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State-of-the-Art Article

Trends in qualitative research in language teaching since 2000

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This paper reviews developments in qualitative research in language teaching since the year 2000, focusing on its contributions to the field and identifying issues that emerge. Its aims are to identify those areas in language teaching where qualitative research has the greatest potential and indicate what needs to be done to further improve the quality of its contribution. The paper begins by highlighting current trends and debates in the general area of qualitative research and offering a working definition of the term. At its core is an overview of developments in the new millennium based on the analysis of papers published in 15 journals related to the field of language teaching and a more detailed description, drawn from a range of sources, of exemplary contributions during that period. Issues of quality are also considered, using illustrative cases to point to aspects of published research that deserve closer attention in future work, and key publications on qualitative research practice are reviewed.

1. Introduction

'Qualitative research', claimed Lazaraton (2003a) in a recent review of evaluative criteria, 'has come of age in applied linguistics' (p. 1). In the thirteen years since her own groundbreaking assessment (Lazaraton 1995) enough has changed to warrant this claim. Qualitative research (henceforth QR) has opened dimensions of insight into the processes of language teaching and learning that were not even discernible on the horizon twenty years ago, and developments in the new millennium promise even richer understandings in the future. Although I shall not advance the case for QR in this paper – its many and valuable contributions over the years have established a rich methodological pedigree from which current research benefits – it is nevertheless important to recognise that prejudice still exists: van de Ven's note that he will 'work with an interpretive epistemology, which is not always accepted in the Netherlands' (2007: 112) reflects a familiar condition. The focus here, though, will be on the achievements of QR since the turn of the century.

The present paper begins with a brief introduction to the field of QR, highlighting current trends and debates in the area. This is followed by an overview of developments since 2000 based on the analysis of all papers published in 15 journals related to the field of language teaching and a more detailed description of some exemplary contributions to the field during that period. Attention then turns to the issue of quality in qualitative research. Following a

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review of available resources, the paper concludes with a brief comment on the prospects for QR in language teaching. A list of online resources will be found in the appendix.

2. The field of qualitative research

2.1 What is qualitative research?

Holliday (2007: 1) notes that it is traditional to begin by distinguishing QR from quantitative research, an 'unadventurous' if necessary approach since this is how most people see it. This is certainly true and well worth bearing in mind as this section situates QR in its broader conceptual and historical context before concluding with a working definition.

In fact, the distinction between quality and quantity is just one of many convenient but rather crude alternatives such as words/numbers, subjective/objective or specific/generalisable (for a longer list see Freebody 2003: 3). These distinctions derive from much deeper beliefs about the nature of research itself and the world it seeks to understand, reflected in different PARADIGMS (see Richards 2003: 32–40 for a discussion of relevant concepts). Although the terminology varies, there is general agreement on the nature of the three dominant paradigms. Research was for a long time dominated by the first of these, (POST-)POSITIVISM, based on the assumption that we can test our hypotheses about the nature of the world through a process of carefully constructed experimentation or measurement. This came to be challenged by CONSTRUCTIVISM, which rejected the objectification of knowledge and sought instead to understand, through locally situated investigation, participants' social construction of reality. A third paradigm associated with CRITICAL THEORY demanded an analysis of participant perspectives based on the recognition that these reflected power asymmetries produced by social and historical forces.

The emergence of new paradigms and their challenge to the hegemonic position of post-positivism led to what became known as the 'paradigm wars' of the 1970s and the 1980s in which rival claims were played out in various ways. The long debate was valuable in directing attention to important conceptual and methodological issues, but now to a large extent 'peace can be regarded as having broken out' (Bryman 2006: 113; for further discussion of this, see the special issue of *International Journal of Qualitative Education* on paradigm proliferation in educational research (vol. 19.1, 2006), which includes a useful discussion by Donmoyer (2006) of differing views on the concept of a paradigm shift). An important contributor to this development was an attack on the sort of simplistic contrast exemplified by the quantitative/qualitative distinction (e.g. Hammersley 1992; Bryman 2004). Writers in our own field have adopted a range of responses to this, such as offering a more nuanced comparison with a stronger focus on practical concerns (e.g. Holliday 2007) or reconfiguring traditional typologies (Brown & Rogers 2002, for example, use 'qualitative', 'survey' and 'statistical' as labels), though some characterisations are more contentious. Perry's (2005) suggestion, for example, that all research can be placed on a quantitative–qualitative continuum offers a useful heuristic, but one that he applies by drawing on traditional divisions.

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This dissatisfaction with oppositional stances produced in the new millennium a shift towards more pragmatic approaches to QR, focusing on practical issues rather than conceptual debates. This 'pragmatist alternative' accepts 'a multiplicity of positions' (Seale et al. 2007b: 3) and refuses to impose a single version of what counts as QR. Instead, it places the quality of research practice centre stage, emphasising the centrality of the research question (Teddlie & Tashakkori 2003) and the importance of contextual factors in decision-making (Brannen 2007). In our own field, Dörnyei (2007: 29–30) offers a useful characterisation in terms of 'purist', 'situationalist' and 'pragmatic' perspectives on traditional debates.

This shift towards more practical and contextual research issues, while not downplaying the conceptual dimension in research (see Sealey & Carter 2004), has rendered more abstract debates redundant and directed attention to ways in which quantitative and qualitative approaches can be integrated. This presents its own challenges (for a revealing discussion based on interviews with researchers using mixed methods, see Bryman 2007) and does not in itself resolve postmodernist doubts about the stability of core constructs or remove continuing positivist prejudices (see St.Pierre & Roulston 2006 for a valuable introduction to some of the relevant issues here), but it nevertheless opens up fresh avenues of exploration.

An adequate definition of QR, then, must be more than merely contrastive and must seek to capture the essential characteristics of a very broad and still contested field. The definition which seems to me to come closest to achieving this is that provided by Denzin & Lincoln (2000: 4–5):

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. . . . This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Working from this definition, I have therefore included in this review research that is:

- locally situated (it studies human participants in natural settings and conditions, eschewing artificially constructed situations);
- participant-oriented (it is sensitive to, and seeks to understand, participants' perspectives on their world);
- holistic (it is context sensitive and does not study isolated aspects independently of the situation in which they occur);
- inductive (it depends on a process of interpretation that involves immersion in the data and draws on different perspectives).

This fairly open list does not exclude an element of quantification (though it is clear that an essentially quantitative study would not meet these criteria) and neither does it insist on an exclusively insider perspective, but it establishes a sense of the boundaries that apply to QR. The need for this becomes clear when the landscape of QR is considered.

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2.2 The landscape of qualitative research

In 1994, Denzin & Lincoln remarked, in a positive vein, that there had never been 'so many paradigms, strategies of inquiry, or methods of analysis to draw upon and utilize' (p. 11), though a less optimistic note had been struck two years earlier by Miller & Crabtree (1992), who likened the 'quest for a useful organizational map of qualitative methods' to 'the quest for the holy grail' (p. 13). Although the rise of pragmatism has rendered the desire for a clear overview less urgent, differences in terminology and categorisation can still make the field daunting for new researchers.

Terminologically, the status of paradigms is no longer problematic, given the shift away from debates in this area and a general consensus that they represent fundamental belief systems about the nature of research. Neither is there a problem about what constitutes a METHOD, such as observation or the interview, though the term TECHNIQUE is sometimes used instead. The challenge lies more in deciding what counts as a core TRADITION, STRATEGY OF INQUIRY, ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK, or APPROACH, all terms that are used to label the different territories within QR. The fact that Creswell uses the first of these in his 1998 book on QR and the last in its second edition (2007) highlights the danger of assuming fixed points in this shifting world, while lists of traditions ranging from four items (Nunan 1992; Perry 2005) to twenty-seven (Tesch 1990) testify to the impossibility of definitive mapping. Nevertheless, Prasad (2005) does provide a reasonably comprehensive sketch with excellent brief overviews.

An analysis of standard introductions to QR in our field since 2000 (Brown & Rogers 2002; Holliday 2002a, 2007; Richards 2003; Perry 2005; Dörnyei 2007) produces only case study – a potentially catch-all category – as common to all, though ethnography and conversation analysis (ethnomethodology) have solitary exceptions, and action research, grounded theory, introspective methods and phenomenology also feature in more than one source. However, while phenomenology and grounded theory feature in QR generally, they do not loom large in research in language teaching and introspective methods are as likely to be quantitative as qualitative (the same might apply to case studies and even action research). Only Richards includes life history, though there is evidence of valuable work in this tradition in our field (see section 4.3 below).

To attempt a synthesis of these different categorisations would probably be futile and from a practical perspective would certainly be unproductive, but it helps to have a sense of the approaches a writer is using. In the analysis that follows I draw on the following broad categories, without claiming that the list is in any way exhaustive or exemplary: ethnographies (including linguistic ethnographies), case studies, interactional studies (and conversation analysis), introspective methods (including diary studies), life history/narrative research (and in-depth interview studies) and action research (including exploratory practice). Anyone interested in exploring relationships between these can attempt to follow the branches of Wolcott's (1992) tree, embracing twenty different traditions.

3. Review of trends in qualitative research since 2000

This section provides a (crudely) quantitative overview of QR trends since 2000 based on an analysis of leading journals in the field of language teaching. This is followed in the next

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section by a more developed discussion of areas of research that have received particular attention during the period.

It is worth noting at the outset that this is not the first time such an overview has been attempted. Lazaraton (2000) analysed all data-based articles in four core journals (*TESOL Quarterly*, *Language Learning*, *The Modern Language Journal* and *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*) over a seven-year period from 1992–1997 and found only 10% were qualitative (with a further 2% 'partially qualitative'). Yihong, Lichun & Jun (2001) also compare China and the west in terms of trends in research methods in applied linguistics, covering the years 1978–1997. Reviewing four 'western' journals (*Applied Linguistics*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *The Modern Language Journal* and *International Review of Applied Linguistics*), they note 'a shift toward the qualitative direction' and claim that 'from the mid-1990s, the percentage of qualitative studies has been approaching that of quantitative studies' (Yihong et al. 2001: 7). The review here covers a wider range of journals, but if the ten years following the period of their study (1998–2007) are examined for the four journals they select, this trend does not seem to have continued.

Even allowing some latitude in what counts as QR, the facts are stark: *TESOL Quarterly*, a journal clearly sympathetic to QR, dedicated less than a third of its space to these articles (47 out of 178), while in *Applied Linguistics* (31 out of 196) and *The Modern Language Journal* (39 out of 218) they amounted to less than a fifth of the total, and *IRAL* included only 10 (including two mixed methods papers) in its total of 128 papers. Not all the remaining papers were quantitative, but a representation of less than 18% of the total does not suggest a narrowing of the gap between qualitative and quantitative studies. The period covered by Yihong et al. (2001) was an important one in terms of the development of QR in language teaching and the shift they remark on was notable at the time, but the following analysis of trends in the new millennium suggests that things have settled into a situation where QR has a solid – though minority – presence in leading journals.

Any choice of 'representative' journals is bound to be contentious, but the overview that follows draws on 15 international publications, all with a research dimension and all of which at least have a reasonable claim to importance. In fact, the list includes all but one of the journals featuring in Egbert's (2007) quality analysis, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* being surveyed but excluded because of the predictable absence of qualitative studies (though the case is less clear-cut, I excluded *Language Testing* for the same reason). Some of the journals have a more local geographical relevance than others (though journals related to a specific country were not included), while some have a specialist focus, and they range from those with a heavy research focus to others with a more practical orientation. They also differ to some extent in terms of length of article, but the only journal excluded on this basis is *Language Learning Journal* because with an article length of around 4–6 pages it allows sufficient space only for reports on research and excludes an important methodological dimension. The full list is as follows: *TESOL Quarterly*, *The Modern Language Journal*, *RELC Journal*, *JALT Journal*, *Prospect*, *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, *System*, *ELT Journal*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Language Learning*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism*, *Applied Linguistics*, *English for Specific Purposes* and *International Review of Applied Linguistics* (*IRAL*).

In surveying these journals I have included all papers, excluding editorials, introductions, forums, comment papers, reviews, etc. This means that when QR papers are removed what

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remain are not necessarily just quantitative studies, but since my aim here is to present a picture of QR representation in general rather than to compare quantitative and qualitative studies, this seems legitimate. The analysis itself makes no judgement on the quality of the contributions and is based on the broad definition of QR provided in the introduction. This seems to work straightforwardly in most cases, though the term itself cannot always be relied on. Takahashi's (2005) title, for example, promises a 'qualitative analysis' but this belies the experimental study that follows. Where the analysis depends entirely on the analysis of discourse, I have made decisions on the basis of whether the interest is primarily in aspects of the discourse itself (i.e. essentially linguistic), in which case I have excluded it, or on the individual or social dimension, in which case it has been included. Mixed methods approaches are included where the qualitative aspect predominates, though they do not seem to have yet made a significant impact in language teaching research despite their potential, exemplified in Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis's (2004) study of the relationship between the beliefs and classroom practices of three teachers.

If anything emerges clearly from a study of papers published in these journals between 2000 and 2007 it is that, with a couple of notable exceptions, they have remained remarkably consistent in terms of the extent to which they feature papers involving QR. In terms of representation, the journals fall very roughly into two equal groups: those where QR papers take up less than 10% of the total (*International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism*, *IRAL*, *Language Learning*, *RELC Journal*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *ELT Journal*, *Journal of Second Language Writing* and *System*), and those in which either roughly one in five of the papers (*The Modern Language Journal*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Prospect* and *JALT Journal*) or around a quarter of the papers involve QR (*TESOL Quarterly*, *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching* and *Language Teaching Research*). It is perhaps not surprising – and quite encouraging – that most of the journals with more 'general' coverage fall into the second category.

There are other encouraging signs. Both *Prospect* and *ELT Journal*, for example, show signs of increasing the proportion of QR papers over the last couple of years, and while questionnaire surveys have always featured very prominently in *JALT Journal* there has been a noticeable increase in QR contributions over the last few years, rising from about one in ten papers up to the end of 2004 to over one in three after that. One of the most interesting developments is to be found in the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, where more QR papers were published in 2006 and 2007 than in the previous six years combined, with the emergence of individual case study particularly prominent.

Case studies are widely represented and feature most prominently in the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, but other approaches are also particularly associated with specific journals. For example, *The Modern Language Journal* seems to favour discourse-based papers, which represent around two-thirds of the total QR papers in the journal. These also feature strongly in *Applied Linguistics*, where papers based on introspective methods are rare, in contrast to the generous provision in *ELT Journal* and *Prospect*. Intriguingly, action research and exploratory practice do not seem to be well represented generally, with a significant presence in only *Language Teaching Research*, where exploratory practice is allotted its own separate section. The same might be said of ethnographic projects, which feature in nearly all the journals but far from prominently. *TESOL Quarterly*, where a quarter of the QR papers fall into this category, is a notable exception.

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The qualitative landscape seen through the lens of journal readers, then, might seem fairly bland: QR is reasonably well represented across a range of traditions, with none emerging as predominant and no evidence of a trend in any particular direction. However, a more careful examination of the sort of work being published in QR, in these journals and in other forms of output, reveals that new territory has been opened up through this form of inquiry. When compared with QR published in other fields, for example, it becomes immediately apparent that the use of teacher and student journals as a data source is a distinctive feature of research in language teaching, and the development of introspective approaches represents a notable contribution made by our field. The next section will highlight areas of research in language teaching (including language support in L1 situations where appropriate) that have benefited particularly from the strengths of QR. It is necessarily selective and based on what seems to me to be most interesting in terms of QR, and I have deliberately tried not to describe territory already mapped by other articles in this journal.

4. Qualitative research contributions to research since 2000

4.1 Approaches to teaching

Researchers have continued to build on QR's important contribution to our understanding of what happens in language classrooms, and studies of teachers' perceptions of communicative language teaching and their approaches to it continue to proliferate (e.g. Miller & Aldred 2000; Mangubhai et al. 2004, 2005; Nazari 2007). The contradictory results of research on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and teacher stereotypes are thought-provoking. For example, while Wu & Fang's (2002) study of teachers in China found that their perception of teaching as one-way transmission of knowledge inhibited their approach to CLT, Xinmin & Adamson's (2003) in-depth study of a single Chinese teacher directly challenged this stereotype, exposing a dynamic interplay of experience, beliefs and practice, findings supported by research in Vietnam (Ha 2004) and Korea (Mitchell & Lee 2003). This is an area which would repay further research.

Research on student writing and feedback on this has benefited from QR's focus on processes and relationships from the perspectives of those involved (for a review of ethnographic research in L2 writing, see Ramanathan & Atkinson 1999). There is evidence, for example, of a developing interest in the influence of learning biography (Leibowitz 2005), beliefs and previous writing experience (Yasuda 2005) on the process of composition. In-depth interviews feature prominently in data collection here, while between-method triangulation is particularly rich in feedback studies. In their study of the relationship between novice tutors and ESL tutees, for example, Weigle & Nelson (2004) used online discussions from the course, videotapes of tutoring sessions, retrospective interviews with tutors and tutees, and the tutor's final reflective papers for the course. Hyland's (2000) study of autonomy in feedback provides a useful illustration of how an impressively wide range of methods (questionnaires, interviews, think-aloud protocols, classroom observation and documents) can be applied over the length of a three-month course, while Hamp-Lyons' (2006) presentation of drafts, lesson exchanges and interview data in her case study is exemplary. Also methodologically interesting are

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Asaoka & Usui's (2003) use of student journals and interviews to provide insights into the problems with writing; Zhu's (2004) combination of genre analysis and focus group interviews to explore professional perspectives on the writing of business faxes by Chinese students; and Li's (2007) exploration of the first draft of a chemistry student's paper based on the student's process logs, his developing text, his bulletin board exchanges and post-hoc interviews.

Conversation analysis has established a major presence in the area of speaking (but for a broader overview see McCarthy & O'Keeffe 2004) and has been comprehensively reviewed by Seedhouse in this journal (2005). The literature is marked by differences of emphasis and debates on the precise nature of its contribution continue (Kurhila 2006; Hall 2007a, b; Hua & Seedhouse 2007; Seedhouse 2007; Hellermann 2008). Research has extended into different language environments (e.g. Buckwalter 2001 for Spanish; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain 2003 for German) and is opening up new aspects of interaction such as humour (Bell 2005) and laughter (Reutzel 2003).

Multiple methods have also been used to explore aspects of classroom interaction. Ohta & Nakaone (2004), for example, use recordings of over 30 hours of classroom talk, observation and documentary evidence to open up student questioning, while Tan (2007) revealed problems with teachers' questioning behaviour through lesson observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This seems to be an area with considerable scope for further exploration, but even more exciting is the recent growth of developmental studies. Hellermann (2006), for example, used longitudinal microethnography to trace a shift from peripheral to engaged participation in classroom literacy events and, in Hellermann 2007, followed six successful learners over a period of 18–27 months to identify the development of conversational practices in student dyads. Along similar lines, Cekaite (2007) used microanalytic and ethnographic methods to trace a child's emergent L2 interactional competence during the first year in a Swedish immersion classroom. The findings of these papers suggest that there are significant benefits to be gained from further QR of this kind.

Although reading and listening have been less well-served by QR, the range of approaches used by research on the former suggests that it has been under-exploited. Kamhi-Stein (2003), for example, brings together think-aloud protocols, open-ended interviews, self-assessment inventories and reading comprehension measures to explore the relationship between L1 and L2 reading strategies, revealing how attitudes to home language influenced reading behaviour, while Miller, Mitchell & Brown (2005) develop a powerful picture of the literacy development of African refugees in Australia, relating this to social backgrounds. Martin's (2003) microethnographic study of reading practices in an up-river school in Brunei describes the way in which members of three different ethnic groups position themselves and accomplish literacy events, providing an excellent illustration of how close analysis of a single lesson can generate valuable insights.

Think-aloud methods dominate QR on listening, though treatments vary considerably. Vandergrift's (2003) study of the listening strategies of grade seven students of French, for example, begins with quantitative analysis but goes on to provide a convincing justification for the inclusion of qualitative analysis and a rich sample of responses which provide model support for this. Goh (2002) does not include the same element of quantification in her study of Chinese ESL learners' listening strategies and tactics, but her categorisation of different tactics is supported by samples and comments, while Farrell & Mallard (2006) provide

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extracts from the classroom with briefer summaries of student comments. This concentration on think-aloud approaches is undoubtedly effective, but research on reading suggests that other approaches also have much to offer and it would be unfortunate if the neglect of these in listening research is allowed to continue.

Qualitative approaches have also opened windows onto aspects of the classroom community (e.g. Creese 2002; Duff 2002) and contributed to an improved understanding of pedagogic practice (e.g. Walsh 2002, 2006b; Carless 2004; Dufficy 2005; Hammond & Gibbons 2005; Lacorte 2005; Gibbons 2006; Richards 2006a; Pinter 2007; Sakui 2007). Gieve & Miller (2006) provide a discussion of relevant issues and Chavez's (2006) study of experienced teachers of German illustrates how narrow but very rich data sets can be exploited to excellent effect.

Useful work has been done on teacher collaboration, where the combination of interviews and the analysis of classroom extracts has proved particularly effective. In a methodologically exemplary study, Creese (2005, 2006) offers revealing insights into the relationship between subject and language teachers in UK schools. Researchers such as Perry & Stewart (2005), Aline & Hosada (2006) and Carless (2006) have also advanced the understanding of team teaching in countries such as Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong, as well as contributing to the development of good practice. However, a more negative picture emerges from Sato & Kleinsasser's (2004) study of Japanese high school EFL teachers, which found that teacher collaboration served only to reinforce existing practices, eroding teachers' motivation.

Extending beyond the classroom, an area that would repay further investigation is the relationship between home and school. Xuesong (2006) has used biographical interviews to explore Chinese parents' involvement in their children's language development, while Neville-Barton (2002) used questionnaires and interviews to study the impact of family lives on language learning of eight immigrant students from China, Korea and Japan. These are areas where greater understanding might make a significant contribution to maximising language learning potential, as Wallace's (2005) research on bilingual learners at both home and school indicates.

4.2 Identity and socialisation

One of the major themes to emerge since 2000 is that of identity, and QR has made a significant contribution to our understanding of different aspects of the language learning experience. Major studies and collections have explored L2 and multilingual contexts, focusing on learners of different ages and backgrounds in different contexts (e.g. Norton 2000; Toohey 2000; Day 2002; Miller 2003; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004; Block 2007), and there is every indication that this interest will continue to grow. Observation and interviews, sometimes combined with discourse analysis, have also been used to study the process of classroom socialisation in a variety of settings and levels including a kindergarten in the US (Hawkins 2005), a bilingual school in Italy (Mickan 2006) and a university in Germany (Chavez 2007), while the influence of cultural and educational background on performance and classroom behaviour has also proved a fruitful area for qualitative researchers (e.g. Gao, Li & Li 2002; Connor & Rozycki 2006). Rampton's (2006) exploration of the use of German

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both inside and outside the classroom opens new avenues of investigation and his concept of 'crossing' (Rampton 1995) has already influenced later studies (e.g. Stroud & Wee 2007).

QR has also opened a revealing window on the world of the immigrant or sojourner. The focus has typically been on particular groups (e.g. Gordon 2004; Menard-Warwick 2005) or educational settings (e.g. Morita 2004; Vickers 2007), but Gordon's (2006) study of strains on the lives and careers of teachers in Japan who work with marginalised youth throws light on an area that would repay further research. Study abroad has also emerged as an area of interest, producing work on identity construction (Pellegrino 2005), engagement with the host culture (Wilkinson 2002; DuFon 2006; Iino 2006), and cultural adjustment (Bacon 2002; Gu & Schweisfurth 2007), among other areas (see DuFon & Churchill 2006 for examples).

Research on teacher identity has thrown up interesting perspectives, including professional identity formation (Alsup 2005), racialised identities (e.g. Hammond 2006; Motha 2006), religious beliefs (Varghese & Johnston 2007) and relationship to place (Elbaz-Luwisch 2004). Non-native-speaker teachers have received particular attention: dimensions such as cultural knowledge (Lazaraton 2003b), 'legitimacy' (Golombek & Jordan 2005; Tsui 2007) and relations with native-speaker teachers (Park 2007) have all been explored. Kurihara & Samimy's (2007) study of the impact of an American teacher training programme on the beliefs and practices of eight Japanese teachers on their return to Japan is also worth noting (for complementary perspectives, see McKay 2000; Lamie 2001).

Methodologically, one of the most encouraging features of research on identity and socialisation has been the appearance of longitudinal studies, from two or three years (e.g. Maguire & Graves 2001; Gordon 2004; Golombek & Jordan 2005) up to five or six years (Caldas & Caron-Caldas 2002; DuFon 2006). Ortega & Iberri-Shea's (2005) critical review of longitudinal studies published in 2002 and 2003 shows that work is being done along these lines, but there is still a pressing need for more longitudinal qualitative studies.

4.3 Narrative/Lives

Although this tradition seems to have been largely ignored in introductions to QR in language teaching, it has produced some interesting studies. In a two-year longitudinal case study of a Chinese student's language learning, Gao (2007) makes an eloquent case for the value of seeking to understand the learning experience from a biographical perspective (see also Menard-Warwick 2005), and teacher biographies have thrown light on relationships to cultural and educational contexts (e.g. Doecke 2004; Tsui 2007). The role of narrative inquiry as a tool in language teacher development has also been explored (Golombek & Johnson 2004), while Cowie's (2006) inclusion of an element of autoethnography as an English teacher and Japanese learner opens up fascinating possibilities.

Despite some useful discussions of theoretical and methodological issues (e.g. Bell 2002; Pavlenko 2002, 2007), approaches to life history are very varied, as a comparison of papers by Simon-Maeda (2004), Cheung (2005) and Hayes (2005) reveals. In fact they seem to have little in common beyond the length of interviews (roughly 2–3 hours) and the inclusion of interviewee profiles. Cheung's approach to understanding phases and changes in teacher careers is characterised by summaries (often tabular) and discussion of her

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findings but relatively limited direct representation of teachers' voices. However, she provides methodological details that are missing from Simon-Maeda. The latter's use of quotation is extensive and teacher voices emerge clearly, but the result is conceptually thin for a paper that claims to contribute to a 'theoretically informed debate' (Simon-Maeda 2004: 431). Only Hayes addresses fundamental methodological issues such as trustworthiness and the researcher's place, describing data collection procedures fully though not extending this to analytical decisions. His analysis is arranged thematically, with a blend of summary and quotation that captures teachers' voices more fully than Cheung but less richly than Simon-Maeda.

4.4 Other developments

This necessarily selective overview has omitted two aspects of QR which are becoming increasingly prominent. The first, teacher beliefs, has already been reviewed in this journal (Borg 2003a) so a briefer overview here would be redundant. The growth of research using introspective methods also needs to be noted, but in the space available it would be impossible to do justice to the complex relationship between quantitative and qualitative approaches here. Diary studies are less problematic and have a history dating back to Bailey's pioneering work (1983, 1990). Most focus on learner strategies (e.g. Halbach 2000; Hart 2002; Huang 2005) or teacher reflection and learning (e.g. Marefat 2002; Towndrow 2004; Lee 2007), though they have also been used to explore aspects such as time management (Ho 2003) and differences between teacher and learner agendas (Zhanjiang 2006). What seems to be lacking, though, is an extended and rigorous treatment of relevant methodological issues.

An exciting development in QR in this period has been the emergence of linguistic ethnography, focusing on the relationship between language and social life. There seem to me to be at least three reasons why this should be welcomed by researchers in our field: at the heart of the tradition is an attempt to bring together linguistics and ethnography; the process of emergence brings to the surface fundamental issues relating to the nature of QR; and the quality of core work in the tradition so far is exemplary. The relationship at the core of the tradition between 'tying ethnography down' and 'opening linguistics up' is examined in a seminal discussion paper (Rampton et al. 2004: 4) and the debate on this is taken up in a special issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* where, for example, Sealey (2007) and Blommaert (2007) engage on issues of theory.

Theoretical and methodological issues are brought to the fore in three key studies in this tradition. The first of these, Creese (2005), has already been discussed, though it is worth underlining here the effectiveness of the way data from interviews, classroom exchanges and fieldnotes are presented. One of the strengths of Rampton's (2006) study of teenagers in an inner-city school is its richness of detail in terms of both data presentation and analysis. The 'methodological reflections' in chapter 10 not only offer insights into the author's decision-making but also take the reader into Rampton's confidence in matters of methodological choice. It serves as a model for the sort of methodological transparency that is often demanded but rarely delivered. Maybin's (2006) exploration of children's verbal practices inside and outside the classroom raises useful questions about analytical positioning and the extent to

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which researchers need to fashion individual approaches to suit their interpretive needs. Drawing on linguistic ethnography and poststructuralist theory for her analytical framework, Maybin is able to develop her own analytical style, revealingly exploratory in earlier chapters but increasingly confident and persuasive as the book develops. Methodologically as well as analytically, these three books are important resources for researchers in all qualitative traditions, making productive use of the greater space available in book-length studies when compared with research articles.

5. Quality in qualitative research

5.1 Checklists and standards

In spite of the shift away from paradigm wars and towards the more pragmatic perspective described in the first section of this paper, St.Pierre & Roulston (2006) note in their introduction to a special issue of the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* on the state of qualitative inquiry that the politics of educational research are such that researchers 'are encouraged to develop a "culture of science" and that science does not seem to be qualitative' (p. 679). In this section I consider how QR has responded to this challenge, beginning with an introduction to guidelines for conducting research, moving on to consider examples of published research which illustrate core quality issues, and finally considering lines of response to current challenges.

In matters of guidance on good research practice, language teaching is perhaps uniquely well-served in having guidelines provided by *TESOL Quarterly* (2003) which focus specifically on case studies, conversation analysis and critical ethnography. The American Educational Research Association's 'Standards for reporting on empirical social science research in AERA publications' (AERA 2006) are more wide-ranging and are helpfully structured, while Long & Godfrey (2004) provide a briefer 'evaluation tool'. As resources these guidelines are admirable, but the strength deriving from their precision is at the same time a source of potential concern. QR is a heterogeneous field resistant to categorical specification and perhaps best approached from the more general perspective of 'common notions' (Freeman et al. 2007), a point eloquently made by Shohamy (2004) in her discussion of boundaries and structure as part of her response to the TESOL guidelines.

Holliday's (2004a) response to the same guidelines reflects pragmatic developments in QR, making a fundamentally important point: the research activities featuring in the case study guidelines 'should be ever expandable to do what researchers need it to do to answer their research questions' (p. 732). His association of this with the need for THICK DESCRIPTION (for an illuminating brief discussion of this concept, see Ponterotto 2006) and transparency cuts to the heart of validity issues in QR, and his illustrative case brings out an often neglected dimension in the research process: the relationship between flexibility, responsiveness and transparency of representation.

Checklists or guidelines are not in themselves guarantees of quality in QR and 'technical fixes' in general (Barbour 2001) are no substitutes for systematic, sensitive and careful analysis. As Atkinson & Delamont note (2006: 750), '[a] few interviews, a handful of focus groups

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or a period of autobiographical navel-gazing can never generate faithful renderings of the complexity of social life and its multiple forms of social action'. Hammersley (2006: 6) associates briefer time spent in the field with a move away from an older anthropological model of ethnography, a point also made by Holliday (2004b) in his appeal for more creative forms of data management. We need to be sensitive to this, especially in the case of micro-ethnography, where attention to micro-analysis of action can distract attention from the bigger picture. This challenge is particularly salient in our field, where the bedrock exerts a magnetic pull towards linguistic analysis. While the TESOL guidelines rightly respond to Lazaraton's (2003a) criticisms of an earlier failure to accommodate conversation-analytic perspectives, her fundamental point about the need for greater sensitivity to standards of judgement in evaluating the validity of qualitative accounts remains pertinent.

Issues of quality are of course wide-ranging (Borg 2004 provides a succinct introduction to key topics), but the challenge identified by St.Pierre & Roulston requires that our evaluative antennae remain tuned to issues of RIGOUR and VALIDITY, however conceived. The first phase of standards in QR was necessarily a general one and has produced sound guidelines; the next is likely to involve deeper engagement with theoretical and procedural issues. The remainder of this paper will indicate where current fault lines are to be found and what steps are being taken to respond to them.

5.2 Issues of quality in published work

Since terms such as VALIDITY and RELIABILITY remain contested in QR, this section will discuss quality issues in terms of Lincoln & Guba's (1985: 289–331) alternatives, CREDIBILITY, TRANSFERABILITY, DEPENDABILITY and CONFIRMABILITY, which feature in discussions of the topic in applied linguistics (see Brown 2004: 494–495 for a useful brief characterisation). The issue of TRANSPARENCY will also be considered.

DEPENDABILITY in QR involves an interrogation of the context and the methods used to derive data. Methodological positioning cannot be separated from the way in which data are presented and the nature of the claims made, and unsurprisingly practices vary widely. Perpignan's (2003) paper on written feedback, for example, demonstrates that it is not enough merely to collect data using a wide range of methods if details of how they are combined and analysed are not provided. By contrast, in a necessarily brief discussion of methodology as part of a much shorter paper, Tardy & Snyder (2004) relate their methodological decisions to the nature of the claims they wish to make, providing useful additional detail in brief appendices and allowing the participants' voices to emerge clearly in their analysis, thus supporting their methodological positioning. Hall's (2008) reflections on his diary study come towards the end of his paper and are made explicit in the section heading: 'Did my research methodology affect the data?'. These examples of good practice are not isolated but it is probably fair to say that methodological interrogation could be more widespread.

One area in need of particular attention in this respect is that of interviewing. Interviews feature prominently in QR in language teaching, but there are as yet few signs that researchers have taken note of developments in the wider field, Pavlenko's (2007) excellent discussion of autobiographic narratives as data and Talmy's (2008) AAAL (American Association for

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Applied Linguistics) colloquium being notable exceptions. There is a growing literature on the importance of treating interviews as interactionally co-constructed events in which participant identity and positioning have significant analytical implications (Baker 1997, 2002; Nijhof 1997; Rapley 2001; Cassell 2005; Roulston 2006; Wooffitt & Widdicombe 2006), while problems of memory (Gardner 2001) and misrepresentation (Sikes 2000) represent particular challenges. Yet analysis of interviews in our field still tends to treat them as reports rather than accounts, relying on unproblematised thematic analysis.

There is no shortage of illustrative examples of this tendency, but I choose Palfreyman (2005) because it is a valuable interview-based study from a leading journal in our field. Although it explicitly refers to issues of representation and recognises the relevance of personal relationships, these aspects are not examined in terms of the interviews themselves. Neither is any indication given of how analysis was approached, even though in other respects (e.g. data presentation) the paper is exemplary.

CONFIRMABILITY in QR depends on making the data available to the reader, and this in turn depends on transparency of representation. An impressionistic assessment, based on the fairly extensive reading involved in this review, is that there is a trend towards richer representation, with participants' voices and perspectives emerging clearly, though in ethnographic studies word limits may restrict the extent to which relationships can be fully represented. Of course, even shorter papers can provide excellent coverage (see, for example, the range in Borg 2001a), while extended accounts can integrate different data sources to powerful effect (e.g. Creese 2002). Exceptions are typically justified in terms of the aims of the research. Huang's (2003) ethnographic study, for example, provides no examples from fieldnotes and only one extract of classroom interaction, though its detailed descriptions of the pedagogic context and procedures, and its focus on materials and the language produced as a result, properly reflect the aim of the paper.

TRANSPARENCY has been described as 'fundamental to good research practice' (Dale 2006: 79), but it is perhaps the most difficult aspect for a researcher to manage and an outsider to judge, not least because of the complex issues which may underlie representational decisions. With no access to the decision-making processes of other researchers, I illustrate this with an insider's perspective on two research outputs, focusing on what would seem to be on the surface one of the most straightforward issues: researcher representation in the data.

In their paper on justifying outcomes in QR, Edge & Richards claim that AUTHENTICATION 'involves making available an appropriate selection of the records of the research process' (1998: 351), leaving open the issue of what counts as appropriate. In his book on identity in professional interaction, Richards (2006b) appears in two of the three groups featured, in one as himself and in the other under a pseudonym. His justification for the latter is that he is a member of the group whose exchanges were originally recorded by another researcher. Nevertheless, this effectively produces three voices in the book, which the reader may not easily identify: author, author-as-researcher, and group member. In a paper on computer-mediated cooperative development published in the same year, Edge (2006) assigns individual names to four different participants but does not identify himself as representing two of these. The justification for this would seem to be that, since the discourse roles in these exchanges are fixed, personal idiosyncrasies are not relevant to the analysis and would be distracting. Nevertheless, the decision produces a confusing picture in terms of the number of participants

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involved and commits the analyst to creating an artificial distance between himself and his pseudonymic representations.

It should be stressed that in neither of these cases does the use of a pseudonym influence the analysis or affect the results, but the issue of transparency remains awkwardly present and essentially unresolved. The broader issue of the relationship between the researcher's voice and those of other participants is succinctly discussed by Holliday (2002b), who is careful to reflect the complexity of the dilemmas involved rather than suggesting comfortable solutions.

Transparency is closely related to the requirement for researchers to establish the CREDIBILITY of their interpretation, and though it seems excessive to insist that 'every ethnography be accompanied by a research biography' (Ball 1990: 170), it is reasonable to expect evidence that alternative interpretations of the data have been considered. Constant comparison within the data set (looking for new relationships, categories, etc.), the search for negative evidence and the use of member validation are important steps in this process, so it is disappointing that reference to these procedures is rare. Ha (2004) offers a welcome exception, giving transcripts of interviews to participants, while Guerrero (2003) refers to member validation and demonstrates in his analysis that he is sensitive to the discrepant case (p. 661). These, though, are exceptions rather than the rule, and even book-length studies often fail to provide details of the author's engagement with methodological and analytical issues.

To meet the demands of TRANSFERABILITY, the research needs to provide a sufficiently rich description of the project for readers to assess how far it might apply in their own context, and here the picture is a much happier one. Though few accounts are as detailed as that of Duff (2002), the level of local contextualisation is generally high. Van Lier (1996) offers a particularly engaging and revealing account of a research project in Peru, shot through with a tension between the demands of research and a commitment to pedagogic action. The quality of the author's descriptions of the context (derived from fieldnotes), the feeling for place and the honesty of his reflections convey a sense of constant interrogation of method and circumstance that contrasts powerfully with more neatly packaged representations.

5.3 Lines of response to quality issues

One of the trends identified in section 4.2 was an increase in longitudinal studies, and in their review Ortega & Iberri-Shea (2005) note that 'studies adopting a case study or ethnographic approach end up reporting on only a small subset of the richer longitudinal data' (p. 36). While this might, as the authors imply, reflect a failure of proper focus, it is conceivable that journal word limits make fuller descriptions problematic.

Since it is unreasonable to expect journals to expand in size or reduce the number of papers they publish in order to accommodate longer studies, other responses are needed. One option would be to allow space for a longer paper in one or two issues each year, which would reduce the impact on the number of papers published. Another would be to provide links to online data sets (journals such as this one and *Applied Linguistics* already have associated websites) or exploit the potential for electronic publishing. Markee & Stansell (2007), for example, make a convincing case for the electronic publishing of conversation analytic research.

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Researcher training also makes an important contribution to improving quality, and the expansion of research methods literature, courses and workshops suggests that this aspect is being addressed. A gatekeeping encounter that faces all seriously committed researchers sooner or later is the doctoral research proposal, and Kilbourn's (2006) discussion of the qualitative proposal provides an outstanding introduction to this (a significantly briefer account can be found in the 'top ten tips' provided by Patton 2002: 33–35). More neglected, but arguably even more important, is the researcher's journal/log, for which Borg (2001b) develops a compelling case.

Although good practice may be disseminated on a local level, there is probably a need for a more global perspective, covering publications across a range of specialities. For example, Hanke's (2000) use of drawing completion as a data source when researching young children is likely to interest researchers outside the field of reading, though its source makes it unlikely that they would happen upon it. Finally, we need more first-hand accounts from researchers of their engagement with the research process, not only experiences with different elements in the research process of the sort collected by Darlington & Scott (2002), but also accounts from novices (e.g. O'Toole 2002) and developmental descriptions such as Giske & Artinian's (2007) on using grounded theory.

It is also essential to maintain healthy debate on broader research issues. The relationship between research and practice, for example, is a fundamental topic which takes many forms. These include the relevance of research to practice (Hammersley 2005), the nature of research collaboration and the teacher-as-researcher (e.g. Hawkins & Legler 2004; O'Connor & Sharkey 2004; Stewart 2006), the place of research in teacher education (Jones 2004), challenges to teacher research (Borg 2003b, 2006, 2007; Allison & Carey 2007) and reconceptualisations of practitioner research (Allwright 2003).

6. Researcher resources

Researcher resources for QR continue to proliferate and this section is designed as a guide to some of the most useful. It focuses on books on QR methodology but also includes a brief note on journals. Comments are necessarily brief and coverage is selective.

6.1 Research in general

Not too long ago researchers in our field had to rely on general treatments, some of which are still widely used (e.g. Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007), but the appearance of books directed towards research in language teaching (e.g. Nunan 1992; McDonough & McDonough 1997) changed this situation and it is now possible to refer to specialist texts. The challenge here is to provide wide coverage without sacrificing depth of engagement and in this respect Dörnyei (2007) is particularly welcome. The structure of the book, moving from a consideration of key issues, through data collection and analysis to reporting, provides a solid framework in which quantitative and qualitative approaches receive balanced treatment, with a judicious mix of practical summaries, clear advice and insights from personal experience. Bulleted

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lists are particularly well-used, ranging from descriptive summaries to evaluative responses to key questions, and the range of perspectives is impressive. A useful complement to Dörnyei is Brown & Rodgers (2002), which includes helpful exercises (and answers). If there is a primer of research in our field, this is it. More substantially, Hinkel (2005) is an essential resource, a wide-ranging collection of key papers judiciously selected to provide in-depth coverage of research in our field. Research methods take up less than 10% of the book, but the contextualisation provided by other sections is invaluable.

Perry (2005) writes for those who wish to make use of research in applied linguistics. The target audience is novice researchers at Master's level, but it has wider application and would appeal to teachers who wish to explore the ever-expanding research literature in our area. Though more attention is given to quantitative than to qualitative research, its chapters on locating research and reading research articles are particularly useful. The discussion in the chapter on understanding research design, taken together with the brief opening chapter, would be very useful in helping novice researchers to understand some of the conceptual issues that bedevil those new to the field. The brief guides to terminology are useful additions and the table of journals in the field provides an invaluable overview, though the index is disappointingly thin.

6.2 Qualitative research in general

The choice of general books ranges from authoritative collections designed for experienced researchers (e.g. Denzin & Lincoln 2005) to more user-friendly approaches (e.g. Mason 2002; Patton 2002), while the qualitative dimension in some more general treatments also makes them worthy of consideration (e.g. Bryman 2004). Seale et al. (2007a) offers a useful compromise that combines the practical orientation that a single author can provide with the range of expertise that a collection can assemble. This is a weighty collection priced for individual use and is an excellent resource for tutors. New research students will find Silverman's (2004) introduction to QR particularly valuable while more advanced students might prefer his more narrowly focused guide to the research process (Silverman 2006).

Qualitative research in language teaching is directly addressed in two books. Richards (2003) offers three levels of access, from novice to (post-)doctoral, and is designed to be read either across a single level or developmentally from level to level. Its core chapters provide detailed advice on observation, interviewing and using recorded data, and the book is well-served in terms of illustrative cases. Judged by its title, Holliday (2007) may seem to be a more general text, but the author writes 'as an applied linguist' (p. xii) and this is apparent throughout. Central to the book is the integration of writing samples, from undergraduate to post-doctoral, with a genuinely international range. The voices of researchers emerge clearly and there is also a strong sense of the author as researcher. The book is attractively written and is particularly impressive in the way it addresses core problems for novice researchers. The chapter on what counts as data addresses a fundamental but often neglected issue in a very accessible way and there is a strong sense of the visual throughout the book, both features that are missing from Richards. Holliday describes getting from data to the written product

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as 'traumatic' and his book responds very effectively to the complexities of this challenge. The very different approaches adopted in these two books produce a complementary pair with virtually no overlap – a reflection of the breadth of QR.

6.3 Ethnography and fieldwork

The standard work here (Atkinson et al. 2007) is really only for the serious ethnographer, but it is nevertheless an essential collection. A more accessible resource for the novice researcher, methodologically informative, engagingly written and with entertaining examples, is Hammersley & Atkinson (2007). O'Reilly (2004) is also methodologically focused and makes good use of student work. Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (2001) provide an excellent brief introduction to participant observation and Delamont (2002) is also worth reading for its educational focus. Bowern's (2007) useful addition to fieldwork literature is aimed very much at linguists rather than language teachers, but it includes plenty of practical advice and would be an essential resource for anyone interested in researching aspects of language (phonology, syntax, etc.) in the field.

6.4 Interviewing

The standard work here is Gubrium & Holstein (2002), but it is not designed for the novice researcher. The most straightforward introduction is probably Gillham (2005), which is very accessible and covers a range of issues as well as a wide selection of interview types. However, it is essentially introductory and Kvale (2008) or Arksey & Knight (1999) provide deeper treatments. Wengraf (2001) offers a comprehensive guide to life history interviewing, though the book is rather hard going; Siedman's (2006) phenomenological perspective is more accessible. Finally, for anyone wanting a sense of the experience of qualitative interviewing, Rubin & Rubin's (1995) personal recollections make entertaining reading.

6.5 Data analysis

This area is relatively under-represented. Miles & Huberman (1994) is in some respects a useful sourcebook and Coffey & Atkinson (1996) provide a readable discussion of relevant issues, but neither book serves as a practical guide. Grbich (2007) offers good breadth of coverage and has helpful further reading sections, but the level of discussion is necessarily introductory. As a practical guide, Richards (2005) has much to offer. Part of the reason for the dearth of practical guides may be the growing popularity of computer software. Both Gibbs (2002) and Bazeley (2007), for example, provide excellent guides to the use of the qualitative analysis programme, NVivo, though in purely practical terms the spiral binding of the former make it much easier to use when working at a computer.

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6.6 Ethics

The importance and complexities of this aspect of research are now properly appreciated, and Oliver (2003) provides an excellent introduction. The book's division into two parts, stages in the research process and themes, enables the reader to select an appropriate starting point and work from there. De Laine's (2000) treatment is more uneven, but the coverage is good and the writing is clear. A useful supplement to these would be Mauther et al. (2002), which offers a stimulating collection of papers engaging with the practical complexities of the field.

6.7 Classroom research

The association between classroom research and QR has always been close and a number of earlier resources are still relevant (e.g. Allwright 1988; van Lier 1988; Allwright & Bailey 1991). The most wide-ranging of current treatments is probably McKay (2005), which would be a useful starting point for teachers interested in exploring options in classroom research, Hall & Verplaetse (2000) making an excellent accompaniment. Anyone wishing to investigate classroom discourse will find Walsh (2006a) very useful, not least because of the classroom extracts it contains. This also applies to Seedhouse's (2004) book on the architecture of the language classroom. Even though it is not primarily intended as a research guide, its treatment of conversation analysis from the perspective of the classroom and the quality of its analysis make it essential reading for anyone working in this area. For an action research perspective, the best introduction for language teachers is still Burns (1999), directly addressing the interested professional and containing excellent advice. Carr & Kemmis (1986) remains a standard work on critical action research, while McNiff & Whitehead (2005) provide a useful general guide, Reason & Bradbury (2007) a sourcebook and Edge (2001) a key collection of practitioner accounts. For a more detailed review of the literature, see Burns (2005).

6.8 Other methods

One of the most notable developments in QR since 2000 has been the growth of introspective approaches, and here Gass & Mackey (2000) provide a standard introduction, including a useful table summarising relevant research. At the core of the book is a strong methodology chapter with useful advice and illustrations, though it is fair to say that the dominant orientation is towards quantitative analysis, with QR seen as having a supportive role – an important corrective to the assumption that introspective approaches can comfortably be categorised as qualitative. The authors' later book (Gass & Mackey 2007) on elicitation methods is more broadly based and is particularly strong in terms of the number of boxed summaries of research papers it includes. The emphasis, though, is on elicitation rather than analysis and readers interested in gaining an insight into the research process should find the

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discussion in Johnson (2002) informative. Gass & Mackey (2007) include brief sections on diary studies in two of their chapters, but anyone wishing to pursue this line should consult Alaszewski (2006), which includes a very useful chapter on analysis.

Case studies also feature prominently in language teaching research and Duff (2008) provides a welcome introduction to work in applied linguistics. The book includes a particularly good discussion of the nature of case studies and a justification for them, as well as a helpful overview of research using this approach, though the book's illustrations are disappointing. From a methodological perspective, it would be useful to supplement this with Yin (2003), while Gomm, Hammersley & Foster (2000) covers some of the more general and theoretical issues. Narrative research is less well served, but Johnson & Golombek's (2002) collection of language teacher narratives demonstrates what this method can offer in terms of personal investment and insight. However, the book is not designed as a guide to the method, so it is best read in conjunction with Clandinin & Connelly (2000), which though less engaging does provide theoretical and methodological perspectives.

6.9 Other aspects

The rise of visual methods (the use of photographs, film, etc.) in QR has not yet made a significant impact in research in language teaching, though Holliday (2007) may signal the beginning of a change. The same applies to internet research methods, and here Hewson et al. (2003) is useful. It is accessible to the uninitiated and would need to be used selectively, but as far as I can judge (I have not conducted research using this method) its advice seems well-informed and practical. The case studies at the end include useful critical evaluations.

Those interested in different aspects of language teaching and learning will also find some publications that combine field specificity with research sensitivity. Hall's (2003) introduction to researching language and culture provides an outstanding example of this, its three chapters on research issues providing an ideal springboard for further exploration. The two chapters on interpretivist procedures and analysis that Lynch (2003) includes in his book on evaluation and language assessment also make a valuable contribution to the field. Finally, for experienced researchers wishing to explore a new perspective on the research process, ten Have's (2004) ethnomethodological approach to research methods is refreshing and thought-provoking.

6.10 Journals

The core journal for QR methods is *Qualitative Research*, which is very accessible and manages to avoid technical and theoretical extremes. Anyone interested in more radical and varied approaches could try *Qualitative Inquiry*, though papers of practical value to our field are relatively rare. Closer to home, the most convenient source is probably *TESOL Quarterly*'s 'Forum', where brief contributions allow for a genuine sense of debate. A list of links to online journals, along with details of useful websites and lists, is in the appendix to this paper.

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7. Conclusion: prospects and challenges

From a language teaching perspective, the first seven years of the new millennium have been a period of valuable consolidation in QR but with signs of new avenues opening up. In this concluding section I summarise some key outcomes of this review and indicate what these presage for the next seven years.

The broader field of QR has been characterised by a less confrontational orientation, with attention shifting to practical issues and away from more theoretical debates. This is a welcome development in our field, where novice researchers still become easily enmeshed in paradigmatic conundrums, and it would be reassuring to see a pragmatic approach gaining ground. If this produces more emphasis on research practice combined with greater tolerance of alternative positions, the seemingly intractable problem of defining different research traditions will be less pressing.

The most significant movement to emerge from QR generally is a shift towards mixed methods research (see Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998 for a useful introduction). The publication of a new journal, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, in 2007 reflects its growing importance, and research of this kind is bound to feature much more prominently in our field in the future.

This review has revealed no evidence of a continuing expansion of QR papers published in leading journals in our field, but the new millennium has seen consolidation to a point where its position seems secure. There are signs of growth in some journals, though this may now be reaching its peak. More interesting are the areas where QR is making significant contributions or opening up new territory. For example, research on CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) still features prominently and is producing interesting but contradictory local studies of how this is being applied, suggesting that this will remain an attractive area for some time to come. It is also likely that the excellent work being done in the area of writing will continue, though research in the areas of reading and especially listening is disappointing by comparison. There is surely scope here and more generally for exploring what mixed methods research has to offer, and there is a pressing need for more longitudinal studies.

Inevitably, research in language teaching has reflected wider developments, so traditions such as conversation analysis have gathered strength and topics such as identity have emerged into relative prominence. The latter is opening up new territory, generating a greater understanding of both teacher and student identity and throwing new light on the experiences of immigrants and sojourners. This has exposed unexplored features of the language teaching landscape which should attract researchers using narrative and life history methods. Linguistic ethnography is also likely to be a significant contributor to what was once seen as the hinterland of language teaching. This approach has already produced illuminating studies of the relationship between classroom and community and offers an energising reconfiguration of practical and conceptual orientations.

Mindful of the way that conversation analysis established its place in the field of L2 acquisition studies in the face of initial opposition, to the point where debates about its legitimacy are now redundant, we need to be sensitive to other emergent areas. The sociocultural dimension of engagements with language has developed immeasurably since 2000 and the prospects for deepening this knowledge are exciting.

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The most encouraging development since 2000 has surely been the contribution that leading researchers in our field have made to the development of quality in QR, with the emergence of clear guidelines on standards and books designed to help the novice researcher respond to the methodological and representational demands of good research. However, on the evidence of papers reviewed here, there is still work to be done to encourage yet deeper engagement with methodological issues, especially where interviews are concerned. We need to have more details of methodological and especially analytical matters in published papers, and it would be satisfying to see the demise of summaries amounting to no more than a couple of sentences or a short paragraph.

Developments here will depend at least in part on how the Internet is exploited. The growth of online journals, tutorials, lectures, etc. will doubtless continue, but publishers could be encouraged to provide links to authors' data that will allow greater transparency. Data extracts presented in published papers can then be regarded not as windows looking out at selected features of the landscape but as doorways inviting exploration. This should encourage the sort of creative use of data that Holliday (2004b) has called for, which will be realised in richer forms of representation, perhaps leading to linked data sets evolving over time, so that new forms of longitudinal studies evolve.

That said, I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out conceptual and practical problems associated with this. For example, since QR does not treat data as autonomous or 'objective', their appropriation by a third party who may analyse them using a different theoretical framework raises fundamental issues about the nature of research and its representation. More seriously, if we are to share data in this way, we have an ethical responsibility to our participants to ensure that they are fully informed about – and understand – the implications of this. Neither of these problems is insurmountable, but they are potent reminders of the intellectual and ethical demands that QR makes.

Whatever the developments on this and other fronts, the relationship between teaching and research will always remain problematic, and so it should: the issues are too important to be dismissed with pat solutions. The emergence of exploratory practice as an alternative approach to action research, for example, raises interesting questions about the methodological boundaries between research and exploration. In a field where most researchers begin as teachers, the place of such 'alternatives' needs to be debated.

However the future unfolds, a review of this sort should conclude with a reminder of what is at the very heart of our enterprise, a poignant elision of teaching and research summed up in Freeman et al.'s (2007: 30) 'guiding question': 'How can we best listen to, work with, and represent the people our work is intended to serve?'

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Appendix: Online resources

ONLINE JOURNALS

Asian EFL Journal
http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/index.php
A good range of papers, some of them qualitative in orientation, but discussion of research methodology does not feature strongly.

Educational Research and Reviews
http://www.academicjournals.org/ERR/Archive.htm
Wide coverage and only one QR paper on language teaching so far, but good for local educational contexts.

Education-line
http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/
So far, very little in this area, but access to conference papers and work-in-progress makes it a potentially very valuable resource.

Educational Researcher
http://www.aera.net/publications/?id=317
Some useful papers on general issues in research. More likely to be of interest to the teacher of qualitative research methods than students.

English Teaching Practice and Critique
http://education.waikato.ac.nz/research/journal/index.php?id=1
This focuses predominantly on L1 contexts and literacy issues, but there are some useful papers relating to the research process, for example the December 2000 issue on what counts as research on English/literacy issues.

Forum: Qualitative Social Research
http://qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm
A key website for the qualitative researcher.

International Journal of Qualitative Methods
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/IJQM/index
This goes back only as far as January 2007 but has already published some papers that are likely to be very valuable to the teacher of qualitative methods. Practitioners' accounts are particularly revealing.)

Journal of Research Practice
http://jrp.icaap.org/index.php/jrp/index
This started in 2005 and already includes some useful papers on aspects of QR.

Prospect
http://www.ameprc.mq.edu.au/resources/prospect
A leading journal in the field and included in list of journals analysed in the state-of-the-art paper.

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The Qualitative Report
http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/index.html
Another key website with useful articles and excellent links. Some useful discussion of the thinking behind it is found at http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12–1/chenail.pdf and would be useful to anyone contemplating setting up an online journal.

Qualitative Research Journal
http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aqr/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=41
The latest issue is not available but archived issues are and contain useful papers on aspects of QR methodology. However, you have to download the complete issue (around 3MB) if you wish to read a paper offline.

TESL-EJ
http://tesl-ej.org/ej41/toc.html
This is a good source of qualitative studies, many with useful discussions of methodological issues. Issues appearing over the last four years are more productive in this respect than earlier ones.

WEBSITES

Association for Qualitative Research (Australia)
http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aqr/
Useful links to conferences and the online journal, though at the time of writing the resource page was still under construction.

The Grounded Theory Forum
http://www.groundedtheory.com/
Relatively limited resources for non-members, but some useful references.

Social Research Update
http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/
A list of excellent brief introductions to aspects of research.

ESRC National Centre for Research Methods
http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/research/outputs/publications/
Excellent resource with very useful methodology papers available online.

Qualiti – QR Methods in the Social Sciences: Innovation, Integration and Impact
http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/qualiti/
A good source of information and access to working papers and 'Qualitative Researcher'

National Science Foundation Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences
http://www.nsf.gov/dir/index.jsp?dir=SBE
This covers a lot of territory and includes useful publications.

British Educational Research Association
http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/index.php

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Links to some useful publications (for purchase), useful ethical guidelines and a brief guide to good practice in research writing.

LISTS

BIOG-METHODS@mailbase.ac.uk
Message to: mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk:
Message: Join BIOG-METHODS
(Focuses on biographical methods)

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Message to: mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk
Message: join ethnography-in-education [firstname lastname]

Ethnomethodology/conversation analysis
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Message: join ethno

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Message to: comserve@cios.org
Message: join methods
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Message to: listserv@uga.cc.uga.edu.
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