CASE STUDIES

&

ACTION RESEARCH

Melba Libia Cárdenas B.
Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Bogotá
WHAT IS A CASE STUDY? (1)


- The study of a specific, holistic, often unique instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle.
- The study of an instance in action.
- The study of an evolving situation.
What is a case study? (2)


- Case studies portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation
- Case studies often include direct observations (participant and non-participant) and interviews.

A case can be:

A person, a group, an organization, an event.
Elements of case study

- Rich, vivid and holistic description (‘thick description’) and portrayal of events, contexts and situations through the eyes of participants (including the researcher).
- Chronological narrative.
- Combination of description, analysis and interpretation.
- Focus on actors and participants.
- Let the data speak for themselves.
ACTION RESEARCH... Features (1)
(Burns, 1999, p. 30; Arhar et al., 2001, p. 31; Wiśniewska, 2013)

- Self-reflective study to improve our practices
- Introspective inquiry
- Collective / Collaborative
- Applied research
- Observation and records of events
- Extension of reflective practice
- Emancipation.
Features (2)

- It is contextual, small-scale and localised
- It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice
- It is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners and researchers
- Changes in practice are based on the collection of information.
- It does not espouse “objectivity” in the traditional sense.
Features (3)

- It is conducted mainly by insiders (practitioners) rather than outsiders.
- It is geared toward the improvement of the practitioner-researcher as well as the practice.
- It is self-critical inquiry, undertaken by the participants themselves.
- Aims at practical knowledge, new forms of understanding and liberation of individuals and communities which, in consequence, should lead to the enhancement of the well-being of people.
Processes of AR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)
Processes identified by teachers

1. Exploring
2. Identifying
3. Planning
4. Collecting data
5. Analysing/reflecting
6. Hypothesising / speculating / refining
7. Intervening
8. Observing
9. Reporting
10. Writing
11. Presenting

(Based on Burns, 1999, p. 35)
“Investigating is a process [...] It is like learning to skate. If you try the skates before the race, surely you won’t fall before you reach the end… In this case, if you do research before the final monograph, surely you will do it faster. Besides, if teachers have defined research areas in which they involve students before the monograph, the skating-rink will be more even...”

(S26, Survey)
Reporting: Different forms

- Reflection
- Puzzles
- Plans & plans
- Doing R & writing
- Critical friends
- Telling here and there
Reporting: Publications & Events

Call for Papers

Dear Colleagues:

From June 1st to 3rd 2016, Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Sede Bogotá will host the 8th International Colloquium on Research in Foreign Languages. We kindly invite you to participate in this new version of the Colloquium which is organized with the aim of sharing the latest research done by teacher-researchers in the area of foreign languages, covering issues related to culture, pedagogy, translation, morphology, among others.

We would also like to invite you to send your proposal/s for presentation. If you are interested, you can fill in the proposal form which you will find in the following link:

http://goo.gl/forms/raSr6Hebt

Proposals will be received until next March 30th, 2016.

www.humanas.unal.edu.co/coloquiolenguas
Pre-Service samples... Teaching issues

- A Case Study of Learning Styles in Low-Level Learners in a Private School in Bogotá (Abella & Salinas, 2008)

- Interaction in Online Tutoring Sessions: An Opportunity to Knit English Language Learning in a Blended Program (Rosa, 2009)

- The Role of Discussion Boards in a University Blended Learning Program (González, 2011)

- Collaborative Project Work Development in a Virtual Environment with Low-Intermediate Undergraduate Colombian Students (Salinas, 2008)
Pre-Service samples... “Beyond” teaching issues

- Indigenous Students’ Attitudes towards Learning English through a Virtual Program: A Study in a Colombian Public University (Cuasialpud, 2010)
- Teacher Collaboration in a Public School to Set up Language Resource Centers: Portraying Advantages, Benefits, and Challenges (Rojas, 2008)
- Tasting Teaching Flavors: A Group of Student-Teachers’ Experiences in their Practicum (Prada & Zuleta, 2005)
Action research ... some samples...

- Improving Pronunciation through the Use of Karaoke in an Adult English Class (Rengifo, 2009)
- Adolescents’ Awareness of Environmental Care: Experiences when Writing Short Descriptive Texts in English (Jaramillo & Medina, 2011)
- An English Syllabus with Emphasis on Chemistry: A Proposal for 10th Graders of a Public School in Colombia (López, 2009)
Samples of action research...

- Using Songs to Encourage Sixth Graders to Develop English Speaking Skills (*Duarte, Tinjacá, & Carrero, 2011*)

- Writing Using Blogs: A Way to Engage Colombian Adolescents in Meaningful Communication (*Rojas, 2011*)

- Using Cooperative Learning to Foster the Development of Adolescents’ English Writing Skills (*Caicedo, 2016*)
Seeking explanations

The main focus of the study was to determine the learning styles characterizing low achievement students when learning English. It also gives an account of the role learning styles played in the learning process as well as the factors that allowed students to explore their styles. Instruments used to collect data were field notes, students’ work and focus-group interviews... (Yakelín Salinas & David Abella, 2006)
Exploring research paths

On the one hand, it is a case study given that it describes the happenings within a certain group of individuals in a specific context (Wallace, 1998). A comprehensive and exhaustive study of the learning process of the student and the features of his speaking performance would give us a holistic view of the factors affecting his oral production. On the other hand, this study shared principles with action research since it aimed to take part in this problematic situation by identifying the problem, reflecting, making decisions and taking actions (Kogan, 2004). ... (Daissy Velandia)
My role as a researcher

I belong to an indigenous community located in Nariño, in the southwestern region of Colombia. Therefore, I followed the principles of a participant observer that, according to Trochim (2006), is the one who becomes a participant in the culture or context being observed. In this sense, as an indigenous student and as a student of English philology, I could share similar experiences with students in regard to educational background. First, I talked to the participants and asked for their collaboration. … (Ruth Cuasialpud)
Positioning oneself: a decision maker

From personal experience, I realized that many activities which included music were used in classes with good levels of acceptance. I also perceived that many students liked to sing. Some were keen on certain types of music in English or enjoyed certain songs. One student was even learning English because he wanted to sing in this language for a project of a rock band; that was one of the many reasons I proposed the integration of available technology into the class; in this case, as a means to help improve students’ pronunciation. (Andrés Rengifo)
Collaboration with school teachers

In the present article [...] to describe the benefits, challenges, advantages and disadvantages experienced by teachers in a public school when working collaboratively to implement a language resource center in their institution. Taking as a point of departure the development of a proposal to implement the resource center in their school, some teachers engaged in group work in order to attain the different objectives that were stated at the beginning of the process, thus encountering a number of difficulties and challenges... (Javier Rojas)
Gains when doing A-R in PDPs*

- Collaborative action research
- Trustworthiness
- Sharing findings
- Changing beliefs: the teacher as a researcher

(Cárdenas, 2000)

*PDPs = Professional Development Programmes

- An empowering tool
- Demystifying research role
- Ongoing inquiring for decision-making and change
- A path to professional development

(Cárdenas, 2004)
Achievements when doing AR in PDPs*

Research in an environment of tensions

- Anxiety experienced by teachers
- The school culture and the research activity
  - Sharing findings: Teacher-researchers as writers
  - Interest in networking

(Cárdenas, 2004; Cárdenas & Nieto, 2007)

*PDPs= Professional Development Programmes
Limitations and implications

- Collaborative work vs. School reality + Personal constraints
- School support
- Academic writing
- Resistance to change
- Teacher education practices
- Continuity and sustainability
- Who is leading research courses? Mentors?

(Cárdenas, 2004; Cárdenas & Nieto, 2010)
References


