indicate the article's methodological or theoretical contributions to mixed methods research.

Shifting the focus to the main text of the articles, 40% exhibit a clear writing style, complete with ample headers and sub-headers, making it easier for readers to follow the flow of arguments. Furthermore, 25% of the articles delve deeper into methodological challenges within their background sections, with 15% providing a rigorous review of related literature and citations. Interestingly, only 5% explicitly state the methodological aim in their background.

In the additional elements section, 50% of the articles elucidate their structure within the background. Moreover, 55% of the articles actively address various methodological aspects within the body of the text. In the discussion section, 10% of the articles synthesize methodological points, while an impressive 60% feature a dedicated 'Contribution to Mixed Methods' section. Additionally, 40% of the articles discuss methodological limitations and 25% offer recommendations for future research inquiries.

These findings underscore areas where improvement is needed in the assessed articles. In particular, there's a need for greater clarity in titles and abstracts regarding methodological contributions. Articles should also focus more on discussing methodological limitations and providing suggestions for future research. Including a 'Contribution to Mixed Methods' section in the discussion could further enhance the visibility of their methodological contributions.

## Discussion

Over the past decades, numerous articles have been published in the *Journal of NELTA*, covering various aspects of language teaching and learning, exploring pedagogical approaches, and examining the attitudes of teachers and learners. From 2010 to 2015, Khang (2010) investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of text readability and modification in the Vietnamese context. Joshi (2011) explored Master level students' attitudes toward autonomous learning activities in Nepal. Sijali (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of cooperative learning in improving English language proficiency in Nepal, while Sah (2017) examined perspectives on using the first language as a resource in EFL classrooms among Nepali university teachers and students.

Between 2016 and 2021, there has been a notable shift toward innovative and alternative teaching and learning methods. Adhikari (2017) examined student teachers' views on grammar and communication with their students. Mahmud (2018) explored the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. Le (2018) investigated the use of voice recording to practice speaking skills outside the classroom, and Ullah and Farzana (2018) focused on the impact of technology on teaching and learning English at the secondary level. Adhikari (2019) examined the status of teaching English in secondary schools in West Bengal, India, and Dawadi (2021) reported on the impact of high-stakes tests on Nepali EFL learners. These articles collectively underscore the importance of considering contextual factors in language teaching curricula and addressing test-related anxiety.

A common trend among these articles is the increasing use of mixed-methods research, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively understand language teaching and learning processes. However, there is still untapped potential for more studies in this field that incorporate mixed methods, given its effectiveness in exploring complex phenomena and contextual factors. Additionally, there is a need for more research that delves into learners' experiences, well-being, and perspectives. Globally, mixed methods research has gained significant prominence in recent years. Timans et al. (2019) reported a substantial increase in the normalized share of the term "mixed methods research" in academic databases. Creswell (2012) identified a significant rise in the citation of 'mixed methods' in theses and dissertations.

While initially designed to enhance the quality of submissions to JMMR, the checklist outlined

by Fetters and Molina-Azorin (2019) serves as a versatile tool for evaluating and improving any mixed methods research (MMR) article, irrespective of the intended publication venue. Researchers in diverse fields can leverage this checklist to ensure adherence to rigorous standards and encompass key methodological elements (Bazeley, 2015). Journals with a focus on English Language Teaching and related fields stand to benefit significantly from this checklist. It assists authors in crafting titles that effectively convey methodological contributions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Clear abstracts with explicit statements regarding methodological challenges and contributions become even more critical in interdisciplinary contexts like language education (Cheek, 2015).

The checklist's emphasis on structured and clear writing, including headers and subheaders, enhances the readability and coherence of articles (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2008). Additionally, it encourages rigorous literature reviews, essential in disciplines emphasizing methodological innovation (Mertens, 2011). Furthermore, the checklist's call for transparent discussions of methodological limitations and recommendations for future inquiry can enhance the quality of MMR articles published in diverse domains (O'Cathain, 2010). It prompts authors to reflect on broader implications, making research relevant across fields (Onwuegbuzie & Poth, 2016).

The IJMMR checklist transcends disciplinary boundaries, empowering researchers worldwide to produce high-quality MMR articles. Whether published in NELTA or any other journal, scholars can utilize this checklist to enhance the rigor and impact of their mixed methods research.

## ***Low Prevalence of MMR in ELT Research***

The analysis of ELT research within the *Journal of NELTA* reveals a notably low prevalence of mixed methods research (MMR) adoption, with only approximately 11% of the 176 reviewed articles incorporating MMR as their chosen research methodology. This finding is remarkable and unexpected, given the recognized benefits and advantages of employing mixed methods in educational research. While MMR offers the potential to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of complex educational phenomena, its limited integration within ELT research in the *Journal of NELTA* raises questions about the factors influencing researchers' preferences for research methodologies.

The observed low prevalence of MMR in ELT research prompts critical inquiry into the factors contributing to this limited adoption. Researchers and stakeholders in the field may benefit from exploring the specific challenges or constraints that impact the choice of research methods. Additionally, opportunities exist for raising awareness and providing resources to facilitate the incorporation of mixed methods in future ELT studies, potentially yielding new insights and enhancing the quality of research within the discipline. This limited incorporation of MMR in ELT research underscores the need for a more robust examination of the barriers and facilitators that shape researchers' methodological choices in language teaching and learning investigations.

## ***Preference for Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches***

The prevalence of traditional qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in ELT studies published in the *NELTA Journal* aligns with a broader trend in educational research. Qualitative methods, including interviews, surveys, and content analysis, were frequently used in *NELTA Journal* articles, often in isolation. Similarly, quantitative approaches involving statistical analysis, experiments, and surveys constituted a significant portion of the research methods employed. This preference for singular qualitative or quantitative methods in the context of *NELTA Journal's* publications suggests a potential reluctance among ELT researchers to explore mixed methods. The underutilization of mixed methods in *NELTA Journal* and ELT research generally reflects a methodological conservatism within the field (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). While recent theoretical developments emphasize the importance of adopting research methods that account for the complexity of language development, ELT research in the *NELTA Journal* predominantly adheres to traditional paradigms. Researchers may need further exposure to the benefits of mixed methods, and the potential for nuanced insights into language teaching and learning processes to encourage a shift toward more diversified research approaches (Granott & Parziale, 2009).

## ***Lack of Adherence to IJMMR Guidelines***

Much like rubrics are essential in ensuring the components in students' writing, a checklist such as the one proposed by IJMMR can be beneficial to authors across disciplines, providing valuable guidance and promoting

a cohesive research community (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2019). This analysis brought to light a significant revelation regarding the limited adherence to the International Community of Practice guidelines, as established by IJMMR, within the ELT research community. These guidelines are designed to promote the rigorous application of mixed methods in research, advocating for the integration of qualitative and quantitative components and comprehensive reporting of methodological details. However, it appears that many ELT researchers may not be fully aligned with these guidelines, potentially due to a sense of comfort with traditional research approaches. This discrepancy underscores the need for additional training and awareness within the ELT community regarding the benefits and practicalities of MMR. Moreover, a lack of exposure to successful MMR studies within the ELT field could deter researchers from adopting this methodology.

In recognizing this potential dilemma faced by both authors and readers within the ELT research community, we propose the introduction of a checklist that aligns with established MMR guidelines. Rather than imposing restrictions, this checklist serves as a supportive tool, aiding authors in enhancing the rigor and quality of their research articles. The guidelines practiced within the MMR community have demonstrated their effectiveness in elevating research standards. By extending these guidelines to the ELT community, we aim to foster collaboration, enrich methodological diversity, and contribute to a deeper understanding of language teaching and learning processes. Embracing such guidelines could potentially enhance research quality and influence future researchers, promoting a culture of methodological rigor and collaboration within

the ELT research community (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

## Potential Risks and Limitations

Implementing a structured checklist like the one proposed in this study could raise concerns within the NELTA journal and the broader ELT community. There's a potential risk of imposing rigid structures that might stifle the creative expression of authors submitting papers (Bazeley, 2015). Authors may fear losing the opportunity to present innovative methodological contributions that need to fit into predefined categories neatly. However, it is essential to note that the checklist intends to guide and enhance methodological rigor rather than becoming a barrier to novel ideas. Context matters and the checklist's applicability to the NELTA journal should be considered, considering the diverse research approaches in ELT (Cheek, 2015). While this research focuses on mixed methods, it's crucial to acknowledge that other research methods also have their place within the ELT community. This study does not aim to prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach but instead suggests a valuable tool for those who find it beneficial while recognizing the diversity of research practices and constraints faced by researchers in ELT.

## Conclusion

The analysis highlighted a significant gap in meeting the International Community of Practice of Mixed Methods Research's criteria within the *Journal of NELTA* publications from 2009 to 2022. The recent introduction of the checklist in 2019 presents an encouraging opportunity for future researchers like yourselves to address the observed gap. By embracing the recommendations of

the international mixed methods research community, the full potential of mixed methods research in English language teaching and learning can be realized, leading to significant advancements in knowledge. Valuable contributions by the authors to the ELT are pivotal in promoting methodological rigor and innovation within the field. Throughout the review, notable challenges emerged, such as inadequate abstract summaries and incoherent article presentations with weak headings, affecting overall argument strength. Methodological complexities and key points could have been better addressed with visual aids like figures. Synthesizing methodological issues in the discussion to support the aim needed improvement, along with specific subsections discussing method contributions and limitations. Addressing these challenges and integrating the recommendations proposed by the international mixed methods research community will undoubtedly bolster the quality and rigor of future mixed methods research studies in English language teaching and learning. Acknowledging its limitations, this study lays the groundwork for further research to enhance mixed methods research practices in ELT.

## Implications

### *Researchers and Authors*

To elevate the caliber and impact of forthcoming ELT research articles employing the mixed methods research approach, authors have the opportunity to refine various elements. Primarily, incorporating essential methodological details into article titles is recommended. Furthermore, abstracts have the potential to transparently outline methodological challenges and contributions. Achieving alignment between abstracts and background sections, supported by thorough

literature reviews in the latter, contributes to a coherent structure. Authors may employ clear writing styles, utilizing appropriate headers and sub-headers for systematic organization, effectively encapsulating pivotal points within sections. Visual aids like illustrations or figures can elucidate intricate study components. Synthesizing methodological insights within the discussion section substantiates the study's objectives. The incorporation of dedicated subsections can elaborate on contributions and methodological limitations.

Moreover, the endeavor to enhance the caliber and impact of mixed methods research articles necessitates addressing specific research methodology dimensions. Initiate titles with essential research methodology specifics to ensure upfront clarity. When abstracts overtly delineate methodological challenges and contributions, they foster reader comprehension of the research's core facets and significance. Maintaining coherence between abstracts and background sections sustains overall consistency.

### *Editors and Reviewers of Journals*

Based on the research trends analyzed in this report, it is suggested that journal editors and reviewers could benefit from engaging in specialized orientation programs. These programs, centered on the effective implementation and standardization of MMR, have the potential to deepen their understanding of MMR's complex and rigorous nature. Furthermore, such training could help standardize the application of these methods across various articles. While maintaining high methodological standards is crucial, there is also a need to be receptive to innovative and creative research methods. A balanced approach that blends the established rigor of MMR with emerging methodological

innovations could significantly enrich the journal's academic contributions. Such an alignment would not only bolster the journal's academic impact but also ensure its continued relevance in the face of evolving global research trends.

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