

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Abstract: This paper presents the theoretical framework and features of qualitative research, as well as its approaches, data collection and data analysis, advantages and disadvantages. The statistics show that qualitative research method has dramatically risen in popularity over the last fifteen years. It includes discussion on the contribution of qualitative research in terms of both its popularity and suitability to the field of English language teaching and learning. The specifics for how qualitative research is implemented in the field of language learning and teaching will be specifically explored. Two articles will be reviewed in terms of their application of qualitative research method. This will be done in order to provide insights for literature reviews conducting qualitative studies in the research relevant to the interests of this essay. This research enriches the literature of qualitative research in the field of English language teaching and learning.

Keywords – Qualitative Research, English Language Teaching and Learning, Writing, Feedback

INTRODUCTION

Finding an appropriate methodology is crucial for conducting research because it provides the tools to help researchers collect data and find underlying meanings in their respective study. The study discusses how researchers collect data and gather their findings through the method of qualitative research. This paper will discuss the definition of qualitative research and its application by looking at two articles in the field of English

language teaching and learning. The purpose of this essay is to understand the theoretical framework of qualitative research, its distinct characteristics, approaches, data collection and data analysis, and the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research in order to be able to assess and review research that has been conducted using qualitative research methods. It also aims to lay foundations for applying qualitative research methods by addressing the definition, contribution and application of qualitative research in English language teaching and learning. The potential readers of this piece of writing are those who are interested in doing qualitative literature reviews and intend to apply qualitative research in the field of TESOL as defined by Nunan and Carter (2001, p.1), “TESOL is an acronym which stands for Teaching English to speakers of other Languages and is a term covering situations in which English is taught as an L2, as well as those in which it is taught as a foreign language”.

Qualitative Research

This part of the paper presents the theoretical framework and features of qualitative research, as well as its approaches, data collection and data analysis, advantages and disadvantages.

Definition

According to Berg and Lune (2014, p.8), “Qualitative research properly seeks answers by examining various social settings and the groups or individuals who inhabit these settings.” Richards writes (2003, p.33) that the term “qualitative” is based on the “paradigmatic position (that) can be represented in terms of...two intimately related aspects, which have to do with the nature of our beliefs about reality (ontology) and about knowledge (epistemology), beliefs that impinge not only on our research but on other aspects of our lives.” For Nunan (1992, p.10), “Underlying the development of different research traditions and methods is a debate on the nature of knowledge and the status of assertions about the world.” In other words, understanding qualitative research means to understand the lived philosophy behind a research method.

There are two questions the researcher must address when taking a qualitative approach--namely, “What is reality?” and “What is knowledge?”. From the ontological point of view, reality and knowledge are based on the experience of being and the interactions of different individuals under any given set of circumstances. From the perspective of epistemology, it is possible to find universal laws by observation and investigation, which can help to understand how the world is perceived and how common

sense is constructed. Both ideas associate with qualitative research. It is important to investigate these multiple realities according to any given individual's experiences and perceptions.

The two views discussed above—the epistemological and the ontological—are based on the understanding of the world around us. The epistemological approach to the world can be measured universally with the aim of deducing one answer or “truth”, and the ontological can be understood as dynamic and measured by multiple definitions of “truth”. As a result, there are two research methods, the quantitative method and qualitative method. Quantitative research aims to test suppositions and generalize universal patterns by accumulating a large amount of samples. However, qualitative research is based on an understanding of the world through engagement, dynamic interactions, and with a largely ontological approach that prefers a multifaceted approach.

By using qualitative research methods, human activities are examined and underlying meanings are explored, which is transformational for both of the researcher and the participants involved. Based on the basic concepts described above, the following section of this essay will address the distinctive features of qualitative research including how an approach to multiple forms of meaning, small sample size and total immersion works in the qualitative research methods approach.

Main Features

Different views of understanding the world's reality or truth resulted in two interpretations for analysis, i.e. quantitative and qualitative. In this section, the main characteristics of the qualitative approach are going to be discussed in comparison to the quantitative. First, qualitative research can be understood as being more open to a research design that does not have a predetermined hypothesis to be tested or a set of presuppositions, unlike quantitative research. As Dornyei (2007, p.37) describes, “This means that the research focus is narrowed down only gradually and the analytic categories/concepts are defined during, rather than prior to, the process of the research.” Second, multiple layers of the experiences of individuals are revealed from different perspectives, rather than an overarching theme being emphasized (Richards, 2003). The focus of qualitative research rests on the experiences of individual participants as dynamic. Third, there is relatively smaller sample size for qualitative research that is different from quantitative research, which typically has a large sample size in order to uncover a generalization within a set of data (Gorard, 2001).

Another feature that differentiates a qualitative versus a quantitative approach is the level of involvement and immersion that the researcher has with their participants. In this sense, the researcher who is taking a qualitative approach must be careful so as not to influence the opinions and relevant data of the participants. Similarly, the researcher must be aware of their level of potential biases that may inform the quality of the research gathered. As Dornyei (2007, p. 28) remarks, “in qualitative research, the researcher’s own values, personal history and the position on characteristics such as gender, culture, class and age become integral part of the inquiry.” As this quote helpfully illustrates, it is important for the researcher to assess the qualities that may lead to a bias in research results.

Approaches

The main purpose for conducting qualitative research is to reveal the complexity and multiplicity of the themes and individuals that are being researched. To approach this goal, methods such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, case study, life history, action research, conversational analysis and narrative analysis are widely used in qualitative inquiry (Lazaraton, 2000). By applying these different methods in approaching the various perceptions of individuals, this form of research can lead to an analysis that is potentially more true to the life of individual experience than a quantitative approach. Within each qualitative approach, there are both strengths and weaknesses. In the following section, some of these major approaches to qualitative analysis will be discussed and the features of each of them will be examined.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology asserts that people view reality differently and interpret things according to their perception of any given phenomena, or lived circumstance. As Heigham and Croker point out (2009, p.6), researchers should not necessarily aim to reach a universal understanding of individuals but rather look for “the person-, context-, and time-bound.” There is likely no one conclusion or explanations for the complexity of the world that people are involved in due to different situations and individual perspectives. The exploration of the experience of individual perception comes as the top priority within this approach in order to reveal the rich elements that make up contexts. According to the phenomenologist Heidegger, phenomenology is keen on the interpretation and understanding of experiences rather than the search for one unifying universal truth. (2004

cited in Rahman, 2015) As a result, phenomenology emphasises extracting the participants' experiences Wilson (2014 cited in Rahman, 2015).

The focus in phenomenology is to understand individual realities as they are lived beyond sets of pre-established meaning. Presuppositions and well-defined concepts should be avoided in the process of investigating every phenomenon. However, a downside to the phenomenological method is that this philosophical framework can potentially pay too much attention to superficial exchanges and maybe not address social and cultural interactions. Social activities, social norms and cultural groups are often ignored in phenomenology. However, ethnography does deal with these things directly, which will be discussed in the following section.

Ethnography

For Richards (2003, p.14) ethnography aims to “describe and understand the behaviour of a particular social or cultural group,” and requires researchers to be exposed to fieldwork. An ethnographical approach means immersion in the social setting that is being researched for an extended period of time. The term originates from work done by anthropologists such as Malinowski in the early 20th century (Hughes, 2015). Ethnography aims to understand the cultural norms, behaviour patterns and values that certain groups of people have in order to explain these findings to people outside this context. In this form of research, the insiders view and outsiders view are both crucial in order to establish an understanding that forms new perspectives in research (Hughes, 2015). The challenge in ethnographic research is the possible risk for biased research resulting from the immersion and exposure to the field by observation and participation. It is possible that the immersion fieldwork ethnographical research entails can lead to a tainted form of analysis that causes the case study to be deviated from or wrongly inform the research project. In the next section, the approach of “case study” will be explored more closely.

Case study

A qualitative research method case study focuses “on a particular unit or set of units – institutions, programmes, events and so on – and the aim should be to provide a detailed description of the unit(s)” as mentioned by Richards (2003, p.20). It can generate the description by a large amount of data obtained by observation and participation and collecting data through conducting interviews. Relevant documents can also be used to conduct this form of analysis. In case study analysis a sample selection is used for the study of individuals or broader practice, which needs thoughtful consideration. Also, case

study analysis relies heavily on individual interviews, which need to be well designed in order to provide the best material possible.

It is also important to consider the relationship between case analysis and theoretical analysis. For example, it can be hard to distinguish the differences between a life story and a life history as terminologies. According to Goodson (1994, p.6), “The life story is the story we tell about our life; the life history is a collaborative venture, reviewing a wider range of evidence.” The life story or biography attaches importance to the individual’s life. However, the life history reveals more about the social context. Both can be included in case study. Another example of case study is action research, which involves the improvement of conventions by evoking change and offering solutions to a particular problem.

Action Research

Like case study analysis, action research is case-based too. It aims to improve professional practice by implementing interventions during a changing situation or after reflecting on that situation. For Burns (2010), it involves examining a specific issue that teachers are concerned about in relation to a classroom setting. As Richards (2003, p.25) points out, action research “embeds the research within a professional context where practitioner seeks, through deeper understanding and intervention, to bring about changes in their working practices and to explore the emancipatory potential of their activities.” The research needs systematic methods related to qualitative research, such as interviews, journals, observations and participations. According to Heigham and Croker (2009, p.115), the stages can be listed as “action research cycle of planning, action, observation, and reflection”. In summary, action research focuses on one, two or more particular problems that have occurred in any given context. Practitioners notice an issue and begin to investigate and intervene in order to improve a situation or a particular practice. Based on the above analyses the focus and challenges of different methods have been discussed. In the following section data collection and data analysis will be explored in order to compliment the aforementioned subgroups of qualitative research methods.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

For data collection, the most common approach is to conduct interviews in order to collect transcribed recordings for analysis. According to Dornyei (2007), other ways include ethnographical field study, focus group interviews, introspective methods, case studies, diary studies and participant observation. In terms of the analysis of the collected

data, Glaser and Corbin (1990, p. 24) state that the basic theory for analysis is grounded theory, which is “a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon.” It is an interpretive method that has similar characteristics to the phenomenological method. It favours an inductive rather than deductive approach, which means it looks for evidence rather than proof. Further to grounded theory, Bryman (2012, p. 578) states that finding an adequate method for evaluating data can also be done through “critical discourse analysis, qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis.” As such, it is clear that there are many varieties of methods of collecting data, such as interviews, focus groups, audio or video recordings, photos, documents and journals and so on.

Additionally, there are useful computer-assisted data tools such as NVivo, which is one of the data analysis software (CAQDAS) used in analysing qualitative data (Gibbs, 2002). Bryman (2012, p.593) thinks that “the coding and retrieval process (become) faster and more efficient” because of the use of computer software. From the above discussion the definition, the characteristics, and approaches to data collection and analysis of qualitative research are addressed. In the next section, the strength and weaknesses of qualitative research will be elaborated.

Advantages and Disadvantages

There are many merits to qualitative research, which can be summarized in the following three points. First, individual views, experiences, comments, perceptions, concepts and pearls of wisdom can be explored and described from within the specific situations and contexts. Second, the qualitative method is interpretation-based and is therefore suitable for examining the complexity inherent in different realities. Third, it provides the chance for researchers to be in close contact with the real experience of what is going on in the different contexts while conducting their research. This allows for issues to be identified and solutions to be found.

On the other hand, there are weaknesses in conducting qualitative research. For example, using a small sample size is not beneficial for a generalized analysis applicable to larger populations. However, good qualitative research data still needs to be collected for certain patterns or systems to be identified. (Brown, 1988; Bryman, 2012; Hughes, 2015; Nunan, 1992) Secondly, there are potential biases or limitations in the qualitative approach due to immersion and engagement in the research. Because of the immersed engagement with the research being conducted, there may be skewed results based on the personal engagement the researcher has with their findings. Thirdly, and practically speaking,

qualitative research may be time-consuming and expensive—engaging in thorough and field-based research requires significantly more resources and time than a quantitative study. Fourthly, without the standardized measurement, the research cannot be copied again and retested. The dynamic engagement of a qualitative methodology means that its results cannot always be repeated. Lastly, the conclusion derived from a qualitative approach could be too narrow or too general due to the lack of a strict theoretical framework.

In summary, qualitative inquiry studies the meaning of a naturally occurring setting and the people involved in that setting. It engages the contexts people are immersed in order to see through the eyes of those studied to understand the reason they perceive reality in the way that they do. That is, it looks to understand things beyond what people say by also focusing on what they experience and why. Many data collection methods such as interviews, participatory observation and documentary methods are widely used for data collection. The data covers the words, texts, photos and stories of those involved in the research that is being conducted.

In the above analysis, I explored the characteristics, data collection and analysis, and advantages and disadvantages associated with qualitative research. In the next section the contribution and validity of using qualitative research in the field of English language teaching will be explored. This will be done in order to analyse how a qualitative method impacts a specific field of study.

The Contribution of Qualitative Research in English Language Teaching and Learning

This portion of the paper will discuss the contribution of qualitative research in terms of both its popularity and suitability to the field of English language teaching and learning.

METHOD

In this analysis published articles with self-reported qualitative research methods in the field of English language teaching and learning will be used. They will be collected from 2000-2014 from the Queen's University of Belfast (QUB) database. The trends of each research method used in the article will be discussed from the online data. To begin, I typed primary keywords such as “mixed methods”, “English language teaching and learning” during the time frame of 2000-2014 into the QUB database. Then I typed the words “quantitative”, “English language learning and teaching” also in the same time period. Lastly, I entered the words “qualitative”, and “English language teaching and learning” also in the same time period. The purpose of this exercise was to give an

example of how data entry illustrates interest in these three related but slightly dissimilar fields, as well as to assess their popularity. A comparative understanding as well as an assessment of the popularity of qualitative and quantitative analysis can be quickly understood by looking at the bar chart I've included in the next section.

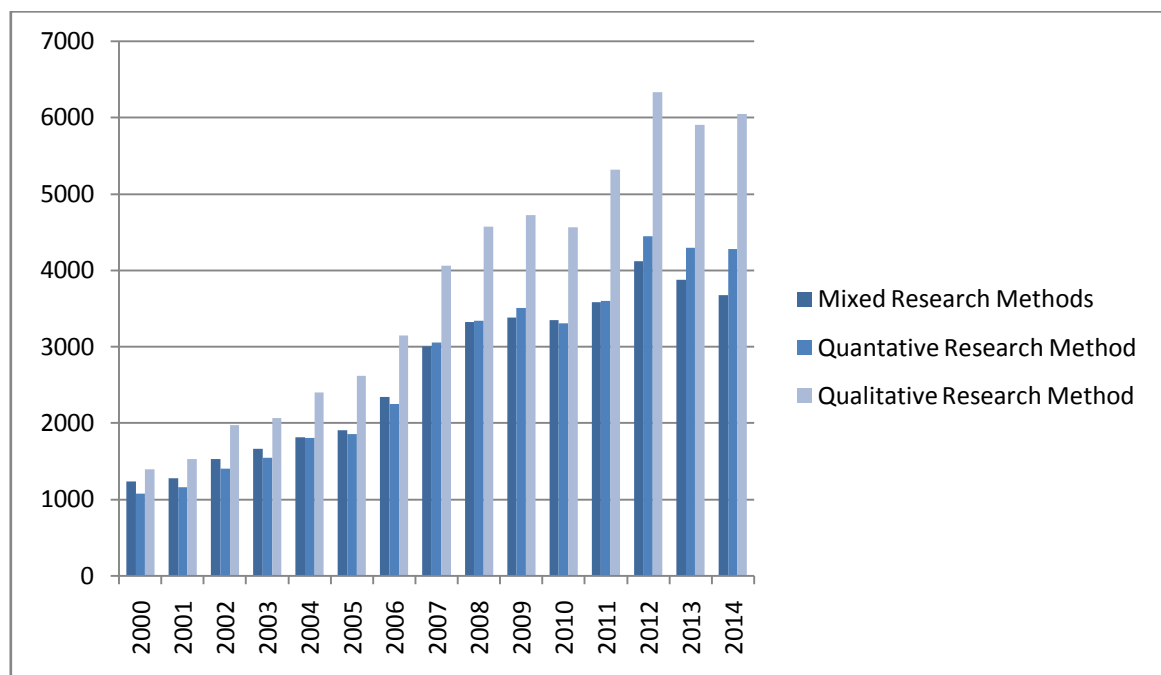
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Data 1

According to the data in the appendices the trends of the popularity of each research method can be seen very clearly. Interestingly, there was a steady increase for all three methods used in the published articles from the time period of 2000 to 2014. Here is the bar chart of the trends:

Bar Chart: Comparison of the Three Research Methods from 2000 to 2014



Results 1

The bar chart demonstrates the different number of published journal articles from the online database of QUB. The total number of published journal articles has increased about 4.5 times from 3700 in 2000 to 14000 during the past 15 years. The numbers have grown at an amazing speed. In a similar trend each method used by researchers rose dramatically as well. However, after reaching a peak in 2012 there was a declining tendency. On the whole the published articles with the qualitative method were about 40% of the total number of published articles and the quantitative method and mixed method

were about 30% respectively. To conclude, the most popular method currently is the qualitative research method in the academic published journal articles in the field of English Language teaching and learning.

Data 2

Review of the Application of Qualitative Research Method in Two Published Journal Articles

I will address two published articles that discuss the issue of writing and feedback in the field of English language teaching and learning. This will be done in order to examine the application of the qualitative research method in pedagogy.

Two Journal Articles

- Hyland, F. (2000). ESL Writers and Feedback: Giving More Autonomy to Students. *Language Teaching Research*, 4(1), 33-54.
- Weigle, S. C., & Nelson, G. L. (2004). Novice Tutors and Their ESL Tutees: Three Case Studies of Tutor Roles and Perceptions of Tutorial Success. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(3), 203-225.

Reasons for Article Selection

My reasons for choosing these articles are—first and foremost—because they explicitly use qualitative data collection tools. For example, in the article by Fiona Hyland, interviews, teacher think-aloud protocols are used. In the Weigle and Nelson (2004) article their data includes online discussions from writing lessons, interviews from tutors and students, as well as lesson videotapes and reflective writing by the tutors. Secondly, in both articles the sample size that informed their research was relatively small compared to the amount typically used in quantitative research. For Hyland, there were 6 case study students in a three-month course. For Weigle and Nelson, three pairs of tutors and tutees were discussed. Third, both articles engage with the process of collecting data and studying by immersing themselves in the research context. Finally, the articles address the issue of teaching methods, teaching writing and feedback in particular, which is of specific interest here. In summary, these articles demonstrate the key elements of how qualitative research is conducted in relation to pedagogical contexts.

Discussions

Discussion of Data 1

From the above data I collected, it can be seen that the total number of publications rose from 3698 in 2000 to 13 998 in 2014. It is a dramatic increase in the number of articles published that specifically involve the qualitative research method, with 1390 publications in 2000 increasing to 6048 in 2014. Again, this shows the increasing popularity of a qualitative research-based method. As Lazaraton (2000) shows after searching data based articles in four key journals from 1992-1997, only 10% of those articles used qualitative studies. However, Benson (Benson et al. 2009, p. 92) conducted a survey that revealed that 477 qualitative articles (22% of the total number published) appeared in ten journals over 1997-2006. Richards (2009) analysed trends in qualitative research from 2000 and found that it was apparent that researchers who contributed to the study of language used qualitative research methods. The increasing popularity of qualitative research underscores how an understanding of language teaching and learning is being increasingly recognized as formed out of interpersonal relations, which suit qualitative methods. As Ramanathan and Atkinson (1999) affirm, research in the field of learning and teaching benefits from the qualitative research perspective because it complements the complex context of learning and teaching.

It is not just an analysis of the increase of publications using qualitative research that is informative—the vast range of investigations pertinent to issues related to English language teaching and learning also show its importance. Richards (2009, p. 159) categorizes how a variety of topics are covered that relate to communicative language learning, teachers training, classroom interaction, language development, learning experiences, identity, language and social life, the teacher's voice, etc. This specifically shows how qualitative research methods can be understood in relation to a teaching dynamic. For Richards (2009, p.150), the complicated situation of researching English Language teaching and learning needs “the qualitative research method including ethnographies, case studies, interactional studies, introspective methods, life history/narrative research and action research” in order to explore the diversity of “experiences and opinions”. The methods can be applied easily investigating the relevant topics concerning teaching and learning.

As Ellis (1990) mentions, the relationship between learning and teaching is very complex. The experiences, opinions, problems, conflicts and practices of individuals can be better detected, researched and understood by becoming immersed in the type of fieldwork qualitative research advocates (Lazaraton, 2000; Richards, 2000; Benson et al.,

2009). For Rahman (2015, p. 10), qualitative research brings a critical benefit to the field of language teaching and learning because “the researchers can accumulate participants’ experiences and opinions directly and subjectively; the interpretation of accumulated data is thick and deep”. That is to say, a qualitative approach is particularly relevant to the discipline of language teaching and learning because learning a new language and teaching individuals require a dynamic engagement.

In summary, and as my research shows, the qualitative research method is suitable for conducting research in the field of English language teaching and learning, and is something that has dramatically risen in popularity over the last fifteen years. The specifics for how qualitative research is implemented in the field of language learning and teaching will be specifically explored in the next section. I will review two articles in terms of their application of qualitative research method. I will do this in order to show how qualitative research is used in the field of language teaching and learning, and to answer the questions listed in the lecture handout. This will be done in order to provide insights for literature reviews conducting qualitative studies in the research relevant to the interests of this essay.

Discussion of Data 2

Understanding the application of qualitative methods in both articles is based on ideas of organization and data interpretation. In the two articles the methods are clearly presented, and consistent with a qualitative methodology. Hyland divides the method used into two parts, that of research context and of participants. Weigle and Nelson include three sections to describe the use of method: context for study, participants and procedure. Thus, both articles articulate their methods explicitly as seen in the Table below.

Table: Comparison of the Qualitative Methods between the Two Articles by Author

| | Hyland | Weigle and Nelson |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Participants | Teachers as tutors postgraduate Undergraduate students | TESOL Master student as tutors ESL students |
| Number of participants | 8 in total, 2 tutors and 6 tutees | 6 in total, 3 tutors and 3 tutees |
| Time | 48 Hours | 10 Hours |
| Tutor Formality | Workshop | Curriculum-based class and non-curriculum-based class |
| Type of Feedback | Oral and written | Oral and written |
| Data collection | Questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations | Videotaped tutor sessions, interviews, documents |
| Data analysis | Teacher think-aloud protocols | On-line discussions |
| Research methods | Qualitative study | Case study |

Hyland (2000, p.33) states that the aim of her study was to find real happenings in the context of writing and feedback, and found that “in some circumstances, teachers should encourage students to take more responsibility for their own writing.” Weigle and Nelson believe “contextual conditions are pertinent in understanding the construction of individual tutors roles over time and also the tutors and tutees’ perceptions of effective tutoring” (2004, p. 205). Case study is used in both articles. In the Hyland’s article the importance of peer feedback, the need of a peer support mechanism and the use of the peer feedback and teacher feedback are pointed out and the problem of lack of one-to-one communication is discussed. In the Weigle and Nelson’s article, online interaction is revealed to be a good supplement for learning writing and language proficiency. Online interaction is also shown as being capable of expanding the role of the tutor by making him or her more available.

Is there evidence of author reflexivity in these articles? Bourdieu (1990) believes that reflexivity is a part of the research process. In the case of the authors discussed here, both reflectively examine their work. They both found unexpected situations in the course of their research but they responded and reflected upon those situations accordingly. In Hyland’s article, she intended to compare the effects of feedback from teachers and peers on students, but ultimately found that peer feedback was partially manipulated by the teachers. In Weigle and Nelson’s article, they found that language competence was crucial in becoming a successful tutor.

In both articles, the theoretical and empirical location of the study were well explained and relevant. The philosophical foundation of both articles situated itself in a concept of reality that was constructed by the interrelations between individuals and their environment. As Richards states (2003, p. 38) they have the same “goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it.” This quote aptly defines how the authors of the articles I’m exploring conducted their research. In Hyland’s article, the debate concerned teacher-student relationships, intercultural communication, peer feedback, and the ownership of writing. For her study, she highlights these aspects by looking at the effect of feedback on English teachers. She uses qualitative research data collection methods by interviewing participants and observing curriculum-based classes and non-curriculum based workshops. Weigle and Nelson present a critical analysis of other researchers’ comments on the setting and context of tutoring in order to explore the perceptions of the role of tutoring within research that has been done before. The concepts are clear and connected to each other in both articles, and are therefore adequately interrogated. In Hyland’s article, she reviews the context and concepts that she

anticipated encountering in the main body of her article. However, on occasion there were concepts that lacked rigorous elaboration. For example, terms such as ‘feedback’ were not sufficiently defined in order to provide adequate information for understanding the concept. Hyland writes that students should have autonomy within their writing. For example, by selecting the feedback that they want to pay attention to, and by using the sources of feedback from under their own terms. Given her reliance on the term ‘feedback’, it would have been helpful to have more information. Additionally, how and why students should work autonomously in order to solve a problem is not mentioned. My biases or personal perspective was affected in this analysis based on language barrier and, by proxy, potential misunderstanding. As a learner of English, it took me a lot of time to understand various words used throughout this study. For example, words such as “dyad” or the term “vis-à-vis” were ones that I had not come across before. My interpretation of the meaning of these words might be different from what the author is trying to convey. Perhaps I was unable to be as critical to these topics because of my unfamiliarity with them—not just as a non-native English speaker, but because I didn’t know them before. Lastly, my own experiences of teaching writing to other individuals led me to agree with a lot of the concepts explored in the articles. From personal experience, I think autonomy is very important to teaching writing, so therefore I was already biased in my understanding of the article material.

In summary, these articles are two good examples of qualitative research in relation to English language teaching and learning. They reveal most of the key elements required for conducting qualitative research within this field. Methodologically speaking, the articles authors use philosophical positions to acknowledge the diversity of the research contexts, focusing on information that is derived from a case-by-case basis. The samples used in both studies are described and defined well. The data of both articles are well documented—through interviews, observations, documents, and videotaped class sessions. The analysis in both was inductive, in that it generalized inferences from observations. Both of the authors presented findings from data, but also included reflections on that data. While there were many merits to both articles, there were also shortcomings because of its methodology. For example, the studies conducted in both were done over a short period of time, and therefore the long-term impact on the tutors and tutees cannot be ascertained. While the descriptions of the samples were clear, how the participants were acquired was not mentioned, and the relationship between the researcher and participants was not explained in detail. Additionally, there was no information on an informed consent form, which is troublesome. There was also no description of either computer-based or manual-

based analysis in Hyland's article, though there was in Weigle and Nelson, where they describe qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti (Scientific Software Development, 1997).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

English language teaching and learning involves many aspects of how human interaction works, something that is very complex and diverse. Qualitative research is suitable for conducting research that explores individual experiences, concepts, and challenges. A large variety of issues concerning teaching methods, classroom interactions, learners' language development, identity and socialization, teachers' training, etc. can therefore be researched well by using the qualitative approach (Richards, 2000; Goodson, 1994). The increase in popularity of qualitative research methods in the field of language teaching and learning over the last fifteen years shows that researchers understand the benefits of using the qualitative method. As I have demonstrated in section three, pedagogical issues such as the functions of feedback, the need for peer support schemes, one to one communication, intercultural communication, etc. compliment the qualitative approach. In summary, qualitative research contributes to and is suitable for conducting research in the field of English language teaching and learning by complimenting the dynamic quality of interpersonal exchange.

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