

Some questions:

- How do we maintain a sense of real life in our research? A sense of messiness? Should we?
- What happens when we impose theoretically informed interpretations on participants' stories? 'Whose story is it anyway'?
- Is there a place for serendipity in research?

'Things don't hold still'¹

LIFE is	RESEARCH is ...
Messy	Ordered / 'hygienic'
Serendipitous	Systematic
Individually experienced	Looking for commonalities Concerned with representation
Multiple realities	Reductive to one reality ? (common-sense perspective on reality, even for QUAL R?)
A-theoretical ?	Theoretically meaningful

¹Law 2003

"Because the subjects exist in the report only through the voice of the researcher, there is a natural tendency for their complexity to be suppressed and their identity to be generalized (or essentialized) to fit the dominant assumptions and theoretical constructs of the researcher and the disciplinary community." (Canagarajah 1996:324)



Answers ?

Embracing Bricolage, Crystals and Mirrors

The researcher as *bricoleur*, maker of quilts

- Uses tools & materials to hand
- 'Emergent construction'

The researcher's reflexivity on research and writing process is crucial

Awareness of our 'othering' & clarity about who we are

Representation vs. Re-presentation:

- seeking to go beyond value- free re-presentation to critical analysis
- Participants' words are used for something beyond immediate

Crystallization, not triangulation: keeps meanings open & partial; uses contrasting modes of producing knowledge (Ellingson 2013: 433)

Expanding our continuum?

Art/ impressionist	Middle-Ground	Realist
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To unravel 'accented' truths• To construct personal truths• To explore the specific• To generate art	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To explore the typical• To generate description and understanding• To generate pragmatic implications for practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To discover objective truths• To generalise• To explain reality 'out there'
How do we/ can we cope with life? What is unique about my or another's experience? What other ways can we imagine?	How do participants understand their world? How do the participants and author co-construct a world?	What does it mean from the researcher's point of view? What is the relationship among factors? What behaviours can be predicted?
Auto-ethnography Interactive interviewing Performance Visual arts	Focus groups Participant observation / ethnography Thematic, metaphoric and narrative analysis	Coding texts Random sampling Measurement Frequency Surveys

(from Ellingson, LL 2013:418)

Artistic approaches in TESOL: crafted narratives

"...deliberately styled in arts-based forms (stories, poems, plays, and the like) and that are meant to be evocative and aesthetically engagingcould also be in visual, video, or performance modes. Implicit analysis or social commentary is often embedded within the crafted narrative, which may be serious or humorous, contemplative or dramatic, other- or self-focused, or some combination." (Nelson 2011: 465)

Encourages 'grassroots knowledge work' (ibid: 470)

More Questions:

- How far can we go in being creative?
- Is this a realistic choice for most researchers? For publication?
- Is it sufficient?
- Straddling the continuum is possible (?) aligns with mixed methods?
- What are particular challenges for TESOL research contexts?
- *What story would you craft about our experience today?*
- *What art could you create?*

References:

Canagarajah, S 1996 'From critical research perspective to critical research reporting' *TESOL Quarterly* 30/2 pp. 321-331

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Nelson CD 2011 'Narratives of classroom life: changing conceptions of knowledge' *TESOL Quarterly* 45/3 pp. 463-485