CHAPTER TEN

Narrative Inquiry

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Narrative inquiry is a way of doing research that focuses on the stories we tell about our lives. These stories are about our *experiences* of life – the meaning we make of the events we live or imagine in our future lives. Kramp (2004, p. 107) says that stories 'assist humans to make life experiences meaningful. Stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us to our past and present, and assist us to envision our future'. In other words, stories are not merely a list of facts about the things we do, the people we do them with and where and when we do them, they also embody our understandings of those events as well as express our feelings about them. Read the following extract which comes from a larger written narrative – a teacher journal entry in which the teacher reflects on an encounter with a male colleague – and you will notice that she is not only writing about what happened but also about her emotional response to those events.

> Extract 1
>
> … Later that afternoon, I was in the photocopy room at work. I tried desperately to focus on my lesson preparation because I did not want my work performance to decline in any way due to sexist language. At some point, UB came into the room. He decided to make small-talk with me and asked me what I did over the weekend. I said that I went to the video shop and borrowed DVDs, but felt angry with the guy at the video shop because he called me 'love', as in 'Yes, love?' when I approached the desk to borrow DVDs. UB's response to me was a bewildered, 'Why?? I call my wife and daughter, love.' At this point, I felt very disgusted …

Experiences become narratives when we tell them to an audience and the narratives become part of narrative inquiry when they are investigated

for research purposes. In this chapter, I begin by suggesting why narrative inquiry has recently gained legitimacy in applied linguistics and become more widely used, particularly in language teaching and learning research. I then outline some of the methodological options that have become available to narrative researchers in the field. I also give examples of various types of narrative data they have worked with. After a consideration of some of the ethical issues typically faced by narrative inquirers, I end with a sample narrative study which illustrates a number of the methods, assumptions and tensions discussed earlier in the chapter.

Underlying assumptions and methodology

A *narrative turn* in recent years has meant that in applied linguistics, researchers have begun to understand the importance of paying attention to how language teachers and learners use stories to make sense of their experience. Researchers learn about these experiences from the participants' own perspectives. Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014), more specifically, suggest four explanations for this narrative turn. First, narrative inquiry has an intuitive appeal to researchers who have 'become weary of variables and the quantification of the positivistic approach' (Josselson 1993, p. xv). It is thus part of a broader turn towards qualitative research and away from the assumption that psychological, social and educational phenomena should be investigated in much the same way that scientists investigate natural phenomena. Second, interest in narratives reflects postmodern concerns with the self, identity and individuality, signalling a turn away from the quest for general social theories that would enable social scientists to predict human behaviour. Third, a related explanation is the importance that narrative has acquired as a resource that individuals draw upon in the construction of social identities. The stories they tell help researchers understand the ways in which they situate themselves and their activities in the world. Lastly, we point out that an interest in narrative has been linked to a turn towards the idea that research should both involve and empower the people whose experiences are the subject of research. Narrative inquiry expands the range of voices that are heard in research reports, often highlighting the experiences of marginalized groups (Hayes 2013). In the sections that follow, I outline some of the key assumptions and methodological issues associated with narrative inquiry.

Narrative epistemology

A *narrative epistemology* refers to the belief that we know about the world narratively. Bruner (1986, p. 116) refers to this way of knowing as narrative cognition: people make sense of the world by organizing experience temporally, seeking explications 'that are context sensitive and

particular'. To put it simply, in order to understand their experiences, people construct stories out of them by synthesizing them into a unified whole. It would follow, then, that narrative researchers would want access to these stories, and in their endeavour to construct and analyse them for research purposes, a narrative epistemology would inform their 'philosophical approach to research, its theoretical underpinnings and its methodological procedures' (Barkhuizen 2013, p. 7). Narrative, therefore, as De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012, p. 19) point out:

> becomes much more than a set of techniques and tools for collecting and analyzing data. It becomes a particular way of constructing knowledge requiring a particular commitment and even a bias from the researcher in addition to a political stance.

Narrative methods

The methods used by narrative researchers to collect and analyse data reflect the narrative epistemology to which they are oriented. Many of the methods are those typical of other forms of qualitative research, such as oral interviews, written diaries and online blogs. But what makes them *narrative* is their commitment to the meaning made by research participants of their lived experiences in particular spatiotemporal contexts. Data collection generates stories of experience; methods of analysis treat data as contextualized meaning making; and reporting of findings is handled with narrative awareness and ethical sensitivity. In the sections that follow, various forms of narrative data and approaches to data collection, analysis and reporting will be described.

Content

The *content* of narratives refers to *what* narratives are about, what was told and why, when, where and by whom. Research with aims of learning about the content of the experiences of the participants and their reflections on these focuses on the autobiographical 'big stories' of our lives, that 'entail a significant measure of reflection on either an event or an experience, a significant portion of a life, or the whole of it' (Freeman 2006, p. 131). Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 477) refer to narrative inquiry as 'the study of experience as story' and encourage inquirers to explore content in terms of three dimensions or commonplaces, relating to temporality (the times – past, present and future – in which experiences unfold), place (the place or sequence of places in which experiences are lived) and sociality (personal emotions and desires and interactions between people). A content or thematic analysis is typically conducted to examine systematically the content of narrative data (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik 2014).

Narrative form

Narrative form refers to the way stories are constructed: the organization of ideas, the sequences of events, choice of words and textual coherence. William Labov's well-known early work in sociolinguistics (Labov 1972; Labov & Waletzky 1967) examined the spontaneous narratives we tell in everyday interactions. He identified basic elements or clauses that made up these narratives: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. More recently, *small story* analysis has emerged as another kind of narrative analysis that pays very close attention to the form of narrative data. Small stories are snippets of often mundane talk in conversations (and sometimes in interviews) which tell of past, imagined or hypothetical events as opposed to 'big' narratives like life histories and those compiled from multiple interviews and other ethnographic data collected over an extended period of time (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008). Close analysis of the text, similar to line-by-line conversation analysis (Wong & Waring 2010), examines turns at talk and other fine details of discourse, usually with the aim of discovering how the narrator's identity is co-constructed through talk-in-interaction with other participants in the conversation or interview. The following is a good example of a small story. It is an extract of an interview with a student teacher at a university in New Zealand. She is talking about a family member who is a migrant from Tonga also living in New Zealand and does not wish to take up ESL lessons because of her family responsibilities.

Extract 2

S (student teacher): Not interested in getting a whole lot more money, she's pretty much satisfied with just being at home, looking after the kids, not really interested, you know, when I asked her she said 'it's crossing my mind now but, no, I'm happy just staying home looking after the kids, making sure that they have their lunches, they go to school, they come back, there's someone at home, there's food there, 'cause if I go out and work or go and do a course, I'll have to send them off to other people to look after', and she doesn't quite trust that.

G (Gary): Ok, I see.

S: So her investment is more in motherhood, and she's quite happy with that.

G: And not really seeing going to some ESOL course as an alternative, yea, that makes sense.

S: And she doesn't mix on any sort of level with any other people, I mean, she just basically stays home with her kids. She goes out of the house in order to go shopping or go to church, so there's no other ethnic, people of different ethnicities that she really mixes with, so she doesn't feel it's really an essential part of her life to learn English.

Riessman (2008) suggests that combining both content and structural analyses enhances the quality of the analysis, generating insights beyond what a content analysis alone would achieve. Of course, any attempt at analysing the content of narratives must inevitably encounter and make sense of some narrative form along the way, even if it is just the way particular vocabulary items are used. However, the extent to which this happens can differ substantially from one study to the next.

Context

Riessman (2008, p. 105) says, 'Stories don't fall from the sky…; they are composed and received in contexts – interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive – to name a few.' This is an important message for narrative inquirers: context is important in the study of narrative. What is meant by *context*, however, differs considerably in different types of narrative research, and it is taken into account more or less by different narrative researchers. For those interested in examining the details of narrative form or text, the context of the talk-in-interaction (i.e. linguistic context) is their primary concern. At this level they focus on how the narrative unfolds in sequences of turns at talk. Who is talking, and when and what their roles are (including possibly that of researcher) at each moment of talk are examined in detail.

Another layer of context to which researchers pay attention is the local context of the narrative telling – for example, the physical setting, language choice, other present people, the purpose of talk and the conditions of interaction (e.g. time constraints, permission to talk). Some of these contexts can be more local than others, however. Barkhuizen (2008), when reporting on a study he conducted with two teachers participating in a graduate language teacher education course, suggested three interconnected levels of story (or contextual spaces) which not only help guide analysis but also encourage the researcher to look beyond the immediate contexts of the teacher and her classroom. The first level of story (all small letters) is personal and embodies the inner thoughts, emotions, ideas and theories of the teachers. It includes the social interactions in the teachers' immediate contexts, for example, during classroom lessons, during conversations with students and in teacher journals. The second level of Story (with a capital S) spreads wider than the immediate psychological and inter-personal context of teachers. Included here are consequences of decisions made typically by others in the work environment, as well as their attitudes, expectations and prescriptions – for example, a school's language-in-education policy and assessment practices. At this level of Story, teachers usually have less power to construct their practice and consequently their stories. Lastly, STORY (in capital letters) refers to the broader sociopolitical contexts in which teaching and learning takes place. Here, teachers have even less

power to make decisions about conditions which influence their practice. Examples of STORIES include national language policies and curriculums imposed on schools by Ministries of Education. The use of capital letters to refer to this level of STORY merely signifies a wider, macro context and the power often associated with it. In no way does it diminish the worth of any individual teacher's story. Pavlenko (2007, pp. 176–177) recommends that narrative researchers should take into account the broader historical, political, social and economic contexts that both shape narratives and are reflected in them. They must also consider:

> language ideologies and discourses that have currency in narrators' communities and with regard to which they position themselves, and, last but not least, the setting where particular versions of narrative experience are produced and the audience they are produced for.

Narrative co-construction

Narrative data is always treated as co-constructed. In other words, stories are told to someone; they have an audience. During the process of data construction, the audience may or may not consist of the researcher and may even be the narrator, as is the case with autobiographical research. However, the extent of co-construction does vary depending on the nature of the data, the purpose for which it was gathered and the context in which it was collected. Ochs and Capps (2001) have placed narratives along a tellership continuum, with the extent and kind of involvement of those participating in their construction determining where on the continuum they lie. Towards one end of the continuum are those narratives which involve a high level of discursive collaboration. Here stories are told *with* another. These narratives are typically face-to-face or Skype conversations or unstructured life history interviews and are co-constructed through collaborative, negotiated performance (see also Extract 2 on page 172). Towards the other end of the tellership continuum are narratives told *to* others. The telling of stories becomes more of an individual activity with little or even no participation on the part of the audience. Long turns at interview talk in which experiences of past and imagined events are narrated are one example, and others are online language learning histories and written teacher journals which may be read later by a researcher or teacher educator as part of a professional development program (see also Extract on page 169).

Categorization and re-storying

Polkinghorne's (1995) distinction between *analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis* is useful for conceptualizing two broad approaches to analysing and reporting narrative data. His two approaches correspond to

the two ways of knowing (i.e. two kinds of cognition or ways of organizing experience) described by Bruner (1986), one of which has already been referred to above. According to Bruner's paradigmatic cognition, sense is made of the world by looking for similarities among things and then grouping them as members of the same category. Analyses of narrative content (Polkinghorne's *analysis of narratives*) follow the procedures of coding for themes, categorizing these and looking for patterns of association among them – what is called a content or thematic analysis. Bruner's second way of knowing, narrative cognition, organizes experience temporally, seeking meanings about phenomena within their particular contexts. Instead of pulling experiences apart, then, narrative thinking synthesizes them into a unified whole. What Polkinghorne's *narrative analysis* does is configure or re-story the various themes from the data into a coherent whole, that is, the outcome is a story. The distinction between these two broad analytical approaches is somewhat fuzzy, however. There is obviously some similarity in the analytical methods used and also in the later reporting of the findings (i.e. a coherent story or a discussion of separate, extracted themes). Some published research articles, for example, quote short extracts of data (often representing themes) and discuss these sometimes quite independently in their findings sections, whereas in others the entire findings section, if not most of the article, is presented as a coherent story of experience. The sample study included below (Giroir 2014) is an example of the latter (as is Casanave 2012).

Narrative as equitable

A number of researchers have emphasized the empowering, transformative nature of narrative inquiry and work within theoretical and methodological traditions that enable language learners, teachers and indeed themselves as researchers to (bring about) change. Hayes (2013), for instance, believes that narrative research has the potential to challenge the interests of more powerful academics and institutions in language education 'by foregrounding the voices of those who are traditionally seen as the objects of the research process' (p. 63). Enabling the sharing of their stories with others in different contexts may encourage those to reflect on and possibly change their practices. Several scholars have made the same point, including Nelson (2011) who suggests incorporating crafted narratives of classroom life (e.g. interview and observation data scripted into plays) into the applied linguistics research field, saying doing so may 'help to ameliorate the excluding effects of elitist scholarly discourse' (p. 470). What makes narrative inquiry potentially transformative, then, is its positioning of participants as equal contributors to the research process. It is *their* stories that are (co)constructed and shared and when listened to and reflected upon, either by themselves or others, bring about change. And this process, of

course, includes researchers, who are intimately involved in all aspects of the study, from selecting the participants, co-constructing narrative data, analysing the data and then producing the research report. Yet, as Canagarajah (1996) says, they are often conspicuously absent from these reports, 'looming behind the text as an omniscient, transcendental, all knowing figure' (p. 324). Including a discussion of the researcher's positionality (or identity, see Norton & Early 2011) in the research report adds to the transparency and trustworthiness of the research process and shows how the researcher influenced the process along the way. It is also useful for others wishing to embark on their own narrative inquiry projects in the future.

Trustworthiness

Narrative inquiry is often accused of being 'soft' from a validity point of view because it deals with stories. I often hear: 'But what if participants don't tell you the truth?' My immediate answer is that the same could be asked of *any* type of research: responses to a survey questionnaire or structured interview or checks on a grammaticality judgement test could also elicit non-truths. But what is meant by *truth* here is important. One meaning is that participants are being deceptive – that is, they are lying. Well, as researchers we always hope that that is not the case. A second meaning relates to truth (what is told by participants) in the sense that it mirrors experience (what actually happened in reality). This is unlikely, and not only with narrative research, since as Polkinghorne (2007) points out, there are a number of constraints which make this compatibility impossible, including the limitations inherent in language when telling stories, the fact that stories are co-constructed with others and that narrators may not want to tell or be able to remember all details of the actual experience. Instead, narrative inquiry 'makes claims about the meaning life events hold for people. It makes claims about how people understand situations, others and themselves' (Polkinghorne 2007, p. 476). Narrative researchers do not aim to discover whether participants' stories are accurate reflections of their actual experiences (as I have just said, they cannot anyway) but to understand the meaning people attach to those experiences. In research on language teaching and learning, narrative inquiry can help us understand the particular, contextualized knowledge of those intimately involved in teaching and learning; in other words, the meaning they make of their practices in the particular contexts in which they experience their lives. To do this, our methods of data collection and analysis must necessarily be rigorous. As Riessman (2008) reminds us, researchers must present careful evidence for their claims from the narrative data they examine. The following section presents some examples of how this is done.

Techniques and instruments

The methods used to generate data in narrative inquiry are as varied as methods in qualitative research more generally, and many of them are very similar. However, the goal of methods in narrative inquiry is always to find stories of experience. As we have seen so far, these stories may be more or less co-constructed, they may be big or small and the focus of analysis may be on their form or their content, but what we want them to do ultimately is to tell us about the lived experiences of the narrators, from their perspective. In this section, I have listed in Table 10.1 some of the methods that have been used in narrative inquiry. For each type of method, I provide a brief description of some of that method's characteristics as well as a useful reference for further information and examples. Some of the key methods listed here are described in Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014).

Table 10.1 Examples of data and methods used in narrative inquiry

Type	Characteristics	Study
Learner or teacher diaries	Autobiographical, introspective, written series of entries, typically longitudinal, reflective. Records learning or teaching in process. Could be about general topics, though may have a specific focus (e.g. learning strategies).	Casanave (2012)
Language learning histories	Retrospective written accounts of past learning. More recently online using Web.2 technologies. Often incorporated into lessons as classwork and used for research purposes.	Murphey, Chen and Chen (2005)
Narrative interviews	Typical semi- or un-structured. Narrators invited to 'Tell me about…' experiences related to research topic to elicit stories rather than target facts or specific research questions.	Chase (2003)
Teacher journals	Written reflections on teaching practice as well as broader school experiences. Often for professional development purposes. Analysed by teachers, researchers or both collaboratively.	Johnson and Golombek (2011)

(*continued*)

Type	Characteristics	Study
Narrative frames	Written story template consisting of a series of incomplete sentences and blank spaces of varying lengths. Structured as a story in skeletal form. Aim is to produce a coherent story by filling in the spaces according to writers' experiences and reflections on these.	Barkhuizen (2014)
Playscripts	Scripts for a play to be workshopped and performed. Constructed from data such as focus group discussions, interviews, classroom observations.	Nelson (2013)
Drawings	Drawings by language learners and teachers to represent their identities as learners and teachers. Self-portraits, often including others or objects in the same space, symbolizing particular meanings, identities or practices. Can be accompanied by other media, such as links to audio files, blogs, social media accounts.	Kalaja, Dufva and Alanen (2013)
Small stories	Snippets of talk-in-interaction, embedded in conversations and interviews. Analysed discursively, more or less taking into account local and broader context of construction and other ethnographic data, if available.	Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008)
Autoethnographies	A method that represents the perspective of the self. A focus on how culture shapes and is shaped by the personal. An emphasis on the creative resources of writing, especially narrative.	Canagarajah (2012)
Facebook stories	Use of Web.2 technologies. Mutual sharing of language learning histories, followed by commenting and collaborative narrative creation. Including use of photos and video/ music links.	Chik and Breidbach (2011)

Ethical considerations

Like with all types of research, as other chapters in this volume point out, participants should be fully informed about the nature and purpose of a research project before they get involved. There are some aspects of narrative inquiry, however, which make this requirement even more significant. First, when we tell stories, spoken or written, we do so with an audience in mind. There are things we tell some people but not others. So, when participants are asked to write journals or language learning histories or tell stories in interviews, they should be informed in advance who the audience will be (e.g. their instructor (who may be the researcher)), an independent researcher, conference attendees or readers of published academic reports. Stories look different when produced for different audiences. Researchers should know this if they want to gather appropriate stories to meet their research purposes. But it is only fair to the participants that they too construct appropriate stories. Being fully informed of the research topic, purpose and processes will enable them to do so. Second, when working with language learners, it is sometimes the case that the narratives they construct for research purposes are also part of their classwork or assessment; that is, they have a dual purpose. If this is so, learners will need not only to be informed of this beforehand but also to be reminded throughout the project that their work will be used as data because they might get so caught up in the process of completing an assessment or a course requirement that they forget for the time being that what they are doing will later be used for research. Third, participants are encouraged by researchers to share personal details of their experiences, and they often do, especially when they get emotionally caught up in the topic and telling of their stories. Researchers need to tread very carefully when deciding how to manage the data, particularly with regard to representing the findings to another audience. One way to avoid ethical issues arising is to provide the draft report of the findings to participants for scrutiny once their data have been analysed. Another way is to use pseudonyms for participants (and places) so as to keep their identity anonymous. With narrative research, where studies may include only one or two participants, this can prove to be rather challenging, especially when some of the more personal aspects of the data are those that are more likely to give the identity of the participants away! In these cases, member checking or asking participants to scrutinize research reports for their approval before they are distributed to a wider audience is a good idea.

A sample study

In this section, I summarize a study which illustrates some of the typical characteristics of narrative inquiry. The study (Giroir 2014) is conceived as narrative, as is evident in the report, from the title through to the

concluding statements. It addresses issues to do with participation, identity and positionality of two Saudi Arabian learners of English in the United States.

Background context and aim

The two cases reported in this study were part of a larger project which asked: 'How do L2 learners negotiate the periphery in order to achieve fuller participation in L2 communities?' (p. 40). Giroir, like others who are interested in how L2 learners form identities as they move from peripheral to full participation in social worlds, drew on Wenger's (1998) *communities of practice* framework. The two Saudi learners (males, aged 18 and 26) were particularly interesting to Giroir because they were Muslims of Arab descent. Her aim was to examine how, in the context of post-9/11 discourses, they were able to (re)negotiate their peripherality through their interactions in new, often racialized, L2 communities. Both participants were living and studying in the United States on scholarships from the Saudi government and at the time of the research were enrolled in ESL classes in an intensive English program at a large university.

Data collection

Data were collected over a full semester, during which time Giroir was a regular participant-observer in the students' classroom. She assisted the teacher at times and also interacted with students during class discussions. Although she was interested in the students' out-of-classroom community experiences, her involvement as an observer in the classroom gave her access to their 'narratives of experience' (p. 41), since the students were frequently offered opportunities to draw on personal experiences when interacting with each other to work on assigned course topics. Giroir was not granted permission to record class sessions but she kept detailed notes during observations. In addition to the observations, she conducted interviews of between one and two hours with each participant – these were digitally recorded and transcribed. Lastly, she observed, recorded and then transcribed a rather interesting photo narrative activity which involved the students using photography to document their experiences. They then, in class, gave a formal presentation in which they 'visually arranged and discussed photographs that represented their goals, inner thoughts, and views of themselves over time' (p. 41). Giroir held post-presentation interviews with the two students. In this exercise the participants constructed their own personal narratives from both visual artefacts (Riessman, 2008) and an accompanying oral commentary for the classroom audience, including the researcher. The presentation together with the following interview during

which the researcher and student further explored relevant themes proved to be a very effective data gathering opportunity.

Data analysis

Giroir declares that her data were 'primarily narrative' (p. 41) and hence applying an analytical framework informed by narrative inquiry was most appropriate. In the description of her data analysis, she uses a number of key words, and I will briefly comment on some of these. The first is her position as a *co-constructor* of the participants' stories; they were mutually involved in 'meaning making, learning, and knowledge construction' about the participants' L2 community negotiations, what Barkhuizen (2011, p. 395) refers to as 'narrative knowledging'. In other words, sense was made of the phenomenon under study (the research topic) by the participants during their research activities, by the researcher during her research activities and by them all during the research activities they engaged in together. Specifically, narrative knowledging was achieved by the *interactional* nature of the stories told by the two students during the particular telling *contexts* of classroom activities with other students, their teacher and the researcher and also during the interviews. Across the full data set, Giroir identified broad categories of experience and then conducted a more detailed *thematic analysis* by coding for themes and *triangulating* across data sources. Giroir, in sum, approached the data as *discursive artefacts*. But this was not the end of the analytical process. In the report of her study, Girior presents two cohesive stories of the participants' experiences – she actually tells their stories in two separate sections in the written article reporting the study. The process of writing these stories, a process which Grior calls 'writing the findings', involved another layer of analysis: 'connecting and emplotting salient themes' (p. 42). This is the same analytical process I referred to above, described by Polkinghorne (1995) as *narrative analysis*. Benson (2013, p. 251) calls it narrative writing as method and argues:

> In my view, the findings of 'narrative analysis' studies are usually to be found in the narrative itself. We are more accustomed, perhaps, to expect findings to take the form of short statements that address research questions.

In Grior's article, she presents the two coherent stories as well as extensive discussion of them. In other words, she does not merely let the stories talk for themselves but adds a further layer of interpretation. As a final analytical step, member checking took place with one of the participants (that is, he read and commented on the written findings). This is particularly important with narrative research, where data and the interpretation thereof is typically very personal, may contain sensitive details and thus have ethical implications.

Reporting

I have already commented on one narrative feature of Giroir's report – the inclusion of two coherent and comprehensive stories of the two participants' experiences. The remainder of the article is fairly conventional, with sections covering the theoretical background, the context relevant to the topic and the methodology. It does include one further section worthy of mention, however. In this section, the researcher and author of the article positions herself within the study. She informs readers about aspects of her own identity that are relevant to the study, including those that might pose potential limitations on the collection of data and her interpretation of the data. For example, she describes her 'meaning-laden social identities' (p. 42) as a female native speaker of English who is a member of the mainstream target L2 community that is the focus of her study. She is also American, a woman and an outsider to the classroom community (she adds that she is of Lebanese descent and so shares physical features of the participants' ethnic group). She does not say much about these limitations except to point out that they undoubtedly shaped her interactions with the students and her interpretations of their experiences. However, she believes that these limitations were overcome by specific research strategies such as data triangulation, prolonged field engagement, member checks and peer debriefing, thus enhancing credibility and trustworthiness.

Implications

After a discussion in which Giroir examines how the two students negotiated their positionality and identities vis-à-vis the racialized and politicized L2 community in which they lived and studied, showing particularly how they engaged in discursive practices in order to achieve fuller participation in those L2 worlds, she presents implications for TESOL professionals inside classrooms. Her main suggestion is for teachers to adopt critical perspectives on pedagogy, which include making space in classroom discourse for learners to narrate, discuss and analyse authentic L2 experiences – in other words, to deconstruct these experiences to expose the power relations at play in interactions outside the classroom. Grior believes that narratives can do this because they 'mediate social practices that allow learners space to interpret conflicts and define their identities' (p. 54).

Resources for further reading

Barkhuizen, G (ed.), 2011b, 'Special-topic issue on *Narrative research in TESOL*', *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 3.

The introductory article in this special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* introduces the construct of narrative knowledging and locates narrative research in the field of TESOL. The following articles, both full-length and reflective pieces, illustrate narrative research in its various forms. Besides demonstrating research in practice, the articles focus on *issues* in narrative research in TESOL.

Barkhuizen, G (ed.), 2013b, *Narrative Research in Applied Linguistics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

This edited collection provides an overview of narrative research approaches and demonstrates how they work in actual studies conducted in varying contexts. Researchers pay particular attention to their methods of data collection and analysis. They frame their studies in narrative theory, briefly commenting on how this theory is relevant to their approach to narrative research. Each chapter includes a personal reflection by the researcher on their methods.

Barkhuizen, G, Benson, P & Chik, A 2014, *Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research*. Routledge, New York, NY.

This book provides an accessible introduction to narrative inquiry. It discusses basic definitions and concepts; explains how and why narrative methods have been used in language teaching and learning research; and outlines the different approaches and topics covered by this research.

De Fina, A & Georgakopoulou, A 2012, *Analyzing Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

This book will be of interest to those wanting to learn more about sociolinguistic perspectives on narrative, including definitions and methods of analysis. The focus is very much on the discursive construction of narrative data with reference to particular ethnographic contexts.

Pavlenko, A 2007, Autobiographic narratives as data in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 163–188.

This article offers a critical review of methods of analysing second language users' personal narratives. Strengths and weaknesses of these approaches are discussed and recommendations for systematic approaches are recommended. Although the focus is on second language users, the article is relevant and important for those working in applied linguistics more generally.

Riessman, CK 2008, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, Sage, Los Angeles, CA.

Although not specifically targeted for applied linguists, this book provides an excellent introduction to narrative methods in the human sciences, particularly sociology. The chapters are very readable with good examples. Major methods of analysis are covered, including thematic, structural and dialogic/performance.

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