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Ten Tricky Questions about Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research: And What the Answers Mean for Qualitative and Quantitative Research

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Abstract

This article addresses ten 'tricky' questions related to narrative inquiry in the field of language teaching and learning research. The questions come from the author's experiences of presenting lectures and seminars on narrative inquiry in many different contexts. The questions deal with issues to do specifically with narrative inquiry methods as well as with broader issues related to narrative research approaches. Where applicable, reference is made to the implications the answers have for both qualitative and quantitative research. The article starts with a brief overview of what narrative inquiry is in the context of language teaching and learning research.

Introduction

For the past twenty years or so I have been engaged in learning about narrative inquiry, particularly how narrative inquiry functions as a research method to explore the meaning that language teachers and learners make about their experiences (Barkhuizen, 2011, 2016; Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021). There are many different ways of doing narrative inquiry and it means different things to different researchers. I am constantly learning about narrative methodological approaches and trying different narrative methodologies in my own research projects. I like the flexibility that narrative affords and the creativity that it promotes. But most of all, I like that through the stories my research participants tell I am able to delve deeply into their life experiences, to explore the meaning they make of those experiences; and that I am able to be an integral part of that inquiry process. Narrative inquiry methods inevitably allow engagement with our participants, including the co-construction of their stories as data.

I have presented many talks and workshops on narrative inquiry in many different parts of the world, either face-to-face or virtually. These typically involve some input from me followed by group work, discussion, and question and answer sessions (see, for example, Barkhuizen, 2020a, 2020b). The format may vary but there is usually time for questions from the audience about the topic of my presentation and also about narrative inquiry more generally. These questions can be quite specific about the design of a study or a technical aspect of academic narrative writing, for example, or they could be somewhat philosophical focusing on aspects of truth or narrative knowledge. In this article, I have selected ten questions from the many that I get asked. These ten questions are those that probably get asked most frequently by audiences or, at least, they are those that I remember most because I often find them quite tricky to answer. Before getting onto the questions, and my answers, I provide a brief overview of what narrative inquiry is in the context of language teaching and learning research.

Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research

The branch of qualitative research that has as its primary concern the stories people tell of their life experiences is called narrative inquiry. Stories are a central part of the professional lives of teachers and the learning lives of language learners. Since they are always available and accessible – we tell stories all the time – it makes sense to use them productively for research purposes to better understand what it is teachers and learners do in the process of teaching and learning. Using stories to study a phenomenon is not something new. Sociologists and anthropologists, for example, have been using narratives to study the lives of people and cultures for many years. In general education (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), narrative inquiry has been an effective research methodology used to examine topics such as teachers' experiences of curriculum implementation and innovation. In language teaching and learning, narrative inquiry is a more recent, but fast growing, methodology that engages with stories in one way or another to investigate matters relevant to the experiences of language teachers and learners: their learning (Golombek & Johnson, 2021), identities (Ahn, 2021), emotions (Prior, 2016), relationships (Josselson, 2007), imagined futures (Barkhuizen, 2016).

Narrative inquiry attempts to understand the meaning teachers and learners make of their lived (as well as imagined) experiences. In other words, narrative inquiry is not just about telling and listening to stories; it is about using stories to explore the narrator's meaning making, their understanding, of their experiences, from their perspective. The methods used by narrative researchers to collect and analyse data reflect this broad methodological goal. Many of the methods are those found in other forms of qualitative research, such as oral or Zoom interviews, classroom observations and field-notes, written journals, and online blogs. But what makes the methods narrative is the role that story plays in the collection and analysis of data and the researcher's commitment to using the methods to examine the meaning made by research participants of their lived experiences in particular spatiotemporal contexts.

To continue this overview of narrative inquiry, I comment on two aspects of data analysis. The first, can be captured by Polkinghorne's (1995) distinction between analysis of narratives and narrative analysis, a useful way of conceptualizing two broad approaches to analysing and reporting narrative data. The analysis of story content (Polkinghorne's analysis of narratives) follows the procedures of coding for themes, categorizing these and looking for patterns of association among them – what is typically called a content or thematic analysis. The second approach involves synthesizing the experiences evident in the data into a unified whole (Polkinghorne's narrative analysis). Here, the process involves configuring or re-storying the data (which may or may not be in story form) into a coherent whole; i.e. the outcome is a story. The distinction between these two broad analytical approaches is somewhat fuzzy, however. There is obviously some similarity in the analytical methods used, and also in the later reporting of the findings (i.e. a configured story or a discussion of separate, extracted themes). Some published research articles, for example, quote short extracts of data (often representing themes) and discuss these sometimes quite independently in their findings sections (see, for example, Yip et al., 2022), whereas in others the entire findings section, if not most of the article, is presented as a configured or constructed story of experience (see discussion of writing as analysis in Benson, 2018).

The second aspect of data analysis I wish to comment on involves what is focused on in the process of analysis. Of course, researchers want to know what the told stories are about – the content of the stories. What do they tell us about the lived or imagined experiences of the narrators? The content of narratives refers to what they are about, what was told, and why, when, where and by whom. Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 477) refer to narrative inquiry as "the study of experience as story" and encourage inquirers to explore content in terms of three dimensions or commonplaces, relating to temporality (the times – past, present and future – in which experiences unfold), place (the place or sequence of places in which experiences are lived), and sociality (personal emotions and desires, and interactions between people). I have suggested (Barkhuizen, 2016) asking when, where and when to guide the process of analyzing the content of stories.

Narrative analysts also focus on the form of stories, in addition to content; sometimes they pay even more attention to form than content (for example, linguists and sociolinguists, who do detailed discourse or conversation analyses of storied data). Riessman (2008) suggests that combining both content and structural (form) analyses enhances the quality of the analysis, generating insights beyond what a content analysis alone would achieve. Riessman (2008, p. 105) also says, "Stories don't fall from the sky …; they are composed and received in contexts – interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive – to name a few". This is an important message for narrative inquirers: context is important in the study of narrative. What is meant by context, however, differs considerably in different types of narrative research (see Benson, 2021, who prefers to refer to space), and it is taken into account more or less by different narrative researchers. Context could be the local context of the storytelling (e.g. the physical setting, language choice, and time constraints) or the context of the storyworld – the characters and settings and action in the story being told. Pavlenko (2007) recommends that narrative researchers should also take into account the broader historical, political, and social contexts that both shape narratives and are reflected in them.

I next move onto the ten questions. As I've said above, I describe them as tricky because they are not always easy to answer. The questions are complex and the answers depend on the circumstances of any particular narrative study; for example, the scope and design of the study, the resources (human, financial, time) available, and the research knowledge and skills of the researcher(s). However, there are some general principles that apply to each of the questions and their answers, and I will touch only on these. And although my focus is on narrative inquiry, answers have implications for qualitative research generally and also quantitative research. I will make reference to those if applicable. Finally, I need to point out that the answers to the questions are my own; someone else might suggest answers that are quite different.

Ten Tricky Questions

Question 1: What's the difference between narrative inquiry and qualitative research?

A common, rather crude, distinction is often made between qualitative and quantitative research approaches, both in terms of epistemology and methodology. Epistemology refers, simply, to the different ways we know about the world (i.e. it's about knowledge and how we acquire knowledge). A particular research methodology will usually reflect an epistemology. Bruner (1986), for example, proposed two modes of thought – ways of apprehending reality – and one of these ways is narrative. Through narrative people understand their experiences and communicate them in the process of storytelling. Narrative knowing and narrative research methodologies focus on the particular and complex aspects of human activity; researchers aim to understand the fine and full details of people's lived experiences. Now this is similar to what other qualitative methodologies try to achieve, for example through using methods such as observation and interviews; narrative inquiry is, after all, a type of qualitative research. Narrative inquiry is clearly different from quantitative methodologies, which aim for generalizations across many cases and without paying attention to the fine details of people's lives (in fact, often discarding and ignoring them as outliers).

What makes narrative inquiry different is the centrality of *story* in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of any narrative study (see Question 2). As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us, we live storied lives. Participants in narrative inquiries make sense of those lives – they understand them – in the process of co-constructing their stories with researchers, what I have referred to as *narrative knowledging* (Barkhuizen, 2011). The local sense-making of social phenomena by both the participants and the researchers takes place in the dialogic process of storytelling. The telling, as well as what is told (including the story characters, the setting, and the plot), are the data to be analysed. This somewhat postmodern approach to conducting research is clearly a rejection of the more quantitative research approaches that tend to objectify research subjects, reducing them to numbers and measuring them against many other subjects. Instead, narrative researchers welcome the complex, fuzzy, ambiguous, subjective personal stories of experience – the personal *voices* of often marginalized research participants who might otherwise be neglected (Ishihara & Menard-Warwick, 2018).

Question 2: How do stories relate to narrative inquiry processes?

As I've just stated in Question 1, stories are central to narrative inquiry; they make qualitative research narrative research. These stories are about our experiences of life; the meaning we make of the events we have lived or imagine in our future lives. The following is one of my favourite quotes about stories: They "assist humans to make life experiences meaningful. Stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us to our past and present, and assist us to envision our future' (Kramp, 2004, p. 107). Stories are not merely a list of facts about the things we do, the people we do them with, where and when we do them, they also embody our understandings of those events as well as express our feelings about them. In terms of narrative inquiry methodology, there are four points I want to make:

1. What do we mean by *story*? Story means different things to different people: different cultures, generations, ages, possibly genders – and therefore different researchers. It is always a good idea for researchers to say what they mean by story when doing a narrative study (see Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021).
2. When narrative inquirers collect data, sometimes the data is in story form; for example, a response to an interview prompt might be a story. Sometimes, however, that answer might not be a story, but simply a short utterance not in story form. A teacher's written journal or open response to a questionnaire item might contain numerous reflections about their teaching practice, but might not include evidence of data in story form. However, there might well be a story embedded in the journal or questionnaire response, with characters and what they do with each other in various places and times.
3. I said in the introduction, and I need to repeat it here, that narrative inquirers typically follow two broad approaches to analysing the data they have collected; following either mainly one or the other, or both. One is to thematically analyse the content of the story data; i.e. stories are collected and then thematically analysed. The other is to configure the data (in story form of not) into stories. The outcome of the analysis is a story.

But these stories are not merely summaries of the narrators' experiences. The stories certainly do report on the experiences, but they also focus on the particular research questions the study is asking, and they are informed by relevant theory. So, they are research stories.

4. Finally, the following statement regarding the work of narrative analysts by De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) highlights a significant focus of analysts' attention: Their work "is as much on what is said as on who says it and how, and therefore there is a stated emphasis on language and discourse and greater attention to the contexts of storytelling than in previous traditions within the social sciences" (p. 18). In other words, since stories are told and shared and often co-constructed with their audience, researchers need to pay attention to the language and discourse of the actual telling, which includes the sociocultural contexts in which the telling takes place. This is more or less done (see Barkhuizen, 2013).

Question 3: What are appropriate topics to explore in language teacher education using narrative inquiry?

Fenstermacher (1997) says that "Through narrative, we begin to understand the actor's reasons for action, and are thereby encouraged to make sense of these actions through the eyes of the actor" (p. 123). By 'actors' he means research participants, who in our field are most likely to be language teachers and learners. Narrative inquiry aims to explore and understand their actions – what they do, and why they do it. In a similar vein, Mertova and Webster (2020) describe narrative inquiry as *human centred* that aims to illuminate the *real-life experiences* of language teachers and learners. Topics in narrative inquiry, therefore, focus on their personal experiences of matters related to teaching and learning and also who they are (their changing identities as they go about their work). In a recent edited book, (Barkhuizen, 2019, *Qualitative research topics in language teacher education*) the contributing authors suggested topics relevant to qualitative research methodology in the field of language teacher education (LTE), almost all of which are applicable to narrative inquiry as well. I list some of them here to illustrate the broad

range. It is important to remember as you consider these topics that our concern as narrative inquirers is the stories participants tell about their experiences of these, and how they make sense of them.

- language teacher learning and professional development
- language learning and language learner histories
- emotions in language teaching, learning, and teacher education
- language teacher and language learner identities
- L2 and academic writing
- English for academic purposes
- race and gender in language teaching and learning
- translanguaging
- English as an international language
- English as medium of instruction
- multilingualism in language learning, teaching, and LTE
- language learners and teachers studying abroad
- teacher research and action research
- approaches to assessment
- doctoral dissertation writing

Question 4: What if participants don't tell the truth in narrative inquiry?

Here I am going to answer this question directly, which is relatively simple to do. Broader, related questions about *truth* (and validity) are more complex and would necessitate discussions of a more philosophical nature (see my brief comments on epistemology above), such as: What do we mean by truth? How do we know the truth? Of course, truth in this broad sense is important in narrative research, though narrative researchers tend to talk about the verisimilitude of stories, or their plausibility (Sandelowski, 1991). But as I've said, we won't go into those discussions here. Instead, I'll try to answer the question as it is posed in this sub-section, and I'll make two points. Firstly, the aim of narrative inquiry is not to come up with a set of facts or numbers that explain a phenomenon – that's what quantitative research tries to do. Narrative inquiry aims to understand how people make sense of their experiences – *the meaning they make of those experiences* – or make sense of who they are (see topics suggested in Question 3, for example).

It is not so much determining the facts of what happened as it is understanding the participant's meaning making of what happened.

The second point has to do with deception – lying. For some reason, stories and storytellers as research participants are often viewed with a suspicious eye. The process of storytelling and the outcome of the process – the stories – are somehow targeted for critique: But surely the storyteller could lie? Maybe they do not tell the truth when they tell stories? My answer here is another question: Why do these questions not apply to other types of research? Surely in qualitative interviews participants could also not tell the truth. And even when completing a closed-item, structured survey, a responded could lie by selecting 'strongly agree' when they really mean 'strongly disagree'. And in doing a grammaticality judgement test, they could select the incorrect grammatical answer on purpose. But why would they? One would hope that when research participants agree to participate in a research project they do so with trust, openness and honesty. This is especially true with narrative research, where intimate, personal stories are shared and often co-constructed with researchers, sometimes over an extended period of time during which a close relationship and healthy rapport has been built up.

Question 5: How involved in the research processes should the researcher be in narrative inquiry? What about objectivity?

Researcher *engagement* in narrative inquiry data collection and analysis refers to how involved researchers are with their participants during these processes. For example, how do they generate the data together? Do they collaborate in the analysis of the data? Are the participants involved in the way the findings are reported? Engagement sometimes raises questions about subjectivity and objectivity – simply, the extent to which the researcher influences the quality of the data collected and the validity and reliability of the data analysis. This seems to be a constant concern for those not familiar with or new to narrative inquiry methods. Researcher engagement in narrative inquiry takes on a special meaning, however, because central to the research endeavour are the lives of the research participants – the narrators – and the stories they tell about those life experiences. One could argue that this situation

is the same in all types of qualitative research, but narrative inquiry typically involves the sharing of "narratives about some life experience that is of deep and abiding interest" to participants (Chase, 2003, p. 274), whether in interviews, informal conversations, participant observations, or even more public social media spaces. Stories can be extremely personal and often cover confidential, ethically-delicate topics that have to be handled very sensitively by researchers. The researcher-participant relationship is at the very heart of narrative inquiry, and it is this relationship that is the essence of engagement – engaging with the lives of research participants.

One obvious gauge of researcher engagement is the extent of their collaboration (or co-construction) with the teller of stories in the generation of data such as interviews. Ochs and Capps (2001) suggest that narratives as research data can be placed along a tellership continuum, with the extent and kind of involvement of those participating in their construction determining where on the continuum they lie. Towards one end of the continuum are those narratives that involve a high level of discursive collaboration. Here stories are told *with* another. These narratives are typically conversations or unstructured, free-flowing interviews. Towards the other end of the tellership continuum are narratives told *to* others. The telling of stories becomes more of an individual activity with little or even no participation on the part of the audience; i.e., there is less researcher engagement here.

Question 6: When writing my research report, is telling the participants' stories enough? What more should I do?

No, telling, or re-telling participants' stories is not enough. Well, let me quickly qualify this direct answer. It depends on what the aim of the report is. Sometimes merely summarizing the experiences of a participant may indeed be enough. For example, if a report was part of a collection of teachers' stories about the implementation of a new regional language policy to be published by the local professional teachers' association, then the story would be of interest; it would have local relevance and would contribute to an understanding of personal challenges and successes in classroom policy implementation. The report would be *descriptive* in nature, revealing rich details of the teacher's

attitudes towards the policy, for instance, and their classroom practices, and would illustrate particularly what worked and what didn't. But this description might not be enough if the researcher aimed to publish a narrative inquiry report in an international journal. As Bell (2002) has cautioned, narrative inquiry is "more than just telling stories" (p. 207). It aims, as I have repeatedly said throughout this article, to uncover the sense humans make of their life experiences. Researchers, in writing their reports (or talking about them at conferences, or sharing them in multimodal forms on digital platforms), have to re-tell those experiences and represent the participant's sense-making. They also have to focus on the particular research questions being asked in the study, *and* they have to show how they have drawn on appropriate theory to inform their study – its design, the interpretation of the data, and the writing up of the findings. So, in short, writing narrative inquiry research reports goes way beyond mere description (or a summary of 'what happened' in the life of a narrator).

Question 7: How can I conduct a narrative inquiry with many participants?

With quantitative research, it is usually recommended to have a large number of research subjects, especially if one plans to use inferential statistics and the goal is to make generalizations based on the findings; i.e., if one uses a large sample then the statistics are more reliable and the generalizations more meaningful. But, with a large sample, say 200 teachers completing a survey, we only get a general picture about a phenomenon (e.g., teacher attitudes towards implementing a new curriculum). The respondents and their views are reduced to numbers and many details of their lives and experiences are not discoverable. The aim of narrative inquiry is to examine and understand those particular details. But it would be impossible to do so with 200 teachers – unless there was a very large research team working on the project! That is why narrative inquiry studies usually have only a few participants (see Question 8 below). However, there are ways that narrative-oriented methods can be used in studies involving large numbers of participants. One way is to use an instrument which I have called a *narrative frame* (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2014). A

narrative frame is a story template consisting of a sequence of sentence starters followed by blank spaces to be filled in by respondents. The template is in the form of a story especially designed to elicit data – narratives – about a particular phenomenon that is the focus of the study; typically the respondent's personal experience of that phenomenon. The narrative frame is merely an instrument; it is not an approach or a methodology. It is useful for obtaining stories on the same topic from many participants, and it is easy to analyse (e.g., responses to any sentence starter are already categorized thematically). Although there are limitations to its use (see Barkhuizen, 2014), it has proved to be a popular data-collection device, and has been adapted and extended in innovative ways; for example, using photographs together with the frames (Greenier & Moodie, 2021).

Methods associated with narrative research can also be used in conjunction with other non-narrative methods in multiple-methods or mixed-methods studies. Mixed-methods studies integrate both quantitative methods and qualitative methods into the overall design of the study; the latter being those typically used in narrative studies such as life-history interviews or written language learning histories. A common design is one in which a large number of participants are included in the quantitative component of the study (say, 200 participants completing a survey), and then a selection of those (say, 10) take part in an in-depth narrative interview in which aspects of the findings from the survey are explored in more detail (see, for example, Teng et al., 2020). Like narrative frames, using narrative methods as part of a mixed-methods study is not really narrative inquiry, whereby the overall study is conceived from a narrative epistemological stance and the methodological design and processes reflect narrative sensitivities. It is simply the use of methods associated with narrative research for the purposes of reaching, or more deeply exploring findings from, a larger number of participants.

Question 8: Can I do a dissertation with only one or two participants?

This question refers specifically to graduate research at the MA or PhD level, and the dissertation or thesis that students complete as part of their degree requirements. I'll confine my comments here to the PhD

dissertation/thesis in education and applied linguistics. I have pointed out above (see Question 7) that narrative and qualitative research projects typically have fewer participants than quantitative research studies. But can a dissertation-sized study have only one or two participants? The simply answer is yes. But again, this answer needs some explaining. A PhD dissertation is a fairly large project, often taking a number of years to complete, and typically consisting of anywhere up to 100,000 words (or more) depending on institutional regulations. Having one participant would mean that that participant would be intensively engaged in the study. There would be multiple data-collection episodes, probably over an extended period of time, and the participant would probably also be closely involved in the data-analysis process (e.g., regular and frequent member checking). Having two or three participants relieves the pressure somewhat, since their time-commitment and workload is then distributed, and having eight or ten participants achieves this distribution even more. In many of the narrative inquiry PhD dissertations I have supervised or examined, I'd estimate that between 8 and 12 participants is about the norm.

I end this question with two final comments to consider when designing a narrative study: (1) Including only one participant in a study enables a comprehensive, in-depth exploration of the experiences of that participant in relation to the phenomenon under investigation (i.e., the research topic). Including multiple participants, say 8-12, means that a cross-case analysis can be conducted and so a wider understanding of the phenomenon is achieved. Comparisons may also then be possible, if that is an aim of the study. (2) With one participant, there is always the risk that the participant may withdraw from the study, and then the researcher is left without a study! A safer option might be to have more than one participant.

Question 9: How can I convince my institution that narrative inquiry is a legitimate research approach?

I believe I have established in this article that narrative inquiry is indeed a legitimate research approach in language teaching and learning. Methodology textbooks have been written about narrative inquiry, an inspection of the major journals in our field uncovers narrative studies

published on a regular basis, and some of these journals have even published special-topic issues on narrative inquiry and narrative methods. In spite of this, there appears to be some resistance to narrative inquiry as a methodological approach in some contexts. Researchers (graduate students and institutional academics) who ask me this question (Question 9) usually indicate a keen interest in doing narrative inquiry, but respond that they are discouraged from doing so because of constraints prefaced by "At my university …", "My supervisor …", "The journal …", and even "In my country …".

In short, narrative inquiry is not legitimate everywhere and to everyone. There are powerful gatekeepers who have different ideas about what research is and should be. And this is to be expected; even qualitative research struggles to achieve traction in some educational and publishing contexts. Narrative inquiry is a relatively new methodology in the field of language teaching and learning and it will take some time before it gains universal acceptance. My answer to this question is to point out to those who challenge or prevent narrative inquiries going ahead that narrative research is most definitely being published in the top journals (often these gatekeepers seem to be those who pay most attention to journal metrics such as Impact Factor), and the research is published by high-profile academic researchers. Provide them with examples of the studies and the journals, and also the details of the researchers' profiles. Another strategy is to compromise and to take small steps by, for example, including narrative components in a multiple or mixed-methods study (see Question 7 above).

Question 10: Can I use first person 'I' in my research reports?

This is an interesting question, and the answer is not straightforward. I could easily say, "Yes of course it is acceptable to use first person in research reports, just take a look at the top journals in our field and you will see many articles published there where the authors use first person". As examples, take a look at these three quotes:

> "I applied codes to words, phrases, sentences, and short paragraphs" (Atkinson, 2021, p. 608). This quote is from *RECL Journal*, a popular regional journal that is very widely

> read and distributed. Here the author is commenting on aspects of their data-analysis procedures.
>
> "I investigate the way EFL teachers in conflict-ridden educational contexts negotiate a hegemonic EFL policy and push toward transformative outcomes" (Awayed-Bishara, 2021, p. 746). In this quote from *TESOL Quarterly* (Impact Factor, 3.692), the author comments on the aims of the study.
>
> "Our study seeks to reveal that translingual discrimination that shapes the discriminatory experiences of these skilled transnational migrants, very often functions as the unyielding mechanism of selection and exclusion" (Dovchin & Dryden, 2022, p. 366). This quote is from the top journal in the field of applied linguistics (*Applied Linguistics*, Impact Factor, 5.741). The two authors explain the rationale of their study.

Although first person is used in these articles, it is not used in all articles in the same journals, even those with a qualitative research orientation. Some authors probably feel uncomfortable using first person, and this might have to do with their training as researchers. Traditionally, and in journals that tend to publish quantitative research articles (and also in the science disciplines), there is a long-standing convention of using passive voice (i.e., 'Interviews were conducted …') rather than active voice (i.e., 'I conducted interviews …'), and it is difficult to overcome these strong beliefs about report writing practices. Narrative inquiry as a research process, and in the reporting of its findings, takes a much more personal, subjective approach, where stories are shared and co-constructed, and researchers' positions are reflexively examined and displayed (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021). It is not uncommon in narrative inquiry reports (journal articles, dissertations), therefore, to use first person. In fact, I would argue that it is preferable.

Conclusion

I have attempted to answer ten questions in this article. The questions are those that are regularly asked after my conference and workshop presentations on narrative inquiry. There are other questions

too, of course, but these ten questions are those that seem to come up again and again. It has not been easy to answer the questions – I mean it when I say they are 'tricky'. Each one deserves much more space and discussion than I have given them here. Although my answers have been brief and selective, I have focused on what comes to mind based on my experience as a narrative researcher, a reviewer and examiner of other's narrative work, and as a supervisor of graduate student research. Based on your own research experience, your answers to this set of questions might be different. I hope, nevertheless, that what I have offered will give you the opportunity to reflect on your narrative research activity and your research contexts, and to apply what you find useful.

About the Author

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