

# TESOL Standing Committee for Research

## 2009 TESOL Research Fair:

### Charting Pathways in Research Methodology

9:00-10:45, Fri., 27 March  
Convention Centre Room 112

#### Panel:

Anne Burns (Chair) - Macquarie University,  
Sydney, Australia

Christopher N. Candlin - Macquarie University,  
Sydney, Australia

Michael Legutke - Justus-Liebig-University Giessen,  
Germany

David Olsher - San Francisco State University, USA

# TESOL Standing Committee for Research 2009 TESOL Research Fair: Charting Pathways in Research Methodology

## SCR Members in Attendance:

Maggie Hawkins  
Constant Leung  
Angel Lin  
Denise Newfield  
Ali Shehadeh

# Session Format

- **Introductions**
- **Burning Questions on Research Methodology (examples collected from teacher researchers)**
- **Participant Group Discussions (in groups discuss, add to or modify questions according to your interests)**
- **Questions to the Panel (select two burning questions in order of importance to your group. Choose one to present one to the panel)**
- **Panel Members' Responses and Audience Input**
- **Final Words (if time permits)**

# Burning Questions for Research Methodology

To access the questions go to:

[www.professoranneburns.com](http://www.professoranneburns.com)

# Objectivity/Subjectivity in Research

In a way, qualitative research sounds to me as something subjective and apt to be biased.

My question is:

To what extent are the results credible (because the research is done by the researcher alone, and so are the report and interpretation)?

Tho Le (Vietnam)

## Objectivity/Subjectivity (continued)

Merriam (1998) distinguishes between interpretive & critical orientations to research (p.5). In conducting qualitative research, one is often told to 'bracket one's assumptions', i.e. work from the data to derive analyses and findings, rather than pre-empting them.

How does one reconcile this within a critical research orientation, for example: if one were to examine how a certain literacy program is structured in such a way that the interests of some social and cultural groups are maintained and promoted to the exclusion of others?

Sue Ollerhead (Australia)

# Qualitative designs & ethical requirements

True qualitative studies are said to be ‘emergent and flexible’ (Merriam, 1998, p.8).

To what extent is such a research design really feasible for PhD students, when, for example, scholarship and ethics committees demand that the design of the study be established and approved in advance?

Sue Ollerhead



# Generalisability

In a way, qualitative research sounds to me as something subjective and apt to be biased. My specific questions is: To what extent are its results generalisable? (The research is normally case-specific.)

Tho Le

In case study research, there is very little ground for generalisation (Stake, 1995, p.7). So what, if any, are the advantages of conducting collective or multi-site case study research over single case study research?

Sue Ollerhead

# Coding & Analysing Data

Even though I have relied on the literature on methodology research, a number of research articles where coding processes were carried out, as well as on my supervisor's valuable advice, I have found it particularly challenging to code data (from interviews and focus group) when doing grounded theory.

Therefore, I would like to ask the following questions:

# Coding & Analysing Data (continued)

- 1) How do you 'make sure' (or feel confident) that you carry out an accurate coding procedure?
- 2) Because I have found that other categories can emerge when writing the discussion or interpretation of those final categories, how could you 'make sure' (or feel confident) that you arrived to an accurate final coding stage?

Veronica Sanchez (Mexico)

# Ensuring Reliability

Which aspects should be taken into consideration when talking about reliability issues in qualitative research?

Carmen Contijoch (Mexico)

# Formulating the Thesis

I read (Cresswell, 1994, p.203), “In the qualitative area, good literature serves to illustrate clear prose and detailed passages” and the apparent advice is to read classical literature such as *The Scarlet Letter* to improve writing.

*Why? In what way does classical literature facilitate qualitative researchers in their writing?*

Tho Le

# Data in Research Reports

As qualitative data is extremely rich and thick, which parts of the data can go in the Appendix? And can part of the analysis go in an Appendix?

Carmen Contijoch

# Group Discussions:

Please work with the people at your table to ...

- Discuss burning questions (see handout)
- Add to or modify the questions according to your research interests
- Select two burning questions in order of importance to your group. After the group discussion, you will present one question to the panel (if time permits, the second may be asked).

# Your Questions, Some Answers, and Whole Group Discussion

Please ask your selected question  
for responses from the panel and  
discussion by participants



**End of Session:  
Thank you**