

Research in the Classroom

Dr. Mora – UPB – Semester 2, 2012

UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA BOLIVARIANA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY
B.A. IN TEACHING, BASIC EDUCATION AND ENGLISH
(DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAM)

Research in the Classroom (RitC)

Raúl A. Mora, Ph.D., Instructor

raul.mora@upb.edu.co

Skype ID: el.patron.himself

Schedule: Saturdays, 14:00 to 17:00 – Room: 505, Block 6

Attention to students: by Appointment

Course Overview

The current demands of Education at large and English Education in particular have placed different needs for today's teachers. One of those pressing needs is to consider doing research as an important part of their job, one part just as important as learning about pedagogy, didactics, and even classroom management. Stemming from calls for teachers to become reflective practitioners (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) or what Gramsci (1971) would call organic intellectuals, today's teachers need to be able to find contextualized solutions to the issues arising in their classrooms through the development of research.

However, there is a reality surrounding these efforts. Sometimes teachers are left to their own devices, engaging in research projects without any real information about what research is and what it entails to design a research proposal. In addition, some of the ideas that teachers bring to the table about research may include myths and misconceptions (Mora, 2012a, 2012b) that they either think that research is an esoteric endeavor that only a chosen few can accomplish or that anything that one does in a classroom qualifies as research.

This is the background for our course on Research in the Classroom. During this semester, we will engage in a process of reflexivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mora, 2011, under review) about what it means to see the world with researcher's eyes, what it takes to do quality and rigorous research, and what teachers need to incorporate research as a foundation to their practice. The instructor and the contents of this course operate under the assumption that research is the most meaningful and long-lasting way to actually improve teachers' practices.

Course Objectives

1. To discuss the meanings, requirements, and procedures of classroom research.

2. To gather a basic toolkit (conceptual and practical) to engage in research projects for graduation requirements and regular practice in schools.

Course Topics

This course comprises five modules, each of them combining readings from top scholars in the field of research with discussions about the ongoing trends in research in ELT:

Module 1: Introduction to Research – This module will introduce some basic concepts to start the course. The module will feature discussions about the meaning of research and the differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Module 2: A Summary Of Research Approaches – While pretending to cover all the existing research approaches within the qualitative paradigm is beyond the scope of this course, we will devote time to discuss three well-known (albeit misinterpreted) approaches: Action Research, Case Study Research, and Narrative Inquiry.

Module 3: Elements Of A Research Proposal – Stemming from the metaphor of “building a plane you can fly and land” (Mora, 2012b), we will briefly discuss the different sections of a research proposal and how to write them effectively.

Module 4: Data Collection and Analysis – In this six-week module, we will cover the basics of doing field work and analyzing one’s data. The sessions will include both discussions from conceptual readings and practical workshops for students to learn by doing.

Module 5: Issues and Trends In Research – In this final module of the course, we will discuss some topics related to other important aspects of research. We will talk about ethical considerations and publication as two features good researchers must keep in mind. Also, we are in the process of scheduling a panel with research groups from different higher education institutions in Medellín to talk about their research and what it means to do collaborative research.

Assignments

The course will feature a series of conceptual and practical assignments related to research and a capstone project.

Statement of research. You will write a 1-2-page statement where you will define what research means to them, why it is important to conduct research in our classrooms, and what kind of research approaches you may consider as the basis of your future research proposals (20% of the grade).

Data collection practicum and reflective paper. The best way to hone your skills as a researcher is by going directly into the field. You will conduct either a short observation or an interview. You will design the instrument, conduct the field work, and write a brief reflective piece (2-3 pages) about the different issues, problems, and achievements you encountered during the process. (20% of the grade). NOTE: I will provide you with an umbrella consent form to carry out this assignment.

Critical literature review. An important element of research is the recognition of what is available in the literature. Sometimes you may not even need to conduct field work to find

solutions to classroom-based phenomena; through a thorough review of the literature, sometimes teachers can find good answers to their classroom inquiries. The capstone project for this course consists in writing a critical literature review (Mora, 2004) in which you will tackle a specific issue in today's classrooms and you will address a potential solution through the literature. You will work on this project throughout the semester, including a presentation of your findings in the last two weeks of class (40% of the grade).

Presentation of CLR. In addition to writing a paper, you have to present your findings and address questions from a panel in the last two weeks of class. I will give you details about the presentation in the second half of the course (10% of the grade).

Forums. Given that this is a on-site seminar with virtual support, having forums for discussion is an important part of our work. During different times of the semester, you will find discussion topics on Moodle. You are supposed to access Moodle and respond at least twice, once to the general question and once to one of your classmates (I encourage you to respond several times and engage in discussions with other classmates). I will read the forums on Friday afternoon and will make sure to address the most heated topics in our discussions. (10% of the grade)

Expectations

Classwork. I expect all students to be on time every week. If, for some reason, you cannot be in class, please notify me as soon as possible. Make sure to talk to either your other classmates or me to make up for the work. No assignments will be accepted after the due date without a proper excuse. The deadlines are set well in advance so check your personal or work schedules and check there are not any conflicts. If you foresee a conflict, talk to me immediately so we can make proper arrangements. All work is to be submitted electronically via e-mail at raul.mora@upb.edu.co. Please include the letters [RitC] (in brackets) in the subject line so I know this is a classroom assignment.

Participation. I expect all students to be prepared to participate in every class. This includes reading the assigned readings and documents, bringing all required resources at all times, and interacting in the forums. All of you should be prepared to raise questions and issues as the result of your reading and the interactions with your instructor and each other. Since all of you will probably be (or may already be) teachers, I also expect a high degree of professionalism and ethical behavior from all of you. If you disagree with any ideas in class, feel free to say so in a proper manner. To me, the classroom is a community of learners and scholars. Respectful interactions are important for the success of the academic exercises in which we will engage. Equally important, if there is any feature of the course with which you may not agree, whatever it is, please talk to me FIRST, before moving on to other stages. It is my belief that most student-teacher matters can be solved through an open, mature dialog.

Methodology. You will engage in classwork for 3 hours every Saturday. It is expected that you should devote *at least* 4 hours a week to work on the readings and assignments for the course on their own. Since there is an option to use tutoring services to supplement the class, please be proactive and ask the instructor for help if needed. The instructor may also suggest students to

Research in the Classroom

Dr. Mora – UPB – Semester 2, 2012

seek tutoring or extra practice if necessary, but the notion that you must be responsible and proactive is fundamental for your success in this course.

Ethical guidelines. All assignments are to be original work. As a scholar, I abide by the highest standards of academic integrity, including strong stances against cheating and plagiarism. Guidelines against cheating and plagiarism in this course will follow any internal guidelines that UPB has set in place for academic integrity, as well as existing Colombian copyright legislation, such as Ley 23 de 1986, specifically Article 31 (<http://www.cerlalc.org/documentos/colo23.htm>) and Ley 1032 de 2006 (http://www.unal.edu.co/dib/cip/pi_ley_1032_2006.html). Please make sure to get yourselves acquainted with these laws.

Communication etiquette. Learning how to communicate in writing is an important and necessary skill that all academics must develop in order to network effectively with other professionals. In many cases, a well-crafted e-mail is the difference between receiving a reply from faculty and researchers in other institutions and having your message deleted right away. Check the following websites with information about e-mail etiquette, and make sure to practice these rules in any and all class-related communications:

- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/636/01/>
- <http://science.kennesaw.edu/~hmattord/email.htm>
- <http://www.101emailtippstips.com/>
- <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook-help/12-tips-for-better-e-mail-etiquette-HA001205410.aspx>
- <http://www.emailreplies.com/>

Resources

All classroom resources are available online on the Moodle site the instructor has set up for this course. I will send you the information to access Moodle as soon as the site is available. It is your responsibility to have all the resources for every week available for class use. In addition to online resources, you are supposed to have a notebook/journal with you at all times. We will do extensive note-taking during the course. For some assignments, showing evidence that you took notes as part of the preparation process will be a pre-requisite.

Technology

If you have a laptop, you may bring it to class. I suggest you to download the resources to your hard drives before coming to the class, in case the WiFi is not working properly. If you cannot bring your own laptop, please make sure to print the resources if applicable (In that event, please remember the trees: print on both sides of the sheet, print two pages per side of the sheet, or use scrap paper). I kindly ask all of you to avoid using other online applications (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, etc.) during class (if you were a teacher, would you like your students to be Tweeting while you are talking?). Finally, regarding the use of cell phones and smartphones, I have a **no-phoning, no-texting** policy in class (would you feel comfortable if you went to ask me a question and I did not listen to you because I am texting somebody?).

Research in the Classroom

Dr. Mora – UPB – Semester 2, 2012

CLASS SCHEDULE

| Week | Topics | Assigned Readings (all available on Moodle site) |
|--|---|---|
| MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH | | |
| 1 July 7 | Introduction to the course and the capstone project Introduction to research | Course Syllabus Richards (2003), pp. 2-12 Mora (2004) |
| 2 July 14 | What is research? What is classroom research? | Richards (2003), pp. 2-12 Lankshear & Knobel (2004), Chapter 1 |
| 3 July 21 | Qualitative or Quantitative, is that the question? | Yin, pp. 3-6 Stake (2010), p. 15-16 Hatch (2002), pp. 6-11 & 34-35 |
| MODULE 2: A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH APPROACHES | | |
| Follow-up readings for this module: Richards (2003), pp. 12-28 Hatch (2002), pp. 20-34 | | |
| 4 July 28 | Action Research | Burns (2009) |
| 5 August 4 | Case Study Research | Hood (2009) |
| 6 August 11 | Narrative Inquiry | Murray (2009) |
| MODULE 3: ELEMENTS OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL | | |
| 7 August 18 | Statement of the Problem, Research Question | Ely, et al. (1997), pp. 227-231 Yin (2011), pp. 61-65 |
| ASSIGNMENT 1 (Statement of Research) DUE | | |
| 8 August 25 | Conceptual Framework, Literature Review, Methodology | Berg (2001), pp. 28-33 Lodico, et al. (2010), pp. 160-168 Randolph (2009) Taylor & Procter (n.d.) Yin (2011), pp. 93-96 |
| 9 September 1 | Midterm Stop: Capstone Project Progress Check | |
| MODULE 4: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS | | |
| 10 September 8 | Doing field work I: Observations and interviews | Lankshear & Knobel (2004), Chapter 9 Maykut & Morehouse (1994), Chapter 7 Yin (2011), Chapter 7 |
| 11 September 15 | Doing field work II: Collecting artifacts and archival files | |

Research in the Classroom

Dr. Mora – UPB – Semester 2, 2012

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 12 September 22 | Doing field work II: Fieldwork Exercise at Museo de Antioquia | |
| 13 September 29 | Data analysis I: Data organization and reduction | Richards (2003), Chapter 6 Yin (2011), Chapter 8 |
| ASSIGNMENT 2 (Data Collection Practicum) DUE | | |
| 14 October 6 (3-5 pm) | Data analysis II: Categorizing, coding and writing narratives | Richards (2003), Chapter 6 Yin (2011), Chapter 8 |
| 15 October 13 | Data analysis II: Triangulation, Trustworthiness, Implications and Future Research Guest Professor: Prof. Marcela Jaramillo, Head, Language Center | Richards (2003), Chapter 6 Yin (2011), Chapter 8 |
| MODULE 5: ISSUES AND TRENDS IN RESEARCH | | |
| 16 October 20 | Ethics in research | Ely, et al. (1997), pp. 369-376 Mills, et al, (2010), pp. 336-344. Mora (2012) |
| 17 October 27 | Issues and Trends in our local ELT Community (Methodology TBD) | |
| 18 November 3 | Getting your work published | Bell (2005), Chapter 13 Hatch (2002), pp. 238-244 Wineburg (2005) |
| 19 November 10 | FINAL PRESENTATIONS PART I | |
| ALL PAPERS ARE DUE NOVEMBER 10 | | |
| 20 November 17 | FINAL PRESENTATIONS PART II | |

References (Note: In all book references, I used selected chapters)

- Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science (4th Ed.)*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences (4th Ed.)*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Burns, A. (2009). Action research. In J. Heigham, & R. A. Croker (Eds.). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction (pp. 112-134)*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Ely, M., Vinz, R., Downing, M., & Anzul, M. (1997). *On writing qualitative research: living by words*. London, UK: The Falmer Press.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Hood, M. (2009). Case study. In J. Heigham, & R. A. Croker (Eds.). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction* (pp. 66-90). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lankshear, C. & Knobel, M. (2004). *A handbook for teacher research: From design to implementation*. New York, NY: Open University Press.
- Mills, A. J., Eurepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (Eds)(2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mora, R. A. (2004). A framework for additive ESL/Bilingual Education instruction in urban schools: A reflection on the United States situation. *HOW, A Colombian Journal for English Teachers*, 11, 55-74.
- Mora, R. A. (2012, January). *La protección de los seres humanos: Consideraciones éticas en el contexto de la investigación cualitativa y educativa (Human beings protection: Ethical considerations in the context of qualitative and educational research)*. Inaugural Lecture, Faculty of Education UPB-Medellín.
- Murray, G. (2009). Narrative inquiry. In J. Heigham, & R. A. Croker (Eds.). *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction* (pp. 45-65). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- Randolph, J. J. (2009, June). A guide to writing the dissertation literature review. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 14(13), pp. 1-13
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Taylor, D. & Procter, M. (n.d.) *The literature review: A few tips on conducting it*. Retrieved from <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/specific-types-of-writing/literature-review>
- Wineburg, S. (2004). Must it be this way? Ten rules for keeping your audience awake during conferences. *Educational Researcher*, 33, 13-14.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research: From start to finish*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.