Department of English, Jijel   **Academic Year**: 2020-2021
Subject: Classroom Research   **Level**: Master-Semester 3
Teacher: Redouane Naili   **Evaluation**: Assignment + TD Exam

Resource Book:

Nunan, D., & Bailey, K. M. (2008). Exploring Second Language Classroom Research: A Comprehensive Guide. Heinle ELT**.**

Lecture Notes

Case Study Research

Case studies have a long history in applied linguistics research, especially in studying first and second language acquisition. They started as particularly longitudinal studies employed as a tool to trace the linguistic development of L1 and L2 learners (R. Brown (1973): grammar and semantic development in three children learning their L1; Halliday (1975): studying his son's L1). The case study in L2/FL research can be applied to classroom research: good language learner, strategies, fossilization, effects of instruction, interaction, etc.

1. **Definition:**

A **case study** is a detailed investigation of a single individual or entity (or a few individuals or entities). In applied linguistics research, case studies can **best** be classified as a type of naturalistic inquiry.

- Naturalistic inquiry in that they **typically** do not involve any sort of treatment. Instead, researchers working in the case study tradition set out to learn what is happening

- Detailed: by concentrating on the behavior of one individual or a small number of individuals (or sites) to conduct a very thorough analysis/"thick" or "rich" description. The most common type of case study involves the detailed description and analysis of an individual subject, from whom observations, interviews, and (family) histories provide the database. It may also involve more than one subject. It may be based on particular

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groups (e.g., group dynamics within a classroom), organizations (e.g.,a summer intensive language learning program at a university) or events.

"A case study is an <u>empirical inquiry</u> that investigates a <u>contemporary</u> phenomenon <u>within its real-life context</u>; when the <u>boundaries between the phenomenon and the context</u> are not clearly evident; and in which <u>multiple sources of evidence are used</u>" (Yin, 1984, p. 23).

- Empirical research characteristics.

- Investigation in terms of description, analysis and interpretation.

- Bounded. In classroom research, the bounded (physically or temporally) instance can be a single learner or teacher, one classroom, a school, or even a particular school district.

- Contextualized. The phenomenon is studied in context. "case studies clearly have <u>the potential for rich contextualization that can shed light on the complexities of the second language learning process</u>" (Mackey and Gass, 2005, p. 172):

- Unlike formal experiments, which control and manipulate variables and look for causality, case studies are centered on description, inference, and interpretation. Case studies <u>explore and describe the context as an essential part of understanding the phenomenon under investigation</u>. The whole may be greater than or different from the sum of its parts: **while each individual is <u>different</u>, the ones investigated <u>operate within</u> a variety of linguistic, sociolinguistic, sociological <u>systems, regarded as units.</u>**

- They also <u>contrast with surveys</u>, in which the researcher asks standardized questions of <u>large representative samples</u> of individuals. The case study researcher typically observes <u>the characteristics of an individual entity</u>—a

child, a clique, a class, an educational program, or a community—in that entity's <u>naturally occurring situation</u>.

2. Criteria of Case Selection:

Originally, cases were chosen because the individuals were especially <u>interesting or unusual or accessible (context)</u>. A case may be selected on the basis of some criterion/ criteria:

- a particular age group,

- a combination of first and second languages,

- ability level (e.g., basic or advanced), or

- a skill area such as writing,

- a linguistic domain such as morphology and syntax,

- a mode or medium of learning e.g., computer-mediated environment.

- a case seems to jump out of the data (Allwright, 1980, turns, topics, and tasks in two lower-level ESL classes in California. To see how one student got so many turns, one conversation was analyzed in great detail because it showed how his discourse moves caused the teacher to give him more turns through her repeated attempts to understand his message.

3. Characteristics of Case Studies

Other characteristics of case studies are: triangulation, particularity, and interpretation and longitudinality.

- **Longitudinal case study** "examines development and performance over time". It is based on multiple observations as information is collected at regular intervals.

- **Triangulation:** multiple perspectives / many points of view can be brought to the analysis of case study data. For instance, in their investigation of a Japanese FLES (foreign language in the elementary school) program Donato, Antonek, and Tucker (1994) captured numerous perspectives in data from questionnaires completed by parents and learners, reflections from the Japanese teacher, questionnaires from other teachers at the school, interviews, and an observation system.

- **Particularity** is related to the boundedness of the case. The researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many. It is the close examination of the particular phenomenon that allows case study researchers to go into great detail in terms of data collection and analysis.

- **Interpretation**: Interpreting results in data has to do with explaining what they mean: statistically as well as qualitatively. Ulichny (1996) documented interaction in an intermediate adult ESL conversation class, and identified a particular classroom speech event, which contained three different discourse activities: <u>conversation, correction and instruction</u>. Ulichny showed how the conversation is subjugated to correction and instruction. In the process, a particular student (Katherine) is gradually rendered silent in the telling of her story.

4. Types of Case Studies

Stenhouse (1983), developed a typology of case studies.

1- **Neo-ethnographic,** the in-depth investigation of a single case by a participant observer.

2- **Evaluative,** a single case or group of cases studied in order to evaluate policy or practice.

3- **Multi-site case study,** fieldwork undertaken by a team of workers on a number of sites.

4- A**ction case studies.** These are school case studies undertaken by teachers who use their participant status as a basis on which to build skills of observation and analysis.

5. Advantages:

- Case studies appeal to classroom teachers who will be able to identify with the issues and concerns raised. Insights yielded by case studies can be put to immediate use for a variety of purposes: development, feedback, formative evaluation, etc.

- One can generalize from an instance to a class (identify same cases with the studied one).

- They allow a multiplicity of viewpoints and can offer support to alternative interpretations.

- They provide a database of materials that may be reinterpreted by future researchers.

- They are comprehensible to the interested layman as they are written in a more accessible style than conventional experimental research.

Action Research

As an approach to research, action research first appeared in the social science literature in 1940s. In the 1980s, it was adapted by educators.

1. Definition

Action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers/ practitioner-driven); it seeks to link theory to practice, and involves more than simply describing or interpreting classroom events as it involves trying out ideas with a view to cause a change:

- to increase knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning
- understand and improve their own practices
- understand the situations in which the practices are carried out
- improve the rationality and justice of their own practices

The Action research Cycle:

(1) identifying an issue, problem, or puzzle we wish to investigate in our own context (preliminary investigation to gather baseline data);

(2) thinking (hypothesizing) and planning an appropriate action to address that concern;

(3) carrying out the action (intervention),

(4) observing the apparent outcomes of the action (data collection);

(5) reflecting on the outcomes (analyze and interpret the data) and on other possibilities (with the same issue or identify a follow-up issue); and

(6) repeating these steps again (start a new cycle on the basis of step (5).

2. Characteristics of Action research

Action research is different from reflective teaching in that it is a systematic, cyclic, iterative and public process. It is systematic as it involves collecting

evidence on which to base rigorous reflection. (empirical research). It also involves both problem posing and problem solving: change and improve things and learn how to improve them from the effects of the changes being made.

Action research shares some aspects with both experimental research and naturalistic inquiry. It seeks to intervene and bring about change, but is carried out with naturally occurring groups, and does not impose artificial control over variables by some external researcher(s). Action researchers develop questions as the research proceeds.

When diverse kinds of data lead to the same conclusion, we can be more confident in that conclusion. The metaphor of triangulation refers to the quality control strategy and process of using multiple perspectives. Denzin (1978) described four types of triangulation. These are (1) **data triangulation,** which draws on different sources of data (teachers, students, parents, etc.); (2) **theory triangulation,** in which various theories are brought to bear; (3) **researcher triangulation,** when more than one researcher contributes to the investigation; and (4) **methods triangulation,** which involves the use of multiple methods (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, observation schedules, field notes, test scores, journal entries, etc.) to collect data. All these types of triangulation can be usefully employed in action research. Data triangulation can be used in gathering data from teachers, students, administrators, young learners' parents, adult students' employers, etc. Drawing on various theories is also possible. As for methods triangulation, it is also a natural fit with action research, which uses any data that can address the research questions posed when problems and/or puzzles are identified. Researcher triangulation can be developed by collaborating with colleagues or by inviting an external researcher to help with an action

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Introspective Data Collection Procedures

The early days of research into language learning and teaching in formal settings (classrooms) were dominated by behaviorist psychology. Accordingly, researchers were only interested in the observable characteristics of human behaviour (what people do) and ruled out any investigation of the cognitive processes underlying human performance and ability (how people think). The acknowledgement of the limits of observation in describing language learning, a process which is invisible for the most part, led researchers to develop introspective data collection procedures. Nowadays, a lot of research is based on introspective means: (1) Think-Aloud Protocols, (2) Stimulated Recall and (3) Diary Studies.

1. Defining Introspection

As a *data collection procedure* in classroom research, introspection refers to the process of observing and reporting on one's own thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes, and mental states, often with a view to determining the ways in which these processes and states shape behaviour.

Introspection involves a set of techniques in which data collection happens at the same time as or very shortly after the events being investigated. Thus, we can distinguish between *concurrent introspection*, which happens during the event, *immediate retrospection*, which is carried out right after the event, and *delayed retrospection*, which occurs hours or more after the event.

a) Think-Aloud Protocols:

A think-aloud protocol is a record of self-reporting (talking about) one's own current thought processes. That is to say, when subjects engage in completing a task or solving a problem, they verbalize their thought processes as they do so. The word protocol refers to the written record that results from transcribing talk.

This technique requires the researcher to record the verbalization and then analyze the thought processes that the subjects report. It should not be misunderstood as description or explanation of the task or what one is doing as it involves reporting (verbalizing) the information that is attended to or needed to perform the task. According to Ericcson and Simon (1993), three levels of verbalization should be followed:

1. Level 1: reporting or vocalization: the act of speaking. No special effort to communicate his thoughts is expended.

2. Level 2: describing the thought content, recoding information in the short-term memory, with no further explanation or interpretation.

3. Level 3: explaining the thought processes or thoughts, including efforts to link new information to that attended to previously.

A think-aloud protocol proceeds by giving clear instructions to the subjects: to tell everything they are thinking about, to constantly talk, not to plan utterances, not to explain what they say and not to socialize (with the researcher or other participants)

Advantage: The gap between the mental process and the reporting is closer than with other techniques,

Controversy: It is not sure whether verbalization accurately reflects the mental processes that accompany problem solving

Drawbacks:

- The act of verbalizing the thought processes alters them in some way (though not peculiar to introspection.

- It cannot be used to collect data directly from real classes, as it would seriously disrupt the flow of the ongoing lessons.

b) Stimulated Recall

Stimulated Recall is a retrospective data collection procedure for generating introspective data **after** the events being investigated have taken place. The name comes from the effort by the researcher to stimulate the recollection (remembering) of the people who participated in the event by using data that were collected during the event (e.g., a videotape, audiotape, field notes or transcripts.)

Advantages:

- Participants will not be distracted by having to introspect during a task.

- Reliability of the data can be enhanced by ensuring that the data are collected as soon as possible after the task or event has taken place.

Controversy:

- The record of the original event is not sure to stimulate the participants' memories sufficiently to produce good introspective data after the event, which may lead to unreliable data.

Drawback: If subjects know they will be required to provide a retrospective account, this knowledge will influence their performance on the task.

c) Diary Studies:

A diary/ journal in L2/FL learning and teaching is an introspective account of one's experience as recorded in a first-person journal. The learner's or teacher's experiences are "documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events". The diarist can report on various things including affective factors, language learning strategies, and perceptions. Since the late 1970s, entries recorded in teachers' and learners' journals have been used as data in studies of L2/FL learning and teaching. The

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journal entries can be analyzed by the diarists themselves or by someone other than the diarist.

A five-step procedure is recommended for keeping a diary for research purposes:

Step 1: Provide a context for the study by giving an account of your personal language teaching and/or language learning history.

Step 2: Keep regular, uncensored accounts of the teaching or learning experience, trying to be as candid as possible

Step 3: Analyze the account for patterns and significant events.

Step 4: Revise the 'raw' account for public consumption. For instance, students' names may be changed to pseudonyms, local abbreviations will be spelled out, and so on.

Step 5: Document and discuss the factors that appear to be important in language teaching/learning.

Advantage:

- Diaries reveal facets of the language learning/teaching experience which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to an external observer.

Discussion Issues:

1. Should a diarist read other language learning or teaching diary studies while keeping a diary?

2. Should a diarist read about and comment on language learning theories?

3. Should a diarist try to take notes during the actual language learning or teaching experience?

4. To what extent does the process of keeping a diary influence the experience?