tesol QUARTERLY

TESOL Quarterly Research Guidelines

AHMAR MAHBOOB, BRIAN PALTRIDGE, AND AEK PHAKITI
University of Sydney
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

ELVIS WAGNER
Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

SUE STARFIELD AND ANNE BURNS
University of New South Wales
Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

RODNEY H. JONES
University of Reading
Reading, England

PETER I. DE COSTA
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan, United States

This article provides research guidelines for authors intending to submit their manuscripts to *TESOL Quarterly*. These guidelines include information about the *TESOL Quarterly* review process, advice on converting a dissertation into a research article, broad introductions to a number of research methods, and a section on research ethics. The research methods discussed here are experimental research, survey research, ethnographic research, discourse analysis, and practitioner research. These are, of course, not the only methods that authors draw on for their submissions to *TESOL Quarterly* but ones we thought it would be helpful to provide advice on. Each of the sections on research methods includes a broad introduction to the method (or approach), a guide for preparing a manuscript using the particular method or approach, and an analysis of an article published in *TESOL Quarterly* using that method or approach.

doi: 10.1002/tesq.288

These *TESOL Quarterly* research guidelines are designed to provide guidance and support to researchers planning to submit manuscripts to *TESOL Quarterly*. The guidelines first provide information about the *TESOL Quarterly* review process and give some advice to authors who are converting their dissertations into research articles. The guidelines then describe and exemplify a number of research approaches frequently adopted in articles published in *TESOL Quarterly*, including experimental research (written by Aek Phakiti), survey research (by Elvis Wagner), ethnographic research (by Sue Starfield), discourse analysis (by Rodney H. Jones), and practitioner research (by Anne Burns). In addition, the guidelines also include a discussion of research ethics (by Peter De Costa).

THE *TESOL QUARTERLY* REVIEW PROCESS

TESOL Quarterly receives hundreds of manuscripts a year and only has space to publish a couple of dozen articles each year. Given this, only submissions that show potential of being published are sent out for external reviewing. The editors do not send out all submissions to external reviewers because good reviewers are a scarce resource, and we generally only want to ask reviewers to evaluate a submission when we think it has the potential to be published. All submissions are, however, internally evaluated by the editors. In order to be consistent, the editors use a checklist to evaluate if submissions are potentially publishable in *TESOL Quarterly* and should be sent out for review. This checklist is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Checklist Used by *TESOL Quarterly* Editors for Initial In-House Review of Submissions

1. Is *TESOL Quarterly* the correct journal for the submission?
2. Is the article of interest to the international readership of the journal?
3. Is textual similarity a problem with the submission?
4. Does the author relate the research to teaching and learning?
5. Does the article report on research?
6. Is it original?
7. Is it over the word length for submissions to the journal?
8. Is it under the word length for submissions to the journal?
9. Has it been prepared for blind review?
10. Has the author used American Psychological Association (APA, 2010) referencing?
11. Can the author be identified from the acknowledgments?
12. Are the sources referred to in the literature review up to date?
13. Are crucial sources omitted?
14. Does the author compare the results of the study to previous research on the topic so we see how the study moves the field forward?
15. Are all figures and tables attached?

TABLE 2
Review Criteria for *TESOL Quarterly* Submissions

1. Does the manuscript contain new and significant information to justify publication?
2. Is the problem significant and concisely stated?
3. Are methodological and/or theoretical matters comprehensively described?
4. Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results?
5. Is adequate reference made to other work in the field?
6. Does the manuscript appeal to the general interests of the *TESOL Quarterly* readership?
7. Does the manuscript strengthen the relationship between theory and practice?

If, on the basis of this in-house review, the editors think the manuscript is potentially publishable, it is sent to external reviewers. Otherwise, the editors may either (a) unsubmit the manuscript and request the author(s) make changes and resubmit their article, or (b) reject the manuscript without an option of resubmission to *TESOL Quarterly*. This process allows the editors to give due attention to each submission and to monitor the quality of articles sent out to the reviewers.

When a manuscript is sent out for review, reviewers are asked to address the questions shown in Table 2 in their evaluations.

Once reviewers agree to review a manuscript, they are given six weeks to review manuscripts assigned to them. Sometimes it takes the editors quite a few attempts before they are able to identify appropriate and willing reviewers. The editors make their decision about a manuscript based on the reviews. In most cases, the editors either ask authors to revise their manuscripts based on the reviews, or reject the submission. In some cases, where two reviewers have made different recommendations, the editors either carry out an in-depth review themselves or assign a third reviewer for the manuscript. If authors are asked to revise their manuscript, the revised manuscript may be sent out for further review(s)—often, but not always, to the original reviewers. In addition to the external reviewers, the editors also re-review the manuscripts once they come close to being accepted, and may ask authors to make additional revisions. The whole process—between the time that a manuscript is first received and is accepted for publication—can take 6–9 months, and sometimes more. Once accepted, the manuscript is handled by the *TESOL Quarterly* publishers, who copyedit the text, work on the layout, check references, and so forth. At this final stage, before an article is published, the author(s) work directly with the publishers and the editors typically do not interfere with the process.

Converting a Dissertation Into a Research Article

In a competitive job market, where publications, especially in prestigious journals, can make a difference between being hired or not, it is not a surprise that *TESOL Quarterly* is seeing a rise in the number of submissions by doctoral students and recent graduates. There are arguably a number of benefits for these new researchers to publish: it raises their profile, makes them more competitive in the job market, gives them experience of how the world of publishing works, and provides feedback on and engagement with their work. These are all sound reasons for considering publishing one's doctoral research. However, as with other submissions to the journal, although some of the papers make it through the review process, a large number, unfortunately, do not. To have a reasonable chance of being considered for publication, these new authors should make sure that they meet the requirements, the style, and the focus of *TESOL Quarterly*.

Converting a dissertation into a research article, further, often requires recontextualizing, reframing, condensing, and even restructuring the work contained in a dissertation (Kwan, 2010). It is not as simple as just taking a chapter from the dissertation and submitting it as an article. The research article needs to stand alone and able to be read by, and of value to, a much wider readership than that of the dissertation.

Below, we have included a checklist that doctoral students and new graduates may want to consider as they prepare their manuscript for submission.

-Consult your supervisor and seek their advice on the publishability of your paper.

-Consider co-authoring with a more experienced researcher.

-Identify an appropriate journal for your work. To do this, look at your reference list and identify the key journals that you have drawn on. These journals are often a good place for you to submit to.

-Make sure that you follow the submission guidelines, style, and format of writing that are used in the journal you are aiming at.

-Make sure that your paper makes an original contribution to the field and moves forward the discussion of the issue that you are focussing on.

-Make sure that your references are up to date. If you are drawing on a dissertation that was written a year or more ago, make sure to update your literature review and revise your results and discussion sections accordingly.

-Have your colleagues and your supervisor read and comment on your draft. Revise your draft as needed before submitting.

Finally, do remember that only a small proportion of papers submitted to journals—especially highly ranked ones—are published. If your submission does not succeed, do not take a rejection of your paper as a rejection of your work. Instead, consider the reasons for the rejection carefully, revise your paper, and then submit your manuscript to another journal. You should be sure to revise your paper before submitting it to another journal because there is always a chance that your manuscript might be sent to a reviewer who reviewed it for the previous journal. These reviewers want to see that you took their comments on board before sending your paper to another journal.

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

Aek Phakiti

Experimental research aims to determine causal-like relationships between one or more independent variables (e.g., types of instruction, feedback) and one or more dependent variables (e.g., language acquisition, learning behaviours). To arrive at a valid conclusion about the causal-like relationship, the researcher systematically and carefully (1) manipulates the independent variable of interest by varying its degree or nature under different conditions, (2) controls other independent variables that can interfere with the effect of the target independent variable (i.e., foreseen confounding variables such as differences in proficiency levels, time of instruction) by holding them constant across the conditions, and (3) observes changes in the dependent variable(s). See Blom and Unsworth (2010), Gass (2015), Hudson and Llosa (2015), and Phakiti (2014), who present experimental research methods in second language studies.

Issues Related to Methodology

There are different types of experimental research approaches that have been applied in TESOL research (e.g., randomized pretest–posttest control group design, repeated measures design, quasi-experimental design, and single-case design). Experimental researchers need to consider the issues of (1) internal validity (i.e., whether the change in the dependent variable is due to the target independent variable only) and external validity (i.e., whether the observed causal-like relationship is generalizable for other groups of learners or in other settings), (2) potential threats to the internal validity of the study (e.g., selection bias, maturation, testing effect), and (3) the reliability and validity of measurements (e.g., use of pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest) and data analysis (e.g., suitable inferential statistics). An experimental research article needs to address the above issues clearly and precisely. The following are guidelines for preparing an experimental article.

Introduction: Provide background information for the study. Discuss the research problem and its importance. State the aim of the study clearly and explicitly. If space permits, provide an overview of the report.

Review of the literature: Present what has been recently published about the topic. Situate the study within the existing field of study by presenting the relevant theoretical frameworks, as well as landmark and recent studies on the topic. Build the theoretical and methodological foundation and rationale for the study from the existing literature. State the experimental hypotheses or questions that are connected to the theory discussed.

Method: Present the experimental design being adopted for the study in sufficient detail, including the reason why it is suitable for the study. See Purpura, Brown, and Schoonen (2015) and Larson-Hall and Herrington (2010). If a mixed methods design is adopted, make sure to provide sufficient information about the qualitative part of the study. Include setting, participants, experimental conditions and steps taken to derive valid and reliable data, research instruments (e.g., pretests, posttests, delayed posttests), data collection procedure (including data procedure charts and explanations), ethical considerations, and data analysis (e.g., the statistical tests being used to test the hypotheses or answer the research questions, established probability value [e.g., $p < 0.05$]).

Results: Organize the findings around the hypotheses or research questions in chronological order; use tables and/or figures sparingly and only to assist comprehension. Present the descriptive statistics of the dependent variables across experimental conditions (e.g., means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis statistics, sample size, 95% confidence interval). When presenting the results of an inferential statistic (e.g., analysis of variance [ANOVA]) in a table, make sure to include the value and magnitude of the statistic (e.g., *t*- or *F*-value), degree of freedom being used, detected *p*-value(s)—whether or not significant, and the effect size associated with the statistical test (e.g., Cohen's *d*, R^2, partial *eta* squared). See also Larson-Hall and Plonsky (2015).

Discussion: Discuss and interpret the findings in relation to previous theoretical frameworks and research. Make sure that you do not interpret beyond the evidence. Avoid overreacting with nonstatistical findings of the study (as disappointing results) by pointing out the limitations of the study (e.g., instruments, procedures, participants) as the key reasons for not detecting the statistical significance. Also avoid rewriting the related literature and hypotheses to fit the nonsignificant findings. Remember that theory is only tentative, not certain. Interpret and evaluate the statistical effect size of the findings. Compare the findings to those of previous studies.

Conclusions: Consolidate the report by summarizing, explaining and discussing what the findings mean conceptually in light of the results, causal-like hypotheses, and relevant theories. Discuss the theoretical, methodological, and/or pedagogical implications of the study. Discuss the potential limitations of the study and recommend directions for future research.

A Sample Study

Ong and Zhang (2012) is a good example of a typical quantitative experimental study in language learning and teaching. The study investigates the effects of planning conditions (e.g., planning, prolonged planning), subplanning conditions (e.g., task-given, task-content–given), and revising conditions (initial-essay–accessible versus initial-essay–removed) on written text quality of English as a foreign language (EFL). In the literature section, the authors present the research problem aspect by aspect (pp. 376–381). The authors then present the operational definitions of the independent variables of interest and three experimental hypotheses (pp. 381–382). Through stratified random sampling, 108 Chinese learners were assigned to the experimental and control conditions (pp. 382–383). Within each experimental group, learners were also exposed to different subplanning conditions and revising conditions. The researchers present the research procedures and experimental conditions succinctly (pp. 383–386). A range of statistical analyses including a 4 (planning conditions) × 3 (subplanning conditions) factorial ANOVA were employed. Organizing the results according to the hypotheses, the authors report on the statistical findings (including the descriptive statistics) and the statistical test (including the effect sizes, partial *eta* squared). The authors interpret and discuss their findings for each hypothesis. In the Conclusion section, the researchers summarise the findings for the three hypotheses in relation to previous studies. They conclude that the free-writing conditions significantly enhanced the quality of students' writing and the task-content–given and task-content-organization–given conditions led to significantly better text quality than did the task-given condition. The researchers discuss the limitations of the study and suggest directions for future research.

SURVEY RESEARCH

Elvis Wagner

Survey research is a research methodology in which the researcher does not attempt to manipulate or control the setting or environment;

instead, the goal is a systematic gathering of information, often from a large sample or even an entire population. In applied linguistics, survey research is commonly used to investigate psychological constructs such as learner beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and strategy use.

Issues Related to Methodology

Survey research is a quantitative methodology useful in applied linguistics because it allows researchers to operationalize phenomena that are difficult to measure through other means. For example, it would be difficult or impossible for researchers to objectively measure an abstract, psychological construct like motivation using only observational or performance data. Instead, researchers can use survey research instruments (e.g., questionnaires or interviews) to measure these learners' motivation. When writing up the research, the organization is similar to reporting other types of research, but factors especially relevant to quantitative survey research will be described here.

Introduction: The introduction should present the issue that is being researched, and make it evident why survey methodology was used to investigate the topic.

Methodology: Provide an overview of the survey research method used. This should include a description of the participants, instruments, and the approach to data collection.

Participants: In addition to describing the participants, the sampling procedure that is used must be provided. Fink (1995), Perry (2011), and Vogt (2007) provide extensive reviews of sampling procedures. If a convenience sample is used, this must be explicitly stated, and the limitations must be acknowledged not only in the Limitations section, but also in interpreting the results of the data analysis.

Instruments: Describe in detail the survey instruments used, including the development and validation process. If the research is using or adapting an instrument developed by other researchers, and the research context is similar to the context it was developed for, then the researcher can cite the original validation process. However, if the instrument is used in a different context, or if it is modified extensively, then it is necessary to describe how the instrument was validated for this new purpose. If a new instrument is developed, then the theoretical model and the development and trialing of the instrument should be provided in order to justify the instrument's use. The language ability of the participants needs to be considered; if they are lower ability learners, it might be necessary to use instruments written in the first language (L1), and the process of translating (and reverse translating, if applicable) needs to be described (Dörnyei, 2010).

Similarly, the reliability of the instrument must be provided (Wagner, 2015). Brown (2001) provides an overview of how to estimate the reliability of a questionnaire, including estimating the internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha). If using an already established instrument, it is necessary to report the reliability in comparison to the reliability numbers reported in other studies using the same instrument. It is advisable to include the instrument in the appendix so that readers can review it.

Data collection: Describe how the surveys were administered, and any problems that arose during collection. Describe how missing cases were addressed (e.g., if an expected participant was absent, what sort of follow-up was conducted to ensure adequate sampling).

Results: The Results section typically begins with a Descriptive Statistics subsection describing the data, its distribution and appropriateness for using parametric or nonparametric statistical analyses, and the reliability coefficients of the survey instruments.

Discussion: In the Discussion section, the results of the analyses should be interpreted for the reader, and reviewed in relation to how these findings compare to relevant findings in the literature.

A Sample Study

An applied linguistics study that used survey research is Cheng et al. (2014). They examined how motivation and anxiety related to test performance on three large-scale standardized English proficiency tests. For their study, they used a questionnaire that had two main sections: a motivation section composed of 24 Likert items, and a test anxiety section consisting of 25 Likert items (the responses to the items were on a 6-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). The motivation section was the *Language Learning Orientations Scale*, and the test anxiety scale was based on the *Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale*. In the Instruments section of their article, Cheng et al. describe how these two scales were originally developed, the validation process of the instruments, and the reliability reported by the original developers.

The questionnaire was completed by 1,281 test takers that took one of three tests: the Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) assessment, the College English Test (CET), and the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT). The authors did not provide the sampling procedure for how these 1,281 participants were selected, other than to say that they "were representative of the population of those who normally take the three tests" (Cheng et al., 2014, p. 308). They did, however, explicitly report the reliability coefficients for the different groups of test takers on the different sections of the questionnaire.

They analyzed the data from the questionnaire using a number of analyses, including descriptive statistics, ANOVA, factor analysis, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and hierarchical regression. From these analyses, they found that motivation and test anxiety do affect second language (L2) test performance, that the different groups of test takers reported different levels of anxiety and motivation, and concluded that test developers need to consider social and educational contexts when developing and validating tests.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Sue Starfield

Ethnographic approaches to research in TESOL are interested in studying language learning within the social contexts in which it occurs and uncovering the meanings, understandings, and identities of the participants in communicative events taking place within these contexts. Ethnographic research involves the direct observation of human behaviour within particular settings and seeks to understand a social reality from the perspectives of those involved.

Issues Related to Methodology

The origins of ethnography lie in the field of anthropology and its desire to understand the peoples of non-Western cultures; however, disciplines other than anthropology have adopted ethnographic perspectives and adapted these to studying communities within local settings. Under the influence of postmodernism in particular, there is now a considerable diversity in ethnographic research. Written ethnographic accounts are now rarely objective research reports but tend to clearly locate the researcher within the research process and demonstrate reflexivity in this regard. Researchers who see their role as encouraging social change may be more interested in critical ethnography, which seeks to understand language learning and use in terms of issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, identity, unequal power relations, and so forth (Johns & Makalela, 2011; Talmy, 2013).

Despite this diversity, core tenets of an ethnographic approach can be discerned. Ethnographic research is typically small in scale and focused on a single setting or group. Researchers are encouraged to immerse themselves in the everyday activities of the group of people whose meaning-making practices (also known as *emic* or insider perspectives) they are attempting to understand. Hammersley (2010) identifies key features of a broadly defined ethnographic approach to educational research which are relevant to TESOL. These include the following:

- studying people's behaviour in everyday rather than experimental contexts;
- gathering data from a range of sources chiefly by "observation and/or relatively informal conversation" (Hammersley, 2010, p. 387); and
- collecting data which are not based on preset categories or explicit hypotheses but arise out of a general interest in an issue or problem.

Instead of preset categories, interpretive categories and theoretical ideas emerge in the course of the research and analysis. Sustained engagement by the researcher in the research setting is also a defining feature of ethnographic research. The collection of data from multiple sources and the triangulation of these data is therefore central to ethnographic research and promotes validity or trustworthiness. In his year-long ethnographic study of migrant learners of English in a Singaporean school, De Costa (2014) gathered data from field notes, observations, interviews, audiorecorded and videorecorded classroom interactions, and artifacts. From these multiple sources he was able to craft the thick description recommended by Geertz (1973) that includes detailed descriptions of contexts in an attempt to re-create as closely as possible the research setting so that, instead of mere description, the researcher moves to interpretation and the reader is provided with a greater depth of understanding.

An emerging genre is autoethnography in which the autoethnographer uses the tools of autobiography to examine and understand cultural and personal experience (Canagarajah, 2012), authoring texts "in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them" (Pratt, 1991, p. 35). While Canagarajah adopts a personal, reflexive tenor, including narrative elements in his account, ethnographic accounts in applied linguistics have tended to adopt fairly conventional formats and thus far appear to show little evidence of researcher reflexivity (Starfield, 2013).

A Sample Study

Christian Chun (2014) discusses a critical ethnographic study he carried out in an English for academic purposes (EAP) class in an intensive English program at a Canadian university over an

11-month period. The article examines racialized textbook representations of immigrant success stories that fail to challenge institutionalised social inequities and identities. The ethnographic research involved observing an instructor's classes and included audiorecording and videorecording the classes, interviews with the instructor and two students taking the class, 18 research discussion meetings with the instructor, classroom observation field notes, and curriculum material analysis. The data analysed in the article are drawn from two classroom lessons featuring a textbook character called Jennifer Wong and from a meetings with the instructor that took place between the two lessons.

After two months of observation, Chun became aware that the teacher was concerned about the students' lack of engagement with the curriculum. He raised the possibility of sharing work with her on functional grammar and critical pedagogies that informed his own thinking and pedagogy. Their meetings became collaborative, research-oriented inquiries into the theoretical and practical aspects of implementing a critical pedagogies approach. This attempt to bridge the divide between critical pedagogy theorists and practitioners was, for Chun, part of the critical reflexive praxis in which they were both engaged. The regularly scheduled conversations with the instructor had the ethnographic aim of examining and reflecting on the teacher's evolving approaches to her pedagogy and "document[ing] the effects of any changes in both her classroom practices and the resulting meaning-making by students" (Chun, 2014, p. 6).

In Chun's study, we see, as outlined above, how the researcher's engagement at the site allows for the research to evolve as new questions and issues emerge over time, allowing Chun to develop a mutually supportive dialogic relationship with the teacher. Chun clearly identifies himself as not being "an objective, neutral observer but … part of and implicated in the phenomena" (Chun, 2014, p. 6) being observed. He observed how many of the discussions with the teacher were taken up in subsequent lessons and discussed these observations with the teacher. He also shared with her the transcripts of all the classroom interactions as well as his initial analyses of the classroom data, and she offered her own observations and comments that further shaped the analysis. The relationship that developed enabled the teacher to disclose to Chun, after the first lesson, a racialising encounter with a teacher in her own school days that she reinterpreted in the light of her new-found, more critical, understandings. Chun too shared with her his own experiences of being racially positioned in the U.S. context. In a second lesson using the same material, the teacher opened up the discussion in a more critical way and the students became more engaged in the discussion.

Chun's choice of a critical ethnographic approach that is explicitly informed by theory allows him to illustrate the ways in which social, political, and historical contexts shape everyday communicative classrooms events.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Rodney H. Jones

Discourse analysis is a term used for a range of research methods that study the structure and function of texts and interactions in relation to the social or institutional contexts in which they occur. The main approaches to discourse analysis used by scholars of TESOL are conversation analysis (see, e.g., Waring, 2012), interactional sociolinguistics (see, e.g., Kayi-Aydar, 2014), genre analysis (see, e.g., Paltridge, 2014), narrative analysis (see, e.g., Barkhuizen, 2011), and critical discourse analysis (see, e.g., Hammond, 2006). More recently, newer approaches to discourse such as mediated and multimodal discourse analysis have also attracted attention among TESOL scholars (see, e.g., Hafner, 2014).

Issues Related to Methodology

Nearly all approaches to discourse analysis used in TESOL adhere to a few key principles. First, discourse analysts are interested in language use beyond the clause or utterance. Second, discourse analysts generally take as their data naturally occurring texts or spoken interactions. Third, discourse analysts examine actual language use. Finally, discourse analysts are concerned with the relationship between language and the social and/or cultural contexts in which it is used. Beyond these principles, particular approaches focus on different aspects of discourse, conversation analysis, for example, focusing on how people structure their participation in conversations in terms of turn taking, topic management, and repair; genre analysis, focusing on the ways texts and interactions are structured in relation to particular social practices or activities; and critical discourse analysis, focusing on how texts and interactions reflect underlying ideologies and relationships of power in institutions and societies. Articles using discourse analytical methods generally follow the following format.

Introduction: Discourse analysis articles generally begin with a clear statement of the problem or issue under investigation and a theoretical discussion of the particular approach being used.

Methodology: This section provides an account of how the data have been collected, selected, and (in the case of spoken data) transcribed, and the specific procedures that were followed in the analysis.

Findings and discussion: The Findings section usually includes a clear description of the features or patterns found in the data along with exemplary passages or examples to illustrate these features or patterns. Because discourse analysis normally involves some degree of interpretation, the Discussion and Findings sections are often combined. This is usually the most important part of the article, because the researcher must make a very strong case for the validity of his or her interpretation.

Conclusions: Such studies usually end with a conclusion that reiterates the main findings and discusses such things as the limitations of the study and its implication for pedagogical practice.

Researchers using discourse analysis must address a number of particular challenges if they are to produce successful studies. Most importantly, they must strive to show that their analysis involves systematic attention to linguistic features in the data rather than just impressionistic interpretations of what people say or write (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2002). Researchers must also be aware of how methods of sampling and transcription can affect their findings (Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, 1997). Because discourse analysis is essentially an interpretative exercise, researchers must present convincing arguments to justify their interpretations and conclusions. Finally, discourse analysts must be sensitive to the ethical dimensions of their work, not just in terms of how they obtain informed consent from participants to record interactions or collect texts, but also in terms of how they represent participants' speech and the contexts in which this speech occurs (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992).

A Sample Study

Waring (2012) is a good example of an article reporting on a discourse analytical study. Waring uses tools from conversation analysis to examine how yes/no questions (such as *Do you understand?*) function as understanding checks in language classrooms. The article begins with an introduction to the problem and a strong justification for the utility of conversation analysis in helping to shed light on it. Following this is a thorough review of previous work on understanding checks in language classrooms from a variety of theoretical perspectives, including previous work using conversation analysis. Next, the author presents a clear statement of her research questions—(1) How are the understanding-check questions oriented to by the learners?, and (2) How do the teachers manage the understanding-check questions?—and a detailed account of her methods, including a description of the participants and setting, the procedures followed in data collection and transcription (including the kinds of equipment used), and data analysis procedures (including how the researcher selected segments of the data to analyse and the particular features she focused on). The longest section of the article is the one in which the findings are described and interpreted. Notably, this section is arranged in a deductive fashion in which the researcher states a number of *analytical claims* and proceeds to support these claims using examples from her data. Among her main findings are (1) that yes/no questions are often ineffective ways to check students' understanding, because conventions governing these question types make affirming understanding the preferred response (Pomerantz, 1984), whether students really understand or not; (2) that lack of understanding is often communicated with hesitations or silence rather than with no responses; and (3) that often such questions have important functions in classroom discourse other than checking understanding, such as signaling transitions from one activity to another. In the final section of the article the author reiterates her main findings and how they address her research questions, discusses the validity and generalizability of the findings in relation to the theoretical principles of conversation analysis, and discusses the pedagogical implications of the study.

Whereas particular studies using approaches like critical discourse analysis may be structured slightly differently, all articles using discourse analysis should demonstrate a similar degree of analytical rigor and accountability to the theories of language and social interaction advanced by whatever method of discourse analysis the researcher chooses.

PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

Anne Burns

Practitioner research (PR) broadly reflects the notion that professionals working within their own workplace settings carry out systematic investigations on aspects of their daily practices. Educational PR draws on methodologies of action research, practitioner inquiry, classroom research, action learning, and reflective and exploratory practice. It is situated at the interface of practice and theory, where participants are moving between the two in a designed process of intervention in response to participant-identified issues and challenges.

Issues Related to Methodology

PR highlights participants' role in inquiry (teachers, students, administrators, etc.) within daily educational settings and incorporates critical reflection and the systematic study of practice, informed by evidence that supports new understandings and/or changes in practice. It overlaps with case study and ethnography, and incorporates iterative interventionist approaches, such as those adopted in action research, of planning (or identifying an issue), acting (conducting some kind of intervention related to the issue), observing (collecting forms of evidence), and reflecting (analysing the evidence and reflecting on the intervention experiences). Data collection is eclectic (qualitative and/or quantitative), depending on the questions posed. PR genres (still a subject of considerable debate), may avoid the traditional sequence of research reporting (Background, Method/Procedure, Results, Discussion, Conclusions). In contrast, narrative forms of writing orient reporting toward personalization, subjectivity, and localization, and are valuable tools for writing (Burns, 2014).

The format and style of reporting is inevitably determined by the target audience. Teacher colleagues working in similar circumstances, and primarily interested in practical issues, are more likely to appreciate accounts presented through narrative genres (telling the story of the research) that focus on practical activities and outcomes, and on the researcher's experiences, such as newsletter contributions (e.g., *ELT Research*, 2015), short recounts (e.g., Cambridge English Language Assessment, 2015) or poster presentations (e.g., Smith, Connelly, & Rebolledo, 2014). Here, with the proviso that agreed genres for reporting PR are still in flux, I focus on how PR might be presented to academic journals such as *TESOL Quarterly*.

Introduction: An introduction is likely to contain an orientation to the researcher's theoretical and/or practical rationale for the research and the issues and questions driving the investigation. It may also outline the aims and purposes of the research.

Context/background: The context provides a rich introduction to the research setting to clarify the cultural, social, and educational circumstances and imperatives and describe the participants involved. It includes information about the teaching program and the roles played by the participants.

Strategies/phases of research/steps taken: Often using an autobiographical style, the researcher details the actions taken and how they address the issues under investigation. This section may unfold as a recount of the events and reactions of participants during various research phases, outlining the methods and tools used to gather evidence to support emerging reflections and conclusions. These reflections often show how the research moved in new directions because of unanticipated outcomes.

Insights/findings/outcomes: The data are presented to illustrate the impact of the practical investigative strategies and empirical phases on the original issues the researcher identified. The discussion relates to strategies and interventions that were both successful and unsuccessful and illustrates why theoretical and/or practical changes in practice occurred.

Implications/reflections/discussion: PR involves the researcher in arriving at new understandings and insights about the educational situation, themselves as practitioners, and how the research has resulted in "a better world" for participants. This section revisits what was anticipated from the research and what actually eventuated. It also suggests how other practitioners might replicate the process or draw on what has been gained.

Readers will notice that the format above does not include a formal literature review. There is no firm reason why this section might not stand alone, but since PR is not driven foremost by formalised "received theory," a more logical approach for many practitioners is to interweave references within the various sections as the researcher moves between theory and practice.

A Sample Study

Despite the dramatic increase in interest in PR in recent decades, its almost nonexistent publication in *TESOL Quarterly* is telling. A search through the 20 issues published between 2010 and 2014 revealed only one (Murphey & Falout, 2010) that came close to orienting itself specifically to practitioner/action research, through "praxis, the unity of theory and action" (p. 819).

Murphey and Falout (2010) used a process called critical participatory looping (CPL), based on Freire's (2007/1970) principles of participatory pedagogy and Dewey's (2004/1916) frameworks of experience, description, analysis, and intelligent action as an alternative to individualistic member checking, to validate research in their own classrooms. This process of "mutual validation" (p. 812) involved participants (students and teachers) in two classroom studies to review data and interpretations in a way that fed back into classroom practices. The introductory part of the article, referenced to the literature, theorises the concept of CPL and the researchers' introduction of it into two classroom investigations. A Background section, providing further theoretical rationalisation for their approach, is followed by a section on utilizing CPL in research, explaining the intervention processes and practical steps used to exploit the potential of CPL for learning. The next sections, Study One and Study Two, describe respectively how CPL (a) heightened both teachers' and students' sensitivity to previous diverse learning experiences (p. 815), and (b) disclosed attributions of motivation/demotivation among students such that student agency was enhanced (p. 816). The Discussion section highlights the sociocultural processes of meaning making—dialogic energy (Wertsch, 2006), languaging (Swain, 2006) and intersubjectivity (Guilar, 2006)—that, as a result, created learning processes "*with* rather than *of*" (p. 818) students. The Limitations section acknowledges possible limiting factors in the investigative approach, and the Conclusions section reflects on the research's theoretical and practical value in transforming second language acquisition (SLA) learning environments.

ETHICS

Peter I. De Costa

TESOL researchers generally observe the core principles of justice, respect for persons, and yielding optimal benefits while minimizing harm when conducting research. Ethics can be examined from a variety of perspectives: quantitative vs. qualitative (Kono, 2013) and through *macroethical* and *microethical* lenses (Kubanyiova, 2013). Macroethics refer to the procedural ethics of institutional review boards (IRBs), ethics committees, and professional organizations; microethics engage with the everyday ethical dilemmas confronted by researchers. To date, much of the ethics literature has been shaped by macroethical guidelines (e.g., Chapelle & Duff, 2003). TESOL researchers have also turned to professional organizations for ethical direction (BAAL, 2006; TESOL International Association, 2014). These macroethical guidelines, however, need to be complemented by microethical governance, that is, actual examples of ways to negotiate ethical dilemmas in specific research contexts (De Costa, 2016).

Ethical practices need to be enacted before, during, and after a study is conducted. Even before a study begins, researchers play a vital role in educating ethics committees and co-investigators in different institutions because the type of consent varies according to institutional setting. Consent forms need to be made accessible and understandable, especially when working with under-researched populations (Ortega, 2005). On a microethical level, only valid and reliable instruments should be used, and researchers need to be respectful of participants' time while exploring compensation possibilities.

During data collection and data analysis, a flexible approach in dealing with emergent ethical problems needs to be adopted. For example, when administering a survey, research bias ought to be factored in. Similarly, interviews should be viewed as a form of social practice involving discursive positioning and evaluation by both interviewer and interviewee. Underscoring the importance of building relationships with participants, Holliday (2015) reminds us that it may be unfair to develop relationships within a research setting that cannot be sustained on the participants' own terms. Analyzing data also poses ethical demands. When analyzing quantitative data, researchers need to select appropriate statistical tests and understand the logic behind statistical analysis. Overall, transparency of method should be observed.

Shohamy (2004) warned about the potential misuse of research results, which may be used inappropriately by consumers for immoral purposes after a study is completed. One way to evade this problem is to foreground the statistical and practical significance of one's findings. Another growing ethical concern of TESOL researchers is the "publish or perish" culture confronting the academy today. Student–faculty collaborative research, in particular, is prone to abuse. The macroethical publishing guidelines provided by IRB protocols, the American Psychological Association (2010), and journals such as *TESOL Quarterly* (http://www.tesol.org/read-and-publish/journals/tesol-quarterly/tesol-quarterly-research-guidelines) provide useful guidelines on authorship.

A Sample Study

De Costa (2014) illustrated the ethical problems encountered during a year-long ethnographic study involving adolescent immigrant students in an English-medium secondary school in Singapore.

Before the study. Upon securing the approval of the Ministry of Education and the support of the school principal and his participants, De Costa applied for IRB approval and distributed consent forms. His participants were given the option to withdraw at any point in the study without penalty. In reciprocation for their participation, he implemented a lesson study professional development project for the teachers. He provided his student participants supplementary English lessons, organized field trips, and furnished them with information about the Singapore education system.

During the study. De Costa's enduring presence in the school helped offset any hasty and preliminary generalizations. Further, his holistic understanding of the school was enhanced by having multiple data sources. He was also reflexive about not taking advantage of the hospitality of teachers. Lesson observations were staggered, and ample notice was given before turning up for class. Broad classroom interactions were videorecorded, and interactions involving his focal learners and their Singaporean teachers and peers were audiorecorded to respect the wishes of some of the Singaporean students, who felt uncomfortable being videotaped. Interviews were held at a time that was convenient for participants and in a private space. Overall, cycling back and forth between the different data sources enabled him to avoid drawing simplistic conclusions.

After the study. When reporting his findings to the principal and teachers at his research site, De Costa was selective in disclosing and brokering information in order to avoid harming his student and teacher participants. Upon completing his study, deliberate efforts were made to share his findings with a broader audience through journal publications and presentations at conferences organized by professional organizations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The information included in these guidelines is meant to provide a broad overview of some of the key issues and approaches relevant to work published in *TESOL Quarterly*. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with other information available on the TESOL website (e.g., the TESOL Research Agenda), the *TESOL Quarterly* website, and other publications on research methods and academic publishing. These guidelines include key references and information on a range of research approaches, but they do not include the full range of research methods and approaches available to researchers and do not provide comprehensive details about the ones that are included. Authors are strongly advised to read more about the particular research method that they are adopting, look up research studies that use that particular method, and use up-to-date references in their work.

THE AUTHORS

Ahmar Mahboob is a senior lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. His recent research looks at language variation and its implications for educational, social, and national development. He also works in the areas of genre studies and nonnative-English-speaking teacher (NNEST) issues. Ahmar is a co-editor of *TESOL Quarterly*.

Brian Paltridge is professor of TESOL at the University of Sydney and co-editor of *TESOL Quarterly*. His most recent publications are *Ethnographic Perspectives on Academic Writing,* with Sue Starfield and Christine Tardy (Oxford University Press, 2016) and *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics,* edited with Aek Phakiti (Bloomsbury, 2015).

Aek Phakiti is an associate professor in TESOL at the University of Sydney. His research and teaching focus on language testing and assessment, second language acquisition, and research methods in language studies.

Elvis Wagner is an associate professor of TESOL at Temple University in Philadelphia, United States. His research focuses primarily on second language assessment, especially the assessment of second language listening and oral communicative competence.

Sue Starfield is a professor in the School of Education and Director of the Learning Centre at the University of New South Wales, Australia. Her research focuses on doctoral writing, writing for publication, identity in academic writing, and ethnographic research methods.

Rodney H. Jones is a professor of sociolinguistics and new media at the University of Reading, England. His main research interests include discourse analysis, computer-mediated communication, health communication, and language and creativity.

Anne Burns is a professor of TESOL in the School of Education at the University of New South Wales, Australia. She is also professor emerita at Aston University, Birmingham, England, and an honorary professor at the University of Sydney.

Peter I. De Costa teaches on the doctoral Second Language Studies and Masters in TESOL programs at Michigan State University in East Lansing, United States. He is the editor of the Routledge volume *Ethics in Applied Linguistics Research: Language Researcher Narratives* (2016).

REFERENCES

American Psychological Association (APA). (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Antaki, C., Billig, M., Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (2002). Discourse analysis means doing analysis: A critique of six analytic shortcomings. *Discourse Analysis Online, 1*(1). Retrieved from http://extra.shu.ac.uk/daol/previous/v1_n1.html

Barkhuizen, G. (2011). Narrative knowledging in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *45*, 391–414. doi:10.5054/tq.2011.261888

Blom, E., & Unsworth, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Experimental methods in language acquisition*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: John Benjamins.

British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL). (2006). *Recommendations on good practice in applied linguistics*. Retrieved from http://www.baal.org.uk/about_-goodpractice_full.pdf

Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, A. (2014). "Systematic inquiry made public": Teacher reports from a national action research program. *Research Notes*, *56*, 4–6. Retrieved from http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/170903-research-notes-56-document.pdf

Cambridge English Language Assessment. (2015). English Australia/Cambridge English Action Research Program 5. *Research Notes*, 60. Retrieved from http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/228055-research-notes-60.pdf

Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, M. B. H., & Richardson, K. (1992). *Researching language: Issues of power and method*. London, England: Routledge.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2012). Teacher development in a global profession: An autoethnography. *TESOL Quarterly*, *46*, 258–279. doi:10.1002/tesq.18

Chapelle, C., & Duff, P. (Eds.). (2003). Some guidelines for conducting quantitative and qualitative research in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, *37*, 157–178. doi:10.2307/3588471

Cheng, L., Klinger, D., Fox, J., Doe, C., Jin, Y., & Wu, J. (2014). Motivation and test anxiety in test performance across three testing contexts: The CAEL, CET, and GEPT. *TESOL Quarterly*, *48*, 300–330. doi:10.1002/tesq.105

Chun, C. (2014). Addressing racialized multicultural discourses in an EAP textbook: Working toward a critical pedagogies approach. *TESOL Quarterly*, doi:10.1002/tesq.216

De Costa, P. I. (2014). Making ethical decisions in an ethnographic study. *TESOL Quarterly*, *48*, 413–422. doi:10.1002/tesq.163

De Costa, P. I. (Ed.). (2016). *Ethics in applied linguistics research: Language researcher narratives*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Dewey, J. (2004). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: Continuum. (Original work published 1916.)

Dörnyei, Z., with Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

ELT Research. (2015). The newsletter of the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group, (January), *30*. Retrieved from http://resig.weebly.com/issue-30.html

Fink, A. (1995). *How to sample in surveys*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Freire, P. (2007). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. Ramos, Trans). New York, NY: Continuum. (Original work published 1970.)

Gass, S. (2015). Experimental research. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Research methods in applied linguistics: A practical resource* (pp. 101–117). London, England: Bloomsbury.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Green, J., Franquiz, M., & Dixon, C. (1997). The myth of the objective transcript: Transcribing as a situated act. *TESOL Quarterly*, *31*, 172–176. doi:10.2307/3587984

Guilar, J. D. (2006). Intersubjectivity and dialogic instruction. *Radical Pedagogy*. Retrieved from http://www.radicalpedagogy.org/radicalpedagogy/Intersubjectivity_and_Dialogic_Instruction.html

Hafner, C. A. (2014). Embedding digital literacies in English language teaching: Students' digital video projects as multimodal ensembles. *TESOL Quarterly, 48*, 655–685. doi:10.1002/tesq.138

Hammersley, M. (2010). Ethnography. In P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGaw (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (3rd ed., pp. 386–391). Oxford, England: Elsevier.

Hammond, K. (2006). More than a game: A critical discourse analysis of a racial inequality exercise in Japan. *TESOL Quarterly, 40*, 545–571. doi:10.2307/40264543

Holliday, A. (2015). Qualitative research and analysis. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Research methods in applied linguistics: A practical resource* (pp. 49–62). London, England: Bloomsbury.

Hudson, T., & Llosa, L. (2015). Design issues and inference in experimental L2 research. *Language Learning, 65*, 76–96. doi:10.1111/lang.12113

Johns, A. M., & Makalela, L. (2011). Needs analysis, critical ethnography, and context: Perspectives from the client—and the consultant. In D. Belcher, A. M. Johns, & B. Paltridge (Eds.), *New directions in English for specific purposes research* (pp. 197–221). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kayi-Aydar, H. (2014). Social positioning, participation, and second language learning: Talkative students in an academic ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 48*, 686–714. doi:10.1002/tesq.139

Kono, N. (2013). Ethics in research. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kubanyiova, M. (2013). Ethical debates in research on language and interaction. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kwan, B. S. C. (2010). An investigation of instruction in research publishing in doctoral programs: The Hong Kong case. *Higher Education, 59*(1), 55–68. doi:10.1007/s10734-009-9233-x

Larson-Hall, J., & Herrington, R. (2010). Improving data analysis in second language acquisition by utilizing modern developments in applied statistics. *Applied Linguistics, 31*, 368–390. doi:10.1093/applin/amp038

Larson-Hall, J., & Plonsky, L. (2015). Reporting and interpreting quantitative research findings: What gets reported and recommendations for the field. *Language Learning, 65*(special issue), 127–159. doi:10.1111/lang.12115

Murphey, T., & Falout, J. (2010). Critical participatory looping: Dialogic member checks with whole classes. *TESOL Quarterly, 44*, 811–821. doi:10.5054/tq.2010.237337

Ong, J., & Zhang, L. J. (2012). Effects of the manipulation of cognitive process on EFL writers' text quality. *TESOL Quarterly, 47*, 375–398. doi:10.1002/tesq.55

Ortega, L. (2005). For what and for whom is our research? The ethical as transformative lens in instructed SLA. *The Modern Language Journal, 89*, 427–443. doi:10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00315.x

Paltridge, B. (2014). Genre and second language academic writing. *Language Teaching, 47*, 303–318. doi:10.1017/S0261444814000068

Perry, F. (2011). *Researching applied linguistics: Becoming a discerning consumer* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Phakiti, A. (2014). *Experimental research methods in language learning*. London, England: Bloomsbury.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.),

Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis (pp. 57–101). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
Pratt, M. L. (1991). Arts of the contact zone. *Profession*, *91*, 33–40.
Purpura, J. E., Brown, J. D., & Schoonen, R. (2015). Improving the validity of quantitative measures in applied linguistics research. *Language Learning*, *65*, 37–75. doi:10.1111/lang.12112
Shohamy, E. (2004). Reflections on research guidelines, categories, and responsibility. *TESOL Quarterly*, *38*, 728–731. doi:10.2307/3588291
Smith, R., Connelly, T., & Rebolledo, P. (2014). Teacher-research as continuing professional development: A project with Chilean secondary schools. In D. Hayes (Ed.), *Innovations in the continuing professional development of English language teachers* (pp. 111–132). London, England: The British Council. Retrieved from http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/ec/files/E168%20Innovations%20in%20CPD_FINAL%20V2%20web.pdf
Starfield, S. (2013). Researcher reflexivity. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of applied linguistics* (pp. 1–7). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
Swain, M. (2006). Languaging, agency and collaboration in advanced second language proficiency. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced language learning* (pp. 95–108). London, England: Continuum.
Talmy, S. (2013). Critical ethnography. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of applied linguistics* (pp. 1–6). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
TESOL International Association. (2014). *TESOL International Association research agenda 2014*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
Vogt, W. (2007). *Quantitative research methods for professionals*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
Wagner, E. (2015). Survey research. In B. Paltridge & A. Phakiti (Eds.), *Research methods in applied linguistics: A practical resource* (pp. 83–100). London, England: Bloomsbury.
Waring, H. Z. (2012). "Any questions?": Investigating the nature of understanding-checks in the language classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, *46*, 722–752. doi:10.1002/tesq.48
Wertsch, J. V. (2006). Generalized collective dialogue and advanced foreign language capacities. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced language learning* (pp. 58–71). London, England: Continuum.