Narrative Inquiry: A Research Tradition in Qualitative Research

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Abstract

This methodological paper is about narrative inquiry, a research tradition in qualitative research. The paper, first, discusses what narrative inquiry is. Second, major narrative analysis methods are reviewed which are used in narrative inquiry. Third, how narrative inquiry is used in varying ways in the field of teacher education in applied linguistics is examined. The purpose in assessing the field in applied linguistics is to contest the impression that narrative inquiry is a straightforward research methodology. Finally, potential of narrative inquiry and critique on it as a method for understanding and representing lived experiences are discussed.

Keywords: *Narrative inquiry, teacher education, applied linguistics*

1. Introduction

This paper is about narrative inquiry, a research tradition in qualitative research, which takes the narrative mode of cognitive functioning and ordering experience as central in its enterprise (Moen, 2006). First, I discuss what narrative inquiry is. Second, I explore major narrative analysis methods used in narrative inquiry. Third, I briefly review how narrative inquiry is used in varying ways in the field of teacher education. The purpose is to resist/dispel the impression that narrative inquiry is a clear-cut research approach. Finally, I explore the potential of narrative inquiry and critique it as a method for understanding and representing lived experiences. It must be made clear that narrative research is an interdisciplinary enterprise that is conducted through various theoretical lenses (Cortazzi, 1993; Mishler, 1995; Pavlenko, 2007; Riessman, 2008). The paper confines itself to understanding narrative inquiry by focusing particularly upon the scholarship produced through the analyses of oral and written narratives in the domain of teacher education.

Bruner is one of the most influential scholars who laid the theoretical foundations of narrative approach. Bruner (1986) named two complementary yet distinct cognitive ways of seeing and constructing reality as "paradigmatic" and "narrative" modes. He wrote:

"There are two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another. 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 (Bruner, 1986, p. 11)".

Bruner (1986) argues it is the operating principals which make the two modes of ordering experience distinctive from each other. The operating principles actualize them in dissimilar forms. The paradigmatic way of ordering experiences, for instance, appears in the shape of arguments which function to prove "one of its truths." Because the verification of such arguments is conducted through mathematical procedures, they "search for universal truth conditions and function for "establishing formal and empirical proof." Taking a certain phenomenon as a coherent and neutral system indirectly, the arguments work directly to show "which categories" may be "established, instantiated, idealized, and related one to the other to form a system" (Bruner, 1986, pp.11-43).

The narrative way of ordering experiences, in contrast, appears in the shape of stories. The stories do not function to validate certain phenomena objectively or through mathematical procedures. The stories "convince (us) their lifelikeness." Rather than look for the truth, stories establish a "verisimilitude" of life. They "deal with the vicissitudes of human intentions." They show "conclusions not about certainties in an aboriginal world, but about the varying perspectives that can be constructed to make experience comprehensible" (pp. 11-43). In other words, unlike the paradigmatic mode that attains "universality through context independence," the narrative mode shows "universality through context sensitivity" (Bruner, 1986, p. 50). About what makes the two approaches complementary, Bruner seemed to argue that the paradigmatic mode emanates from the narrative one, i.e., a hypothesis tends to be narrative in its essence before it matures into a paradigmatic argument. The operating principles underlying the modes function differently and serve different purposes (Bruner, 1986).

2. Narrative Inquiry

Before understanding what narrative inquiry is, it is important to first understand in brief what narrative is. In fact, what "narrative" is has been defined in varied ways (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Riessman, 2008). Polkinghorne (1995), for instance, showed that the term "narrative" has been taken broadly as "prosaic discourse," which is "any text that consists of complete sentences linked to a coherent and integrated statement" (p. 6). Narrative as prosaic discourse, thus, appears different from poetic discourse that is marked by "its meter and rhyme." He wrote that narrative as prosaic discourse is also defined as a data type in qualitative research. Narrative as data type is used for "any data that are in the form of natural discourse and speech (e.g. interview protocols)" (p. 6). This definition encompasses a range of data collected through various methods such as interviews, observations, field notes, etc. Moreover,

Polkinghorne (1995) wrote that narrative has also recently been defined in the limited sense of a story. *Narrative as a story* is any text where "events and actions are drawn together into an organized whole by means of a plot" (p. 7).

Narrative as a story, thus, focuses upon human action or a sequence of actions undertaken in different timings driven by "human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts" (p.7).

Narrative as a story seems, in effect, the salient characteristic and defining feature of narrative as a research enterprise. And, referring to Phil Salmon, Riessman (2008) noted that contingency is the backbone in *narrative as story* approach that connects ideas, actions, and events (p. 5). Because narrative as a story rests upon the ontological premise of human consciousness, to which Bruner (2004) referred to as "life as narrative," or what Polkinghorner (1988) meant about knowing as essentially narrative, the research tradition assumes that we humans are inevitably surrounded by various narratives of our societies and cultures, and we are guided by them directly and indirectly to cognitively think and function to accomplish our daily-life tasks. Since we think and structure the thought/cognition of our lived experience narratively, the narrative approach advocates the idea of studying the people and phenomena related to them (i.e., education) narratively. That is, the tradition holds that because human experiences of phenomena such as learning, teaching (education), etc. are realized essentially in stories, narrative research as an approach not only helps to understand human experiences in their complex and holistic form but also facilitates representing these experiences in stories (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; 2000; Riessman, 2008).

In one way, from this perspective of narrative as a story, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) took narrative inquiry as a research methodology or approach where narrative is not only a method but also an object of inquiry. They defined narrative inquiry as an approach to "understanding experience" (p. 20). They further defined narrative inquiry in this way:

"It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social (p. 20)".

To sum up, by drawing upon Schwandt's words (2007), I take narrative inquiry in this paper as a qualitative research tradition that not only generates and/or elicits stories from various research tools such as interviews, field notes, observations, etc. but also analyzes structures of stories and reports stories

through either mono or multimodal forms (pp. 203-204). It must be noted that although a lot has been written about narrative inquiry, it still is "a new field made up of diverse elements from a number of philosophical and political sources" (Casey, 1995, p. 217). It has attracted diverse qualitative researchers for the last two decades due to its potential for playing a transformative role in development fields such as teacher development and education as far as the final impact of narrative inquiry is concerned. Now, I discuss below the major narrative analysis approaches.

3. Major Narrative Analysis Approaches

The perspective of taking narrative as a story brings forth the elements that constitute a story. A story tends to be characterized not only by context, temporal order, characters, actions and events, or a sequence(s) of actions and events woven into a thematic plot(s) having a beginning, middle, and an end but also "surprises, coincidences, embellishments, and other rhetorical devices that draw the reader in and hold attention in a different manner" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 201). Since the advent of the new literacies debate where the conceptualization of text is extended to include other semiotic aspects such as color, sound, etc. in addition to oral and orthographic features of realities, story in its constituting elements appears not only in written or spoken forms but also in visual, dramatic, or multimodal modes (Bach, 2007; de Mello, 2007; Mattingly, 2007). Taking story at varying levels of its constituting elements and textual modes, narrative analysis has appeared in diverse narrative analytical families in various disciplines "with their own views, attitudes, and ways of thinking" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 58). Their focus of analysis has ranged from the structure of a narrative – the structure is theorized differently in different fields (i.e. genre, storyline, etc.) – to the functions of a narrative. The functions have also been examined from various macro standpoints (structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, etc.) and/or micro disciplinary perspectives, i.e., sociolinguistics, conversation/discourse/performative analysis, etc. (Cortsazzi, 1993; Riessman, 2008).

Pavlenko (2007) discussed the foci that have largely appeared in such analyses, noting that narrative analytical scholarship has largely focused upon three distinctive yet very "interconnected types of (narrative) information" (p. 165). The three foci are "subject reality (i.e., findings on how 'things' or events were experienced by the respondents), life reality (i.e., findings on how 'things' are or were), and text reality (i.e., ways in which 'things' are events are narrated by the respondents)" (p. 165). Later, Riessman (2008) discussed a continuum of the application of narrative analysis about how such foci have been attained in various disciplines for various research aims. She wrote,

"On one end of the continuum of applications lies the very restrictive definition of social linguistics. Here narrative refers to a discrete unit of discourse, and extended answer by a research participant to a single question, topically centered and temporally organized…On the other end of continuum, there are applications in social history and anthropology, where narrative can refer to an entire life story, woven from threads to interviews, observations, and documents….Resting in the middle of this continuum of working definitions is research in psychology and sociology. Here, personal narrative encompasses long sections of talks – extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of single or multiple research interviews or therapeutic conversations (pp. 5-6)".

Thus, depending upon the various objectives of narrative analysis, i.e., whether researchers have investigated *what* is narrated, *how* it is narrated, *to whom* it is said, or *for what purposes* it is narrated, narrative researchers have analyzed stories and generated and reported them in numerous ways and modes (Cortsazzi, 1993; Riessman, 2008).

Although it appears that narrative analyses have rendered various working definitions about narrative, thus, various units of their analysis too, as Riessman's (2008) continuum shows, narrative as a story seems to remain an umbrella cover for all the narrative analytical approaches (Mishler, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1995). By confining myself to the written and/or oral form of a story, I discuss below two major narrative analysis approaches to narrative inquiry: thematic narrative analysis and structural narrative analysis. I have chosen these approaches because they are generally employed for analyzing a narrative in educational fields.

4. Thematic Narrative Analysis

As discussed above, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) took narrative inquiry as a narrative collaborative enterprise involving a researcher and the researched. The collaboration is developed and sustained for a certain period of time to understand the phenomenon for which inquiry is conducted. The relative longitudinal aspect of the collaboration not only shows an ethnographic or anthropological sense of inquiry but also suggests that various methods are used for collecting data about/of the phenomenon. The methods may include, but are not limited to, interviews, observations, field notes, documents, journals, diaries, conversation, etc. All these methods culminate, in the words of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), in various "field texts" (p. 92). Indeed, the purpose of using such a wide range of methods for collecting such diverse field texts during the narrative collaboration is to understand experiences in their holistic and complex form (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

In fact, there may be a variety of procedures for analyzing the data collected through such a longitudinal collaboration. One of the narrative analytical methods, commonly used for such kind of investigation in narrative inquiry, is thematic narrative analysis. Discussing what thematic narrative analysis aims at broadly, Riessman (2008) wrote, "All narrative inquiry is, of course, concerned with content – "what" is said, written, or visually shown – but in thematic analysis, content is the exclusive focus" (p. 53). In other words, thematic narrative analysis deals with *what* is narrated rather than with *how* it is narrated, *to whom* it is narrated, or *for what purposes* it is narrated.

Thematic narrative analysis helps a researcher to dig into *what is said or written* in the fieldtexts and "uncover" similar patterns, themes, or categories and generate case-stories that revolve around or show the themes. While it is thematic analysis of a story, "narrative" in "thematic *narrative* analysis" suggests that the thematic narrative analysis should be in a storied form. Thus, Polkinghorne (1995) suggested, "the analytic task requires the researcher to develop or discover a plot that displays the linkage among the data elements as parts of an unfolding temporal development culminating in the denouement" (p. 15). It must be made clear here that generating a story in thematic narrative analysis does not preclude that actual excerpts of data from interviews, field notes, conversations, or from other field texts be used. Usage of such excerpts during emplotting a case-story, on the contrary, increases the trustworthiness of the story (Polkinghorne, 2007).

Riessman (2008) cautioned that although thematic narrative analysis may be confused with general qualitative data analysis inspired by or conducted through grounded theory, thematic narrative analysis differs in that "narrative scholars keep a story "intact" by theorizing from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across the cases" (p. 53). Polkinghorne (1995) mentioned that if stories are collected and analyzed thematically, as in general qualitative research, it is thematic *analysis of narrative*. He contrasted this with thematic *narrative analysis* in which stories are configured from various data thematically. Concerning how the configured stories are interpreted, Riessman (2008) viewed that they are given meaning in their wholeness "in light of thematics developed by the investigator (influenced by prior and emergent theory, the concrete purpose of an investigation, the data themselves, political commitments, and other factors)" (2008, p. 54).

Since thematic narrative analysis deals with the *what is in* data, one may see that it may be relatively more concerned with the "told" rather than with the "telling" side of data (Mishler, 1995). Thus, according to the Pavlenko's (2007) three foci, it may be safe to say that thematic narrative analysis may either focus upon "subject reality, i.e., findings on how 'things' or events were experienced

by the respondents" or the "life reality, i.e., findings on how 'things' are or were" (p. 165).

Thematic analysis has both strengths and limitations. So far as the positive side is concerned, it is suitable for data collected through various methods. For instance, a narrative researcher may generate a story from documents, interviews, observations, etc. Thus, it appears relatively attractive to novice researchers. In addition, since such an analysis requires producing a story from the multitude of data, the analysis allows a researcher to be creative while emplotting a trustworthy thematic story. Moreover, thematic narrative analysis may also be suitable for longitudinal narrative inquiry facilitating thematic or cross-thematic stories (Riessman, 2008).

On the other hand, there are limitations as well. For instance, analyzing the data collected through a wide range of sources may be a quite challenging, taxing, and time-taking task. A novice researcher, who may be drawn by the fact that the thematic narrative analysis approach may be well aligned with her theoretical commitments, may end up being frustrated and lost. In addition, since thematic narrative analysis works exclusively with the *what-is-in* aspect of data, it does not attend to how a micro context/setting plays a role in eliciting stories and in generating intersubjectivity between an interviewer and an interviewee. Furthermore, at the minute and detailed level of a research interview or conversation, the approach does not directly attend to explicating how each interlocutor takes turns and what purposes the turns serve in the exchange (Riessman, 2008, p. 53-76).

Despite these limitations, the analytical approach can be used successfully in creative ways to analyze, emplot, and/or report stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990), McCormack (2000a; 2000b), and Polkinghorne (1995) suggested various techniques in this context. They noted that the steps such as making a detailed and careful description of a context, protagonist, and subsidiary characters; sketching a clear temporal order which connects the characters; and punctuating the temporal order with various events and actions of the characters which exhibit the theme(s) can help a researcher to analyze and generate compelling research stories. Below I discuss now the structural approach of narrative analysis.

5. Structural Narrative Analysis

Unlike thematic narrative analysis which mainly works with *what* is narrated, structural narrative analysis, in varying conceptualizations of "structure," deals with *how* narrative is narrated and organized, and *what purposes* it serves (Cortsazzi, 1993; Riessman, 2008). According to Riessman (2008), these concerns of organization and the functions of a narrative move away "from focus on a

narrator's experience to the narrative itself" (p.77). Thus, taking the Pavlenko's (2007) three foci discussed above into account, it may be safe to say that structural narrative analysis centers upon "text reality (i.e., ways in which 'things' and events are narrated by the respondents)" (p. 165). According to Mishler's (1995) typology of narrative analysis, unlike thematic narrative analysis that works with the "told" feature of a story, structural narrative analysis deals with the "telling" feature of a story. Due to the page limit of this paper, I shall discuss in this category only one analytical method, the one most frequently used, the Labovian approach.

6. The Labovian Approach

The Labovian approach to structural narrative analysis is considered paradigmatic in narrative analysis scholarship. It is, thus, the most significant model in the field of narrative inquiry (Cortsazzi, 1993; Patterson, 2008). Riessman commented, "the approach remains a touchstone for narrative inquiry" (2008, p. 81). Originally rooted in the field of sociolinguistics and used for educational purposes, the Labovian model of narrative analysis deals with how an oral narrative of personal experience revolving around an event is organized. It analyzes what functions clauses in the narrative serve. Thus, discussing what the approach does, Cortsazzi (1993) noted that the model "examines structural properties of narrative in relation to their social functions" (p. 43).

Although "a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered" forms a narrative at the smallest level in Labovian approach (Labov, 1972, p. 360 cited in Patterson, 2008, p. 24), there are, in total, six constituents that render a "fully formed narrative" (Riessman, 2008, p. 84). The parts are abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda. It may be important to note two things here. First, it is considered unnecessary for a narrative to have all these components but evaluation. Without evaluation, "a narrative lacks significance: it has no point" (Labov & Waletzky, 2003, p. 94). Second, it is also not essential that these parts follow in order but resolution usually coming after evaluation and abstract appearing in the starting of a narrative (Cortsazzi, 1993; Labov & Waletzky, 2003; Patterson, 2008). I discuss below the parts that form a full narrative.

Those clauses that recapitulate what is to follow are called an abstract (AB) of a narrative. An abstract, thus, summarizes the vital point of a story at the outset. It is held that the occurrence of abstract is optional. However, it is generally agreed that the place of an abstract is always at the beginning of a narrative or near to it because its major function is to sum up the following narrative. A "group of" clauses which introduces settings (i.e., time, situation, characters, and place) in the narrative is named the orientation (OR) (Labov & Waletzky, 2003, p. 93).

Complicating Action (CA) is the main part of the narrative that forms and functions as the plot of the story. This part unfolds the event(s) that run through the story and follows "a 'then, and then' structure which gives a linear representation of time and permits an open-ended series of events to be related" (Patterson, 2008, p. 26).

Evaluation (EV), which is called "the soul" of the narrative" (Riessman, 2008, p. 84), is the part "that reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative" (Labov & Waletzky, 2003, p. 97). This part is considered very significant because it unfolds the space where an analyst may see how the narrator identifies herself, shows her attitudes, perspectives, and emotions, and positions herself. Since evaluation (EV) forms the heart for the structural narrative analysis, it is explored at various levels. The exploration generally revolves around external evaluation (the evaluative comments a narrator makes being outside the story she told) and embedded evaluation (the evaluative comments the narrator makes while being in the story) (Patterson, 2008; Riessman, 2008). Further, Labov & Waletzky (2003) held that the evaluation part may be evident in a narrative in a variety of forms; and, it may better be taken as "a scale of degrees" between embedded and internal evaluation (p. 99). Result or Resolution (RE) is another part of the narrative that shows how the story ends. Finally, Coda, which is also an optional, is the part that finishes the story and brings listeners back to the present time (Labov & Waletzky, 2003, p. 100).

The Labovian narrative analytical approach has several advantages to its credit. First, it is considered a rigorous and well-established method for identifying and analyzing experience at an event level. Second, the approach facilitates a comparative case analyses of stories centered upon similar experiential events. Third, the evaluation part of the approach has the potential to help researchers in many directions. For instance, one can not only investigate the narrator's/writer's perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, emotions but also her identity or positioning. Particularly from the perspective of identity and positioning, one can employ an ethnomethodological and/or conversational analytic standpoint to analyze in detail how a narrator identifies and takes certain positions through narrativization of his/her experience (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). For these reasons, one may conduct a thematic analysis of the evaluation parts – spread across many clauses – of such narratives. Fourth, the approach may be used as a potential method to triangulate one's research. Last but not least, the approach may help educators, linguists, and applied linguists to study how various minority language learners organize their experience of certain events, and what linguistic resources they use in recapitulating their experience and positioning their identities (Cortsazzi, 1993; Patterson, 2008; Pavlenko, 2007).

The Labovian approach has certain limitations and theoretical problems too. For example, it has very specific and limited definition of an oral narrative that is

based upon only recapitulating past time. One's subjective experiences that originated in the past and continue in the present may not be analyzed through this approach. Second, there are certain "narrative traditions that organize stories around a place, or around hierarchy of ranks of the characters, or their relationships to the speakers, rather than time" (Patterson, 2008, p. 30), but the Labovian method may not be appropriate for such traditions. Third, how a micro context or an interactional setting plays a role when an interviewer elicits a personal narrative from an interviewee is also overlooked. The model, therefore, fails to capture how the past is reconstructed by a narrator to tell a narrative in the present. It also ignores the dimension of how the narrative may be co-constructed and situated by/between a listener and a speaker (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). Last but not least, a narrative is also presumed to be an objective and a full representation of what happened to a narrator. The assumption that a narrative can be partial or that it can be socially constructed in nature is also largely ignored when one conducts analysis strictly from the Labovian perspective (Cortsazzi, 1993; Riessman, 2008; Patterson, 2008). Despite these limitations, the method is hailed as the most efficient and effective way of analyzing narratives at an event level.

To sum up, thematic narrative analysis commits itself to generating, analyzing, and/or reporting stories of cases by focusing upon *what* is told/written. Structural narrative analysis largely commits itself to finding *how* a story is told and *what purposes* it serves. Taking the advantages of both the approaches into account, narrative scholars may use them together in mixed-method approaches to triangulate their methods and look into lived experiences from a broader perspective (Greene, 2007). However, it must be mentioned that there may be many other innovative ways of conducting narrative inquiry in addition to or using the above methods in different ways. In what follows, I discuss briefly two examples of how narrative inquiry has been used in a certain different way in the domain of teacher education.

7. Narrative Inquiry and Teacher Education

Narrative inquiry is considered one of the central research approaches in the broad and many-sided field of teacher education (Beattie, 1995; Bell, 2002). From the perspective of narrative inquiry, since it is assumed that teacher's knowledge is structured in storied form, and s/he is the curriculum maker rather than its transmitter, inquiry into teacher's knowledge/cognition, pedagogy, voice, identity, and professional development has been conducted in diverse ways (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007). I discuss here only two exemplars that may help to show the diversity of the ways in which narrative inquiry is conducted. They may add to the discussion made above about narrative analysis methods. Above all, the major purpose of reviewing the exemplars is to demonstrate to a certain extent the complexity scholars have

noted in the manifold applications of narrative inquiry (Squire, Andrew, & Tamboukou, 2008).

Golombek and Johnson's study (2004) with its focus on professional development in the field of teacher education may serve an example. Although Golombek and Johnson (2004) situate their narrative inquiry project in the ontological conceptualization of human experiences as essentially narrative, they define narrative inquiry in a dissimilar way than Clandinin and Connelly (2000) did above. Unlike Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who took narrative inquiry as research collaboration between a researcher and researched, Golombek and Johnson, by referring to Johnson and Golombek (2002,) defined narrative inquiry "as systematic exploration that is conducted *by* teachers and *for* teachers through their own stories and language" (2004 p. 309). In their project, second language (L2) teachers produced stories of their teaching experience in their journals for other teachers. As researchers, they analyzed the three teacher-authored narratives.

Taking the Vygotskyian sociocultural perspective on human learning as their framework, Golombek and Johnson (2004) held the teachers as "learners of English language teaching" (p. 312) and the teachers' narrative inquiry as "a mediational space" (p. 307). The researchers wanted to look into the space created by the teacher-authored stories to examine how the teachers faced various emotional and cognitive conflicts in their teaching experiences. They also wanted to investigate how the teachers solved the conflicts by drawing upon "various resources, such as private journals, peers and 'expert' or theoretical knowledge, that allow them to reconceptualize and reinternalize new understandings of themselves as teachers and their teaching activities" (p. 307).

According to the aforementioned Polkinghorne's (1995) distinction between thematic *analysis of narrative* and thematic *narrative analysis*, Golombek and Johnson (2004) used the thematic analysis of narrative approach. For instance, rather than configuring stories by themselves which show or revolve around certain themes, they worked with the teacher-generated stories and analyzed them in themes from the sociocultural standpoint. Thus, using the theory as their analytical point of departure, they analyzed each story thematically and theorized from each case accordingly.

To illustrate further, in analyzing the narrative of one of the teachers, Jen, they showed and conceptualized how Jen's self mediated "as temporary other" in her story of emotional and cognitive dissonance. The temporary other, later, helped her to self-regulate in such dissonance. In fact, Jen wrote the story about a student who complained to Jen regarding her grades. In sum, by analyzing each narrative and theorizing from it, rather than generating a story from the data, the

researchers show relatively a different way than discussed above narratives are analyzed thematically in narrative inquiry.

Wood (2000) may offer another example in this context. Unlike defining narrative inquiry as narrative collaboration between a researcher and the researched wherein the researcher emplots stories from various sources of data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1995), Wood took narrative inquiry conducted by a teacher herself as "a process by which teachers themselves gain insight into their practice and set new directions for their ongoing professional development" (2000, p. 426). Wood's research included journaling, five open-ended interviews, and various informal telephonic and face-to-face follow-up sessions. Ann, the research participant, produced 42 stories "over [their] eight months of work" (2000, p. 429). The researcher, however, focused upon only two stories in the paper in question. She chose them because "they evoked unusually sustained dialogue and substantial change in Ann's practice" (p. 427).

Interestingly, while Wood's data collection through various methods appears suitable for conducting thematic narrative analysis or thematic analysis of narrative, she used the Labovian conceptualization and analysis for generating and analyzing her stories. She held that the Labovian method of "six narrative movements" appeared to her as a practical, clear, and ready-made way of generating and analyzing Ann's stories (p. 430). Therefore, the six narrative movements helped her to identify "shifts in Ann's consciousness, point of view, understanding, or insight" (p. 446). Above all, the method proved useful to her for finding and constructing specific event-centered stories from the data.

Ann's first story is about her teaching event of one day when she failed to stimulate students' interests in her class. Her second story is about a parent-teacher meeting. To illustrate Wood's method of narrative inquiry, after generating the first story according to the Labovian method, Wood used Polany's (1985) "adequate paraphrase" technique to create a paraphrased version of the story. She offered it to Ann to read and comment on it. The strategy helped Wood to establish trustworthiness of the story. Afterwards, by following Polayni (1985), Wood separated the clauses and phrases that created "descriptions and contexts for *major* events" (2000, p. 433). By doing this, Wood could dig deeper in Ann's consciousness to decipher how Ann acted and attached certain meanings and values to her practice. Above all, Wood's interpretation of both the stories consisted of discussing in detail all the six parts of the narratives in sequence. She also brought the stories into dialogue with each other by cross analyzing them together. She attempted to show how Ann interpreted her practice and self during the events. The exemplar appeared to me as a rigorous application of the Labov's method for the narrative inquiry conducted by teachers.

In sum, this discussion of narrative methods in addition to these exemplars, in effect, attempts to suggest that narrative inquiry may be framed and conducted from various vantage points in order to better understand teachers' lived experiences. In addition to the perspectives presented in the aforementioned discussion and the above exemplars, teachers' mundane life can be explored through a conversational analytical position that can show how their lives that are co-constructed contextually in their commonplace conversations are lived narratively (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Teachers' storied lives can also be uncovered through either autoethnographic lenses (Adams, Jones, & Ellis, 2015) and/or collaborative autoethnographic angle (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013). Last but not the least, one can also uncover and analyze the structure of teachers' lived experiences through phenomenology (Sokolowski, 1999).

8. Potential for Representing Teachers' Experiences & Critique

A teacher is complex; his/her consciousness and cognition are socio-culturally molded, sociohistorically situated, and different and deep at individual levels; thus, understanding his/her lived experiences of learning and teaching through the frame of references s/he keeps developing from his/her surroundings has remained one of the major areas/theses of qualitative research in teacher education scholarship. Thus, rather than buying into a simplistically impartial idea that how a teacher makes meanings and asserts his/her identities may better be represented in specific, clear, unbiased, and linear numerical thought, qualitative researchers have strived to represent teachers' complex experiences largely through words. Words have helped them to go beyond the boundaries of numbers and display what numbers have been unable to (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). The narrative research tradition, specifically, has contributed to this scholarship by positing that teacher's cognition of lived experiences of teaching and learning are in storied form. The approach has held that whether a teacher's story is generated, looked into structurally, or considered a representational form of teacher's actions in any textual mode, it may be the best way to understand how s/he develops meanings, attaches social, cultural, and moral values to his/her actions, and shows his/her attitudes, beliefs, and emotions.

Eisner (1997) noted that when a researcher chooses to represent human (i.e. teacher's) experiences in an alternative form of data representation, s/he wishes to show "a sense of particularity that abstractions cannot render". S/he intends to provide "productive ambiguity" that "generates insight and invites attention to complexity". And, s/he attempts to provide an avenue to "expect new ways of seeing things, new settings for their display, and new problems to tackle" (p. 9). Researchers in narrative inquiry, by their varying focuses on the structure and the content of stories, have been accomplishing these goals in teacher education scholarship. Researchers in the field of narrative inquiry hold that stories have

the potential to show highly personal and contextual experiential scenarios of teachers' ways of being. Stories have the power to capture the interplay of their actions, intentions, and identities in holistic and complex ways. Moreover, stories have the ability to capture the three dimensions of their thought consisting of the present, past, and future. Above all, narrative inquiry attempts to understand teachers' thinking comprehensively in and through stories (Carter, 1993; Casey, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; ElbazLuwisch, 2007).

However, by bringing forth the potential of narrative inquiry in the context of representing and interpreting humans', i.e., teachers', lived experiences, I do not imply at all that narrative inquiry is an innocent research enterprise. Neither do I believe that narrative researchers remain decidedly unbiased and apolitical beings. Nor do I see that the process of representing human's/teachers' lived experiences by generating stories, looking into their structures, or bringing various theoretical families to bear upon the raw data to make them meaningful stories remains an asocial, acultural, and a divorced-from-human-intentions action. Rather, I accept that, as choosing any methodology to conduct research is driven by researchers' desires to achieve certain aims, the same is true with narrative researchers who conduct their narrative inquiry projects to attain certain targets.

Alvermann (2000) noted that narrative research has been critiqued from various theoretical perspectives. For instance, from an empiricist perspective the issue that the interactions between researcher and researched may pollute the researcher's thought. It may thus, may pave a way to distorted and biased truth claims. Critique from a poststructuralist standpoint that narrative researchers "turn the teller into a crafty narrator" in stories (p. 130). And, a concern from a critical vantage point that there should be a certain degree of expectation that narrative projects will "enable those who tell us their stories to take actions that will change their own conditions or the conditions of others living in similar circumstances" (p. 130). Indeed, these issues need to be paid particular heed and handled carefully in narrative research projects.

As to how narrative researchers may tackle these issues in a better way, Alvermann (2000) suggested that "the relationship between the knower and the known is made less obscure and perhaps "safer" when (narrative) researchers practice reflexivity and take steps to ensure that ethical consideration is given to their participants' needs" (p. 130). Further, her suggestion that taking Truth "as a tension, as movement" may better help narrative researchers to conceptualize, posit, and discuss their truth claims (p. 131). To sum up, provided the suggested and relevant steps are taken overtly, and, every research decision is justified

explicitly, narrative inquiry may handle the critique and succeed in showing "universality through context sensitivity" (Bruner, 1986, p. 50).

9. Conclusion

The paper discussed narrative inquiry. Bruner (1986) held that there are two distinctive yet interconnected cognitive ways of constructing reality: paradigmatic and narrative. Narrative research takes the narrative way of ordering experience as central in its enterprise. By drawing upon Schwandt (2007), I described narrative inquiry as a qualitative research tradition that not only generates but also analyzes and reports stories. This paper discussed the major methods of narrative analysis. In thematic narrative analysis, a researcher generates thematic stories from a variety of data. In structural narrative analysis, a researcher not only generates or elicits a story revolving around an event but also analyzes how a narrative is structured and what functions clauses therein serve. The paper noted that there might be many other points of departure for conducting narrative inquiry projects. In this context, the paper briefly discussed two examples from the field of teacher education to illustrate how narrative inquiry may be framed differently for achieving different research purposes. Finally, the paper brought into focus the potential of and critique on narrative inquiry. The paper underlined that by justifying every research decision taken in a narrative project clearly and generating and interpreting the structures of stories carefully, narrative inquiry may prove its potential to analyze and represent the depth, richness, and complexity of human thought.

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