Investigating Research

9th October – 11th December 2017

Professor Paul Dowling

This module is intended to introduce participants to the structure and phases of the research process and to some of the main approaches that are adopted in educational and social research and will also include discussion of the nature and uses of research. The focus will mainly be on qualitative research methods as a serious engagement with quantitative research seems, in my experience, to require a reasonable level of confidence with statistics or mathematics that not everyone will have. This is not to say that qualitative research is easy—very far from it—but most people seem to be able to find a way in to it, whereas this is not the case with quantitative methods within the timescale of a short programme. Quantification—counting—can usefully form a part of almost any research project, although, of course, it’s not compulsory at all. I generally advise, however, against the use of advanced statistical methods or surveys unless the necessary expertise is already there and/or you have strong support from your supervisor. People sometimes think that banging out a quick survey is an easy option: it relieves you of the necessity of actually having to talk with people and you can shove the responses into the computer and your dissertation/report is all but done. This is certainly not the case and some of the worst dissertation/report work that I have come across has involved a naively designed questionnaire and naively analysed responses; please don’t use a Likert scale unless you have studied and understand the principles behind this approach. There is a single session on survey methods and quantitative research that is intended to help you in reading research that adopts quantitative methods and key issues relating to the sometimes over-stated distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methods will come up throughout the programme.

I do not hold to the view that research methodology should be dictated by one’s response to philosophical questions, though there will be time to address philosophical issues if participants are interested. This is a ten session, short course that schedules 25 hours of seminar time. Some of the sessions will be quite densely packed with targeted discussion and activity, however, in others there should be a certain amount of play in the timing that will allow space for the consideration of additional issues that may be of interest to participants. In particular, although there is just one dissertation/report workshop I hope that you will feel able to raise issues relating to your dissertation/report plans—at whatever stage these may be—at various
points during the programme.

Whilst this is a stand-alone module intended to provide participants with the basis to understand the research that they read, it is also intended to provide the research education in support of the dissertation/report element of the MA programme and participants will be expected to introduce and develop their ideas for this element during the course. The production of a research proposal—normally a proposal for their dissertation/report study—will form a part of the coursework assessment for this module.

The sessions will include lectures, seminar discussion, and workshop activities. Preparation for all of these sessions must be carried out beforehand. Some of this will involve essential preliminary reading, but it is also essential that participants read well beyond this during and after the course. There are two main course books and a Master of Research module (details below) that participants should obtain and read. You will also need to prepare an interview topic for session 6, carry out an observation task before session 7, and give some thought to your dissertation/report topic before session 10.

Assessment for the course is by two items of coursework. The first should be a methodological review of ONE of the research articles that are printed in red and marked as ‘Review Article’ in the programme (green on the website). The second piece of coursework should be a research proposal. Details and deadlines are given at the end of this document.

Module evaluation will be completed via Moodle after the end of the course, however, you are also encouraged to offer feedback in any appropriate form at any point during or after the end of the module.

**Preliminary Activity**

If you have not already done so, start a research journal. This may be in digital or paper form (or both). You should record observations, ideas, references, quotations, images, diagrams, and so forth, anything that occurs to you that may be relevant to your research. Digital notes apps such as *Evernote* ([http://evernote.com](http://evernote.com)) are particularly helpful, but I tend to want to keep paper notebooks as well (including waterproof paper notebooks, see:

  http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B003NCIQCG/ref=oh_details_o06_s00_i0 1
  for those *eureka* moments in the bath!)

The research journal is also the place for memos (GT) and for recording informal
observations etc. Start one before the module begins.

Some Key Issues to Consider

- Any research article must present an argument in support of its central claims.
- Methodology is that which enables this argument to be made and sustained.
- Methodology entails a range of decisions taken in respect of:
  - the general approach (which may include epistemological considerations: is the research essentially interpretive, ‘empiricist’, action-oriented) and/or theoretical framework within which the research is to be conducted;
  - research design (descriptive, exploratory, experimental, survey)
  - issues relating to access to the relevant empirical site or sites;
  - sampling within the site or sites;
  - data collection;
  - data analysis;
  - dealing with contingencies;
  - research ethics.
- Each of these areas involves technical knowledge and understanding: methodology is not common sense; your argument cannot depend upon common sense.
- Nor can your argument depend upon opinion: you must make your case.
- All research involves interpretation in one way or another.
- All research involves compromise.
- In reading research it is always necessary to trust the author (unless you have good reason not to).
- In general, quantitative research intends to generalise its findings to a population and so the extent to which the sample can be described as representative of that population is important.
- Experimental research entails the control of all variables other than the experimental (independent and dependent) variables. This is often achieved through the use of random sampling.
- Qualitative research generally does not intend to generalise to a population and so the representativeness of the sample is generally not a crucial issue, but
- Qualitative research does generalise through the generation of theory, the identification of processes and through the accumulation of cases.
- A methodological review of research is not an assessment, it is an unpacking of the methodology that enables the argument in support of the key claims that the research is making.
Whilst this module is partly organised on the basis of named approaches to research—grounded theory, narrative research, and so forth—it is NOT necessary for you to give a name to your approach and, indeed, many researchers do not name the approach that they have taken. The techniques of grounded theory, for example—theoretical sampling, open coding, conceptualisation, memoing, constant comparison, theoretical saturation—are very widely recruited in educational research, but the expression ‘grounded theory’ is far less commonly used in publications (though it is more frequently used in other fields such as nursing research).

**Key Texts**

It is suggested that participants acquire a copy of each of these texts.


Please try to make sure that you acquire the second edition of this book as this includes an additional chapter on research ethics as well as expanded content relating to information technology and statistics.


This book has been selected to provide some contrast: methodology is not a simple, uncontested field and there are also general differences in emphasis on either side of the atlantic. Be careful, some of the descriptions in this book do not entirely coincide with the approaches adopted in some of the review articles, in particular, those recruiting grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenological methods.


Some of this document—including the activities in each chapter—is specific to the online MRes programme. The introductions to each chapter, however, are also relevant to the Investigating Research course.
Other Recommended Reading


# Session Timetable

All sessions in room 728, 17:30-20:00

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<th>Topic</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
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<td>9th October</td>
<td>1. Introduction: conceptualising research</td>
<td>Preliminary reading prezi</td>
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<tr>
<td>16th October</td>
<td>2. Survey methods &amp; quantitative research</td>
<td>Preliminary reading prezi</td>
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<td>23rd October</td>
<td>3. Grounded Theory &amp; QDA</td>
<td>Preliminary reading prezi</td>
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<td>30th October</td>
<td>4. Narrative research &amp; sampling workshop</td>
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<td>6. Phenomenological research &amp; interviewing</td>
<td>Preliminary reading Prep for interviewing prezi</td>
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<td>20th November</td>
<td>7. Action Research &amp; observation workshop</td>
<td>Preliminary reading Observation activity prezi</td>
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<td>27th November</td>
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<td>4th December</td>
<td>9. Discourse analysis &amp; Social Activity Method</td>
<td>Preliminary reading prezi</td>
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Session 1: 9th October

Introduction: Conceptualising research

Session Content

1. The nature and uses of research.
2. Discussion of preliminary reading: the structure and phases of research.

Preliminary Reading


The preliminary reading, in effect, looks at the research process in terms of its structure—the construction of theoretical and empirical fields—and in terms of its process. The latter entails a series of phases: the initial statement of the problem or issue to be addressed or investigated; a consideration of the ways in which this problem or issue has already been handled in the research (and perhaps professional and official) literature; the design of the research itself—is the intention, for example, to test or develop theory or simply to be a fact-finding exercise, is the research to be experimental or exploratory in nature; taking decisions on sampling (who/what, where, when) and data collection (how) strategies; decisions on the approach to data analysis; the formulation of an argument that will seek to establish a claim or claims relating to the research problem or issue.

In addition, in this session, we will consider the nature of research and the ways in which it might be used. It is important to recognise that the research activity is always something other than its object. Thus research into, for example, classroom teaching is not itself classroom teaching, although the latter may well be involved in the research. Ultimately, in my opinion, this entails that research into classroom teaching cannot tell teachers how to teach and, indeed, should not seek to do so. On the other hand, precisely because research produces a view from an outsider’s perspective, it is suitably placed to dialogue with, to interrogate the practice that is its object.

We will also begin consideration of the different approaches that will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sessions. In sequence, these are: survey and quantitative methods; grounded theory; narrative research; phenomenological research; ethnography; action research; discourse analysis; and social activity method (SAM). On the course we shall also investigate more closely ethical issues in research. The course will include workshops on interviewing, observation and the dissertation/report.
Session 2: 16th October

Survey Methods and Quantitative Research

Session Content

1. Discussion of preliminary reading.
2. How might the use of a small-scale survey or other quantitative methods contribute to your own study?

Preliminary Reading

You need read only one of the review articles plus the chapter from my book


Further Reading


The review article by Sanderson investigates the relationship between social class and gender—as independent variables—and attitudes to dance amongst young people. The research employs a survey method. The research has involved a number of stages that also involve qualitative methods. The four Likert attitude scales were developed from statements collected from focus group interviews. These statements comprised a questionnaire that was distributed to an initial sample of secondary school aged students. The survey results were subjected to exploratory factor analysis that resulted in four attitude scales. These scales formed the basis of a new survey that was
distributed to a larger, nationwide sample of students. This article reports on the findings from this second survey. Information on the generation of the scales can be found in Sanderson (2000). The article also mentions the possibility of a further qualitative study, though I can find no evidence that such a study was carried out. What is of interest, though, is that the article illustrates the potential benefit of sequencing qualitative and quantitative phases in research.

In reading the article, don’t get too hung up on the technical meanings of the statistical terms unless you already have expertise in this area; it is certainly not crucial that you understand the mathematical processes that were, in any case, carried out by computer. You should, though, try to gain a sense of the rationales for the various statistical techniques that are described. You should also address at least some of the following issues and especially the item in red:

- What motivated the study?
- What are the research questions?
- What are attitudes?
- What is social class and how is it measured in this study?
- How is sex measured in this study?
- The statements used in the scales are derived from statements collected from young people and attitudes are measured on the basis of respondents’ responses to these statements: in what ways might this method be interpreted as limiting the validity of the survey findings in relation to the research question?
- What is a Likert scale?
- The article gives very few illustrations of questionnaire items (more are given in Sanderson (2000), but consider the processes that generated them.
- What are the statistics mean and standard deviation?
- What are F values, t-tests, p values used for?
- What is the meaning of statistical significance; when is a result statistically significant?
- What is Cronbach’s alpha used for?
- Consider the line of argument that is presented in the paper and how it relates to the methodological choices that have been made.
- Towards the end of the article the author presents some possible explanations for the findings of the survey: what are the bases for these explanations?

The article by Yazdanpanah uses EFA to identify common factors in experienced EFL teachers’ prioritising in respect of knowledge of teaching and knowledge of language. This paper, in my opinion, presents a more sophisticated use of EFA than that in
Sanderson's article. It involves mention of an array of statistical tests and techniques and, if you are unfamiliar with these, it is worthwhile looking up some of them (Google is a good resource for this purpose) to try to get a sense of what is going on. In general, consider:

- What motivated the study?
- What research question is addressed by the research?
- How is the sample generated?
- How is the representativeness of the sample discussed and considered?
- How is the appropriateness of the sample size affirmed?
- The article does not explain whether/how it was affirmed that respondents completed the survey only once: is this important?
- How were the survey items generated and grouped in advance of the factor analysis?
- What is a Likert scale?
- How might you follow up this study with further research?

Key Methodological Terms

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>alpha value</th>
<th>oblique factor rotation</th>
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<td>chi-square test</td>
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<td>closed questions</td>
<td>questionnaire</td>
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<td>confidence level</td>
<td>survey</td>
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<td>control group</td>
<td>reliability</td>
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<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td>response rate</td>
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<td>dependent variable</td>
<td>semi-open questions</td>
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<td>factor analysis</td>
<td>standard deviation</td>
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<td>focus group discussions</td>
<td>statistical significance</td>
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<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>independent variable</td>
<td>t-tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likert scale</td>
<td>validity</td>
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<td>mean</td>
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Session 3: 23rd October

Grounded Theory & QDA

Session Content

1. Discussion of preliminary readings.
2. Some practical qualitative analysis.
3. Introduction to classic grounded theory.
4. How might you recruit GT into your own research study?

Preliminary Reading

you need read only one of the review articles plus the chapter from my book


Further Reading

The themed section of The Grounded Theory Review 11(1) contains interesting discussion on constructivist GT and, in particular, the articles by Barnett and by Hernandez and Andrews mark out the key differences between constructivist and classic GT.


The session will be concerned with the grounded theory (GT) approach originally presented in the 1967 Glaser and Strauss book and enacted in their earlier work, *Awareness of Dying*, and subsequently developed in rather divergent ways (see Strauss & Corbin (1998) and Glaser (1992), which was a response to the first edition of Strauss & Corbin, see also Martin & Gynnild (2011). GT has is now probably the most widely recruited approach in qualitative social research, though, as I have indicated, it really consists of a range of approaches some of which are, unlike classic GT, not appropriately regarded as distinct methods. GT is most commonly used in qualitative research, although Glaser contends that it is appropriate for any kind of data. The general principle of GT is that it is vital to let the empirical setting be heard.
I would say that this is true of any research approach, but in classic GT it is particularly important to avoid imposing preconceptions on the setting. Of course, no one can come to a research setting without already existing experiences and knowledge, but the intention should be to get into the mind-set of seeing the analysis and the developing theory as emerging from the data that is collected. This will perhaps be easier to see in comparing the approach of the preliminary reading for this session with that for session 5 (on narrative analysis), which adopts a particular theoretical position in advance of the analysis, with that for session 6 (on phenomenological research), where the analysis is explicitly guided by the researcher’s reading on the psychological theme of the research and with those for session 10 (on social activity method), where analysis is again informed by extant theoretical constructions.

Key features of the grounded theory approach include theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, open coding, conceptualisation, selective coding, constant comparison, the writing of memos, theoretical saturation, theoretical coding, and the sorting of memos. Theoretical sensitivity might be glossed as the general, discipline-specific knowledge that the researcher brings to the research. I am a sociologist and my training and reading in sociology will tend to ensure that what I see in empirical data will be sociological, rather than, say, psychological in nature. If I were to adopt a classic GT approach, however, I would not be adding to this a knowledge of research specific to the setting that I would be researching in advance of my data collection and analysis phases. In my interpretation, though perhaps Barney Glaser would be less happy with this, data collection and analysis in GT is the result of a transaction between theoretical sensitivity and the setting. Theoretical sampling entails that decisions on who to speak with, what to look at, where, when and so forth are not all made in advance, but in the light of the developing analysis. This, of course, means that data analysis and data collection start at the same time—generally a good idea, in fact—although the process of analysis will always continue well beyond the point at which data collection has come to an end. Coding is the process by which the data is first fragmented, line by line (if it’s verbal text) and organised into significant categories (open coding); exactly what counts as significant is itself part of the product of the analysis. Categories are subsequently organised into higher order categories, which entails conceptualisation and, in GT, the development of a single core category. Subsequent selective coding concentrates on the development of categories that are directly related to the core category in the production of sub-categories and properties of the core category. Constant comparison involves constantly comparing emergent categories and will involve the reduction of their number. Memos are pieces of writing—of any length—that attempt to clarify and, I
would say, illustrate categories as they are emerging from the analysis and detailing the properties and dimensions of the categories. Theoretical saturation is the point at which no new categories are emerging from the further consideration of data. Theoretical coding involves re-integrating the codes around the core category in the generation of the theory (see Hernandez, 2009). Strauss and Corbin introduce the process ‘axial coding’ as a stage between open and selective coding, though I’m not sure (and neither, it seems is Glaser) how helpful this addition is; Strauss and Corbin also omit theoretical coding. Memos may, in my view, be ephemera so that their productivity is in the doing of the writing rather than in the memos themselves as records, though the latter may be of value in reconstructing the history of the analysis and in subsequent development, for example in the move from substantive to formal GT. In classic GT, the memos are more important and form the basis for the write-up of the research. Ultimately, it is the deployment of these strategies and, in particular, theoretical sampling, constant comparison, and theoretical saturation, that affirms the validity and reliability of the theory that is presented and there is no requirement that a research report present extensive extracts from the data, which, in any case, would always be selective. Where data is introduced in a report it is generally there to illustrate the theoretical categories and not to validate them. My view is that this should generally be the case in qualitative research, but, of course, illustration of the theory is an important pedagogic strategy that is sometimes undervalued in classic GT.

In the first preliminary reading Johnston conducts interviews with ‘forty-one subjects who worked with or had children attending 13 schools in 10 school districts and three states’ (p. 44). This is a substantial amount of data and rather more than would be appropriate for a masters dissertation interview study, which may involve, say, 6–10 interviews. If you are used to looking at the results of survey research, then this may seem a very small number and, indeed, it would be small if the intention were to generalise the findings to a wider population. This is not the case, however: GT is always more or less context bound. This is not to say, though, that GT has no value beyond the context of its production. On the contrary, the substantive GT—in the preliminary reading, the generally sequenced modes of pushing that students’ guardians deploy—is constituted as a more general social process. It will have implications for and raises questions of similar settings as is made clear in the reading and may potentially be developed as formal GT, as is also discussed in the paper.

The author of the preliminary reading notes that the expression 'pushing' occurred frequently in her data and has used this in vivo term to name her core category. It is important to recognise, however, that her use of the term constitutes a
conceptualisation of the data as distinct from the various ways in which it was actually used empirically. Pushing has three sub-categories that are constituted as stages: investing, pressuring, and lobbying. Each of these stages also has sub-categories (described, not altogether accurately, as ‘properties’ in the paper). All of these categories are illustrated in the paper. Theoretical sampling is illustrated by reference to the attempt to balance and extend the sample. This strategy is not, however, directed at representativeness so much as testing or developing the emerging theory. At the end of the paper the author points to other contexts—involving ‘powerless populations’ and also the particular case of athletics—in which pushing might be a relevant process. Note that Johnston is not, here, generalizing her substantive grounded theory, but suggesting further situations that might be investigated with a view to developing a formal grounded theory, which is to say, a GT that explains activity in a wider range of contexts.

Please note that Johnston is applying classic GT and NOT the version presented by Strauss and Corbin or that by Kathy Charmaz. The description of GT in Creswell’s work follows most closely the Strauss and Corbin version, so Creswell is probably not the best source if you are going to choose the Johnston paper as your review article; Glaser (1992) or Holton (2010) would be better choices and the anthology edited by Martin and Gynnild (2011) provides good orientating and background discussion.

In reading Johnston’s paper you should address the following issues—especially those in red—for discussion in the seminar:

- What motivated the study?
- Why grounded theory?
- What sampling and data collection strategies did Johnston use?
- What is her core category and what are its sub-categories; how are the sub-categories related?
- How does Johnston claim validity and reliability for her findings?
- Delineate Johnston’s main line of argument.

In the second preliminary reading, Petrie has interviewed just seven experienced ESL teachers using what she describes as a grounded theory approach. She cites Strauss in respect of grounded theory and this approach differs from that deployed by Johnston. Petrie is interested in teachers' views on the inclusion of visuals in texts—such as are to be found in internet pages—to be used in the teaching of English. It is noteworthy
that she uses a prepared list of questions that she refers to as an 'interview guide', which is perhaps unusual in the context of grounded theory research (and perhaps not generally a good idea in qualitative research), which generally seeks to identify the principal concerns of the subjects of the research, which become the central research interest. The article provides quite a substantial amount of data extracts, which is also fairly unusual in grounded theory accounts. Consider the following issues:

• What motivated the study?
• How was the sample selected?
• What were the strategies deployed in data collection?
• What were the strategies deployed in data analysis; how do these compare with/relate to the strategies described in Holton, 2010 (see further reading)?
• What core concept is generated?
• What is the main line of argument?

Key Methodological Terms

case study | epistemology | open coding
---|---|---
category | field work | positivism
causality | observation | property
coding | focus group | qualitative research
conditional matrix | grounded theory | quantitative research
constant comparison | *in vitro* codes | questionnaire
constructivism | *in vivo* codes | reflective diary
control | interpretive paradigm | reflexivity
core category | interview | reliability
credibility | memo | respondent
data | methodology | sample
documentation | objectivism | saturation
empiricism | observation | semi-structured interviews
**QDA (Qualitative Data Analysis)**

*Session Content*

1. Some practical qualitative analysis.

Chapter 7 in Dowling & Brown is concerned with qualitative analysis generally and includes a semiotic analysis of a visual text and some analysis of some verbal text. In this session we shall be concerned with approaches to analysis and also with what it means to analyse data and what the analysis produces.

*Additional Reading for QDA*


Session 4: 30th October

Narrative Research & Sampling

Session Content

2. General discussion of narrative research.
3. How might you introduce a narrative approach into your own research study?
4. Preparatory instructions for interviewing workshop tomorrow.

Preliminary Reading

you need read only one of these


Additional Reading on Sampling


Further Reading


In the first preliminary reading the authors recruit the idea of narrative types, foregrounding the importance of theory in structuring the analysis, which contrasts with the grounded theory approach. This is not a necessary feature of narrative analysis, which is generally concerned to access the narratives—in many cases the life histories or parts of life histories—of the research subjects and the contexts of these narratives (see, for example, Appendix B in Creswell’s book, which adopts a different approach from that in the review article). Narrative analysts will look for structure in the narratives, key characters, critical events (epiphanies, aporias, etc) and so forth. In this particular article the authors begin with a theoretical claim that there exists a cultural stock of narrative types in any particular culture and that, where individual experience cannot align with one of these types then the subject’s mental health is at risk. In the two narratives introduced in this research, we see evidence of the traumatic transition from initial alignment of experience with the performance narrative through the breakdown of this narrative alignment and ‘narrative wreckage’, ultimately to the constitution of a new ‘relational narrative’. Also of note is the very long timescale of this research and the significance of this in the context of life history and narrative research. The authors make the point that, because life narratives are constantly being re-written as conditions change, relevant narratives may no longer be accessible years after the event. This, of course, raises questions for interview-based research generally.

In this research there were only two subjects, albeit that they were interviewed a number of times each. Again, the emphasis is on the development of theory rather than on generalising to a wider population. The selection of cases and the data collection and analysis methods are germane to the argument being made in the article and to the claims that are made. You might give some thought to the extent to which the gender of the subjects is relevant to the kind of explanation that is presented.

In reading the article you should give consideration to the following for discussion in the seminar, especially, perhaps, the items in red.:

• What motivated the research?
• What are the continuities and discontinuities between the approach adopted here and narrative research as described by John Creswell?
• What does the term ‘narrative’ mean in this research? How is theory used in the research?
• What sampling strategies were used in the research? How was data collected?
• What claims are made by the authors about the data collection strategies?
• What are we told about methods of data analysis? How can we be assured that the findings are valid and reliable?
• What is the significance of the position of the first author in the research project?
• How might the research be generalised; do you think gender is an important consideration in this work, in what way?
• What ethical issues arise in this research?
• What are the main lines of argument in the article?

The second preliminary reading involves a rather more simple use of narrative that draws on the approach introduced by Clandinin & Connelly, 2000 (see further reading above). The article reports on a teaching activity involving two participants. Barkhuizen introduces a Venn diagram at one point. As a one-time mathematician I have difficulty with what I often consider to be the over-use of Venn diagrams in social research (qualitative or quantitative). In the simple mathematical use of these diagrams each element carries its own properties; an element may be a member of more than one set (i.e. a member of an intersection), but it remains the same element when considered in relation to each set of which it is a member. This is not always the case in social research. Individual identity, for example, may be constituted differently in relation to membership of a family, a social category or cultural group, and so forth. Give consideration to:

• What is the motivation for the study?
• What was the context of data collection?
• What use is made of the Clandinin & Connelly (2000) approach to narrative research?
• What are the implications of the use of the Venn diagram for the interpretation of the narratives introduced?
• What ethical issues arise in this research?
• What is the principal line of argument in the paper?

**Sampling**

In the discussion, participants will be asked to consider possible sampling strategies relating to their own research interests (e.g. for their dissertations) and, in particular, to look at issues of access and time availability. You should also give careful consideration to the relationship between sampling strategies and your particular
research interest and to the limitations on the kinds of claims that you may be able to make deriving from your sampling choice. In some cases, the requirements of the setting may mean that you have to declare your sample at the outset. Even so, it is often a good idea to modify your sampling strategy in the light of preliminary analysis, which should, in general, begin at the same time as the beginning of data collection. Remember that sampling decisions may have to take into account timing and location as well as the identities of research subjects.

Key Methodological Terms.

- anonymity
- case study
- content analysis
- critical case
- ethical approval
- field notes
- formal interview
- informal interview
- interpretive paradigm
- interview
- life history research
- narrative
- opportunity sample
- probe
- prompt
- random sample
- reflexive diary
- representative case
- snowball sample
- telephone interview
- theoretical sampling
- transcript
- validity
Session 5: 6th November

Ethnography

Session Content

2. Discussion of Geertz Chapters and general issues relating to ethnography.
3. How might you use an ethnographic approach in your own study?

Preliminary Reading

You need read only one of the review articles plus the Creswell and Geertz chapters


Further Reading


Ethnography entails the attempt to access the meanings constituted in particular cultures that may comprise whole societies or, more commonly, smaller cultural groups. The approach derives from anthropology and is now widely used (and misused) in social and in educational research. There are many different takes on ethnography, Clifford Geertz (1977), for example, describes the ethnographic interpretation as in many respects similar to literary studies; the practitioners of both seek to produce interpretations of meaning without insisting that they have the final
word on it. There are no set data collection strategies associated with ethnography, but Geertz, again, advocates the collection of very rich data, covering situations from all sides, as it were to produce what he calls ‘thick description’, an expression that he borrows from Gilbert Ryle (1968), a layered description that generates meaning upon meaning upon meaning. A reading of Ryle’s original lecture gives a good sense of the problem.

Two boys fairly swiftly contract the eyelids of their right eyes. In the first boy this is only an involuntary twitch; but the other is winking conspiratorially to an accomplice. At the lowest or the thinnest level of description the two contractions of the eyelids may be exactly alike. From a cinematograph-film of the two faces there might be no telling which contraction, if either, was a wink, or which, if either, were a mere twitch. Yet there remains the immense but unphotographable difference between a twitch and a wink. For to wink is to try to signal to someone in particular, without the cognisance of others, a definite message according to an already understood code. It has very complex success- versus-failure conditions. The wink is a failure if its intended recipient does not see it; or sees it but does not know or forgets the code; or misconstrues it; or disobeys or disbelieves it; or if any one else spots it. A mere twitch, on the other hand, is neither a failure nor a success; it has no intended recipient; it is not meant to be unwitnessed by anybody; it carries no message. It may be a symptom but it is not a signal. The winker could not not know that he was winking; but the victim of the twitch might be quite unaware of his twitch. The winker can tell what he was trying to do; the twitcher will deny that he was trying to do anything. (Ryle, 1968; no page numbers)

... and so on.

Because of this requirement for ‘thick description’, researchers adopting an ethnographic approach will often use both formal and informal interviews, participant and non-participant observation and documentary evidence, but they may also use other data collection strategies as well, even employing quantitative methods where this is deemed to be appropriate; the aim is to generate sufficient and sufficiently rich data to enable what can be defended as a valid and reliable interpretation—but not the only possible interpretation—of the meanings that are produced within the culture.

Kalthoff’s article presents an interesting way to study teachers’ assessment practices and is concerned with the ways in which assessment outcomes are actually achieved. The study represents a departure from the technical study of assessment that may be concerned with issues of the validity and reliability of assessment procedures—Kalthoff is explicitly NOT concerned with this—and also from sociological studies that consider assessment outcomes in terms of the reproduction of social
inequalities—again, this is explicitly NOT Kalthoff’s interest. The work was carried out in the early 1990s in German high schools, but has only just been published in this English language journal. Kalthoff spent nine months in the schools getting right up close to the teachers’ assessment practices, both in private marking mode and in the negotiation of grades in oral examinations. Only part of the whole study is presented in this article. In reading the paper you should concentrate on the following issues—especially the one in red—for discussion in the seminar:

- How does this study differ from other approaches to the study of assessment that are mentioned in the paper?
- The author gives little information on his sampling strategies, but does outline the various data collection strategies that he used; what were they?
- What can you say about the data analysis techniques? In what ways does the researcher engage in interpretation?
- In what ways does this research match up or fail to match up with Creswell’s description of ethnography? How does it compare with Geertz’s ethnography of the Javanese funeral?
- What meaning does the expression ‘thick description’ have in the context of this study?
- Could an interview study or another approach have achieved the same kinds of findings?
- Can you identify the main line of argument in the paper; how are validity and reliability in respect of the claims made affirmed in this (kind of) study?
- How is Kalthoff using the terms ‘self-observation’ and ‘third-party observation’?

Hall’s article constitutes a critical reflection on the use of diaries in the context of an ethnographic study and so has explicit methodological implications. Further, whilst diaries may be used in ethnography, it might be expected that entries will relate to individual rather than necessarily to collective meanings and experiences and, to this extent, perhaps not to be used alone as a data collection strategy but combined with, perhaps observation and interviews, documentary analysis, photo-ellicitation and so forth. On the face of it, the use of diaries alone might be more suited to phenomenological analysis. Nevertheless, the issues that arise from Hall’s research are of wider relevance.

- What motivated the study?
- What instructions were given to the subjects?
- What were the main issues that arose in data collection that have implications for the use of diaries in research?
Key Methodological Terms from the Review Article

case study
coding
ethnography
fieldwork
informal interview
participant observation
semi-structured
interview
thick description
transcript
vignette
Session 6: 13th November

Phenomenological Research & Interviewing Workshop

Session Content

1. Discussion of paper by Denovan and Macaskill.
2. Discussion of phenomenological research in general and, in particular, in relation to grounded theory.
3. How might you configure your own study as phenomenological research?

Preliminary Reading


Note that the form of phenomenological analysis described in Creswell’s book is different from that adopted in the review article, in respect of which you will find the presentation by Michael Larkin (see the ‘resources’ page on the module website) to be more helpful.


Further Reading


GEORGI, A. (2009). The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A


See the Prezi presentation in IPA (the particular form of psychological phenomenological analysis adopted in the review article) by Michael Larkin at http://prezi.com/dnprvc2nohjt/interpretative-phenomenological-analysis-introduction/?auth_key=3d2c098e0db0a31ea05f2d9f60148ed5144e6d06

The aim of phenomenological research is to explore the lived experience of a phenomenon. There are two principal modes of phenomenological research. The approach adopted in the review article by Denovan and Macaskill is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is an approach that is used in psychological research (see the link to Larkin’s Prezi). The review article is concerned with the experience of stress and coping amongst first year undergraduates. As is common in IPA, however, they generate only a small sample using a purposive strategy designed to ensure that the topic of the research will be relevant to all of the subjects. The kinds of decision made in selecting the ‘purposive’ sample will relate to what are seen as key variations in experiencing the phenomenon, one of Denovan and Macaskill’s subjects, for example, was an individual who had moved to a different country and a different linguistic environment. IPA derives from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, who believed that it is not possible to access the world other than as interpretation. This applies both to Denovan and Macaskill’s subjects and, crucially, to Denovan and Macaskill themselves. Researchers engaging in IPA respond to this by attempting to make explicit their prior reading and understandings of, in this case, stress and coping so as to give some transparency to the transaction between these preconceptions and their data. In this case, extant psychological theory is recruited in the analysis of the students’ experiences. Another approach to phenomenological
research is ‘descriptive phenomenology’ (DPA), which derives from the work of Edmund Husserl. Husserl aimed for a pure description of phenomena, which entailed ‘bracketing’ all preconceptions, which is to say, removing them from any influence in the description; this Heidegger believed to be impossible. In DPA the intention is to identify the essential quality of an experience, but this is NOT the case in IPA, where the researcher is looking for continuities and discontinuities in experience. DPA is a nomothetic approach, which is seeking to make claims about the experience in general; IPA is an ideographic approach that first concentrates on the individual case and then moves on to look for similarities and differences across cases. In It is worth looking at the paper by Wojnar and Swanson, which provides a good introduction to the origins of the two approaches. Note that both approaches are concerned with lived experience (ie of the subjects of the research) and not with the object of the experience. A related approach is phenomenography. There are substantial differences between phenomenography and phenomenology: like the descriptive approach, phenomenography has no place for interpretation by the researcher, but it does impose a general structure on the form that analysis must take. Phenomenography also downplays the philosophical origins of phenomenology. All three approaches, however, are concerned with the exploration of subjective experience. Thus Denovan and Macaskill are not concerned with the substantive ‘facts’ of students’ lives, but with thei perceived experiences. Nor are the authors claiming to have produced an analysis that will generalise to the experience of all undergraduate students (rendering questionable their comments regarding the representative nature of their sample), though they may claim that the categories of experience that they have identified may be relevant in considering experience in related contexts. In reading the Denovan and Macaskill article, consider the following questions—especially those in red—to discuss in the seminar.

• What motivated the study?
• What were the key elements of the methods used in terms of sampling, data collection, and data analysis?
• What theoretical resources are brought to the research; how are these used in the analysis?
• What are the resonances/dissonances between the methods used here and the approach of classic grounded theory?
• What are the resonances/dissonances between the approach in the Denovan and Macaskill article and those described in Creswell’s book?
• What is the main line of argument in the paper?
• How are validity and reliability affirmed in respect of the findings here?
Key Methodological Terms

- anonymity
- composite description
- descriptive phenomenological analysis
- exploratory study
- interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)
- in-depth interview
- participant
- phenomenological approach
- population
- purposive sample
- semi-structured interview
- vignette

Interviewing Workshop

Session Content

1. Conduct short interviews, ideally in threes: one interviewer, one interviewee, and one observer. Groups should reform twice so that everyone has a chance to be an interviewer and an interviewee. Interviewees should not interview their interviewer.
2. Discussion of interviews and of issues relating to interview research generally.
3. Discussion of issues that have arisen so far during the course

Preliminary Reading


Preliminary Work

Before the session, you should give some thought to the interview activity. You will be interviewing each other, so think of a research interest in relation to which an
An interview with any of your colleagues will be relevant. You should not prepare an interview schedule, but you should think of the areas/issues that you want to discuss and formulate a starter question that also introduces your area of interest. Alternatively, you might try the classic GT approach using a ‘grand tour’ question to start with and try to access the key concerns of your interviewee. So, for example, if you ask, “How are things going with you?”, you would then follow up with probes relating to the response. In conducting the interview, the key is to maintain your concentration on what your subject is saying so that you can pick up on (probe) areas of interest. This can be quite a strenuous task, but it should not feel so to your subject.

In reflecting on your interview task after the interviews, consider the extent to which you found out what you had hoped to find out, are there points at which you might have used probes to follow up on something or whether further preliminary thought might have enabled you to put a question in a better way. Consider also the general feel of the interview: how ‘normal’ did it feel; who did most of the talking; what do you think might have been the effects of your own responses to what your interviewee said? You were probably attempting to obtain information about a setting beyond that of the interview itself: do you think this was generally successful or was the interview context itself dominant in shaping the interviewee’s responses?

The book by Bannister & Fransella provides an introduction to the Personal Construct Theory of George Kelly (1955, The Theory of Personal Constructs. New York. Norton). Whether or not you want to follow Kelly’s theory, the approach offers some imaginative ideas for interview technique, including the use of triads and repertory grids. You might also consider the technique of A.R. Luria and Jean Piaget which was the clinical interview; Luria’s work is discussed in Dowling & Brown (2009).
Session 7: 20th November

Action Research and Observation Workshop

Session Content

1. Discussion of the review article.
2. Discussion of issues relating to action research and practitioner research more generally.
3. How might you configure your own study as action research?

Preliminary Reading


Further Reading


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Action research (AR) designates a range of approaches to research that places emphasis on the development of practice in the research site. Generally, this situational action is valued above the generation of more general knowledge, although the latter is certainly not absent from most AR. AR will often start with a problem that has been identified within a site, research will be conducted on the nature of the problem and on possible ways of addressing it. This research will take in previous academic research as well as research that will be conducted in the site in question. On the basis of this research, the problem may be reformulated or not and an initiative will be designed, implemented and evaluated. The evaluation will also involve reconsideration of the original problem or its reformulation and this will initiate a new cycle of AR. There are variations on this structure and variations on the kinds of problem that are to be prioritised, with some approaches being explicitly political in nature, others perhaps more technical. The paper (under Further Reading) by Nicola Rollock is not AR per se, but is an example of work inspired by Critical Race Theory (CRT) that can be said to be intended to constitute political action.

The research reported in the preliminary reading presents an account of an AR project carried out in an English Language Teaching Department in a Turkish University. The project involved only a single complete cycle—generally, AR is cyclical in a more general sense than is the case in this study—involving three phases: reconnaissance, implementation, and evaluation; the implementation phase is described in the article. This phase, however, was cyclical, involving planning, acting, observing and reflecting stages over eight interventions. In reflecting on the paper you should address the following issues—especially the one in red—which should form the basis of discussion in the seminar:

- What motivated the project?
- What are the main characteristics of the approach and methods that were adopted, what can be said about sampling, data collection, what constituted the data, what was the nature of data analysis?
- What were the principal outcomes of the phase of the research that was reported in
What ‘new knowledge’ was generated; to what extent and in what ways is this generalizable?

What are the ethical issues involved in this research; are these addressed in the paper?

Consider the ways in which the findings were discussed in relation to extant research.

What is the main line of argument of the paper?

Key methodological terms

action research
coding
collaborative action research (CAR)

data
field notes
interview
negotiated intervention
observations
questionnaire
transcript

Observation Workshop

Session Content

1. Report back and discussion of observation activity.
2. Discussion of observation in research generally.
3. Preliminary Reading

Preliminary Activity

You will need carry out the observation activity in advance of the session. In preparing for this observation task, you should identify a site to which you can have access as a non-participant or as a participant observer. Ideally, this should be an obviously public site (such as a park, but probably not a children’s playground, unless you’re there as a parent accompanying a child) or one over which you have legitimate
authority (such as part of your domestic space) and not a site where you might reasonably be expected to ask permission to observe and record. A televised scene might be a possibility, but you would need to take into account the editing strategies of the broadcaster. You also need to think of a particular focus for the observation. You might, for example, look at the gendering of the space and of movement within it or the ways in which participants in the space move around it or relate to each other. It is often a good idea to use a camera where this will not be too intrusive but, other than that, it is not suggested that you make video or audio recordings of the site. Rather, you should make handwritten field notes, including sketches, where relevant. First make a plan of the site, possibly using photography. Divide your journal page into two vertical columns. In the left hand column you should write a chronicle of events; on the right you should write your emerging interpretations and speculations. The intention is that this should be a qualitative study and not simply a counting exercise.
Session 8: 27th November

Research Ethics This session will be led by Dr Natasha Whiteman of the University of Leicester

Session Content

1. Ethical considerations in educational research.
2. Implications for your dissertation/report.
3. Module evaluation.

Preliminary Reading


Further Reading


This session will examine ethical issues relating to social science research. It will explore the key ethical principles that underpin institutional and disciplinary Codes of Ethics, and consider cases that unsettle and challenge these principles. The session will also provide you with an opportunity to reflect on ethical issues relating to your dissertation/report.

The article by Brotsky and Giles presents a study of an online ‘community’ that was conducted by using deception, which is to say, one of the researchers adopted a false persona in order to join and participate in the forums and at no time made it clear that she was conducting research, even at the end of the project. You might compare the approach adopted here with that of Carrie Paechter (2012), who was an existing member of the online community that she subsequently chose to study. She maintained this identity whilst constructing an additional identity as an overt researcher member, keeping the link between her original and researcher identities concealed other than to the site owner. If you opt to review the Brotsky and Giles article for your coursework review, then you should concentrate particularly on the methodological decisions that were taken in particular relation to ethical issues and on the explanations and claims that were offered in support of these.

*Key Methodological Terms*

- anonymity
- conduct
- confidentiality
- covert research
- deception
- detriment
- privacy
- reflective research
- respect
- responsibility
- right to withdraw
- voluntary informed consent
- vulnerability
Session 9: 4th December

Discourse Analysis & Social Activity Method (SAM)

NB Two very different approaches

Session Content

1. Discourse analysis
2. Introduction to SAM.
3. Discussion of preliminary readings.
4. Discussion of issues arising out of the SAM method.
5. How might you make use of SAM in your own research?

Preliminary Readings

you should read the first review article and one of the other two plus my paper


DOWLING, P.C. (2009b). 「哲学の道」 In B. Sriraman & S. Goodchild (Eds). Relatively and Philosophically Édrenst. IAP. Pre-publication version available at http://www.pauldowling.me/publications/philosopherswalk.pdf [The published version will have different page numbers etc.].


The article by McEvilly et al deploys a broadly Foucauldian approach to the analysis of curriculum documentation. The differs from the rather more structured approach adopted by Chouliaraki & Fairclough and by Fairclough in the items in the further reading. It is worth comparing the different approaches. It is also worth comparing Foucault's approach in his 'archaeological' phase with his later 'genealogical' analysis in, for example, Discipline and Punish. A difficulty that I have with Fairclough's approach is that he deploys a (very sophisticated) linguistic apparatus in order in his analysis of texts in order to read through the texts to the social. This is similar, in some ways to the New Historicism in literary studies (see Montrose, 1989). In Fairclough's case, the categories 'genre' and 'discourse' do the work of the sociological analysis. These categories, however, remain, in my view, inadequately theorised for the task. In reading the article by McEvilly et al you should give consideration to the issue of just what justifies the conclusions that they draw about the documents that they analyse.

I have listed two review articles on SAM for this session; you should read at least one as well as my 2013 article before the session. The first review article deploys SAM (although this expression was not in use at that time) in a form in which it appeared in Dowling (1998). The key terms and the scheme that it uses are still part of the current version, but the method as a whole has been developed considerably in Dowling (2009a) and some of this is represented more briefly in Dowling (2009b), the title of which is in Japanese, but which is written (mostly) in English. The 2013 article introduces the scheme and also some recent developments. The second review article is perhaps a better reflection of SAM as it currently stands and a better discussion of the approach, but it is very demanding, so take your pick (or read them both, but don’t put too much pressure on yourself in respect of the second one; one student in a previous run of the course described Chung’s paper as her favourite from the whole module and a number of others found it stimulating in various ways).

In reading the Brantlinger paper, look at the kind of ‘interrogation’ of CM (critical mathematics) that Brantlinger is engaging. Look at his sampling methods (and it’s interesting that part of his sample includes material that he himself produced) and at just how he deploys the analytic scheme and at how he reaches his conclusions. The paper by Dowling & Burke makes a related—but not quite the same—argument using SAM differently.
Please be warned, you are likely to find the article by Chung very challenging drawing, as it does, on contemporary philosophy and social theory as well as literary studies. The author makes use of the distinction made by the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, between two layers of knowledge, rendered possible in French (but not easily in English) as savoir and connaissance. In Chung’s article, the latter refers to stocks of knowledge—the things that we know—whilst savoir constitutes the conditions of existence of this knowledge. Crudely, all scholars of English literature will have studied the works of Shakespeare, but how literary scholars perceive the literariness of this connaissance will depend upon the prior structure of savoir, which constitutes a dispersion, a contested knowledge, the ‘crisis discourse’, and it is this that Chung seeks to elaborate via an analysis of the performative actions (actions that produce their own objects) that are the texts that constitute this discourse. She makes use of a term from neuroscience, ‘proprioception’: the facility by which a person knows the disposition of their own body; Chung’s analysis is, of course, her construction, her interpretation of the crisis discourse, so she refers to the structure as a prosthetic proprioception.

The article is not going to yield to a single reading, nor without a great deal of reflection and, indeed, additional reading. It is, however, a very masterful and a very beautiful piece of writing and you might care to focus attention on just a section, a paragraph, even a sentence: what questions does this raise for you about the nature of knowledge in any setting. The task is not to capture the absolute meaning of the text—such does not in any non-trivial sense exist—but to explore what it can do. This is a very different kind of research from the works that have appeared as review articles in the earlier sections. It self-consciously raises questions about just what it ‘thinks’ it is doing and its responses to these questions will—if given the chance—also raise important questions for what we are doing as teachers and as researchers: how might we describe the nature of our pedagogic proprioception, our methodological proprioception?

In reflecting on the work in its own terms, you might first give some attention to the general approach, SAM, and the way that this is articulated with Foucault’s ‘archaeology’. Why SAM and not ANT (Actor/Actant Network Theory) or discourse analysis? Chung makes reference to the Foucauldian term ‘discursive formation’, which refers to the regularities—including the lines of contestation and discontinuity—within, in this case, literary studies. This is very different from other forms of discourse analysis that focus exclusively on continuities in the form of, for example, interpretive repertoires. SAM, in emphasising the dialectical nature of social action in relation to alliances and
oppositions (which are emergent entities rather than the direct products of individual actions) provides both a sociological base for the Foucauldian approach and an operationalising language as illustrated in the two relational structures that Chung introduces. Might we also think of the fundamental tenets of SAM—relating to social action and emergent alliances and oppositions—as in some sense the proprioception of the paper itself or is this role properly given to archaeology or their combination or something else? You will also need to consider the sampling strategies that are used: why books and not their authors, why these books, why not conferences or seminars or undergraduate courses? Having made the decision to focus on books the data collection is, in a sense, trivial—a visit to the library or Amazon.co.uk—but data analysis certainly isn’t. Give some thought to how the texts that have been selected have been interpreted and, indeed, represented; there is actually very little space in a journal article for the presentation of data and hard choices often have to be made.

*Key Methodological Terms*

alliance          genealogy
archaeology       grounded theory
coding            knowledge
descriptive domain ontology
discourse         opposition
domains of action power
 emergence         (prosthetic) proprioception
empirical         public domain
empirical setting strategic action
esoteric domain   theoretical
expressive domain
Session 10: 11th December

Dissertation/Report Workshop

Session Content


Preliminary Activity

No preliminary reading for this session. You will, however, need to give some advance thought to the research proposal that you intend to submit as part of your coursework for this module. These are the areas that you will need to cover in the proposal, so think about them and prepare some notes in advance of the session. A maximum word limit has been suggested for the first area. I have not given guidelines for the word lengths of the other areas because this will depend on the nature of the project, but all of these areas will need to be covered adequately within the 3500 word total.

1. Statement of research interest

This will be a brief statement that outlines in general terms the area or issue or process etc that you intend to research. You should also give some thought to the rationale for the research, which is to say, why it is of particular interest to you and why it might be of interest to others at this point in time. It may be relevant to cite current legislation, official reports, or other current developments in education, but you should not, in the proposal itself, engage in an extended discussion here. You will need to keep this section below 500 words.

2. Review of relevant research literature

For this section of the proposal your review will depend upon your programme:

pre-service MA TESOL students

A close, methodological review of ONE research article (ie an empirical research article published (or originally published) in an English language research journal and NOT an official document, report, works directed at a professional audience, or a book length work) that is relevant to your dissertation/report. Think about the
arguments that are presented in the research and how these are justified in terms of the data that was available to the researcher; how are validity and reliability established, if, indeed, these aspects are relevant to the research? Think also about the ways in which the author has interpreted the data and their findings. You should not approach this review from the position of seeking out faults in the research, although it is legitimate to point to limitations. You will need to think about the relationship of the research to the research that you intend to conduct.

all other students

A brief review of research literature (ie empirical research published (or originally published) in English language research journals and NOT official documents, reports, works directed at a professional audience, or book length works) that is relevant to your dissertation/report topic. You will need to discuss the work critically and you should include some discussion of methodological issues relating to one or more of the articles that you discuss.

3. Research design and general approach

You are not obliged to identify by name a particular approach to your research, that is, you do NOT have to say that you will be conducting a GT or a phenomenological study etc. Indeed, it is more likely that you will be drawing inspiration from a range of approaches that have been presented on the module. What is important is that you are as clear as possible at this stage on the details of the approach that you will be taking and on your reasons for taking this decision. If you intend to engage in AR, then you should consider whether it is going to be possible to complete more than one cycle (probably not), if you intend to conduct a study based on grounded theory, to what extent are you going to be able to deploy theoretical sampling, are you going to be able to proceed as far as theoretical saturation? It may be more appropriate to draw on some of the lessons of GT (open coding, memoing, constant comparison) in producing a thematic analysis of your data (ie rather than pushing as far as conceptualisation and a core concept). You should mark out clearly the relationship of these decisions to the methodological literature.
4. **Empirical setting**

   a) *Brief description*
   
   Give a brief description of the setting (e.g., a school classroom etc.) or possible setting for the research.

   b) *Access*
   
   Indicate how you will gain access to the setting and whose permission you will need to obtain etc.

   c) *Sampling*
   
   Outline your sampling strategies. If you intend to adopt theoretical sampling, you should consider whether you are likely to be able to proceed as far as saturation. In general, this is unlikely in the context of a masters dissertation.

   d) *Data collection*
   
   Outline your data collection strategies. If you intend to conduct interviews, give some sense of how you intend to manage them and consider whether or not audio recording and transcription will be possible/desirable; if you intend to undertake observation, consider whether the use of a stills camera might be useful, and so forth. Consider whether you might want to gather quantitative data at any point. If you intend to arrange group interviews or focus groups, then consider using a video recording in order to facilitate transcription.

   e) *Data analysis*
   
   Give some thought to your likely approach to data analysis. You may choose to adopt some of the strategies of GT, making use of open coding, memos, open coding proceeding to conceptualisation and the development of a core category and (if appropriate) selective coding, constant comparison, saturation. Given the limitations of time for the production of an MA dissertation, theoretical saturation and possibly the identification of a core category may be unduly ambitious and you may be required to identify your sample at the outset, which would rule out a theoretical sampling approach. If you intend to make use of visual data, think about the analytic resources that you might draw on here.
f)  *Contingencies*

Try to anticipate any difficulties that you might encounter, including the possibility of subjects dropping out of the research for any reason.

5.  *Ethical issues*

There is no such thing as a research project that has no ethical issues to consider, even if the work is entirely theoretical. Most important, though, is to reflect on the ethical issues relating to the use of data collected from people. Reflect on the issues raised in the BSA/BERA/BPA codes (note: these are not always compatible, so you will have to go with one) and consider how they relate to your research. How will you obtain the informed consent of your subjects and, if relevant, their carers? What information will you need to give them?

6.  *Professional/researcher development*

You should give brief consideration to the ways in which you hope your research will contribute to your own professional and/or researcher development, linking this to the rationale that you provide in the first section.

You will discuss your proposals in groups and issues will be picked up in plenary discussion during which we will also consider any other issues of interest that have arisen during the module.
Coursework

The assessment for this course is based on three elements.

1. Attendance (minimum 80%) and participation on the sessions. No grade will be given for this element. *Please note that it is the responsibility of students to sign the register for each session.*

2. The production of a methodological review of one of the review articles (1500 words). In preparing the review, look again at the questions and issues that have been raised in the documentation for the relevant session—especially those marked in red—and at your own notes from your reading and from the seminar discussion. Please bear in mind that you need to focus on the methodological issues rather than on the rationale or on the substantive findings of the research. The review should identify the key issue or question that the research addresses and delineate the argument that is produced in establishing the claims that are made in respect of this issue or question, concentrating on the evidence that is presented and the way in which this evidence is presented in making the argument. Reviews will need to explore the methodological and theoretical approach adopted in the article and consider the research design and the sampling strategies as well as strategies of data collection and analysis. The review should also consider whether sufficient information is given in the article to address these questions unambiguously. The review should look particularly at the ways in which and the extent to which the author of the article seeks to generalise from their research, particularly in respect of implications for professional practice. Remember that you are to consider the research in its own terms and not engage in a discussion of what you would have liked the author to have written/researched about, nor should you be expressing opinions: the task is to present an argument.

*Please note: since all of the articles will have been discussed fully during the course and notes on them are given in this documentation, no feedback will be provided on draft work for this element.*
3. The presentation of a dissertation/report research proposal (3500 words). 

*Please review the notes in for session 10.* The proposal should begin with a brief statement of the research issue or question, which should be followed by a critical discussion of research literature relevant to your research. For Pre-service MA TESOL students this should consist of a critical discussion of a single research article that is relevant to the proposed research. For all other students this section should comprise a brief review of research literature relating to the proposed research. The purpose of this critical discussion is to situate the proposed research within a relevant field of research. Following the critical discussion, the proposal should introduce the general approach to be adopted, for example, it might be stated that the approach will follow a narrative approach and there should be a brief discussion on how this is to be interpreted. The proposal should discuss sampling and data collection and analysis strategies to be deployed, making appropriate reference to the issue of access and also relevant ethical issues. The proposal should, where possible, anticipate difficulties that may arise (sample mortality would be an example). Finally, the proposal should outline how the research might be hoped to contribute to the researcher’s professional and/or academic development.

*Feedback will be provided on a 2 page (maximum) word summary of the proposal element provided that it is submitted in time (see below).*

*Please note that work that exceeds the word limit by more than 10% will not be accepted. This applies to both draft work and final submissions.*

**Assessment Criteria**

1. For both pieces of work, the submission must demonstrate an understanding of key methodological issues that will have been raised on the course as they are relevant to the research articles that are reviewed and to the proposed research (see the ‘key issues’ on pp. 3-4).

2. The methodological review must identify the central claims that are made in the research and consider how methodological decisions taken have enabled the argument in support of these claims. The articles reviewed in the proposal must be from or originally published in English language research journals.

3. The proposal must present a viable project that can be completed in the time frame and with the resources that are available on an MA programme.
4. The submission must be written to a satisfactory standard of English.

A composite grade will be awarded for elements 2 and 3 provided that element 1 has been satisfied.

Deadlines

30th April 2017

Submission of draft work for the research proposal. Drafts should be no longer than 2 pages in total and may be in note or bullet point form. Pre-service TESOL students should submit draft work to their MA supervisors, all other students should submit draft work in digital form by email to Professor Dowling.

21st May 2017

Receipt of feedback on draft work. Feedback will be provided by email to the addresses that participants have used to submit the work. Please note that we shall return feedback in the order in which we receive the drafts, so get it in early. We try to return feedback in advance of my deadline.

18th June 2017

Receipt of final versions of all coursework. Coursework must be submitted in digital form on Moodle; all CALT students should also submit their coursework in digital form by email to Professor Dowling.

Please note that feedback on drafts is a very important part of the pedagogy on this programme. Students failing the course tend to be the ones who do not submit draft work for feedback or who pay inadequate attention to the feedback that is given.

Note also that we cannot provide feedback on draft work that breaks the rules (eg in terms of length or deadline).

ALL WORK MUST CONFORM TO THE REGULATIONS REGARDING WORD LENGTH (REVIEW: 1500 WORDS +10%; PROPOSAL 3500 WORDS +10%)