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発表の後：ナラティブにもとづく教師についての 研究／教師による研究をどう論じ、どう評価するか

Life after presentation: How we might best discuss and
evaluate narrative-based research with/by teachers

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Key words : second language education, teacher, research paradigm, narrative

【要旨】

専門家による内省的実践は実証主義的研究によって生成された知識を使っているわけではない。実証主義が数学的論証によって一般的な命題を導きだすことを規範とするのに対して、専門家の「行為の中の知」と「行為の中の内省」はナラティブによって表象される。従って、専門家としての教師を対象にした研究あるいは教師による研究は、ナラティブ型のアプローチをとる必要がある。このような実証主義的パラダイムに属さない研究の成果を論じ、評価する際に、実証主義に従う研究者の行動規範や研究の評価基準を適用することはできない。本稿では、ナラティブ型の研究を理解し、論じるために研究者に必要とされる態度と、ナラティブ型の研究の評価基準について提案を行う。

0. Introduction

I never intended to be an academic. I just wanted a career and starting one in a language classroom was one of the few easy options for a young woman in the late 1970s. But I eventually landed in the academy as a teacher educator. I had more than ten year's teaching experience and I knew I was a fairly competent language teacher. I had successfully given a lot of workshops for practicing teachers and teachers in preparation. I had read a lot and published some papers. There was no reason to fear that I was not prepared for the job. In fact I was able to get along with my students very well. We enjoyed our classes and learned a lot. Still I was not able to shake off a feeling that I was not a proper academic for a long time. I felt that I was not good enough at theoretical arguments to convince my colleagues of relevance of my

knowledge, which I believed was as important as theirs. I was actually a bit intimidated by the confident attitude of some colleagues. I was never told what or how to teach, but I found it impossible to develop interdependent collaborative working relationships with those colleagues. My teacher autonomy (Aoki, 2002a) was impaired.

It has been a long time since those years. I have learned to articulate my thinking in my own way. But I see quite a lot of practicing teachers studying for a higher degree experience a similar feeling to the one I once had. One of them commented:

I have always been a practicing teacher and the world of research was completely new to me. It was difficult to find pleasure in it. Perhaps it was because I could only speak from my experiences but experiences are not made much of in it. (MK, winter 2002)

In order to recognize teachers' professional knowledge and support its development educational research has to have an epistemology that matches with that knowledge. In this paper I shall first explain my rationale for the claim that research involving teachers, either as an agent or as a participant, must be narrative-based. Then I shall explore alternative ways in which we understand, discuss and evaluate such research.

1. Knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action

Reflective practice became a centre of focus in second language teacher education in the past decade (Wallace, 1991; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Richards, 1998; Roberts, 1998; Trappes-Lomax & McGrath, 1999). The common assumption among writers on the topic is that a reflective model of teacher education can integrate both received from academic disciplines and knowledge gained through experience into teachers' practical competence knowledge, thus enabling teachers to update their expertise according to the change in the field and their environment. Most advocates of reflective practice in second language teacher education refer to Schön (1983), but one thing they seldom discuss is the fact that Schön originally conceived reflective

practice as an antidote to positivist epistemology. According to the positivist model, what counts as knowledge must be obtained in a way that is both objective and value-neutral and also generalizable and able to predict and control future events. Positivist epistemology of practice, Schön argues, is unable to deal with the uncertainty, complexity, instability, uniqueness and value conflict which professionals face in their daily practice. By studying professionals in a variety of fields Schön (ibid) finds that professional practice is largely based on tacit knowledge, or knowing-in-action, and that practitioners reflect on their tacit knowledge mostly when they encounter with some surprise, be it an unwanted result or an unexpected success. Schön calls this latter behaviour “reflection-in-action.” This reality of professional practice puts practitioners bound by positivist epistemology in the dilemma of “rigor or relevance” (ibid: 42). Many practitioners resolve the dilemma by “cutting the situation to fit professional knowledge” (ibid: 44). But that obviously does not solve the original problem itself.

The recognition of reflection-in-action frees practitioners from the traditional hierarchy in the academy where pure science comes at the top, applied science in the middle, and “concrete problem solving” (ibid: 24) at the bottom. Practitioners are viewed not as consumers of knowledge produced by the hierarchs in the academy but as producers of knowledge relevant to their own practice. Reflection-in-action also frees practitioners from the positivist paradigm prevalent in the academy, thus enabling them to articulate their thought and describe their action in a way that is more in accord with their perception. In the sense that reflection-in-action frees teachers from the academic hierarchy and positivist epistemology, it can be thought of as an important component of teacher autonomy.

The ways in which educational researchers understand teachers and the means which teacher educators adopt to stimulate reflection in teachers have to recognize the limitation of positivism. Many second language teacher educators encourage teachers to engage in action research which they believe stimulates reflection (Nunan, 1993; Wallace, 1998; Burns, 1999; James, 2001). Most literature on action research in second language education is, however, ambivalent in its stance towards the positivist paradigm. The procedure they often recommend for data collection, analysis and presentation is very much like that of positivist research — itemizing,

classifying, counting and so on. If action research is to contribute to the development of teachers' professional knowledge, it needs to be conceived as an alternative to positivist research which can compensate for its shortcomings.

2 . Narrative mode of knowing

Schön (1983) describes practitioners' knowing-in-action as tacit. He also observes that the practitioners' "intuitive knowing is always richer in information than any description of it" (ibid: 276). I should contend, however, that the practitioners' inability to articulate the content of their knowledge and reflection may be largely attributable to the mismatch between their mode of knowing and the socially recognized way of knowledge representation.

Bruner (1986) recognizes two modes of cognition, paradigmatic and narrative. The paradigmatic mode of knowing uses a formal mathematical system of description and explanation. It tries to categorize particulars and establish relationships among the categories in order to extract general propositions. In other words it is the mode in which logical thinking takes place. The narrative mode operates in a completely different way. It bears with particulars and configures human actions and events into a believable story. Whereas a cause-effect relationship in the paradigmatic mode is derived by logical argument, the concept of cause in the narrative mode is based on a likely connection between two events. Bruner (ibid: 11) claims that "efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to ignore one at the expense of the other inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought", but the positivist paradigm exclusively relies on the paradigmatic mode of knowing.

Motivated by a concern with the social and human sciences' lack of accomplishments in providing useful answers to human problems, Polkinghorne (1988) proposes research based on the idea of narrative. He recognizes three realms of reality - matter, life and consciousness - and a complex interplay among them in human existence. He maintains that "[t]he emergence of human beings from life in general to reflective consciousness and language is a threshold change that has brought about a unique level of reality that I will call 'the order of meaning'" (ibid: 2). To study human experience is to study the order of meaning. As the order of meaning is not

accessible by positivist methodology which is primarily designed to study physical objects, human sciences, Polkinghorne claims, must find an alternative to positivist epistemology. He argues thus:

“The core of the argument I make in this book is that narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a framework for understanding the past events of one’s life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful. Thus the study of human beings by the human sciences needs to focus on the realm of meaning in general, and on narrative meaning in particular.” (Ibid: 11)

Practitioners who work with people may be able to articulate the content of their knowledge and reflection if they are allowed to tell stories.¹⁾ In fact Schön (1990: 344) makes an observation in the conclusion to his edited volume of case studies of reflective practice that “all of them represent their findings about practice in a distinctive way: They tell stories.” Although Schön (ibid) admits that reporting a case necessarily leads to the use of narrative, for many of the authors narrative is much more than the form of representation of their practice. Mattingly (1990), for example, observes that storytelling is a daily practice among occupational therapists and reports on reflective storytelling sessions in which each participating therapists told a story based on a video recording of a therapy session. The project, which was highly appreciated by the therapists, brought to their awareness the contingent and interpretive nature of their work. Mattingly (ibid: 254) attributes the success to the nature of therapists’ thinking.

“Therapists are telling something important about their work in their stories, and this is what our study unearthed and helped articulate. ... their ordinary storytelling had already captured a level of complexity in the clinical problems they were treating that was ignored in the usual biomedically oriented accounts of clinical

work. In their stories, therapists reveal the depth of the problems their patients face and, in so doing, the depth of their own interventions.”

As this example shows stories can be both an object to reflect on and a medium of reflection.

3 . My personal narrative turn

The proposition that teachers' knowledge is narrative has been in the air for more than two decades now. I do not even remember where I encountered the idea for the first time. I do not think I took it too seriously then. In retrospect I believed that teachers learned to teach by closely observing learners and their own teaching and trying alternative pedagogical actions. I considered stories teachers told to be anecdotes which might be useful to vent their frustration or boost their confidence. I did not expect them to be conducive to teacher development. I tried to avoid falling back on anecdotes in my teaching. The narrative nature of teachers' knowledge surfaced in my consciousness when I came to realize that action research as described in introductory books on the topic for second language teachers was rather problematic (Aoki, 2002b). I had been running a weekend study group for in-service teachers in my charge and encouraged them to engage in action research for a couple of years, but the project had not had much success. The teachers who came to the meeting seemed to be too busy to set enough time aside for systematic data collection and analysis. They also seemed to have a wide range of concerns which unexpectedly cropped up and they found it difficult to follow through one research agenda. But they willingly came (and still do) to monthly Saturday afternoon meetings. Each month one teacher brought in a topic of immediate concern and we jointly tried to restory her experience so that she might find a way out of the troubling situation. In April each year I asked them if they wanted to continue with the group for another year, secretly hoping they would say they had had enough. One or two teachers might stop coming so that they could spend their precious little time for writing their thesis. But the group as a whole always answered in affirmative. Ok, I thought, if talking about one's experience was so appealing to teachers, why don't I make it a course within our

curriculum? So I designed an experimental course based on cases written by course participants (Aoki, 2002c). Stories told by teachers, both in this course and at Saturday afternoon meetings, often involved their emotional experience such as conflict with or pressure from senior colleagues, unexpected ending of contract, and difficulty in classroom management. They also often referred to dilemmas between the ideals they held and the reality they faced. I saw tears in the eyes of the story tellers. I also saw entangled emotions and seeming dead ends sorted out in the process of telling a story. Feedback from teachers at the end of each semester has been, on the whole, extremely positive. MK, whom I quoted in introduction, wrote:

Before anything it was a surprise for me to be allowed to tell stories of my experience. And my reflection assumed multiple perspectives and deepened by talking with other students. I wouldn't have been able to do that on my own. It also helped that the teacher sometimes reoriented our discussion. It prevented the development of our discussion from being blocked or becoming unconstructive. It was the class most looked forward to in this semester. (MK, winter 2002)

This experience convinced me of the power of narrative in teacher education and educational research.

4 . Teacher's knowledge

Teachers were traditionally considered as people who implemented ideas formulated by educational researchers and policy makers. Repeated failures of educational reforms, however, spurred researchers on to question this view (Elbaz, 1983; Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi, 1988). They began to acknowledge that teachers are an active agent in an educational process with their own history, values, perspectives and aspirations who think and feel for themselves. A host of new types of research on teachers emerged. Among them were studies in the knowledge teachers put to use in their practice (e.g. Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin & Connelly, 1985; 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1990; Grumet, 1987; Witherell & Noddings, 1992; Gudmundsdottir, 1990; 1991; Carter, 1993; Ben-Peretz, 1995; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Johnson &

Golombek, 2002). A common claim of those studies is that teachers' knowledge, not only of pedagogical and moral aspects of teaching but also of subject matter, is storied. Elbaz (1991: 3) argues thus:

“... the story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way.”

This claim is quite convincing because teachers are people and they work with a variety of people; learners, other teachers, administrators, parents, sponsors and other stake holders in education. Teachers' work necessarily involves a complex interplay of a more than positivistically manageable number of factors. As discussed in the previous sections of this paper such a practice is expected to involve the narrative mode of knowing.

Research with teachers and research by teachers, then, necessarily have narrative elements in the research process; nature of data, mode of analysis, and presentation of findings. I shall call this type of research narrative-based and include such methodologies as narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995), Narrative Inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), life story (Mishler, 1999), life history (Cole & Knowles, 2001) and hybrids of those and other methodologies. In order for such research to flourish we need a research community which operates in the narrative mode. Elbaz-Luwisch (1997: 77), however, observes:

“In North America, the number of researchers doing narrative work seems to have reached a 'critical mass,' and narrative researchers no longer need to argue for the legitimacy of their methods with every new study. In smaller countries the academic community is likely to be more cautious and conservative. In Israel, for example, narrative work is viewed with great interest, particularly among researchers who are close to the schools; nevertheless the question, 'Yes, but is it

research?’ is still raised frequently.”

The situation in Japan seems to be even less favourable. The quantitative/qualitative parameter²⁾ is still a matter “to incite the drawing of swords” (ibid: 76) in some circles. I shall not go into the political aspects of the issue here, but the dominance of the positivist paradigm in the academy is undeniable. In fact the influence of positivist thinking has been so prevalent and powerful that even for those of us who recognize the value of narrative in educational research, developing a new research community presents a challenge of unlearning our often unconscious, automatized way of thinking and acquiring an unfamiliar one. In the remainder of the paper I shall discuss what needs to be learned or unlearned.

5 . Understanding narrative-based research

In the paradigmatic mode of knowing the diversity of the real world is grouped into categories and relationships among the categories are established as some general rules. Conventional research papers have a conclusion which explicitly states what the study has revealed in terms of categories and general rules. With narrative-based research, however, the end of the story can also be the end of the paper. Many would be tempted to ask, “So what?” But this is a wrong question. Narratives are not for categorization or generalization. Polkinghorne (1995:11) argues that “[t]he cumulative effect of narrative reasoning is a collection of individual cases in which thought moves from case to case” and that “the understanding of the new action can draw upon previous understanding while being open to the specific and unique elements that make the new episode different from all that have gone before.” To understand narrative-based research writing, readers have to search in their memory experiences that are similar but necessarily different to the one depicted in the story. The questions to be asked are, then; “How does the story resonate with my experience?”; “What elements in the story are new to me?”; “What implications does the story have for my teaching practice (or whatever aspect of my life)?” Finding an answer to these questions may take a bit of imagination when a reader is unfamiliar with too many elements in a story; different kind of school, different kind of students,

different kind of life experience, and so on. But difficulty of understanding often lies not in these differences but in our habit of framing our experience in a particular way. We need to learn to let unfamiliar stories highlight parts of ourselves that would otherwise remain unnoticed. Understanding narrative-based research is a highly reflexive endeavour.

6 . Discussing narrative-based research

The ultimate purpose of positivist research is to discover the truth. Discussion on a research paper, therefore, inevitably leads to a question of whether the claimed findings are true. In the positivist frame of mind there are winners and losers in an academic debate because it is thought that the truth value of any proposition can unambiguously be revealed. An argument can become a battle ground. An assumption behind the recognition of the narrative mode of knowing is, on the other hand, that there is no single absolute truth. Human beings configure otherwise separate events into a believable story in order to understand their experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). So representation of our experience is always subjective. One event may be interpreted differently by different people or by the same person at different times. There is no point, therefore, in debating over the truth value. How, then, might we discuss narrative-based research? The concept of connected knowing may be helpful to answer this question.

Connected knowing is one of the ways of knowing identified by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) among a large number of women they interviewed. The book has been criticized in some quarters and I myself do not entirely agree with the authors, but the concept of connected knowing remains a valuable tool to think about alternative ways of talking about research. Ruddick (1996, pp. 261-2) summarizes the characteristics of connected knowing as follows:

“Knowing is not separated from feeling; emotion is not only a spur but often a test of knowledge. Knowers attend to particulars — particular persons, relationships, or objects; ... Knowing involves a capacity to appreciate, subtly and accurately, that is as productive of truth and knowledge as the ability to criticize. ... Knowers

present their evidence and construct understandings through contextual and open-ended narratives Knowers take disagreement as an occasion for collaborative deliberation and communication rather than for debate.”

A commentator on a piece of narrative-based research could begin his talk with how the research resonates with his experience and how he appreciates it. If there is any difficulty in understanding, difference in interpretation or doubt about the relevance of the research itself, a commentator and a researcher can jointly explore where the difference in perspectives have come from. This is a very different way of talking about research to the one we are familiar with, but it is worth learning not only for narrative researchers but also for paradigmatic researchers. Aggression is not a necessary component of the ability to produce knowledge even in the positivist paradigm.

7 . Evaluating narrative-based research

My suggestions for understanding and discussing narrative-based research are very different from conventional research practice. They may sound rather lenient. But I am not saying that anything goes. There are good and poor examples of both narrative-based research and positivist research. What, then, are the criteria for evaluating narrative-based research? Quite a number of researchers have discussed how to evaluate the quality of narrative-based research (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1988; Mishler, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Anderson & Herr, 1999; Rogers, 2003). There is, however, no agreed-upon set of criteria. Connelly and Clandinin (1990: 7) think that the absence of agreed-upon norms is an only temporary phenomenon for an emerging research paradigm and that researchers will eventually reach consensus. After more than a decade, though, no one has proposed such a definitive set. We might fare better if we thought the absence were due to the very nature of narrative-based research. As Connelly and Clandinin (*ibid*) observe, some criteria are appropriate to some circumstances and some to others. There may not be any criteria applicable to all situations. In fact Mishler (1990: 421) states that “definitions of evidence and rules and criteria for their assess-

ment are embedded in networks of assumptions and accepted practices that constitute a tradition,” and that “the utility of alternative rules would be limited – as are the standard ones – to their pragmatic function.” In this section I shall elaborate on the points I would consider important for evaluating narrative-based research in my own context of work.

Verisimilitude

One criterion which most narrative researchers agree on is whether the story is verisimilar. Verisimilitude is not determined by any external measure. It is determined, rather, by whether the story resonates with readers' experience. As each reader has her own unique experience, a story may ring true to some and may not to others. Verisimilitude, therefore, is socially constructed among researchers who are knowledgeable both about the topic and the research methodology.

One of the conditions that make a story verisimilar is, I would think, thickness of description. Events that are configured into a story of course need to be described in detail. But you need more information to make a story plausible. A story is situated in physical, social and psychological contexts in which the events took place. It is also embedded in the histories of people and institutions involved in those events. The data collected must include this sort of information and it must be represented in a final report. Another condition may be the emotional tone of the description. Since one function of a story is to provide readers with vicarious experience, and human experience is always accompanied with some emotion or other, whether a story succeeds in conveying the emotions experienced by people in the story and the storyteller may determine the degree and quality of understanding on the part of readers.

Transparency

Acknowledgement that there is no one and absolute truth opens a door to understanding human experience as it is lived and experienced. But it also opens a door to intentional manipulation and deception. In this regard, Connelly and Clanin (1990: 10) issue the following warning:

“Narrative and life go together and so the principal attraction of narrative as method is its capacity to render life experiences, both personal and social, in relevant and meaningful ways. However, this same capacity is a two-edged inquiry sword. Falsehood may be substituted for meaning and narrative truth by using the same criteria that give rise to significance, value, and intention. Not only may one ‘fake the data’ and write a fiction but one may also use the data to tell a deception as easily as a truth.”

I do not necessarily think that fiction is inappropriate as a form to report the result of research. Eisner and Peshkin (1990: 365) write that “there is no reason, at least in our minds, why in the future the academy might not accept Ph.D. dissertations in education that are written in the form of novels.” They claim that “novels have helped people more sensitively and insightfully understand the world in which they and others live” (ibid: 365). Other media which have also played the same function, films, drama and poetry to name a few, may also be possible alternatives in reporting teacher research (Eisner, 1997). Trustworthiness of particular research is obtained, rather, by making the research process transparent to the eyes of readers.

Transparency applies on two different levels. On one level a piece of research writing needs to explain how data have been collected, analyzed and made into a story or stories. If the stories are fictions, it has to state so. As narratives as data are constructed in the relationship between a researcher and each research participant, it is particularly important to describe the nature of the relationship as part of the process. On the other level the researcher’s self needs to be disclosed to an appropriate degree. As what is represented in research writing is ultimately the researcher’s interpretation and necessarily influenced by a particular perspective and interest, a researcher has to make visible what kind of person she is with her values, beliefs, attitudes and aspirations.

Intersubjectivity and multiple perspectives

Although narrative-based research acknowledges the role of subjectivity in the research process, a safety measure to prevent the researcher’s interpretation from

going wild has nevertheless to be taken. Seeking intersubjectivity with participants is one. When there is disagreement among those involved, including the researcher, reporting multiple interpretations may be the solution. In any case, the conclusion of a piece of narrative-based research cannot be presented with certainty. It is always tentative and open to further exploration. A narrative researcher needs to be modest in her claims.

Ethical issues

Narrative-based research is rather intrusive in the sense that it asks research participants to share their personal experience with the researcher. It has, therefore, to consider ethical issues even more sensitively than other types of research. First of all, a researcher has to take every possible measure to protect participants from any harm which being exposed to the public may cause. Second, the research has to serve the interest of participants either directly or indirectly. A problem for a participant may be solved as a result of the research. Or by studying particular individuals, a researcher may speak for a social group which the participants belong to. Third, because it is up to each party's perspective whether a piece of research is considered helpful or not, the research participants' voice must be properly reflected in research writing. This, however, could create a new dilemma. A researcher solicits stories from a teacher or a learner, writes up a paper and publishes it under her name. Does she have the right to do so? Do not stories belong to the storyteller? So, the fourth point to consider is how to acknowledge participants' contribution in research writing. They can be co-authors when anonymity is not required. But, in some cases, such an approach may contradict the researcher's obligation to protect participants. It is also normally not allowed to have co-authors for a degree thesis. There is, therefore, no once and for all solution to this issue. Each researcher has to make a decision with each paper they write.

Familiarity with research literature

Although being useful for research participants is a top priority for narrative-based research, a good piece of narrative-based research also has a value, I would contend, to offer to the research community. In order to achieve that goal the

researcher needs to be familiar with the literature on the topic and be clear about what is unique and innovative about her own research.

8 . By way of conclusion

In explicating their criteria for evaluating research proposals Josselson and Lieblich notice that they “approve the student for the work as much as the work itself” (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003: 272). They claim as follows:

“... narrative research is the far more difficult road and usually takes longer to complete — it is for the hardy, the passionate, the student who can bear enormous anxiety and ambiguity and persevere. It is for those who are comfortable knowing certainly but without certainty who can recognize that all knowledge is tentative and provisional but can still have confidence in what they know. It is for mature students, people with certain life experiences in their selected area of study and with interpersonal skills, and for students with a humanistic bent.” (ibid: 272)

I am not sure whether narrative-based research is any more difficult or time-consuming than paradigmatic research, but I completely agree with a student who once took my research methodology course. She herself was carrying out her research within the positivist paradigm. She wrote in her feedback that she had previously thought qualitative research should be easier than quantitative research but that she had learned that that was not the case by participating in my course. Perhaps it is because we do not see each other’s behind-the-scene effort that we tend to think that other people’s work is easier than our own. It is time to start recognizing that a research paradigm is a language game which a particular discourse community plays and that there is nothing inherently superior or inferior in the paradigms themselves. We need to learn to respect paradigms other than our own for what they can do, instead of denouncing them for their inability to do what they are not designed for.

Notes

- 1) Whereas some theorists conceptually distinguish stories from narratives, others treat them as interchangeable. For the purpose of the present paper, it is not necessary to make a distinction between these terms. Therefore I choose between them according to the authors I refer to.
- 2) Narrative-based research can be considered as sub-category of qualitative research. Some schools of qualitative research operate in the paradigmatic mode and try to meet positivist evaluation criteria of research.

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