Abstract

This case is based on research conducted in the context of teacher education and training in Vietnam, which employed narrative inquiry in combination with a self-rated English language proficiency survey and semi-structured interviews to explore the perceptions of Vietnamese primary and secondary English as a foreign language teachers regarding their English proficiency in comparison with the standard mandated by the Ministry of Education and Training, their attitudes toward English proficiency development, and the characteristics of their language practice. The survey collected responses from 298 in-service English as a foreign language teachers participating in professional development courses in four provinces of Northern Vietnam. A total of 42 teachers were then selected for the semi-structured interviews on a voluntary and availability basis. Of these participants, five were chosen and then repeatedly interviewed using narrative inquiry techniques over a 10-week period. The case promotes the use of narrative inquiry, justifies and illustrates the process of incorporating it into the research design, and suggests frameworks for narrative data collection and analysis. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative methodology based on the premise that we make sense of our lives through narratives and uses storytelling to uncover the issues which may not be captured by other methods. This approach emphasizes the collaborative aspect of research between researcher and participants over time in a socio-cultural context and allows for a rich description of these experiences and an exploration of the meanings that participants derive from their experiences.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case, students should be able to

- Have a better understanding of narrative inquiry and the steps to conduct narrative inquiry research
- Understand the challenges in conducting narrative inquiry research
- Understand how narrative inquiry can be combined with more traditional approaches
- Access the pros and cons of incorporating narrative inquiry research methods as a means of investigating human experiences

Project Overview and Context

This research project evolved out of my struggle to improve English language proficiency as a non-native English-speaking (NNES) teacher. I consider myself luckier than most colleagues in Vietnam due to my postgraduate education in Australia, where I used English every day: the opportunity to converse with native English speakers (NES) is still a luxury most Vietnamese teachers cannot attain. Despite such an advantage, I feel constant pressure to evaluate and improve my English proficiency. This pressure originates from both internal factors, the desire to do better, and external factors, including job-related and cultural expectations.
of employers, parents, and students. The truth is that after two decades of learning and using the language, I am still barely satisfied with my English proficiency. At times, I feel disappointed with my competency and experience self-doubt.

My feelings can be explained as the symptoms of the so-called impostor syndrome (Langford & Clance, 1993), as I frequently question my qualifications to work as a language teacher and contemplate the mistakes I have made during everyday conversations in English. I believed to some extent my feelings were not unique, and many other English as a foreign language (EFL) colleagues were perhaps experiencing similar stresses and anxieties while fighting their own battles to better their English proficiency. I was particularly interested in focusing on individual teachers’ experiences in order to know their worlds as language learners. Therefore, this research began with a personal enquiry into Vietnamese EFL teachers’ attitudes toward their own English proficiency and their experience of English learning and development.

This research was conducted during an important period in the history of English language teaching and learning in Vietnam in terms of its official policy on a standard of English language proficiency for EFL teachers and public awareness of this issue. Between 2010 and 2014, the quality of Vietnamese EFL teachers was seriously questioned as the media revealed the disappointing results of a nationwide teachers’ language proficiency assessment as part of the National Foreign Language Project 2020 (NFL Project 2020). Various domestic and international newspapers drew the public’s attention to the failure of most in-service teachers of English to attain the level of proficiency required by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). It was specified that Vietnamese EFL primary and lower secondary teachers needed to attain the B2 level of the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) for language learning, teaching, and assessment. It shocked the nation that even in major cities, including Hanoi, the capital, and Ho Chi Minh, the largest city in Vietnam, only one-fifth of those teachers tested achieved the required level of English proficiency (Minh, 2012; Parks, 2011). In one province, Ben Tre, only one teacher out of the 700 who had been tested attained this threshold level. MOET and NFL Project 2020 also reported that 80,000 teachers needed further training as 97%, 93%, and 98% of in-service teachers at primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary schools, respectively, were underqualified in terms of English language proficiency (Nguyen & Dudzik, 2013). Criticisms were made, and plans were drafted and carried out, to improve these teachers’ English proficiency.

However, what is missing from all these discouraging statistics and nationwide support programs are accounts of teachers’ own perceptions of their language proficiency and the kinds of training and support they perceive as needed. Do these EFL teachers perceive that they need to improve their English proficiency? How do they maintain and develop it? What are the challenges they face? What kind of training and support do they expect and desire? All these questions are left unanswered. As the teachers are at the center of this educational reform, it is crucial that their voices be heard so that their needs can be met.

The aim of this study is to explore perceptions of Vietnamese NNES in-service teachers of English concerning their English proficiency and the level of proficiency they regarded as necessary for their teaching, their attitudes toward English proficiency development, and the characteristics of their language practice. In
particular, the study seeks to answer the following two research questions:

**RQ1.** What are Vietnamese EFL teachers’ perceptions of their English language proficiency (PLP) and responses toward MOET’s English policy?

**RQ2.** How do participants describe their English proficiency development?

To achieve these aims, I employed narrative inquiry research method. I distributed a survey to 350 in-service EFL teachers who were participating in professional development courses in four provinces. From these 350 teachers, I then conducted semi-structured interviews with 42 teachers, whose participation was on a voluntary and availability basis. Finally, I chose five participants and repeatedly interviewed them using narrative inquiry techniques over a 10-week period. The criteria for choosing these five participants were based on their various lengths of teaching experience and different working contexts. I interviewed each participant four to five times in the participants’ chosen locations; each interview was about 90 min on average. The narratives generated from these interviews offer deeper insights into these participants’ teaching and language learning experiences.

The study makes a contribution in a number of areas, namely, teacher education, language assessment, and EFL educational reform in Vietnam. This case focuses on the study’s significance in terms of its methodology, with its combination of narrative inquiry procedures and more traditional techniques: a quantitative survey approach and semi-structured interviews. Although the results of the survey and semi-structured interviews sketch an overall picture of the teachers’ English proficiency issue, the narratives present the individual teachers’ voices with greater insights and new perspectives on previous findings. The innovative design of the study proved to be advantageous as it enabled both a broad scope of understanding and a deeper more comprehensive one of the problem under investigation. The following sections briefly explain the research design and what narrative inquiry is, justify and illustrate the process of incorporating narrative inquiry into the research design, and suggest frameworks for narrative data collection and analysis.

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**Research Design**

The purpose of my study is to explore a rarely investigated issue: in-service NNES teachers’ English proficiency development during their teaching practice and earlier language learning histories. This study assumes that, as individuals are complex beings engaged in social interaction with others and as teachers’ language learning is a complex issue influenced by many processes, it is best to strike a balanced position between quantitative and qualitative approaches. My research therefore combines a self-rated language proficiency survey, semi-structured interviews, and narrative inquiry.

The self-rated English proficiency survey aims to provide an overview of the participants’ perceptions of their English proficiency, whereas the semi-structured and narrative interviews allow participants to express their understandings of the world and represent their subjective interpretations of issues related to their own language development. Also, the survey and semi-structured interviews create a pool of participants
from which some could be selected for repeated interviews during the narrative inquiry procedure. I chose the methodologies of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis of the texts because they allow participants’ voices to emerge from data and generate insights to further illustrate or provide new perspectives to those discovered in the previous stages. In this way, theory emerges from text, in a manner similar to grounded theory as described by Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (2008).

What Is Narrative Inquiry?

Narrative, as defined by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, is an account of events in a story. As an academic term, *narrative* carries many meanings, but is often used synonymously with storytelling (Riessman, 2008). When a narrator tells a story, a narrative form is given to an experience that can vary from a single event in life to an entire life history. This experience is not necessarily restricted to something that has already happened, but can refer to what is imagined to have happened or might happen: Susan E. Chase (2011) defined narrative as making meaning of past, recent, or possible near-future events. Narrative data range from traditional interviews, oral and written texts to visual images such as photographs, films, or paintings. Gary Barkhuizen (2011, 2013) referred to the process of meaning-making via stories as narrative knowing. It involves narrators, researchers, and also consumers of research reports.

Using narratives or stories as data, narrative research can follow two directions: either to focus on the experiences of the narrators or the use of various narrative devices (Bamberg, 2012). These two types of narrative research, as classified by Michael Bamberg, are, respectively, research with narrative and research on narrative. Similarly, Aneta Pavlenko (2002) contrasted narrative inquiry and narrative study. Whereas the former employs ethnographic means and content-based analysis to elicit understanding of how narrators make sense of their experiences, the latter focuses more on how narratives are constructed using various narrative devices. The research discussed in this case does not intend to study the narrative devices or the construction of narratives, and thus is aligned more with Bamberg’s research with narrative and Pavlenko’s narrative inquiry. It also identifies with Garold Murray’s (2009) description of narrative inquiry that puts narrative accounts and interpretations of narratives within a broader context.

Narrative inquiry in the sense in which it is applied in this case is a qualitative research methodology allowing the researcher to investigate the ways in which humans experience the world as revealed through their stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Jerome Bruner (1990) referred to this mode of thinking (making sense of lives through stories) as a narrative way of knowing in comparison with the logico-scientific mode. He claimed that it was through telling stories that human beings structured their experiences and understood themselves, their identities, and their relationship with others.

Narrative inquirers, like D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (2000), argued that if humans understood the world narratively, then it made sense to study the world narratively. For them, narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience via the stories people tell and how they tell them. The main strengths of the method lie in its approach to understand phenomena from the perspectives of the participants by getting researchers
into the real world of participants and their stories. It is, therefore, a profoundly human way of carrying out research (Barkhuizen, 2013).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) trace the core of narrative inquiry to John Dewey's (1938, 1991) theory of experience. Dewey argued that human beings learn from reflecting on experience, confronting the unknown, making sense of it, and taking action. For him, experience is both personal and social. People are individuals, but they are always in relations, or in other words, always in a social context. Studying one individual's experience, for example, of language learning, would therefore involve more than that individual's learning but also require understanding of that experience in the individual’s context, for example, learning with other people, with a teacher, in a classroom, in a community, and so on. Dewey also argued that experience was continuous as one experience led to another. Any individual’s learning experience always has a history and that history is ever-changing as new events unfold. Narrative inquiry embraces these two characteristics of experience, namely, interaction and continuity, and is conducive to documenting the changing conditions of lives and the impact these new conditions can have over time on all aspects of an individual's life, including language learning. It recognizes that people make sense of their experiences according to narratives that are constantly being restructured in the light of new events and also acknowledges that these narratives are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives (Bell, 2002).

Narrative inquiry has a relatively long history in general teacher education research and is a fast-growing interest in the field of language teacher education (Barkhuizen, 2008). As teachers are no longer viewed just as subjects of study, but rather as knowing professionals or agents of change (Johnson & Golombek, 2002), their narratives of experiences have become the subject of research. The increased emphasis on teachers’ reflective practice, teachers’ knowledge (i.e. what they know, how they think, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom), and the increasing importance of teachers’ voices talking about their experiences have all contributed to the emergence of narrative inquiry and its popularity over the last few decades (Cortazzi, 1993). As narratives can provide a way into teachers’ beliefs and experiences, narrative inquiry can help understand those beliefs and experiences. From this presentation of the works by prominent narrative researchers, it is clear that a narrative inquiry approach can make an important contribution to the current study of teachers’ English proficiency development.

Justification for Incorporating Narrative Inquiry Into the Study

There are several reasons for my employing a narrative inquiry approach in this study. One reason for incorporating narrative inquiry into the research design is the rarely investigated and sensitive nature of the research problem, that is, NNES teachers’ processes of English proficiency development. This project is exploratory because to date the topic has been largely ignored in the NNES teacher literature, and to my knowledge, work on it is non-existent in the Vietnamese context. The most suitable research approach for this topic should be different from the controlled experimental environment and rigid hypothesis testing characterizing quantitative research approaches. Rather, it should follow a qualitative and exploratory
approach similar to grounded theory research developed by Corbin and Strauss so that new insights and theory can emerge from the data.

Second, of all the different research traditions grouped under the term “qualitative,” namely, case study, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative research as listed by John Creswell (2013), the appropriate approach should be the one that caters to the sensitiveness of the topic, in this case, NNES teachers’ English proficiency. Therefore, it should involve gaining trust from and having direct communication with individual teachers who are teaching and living the experience of developing their language proficiency in Vietnam. This approach would involve sharing these teachers’ experiences, in other words, making their worlds visible.

Narrative inquiry fits with these requirements as it is influenced by Dewey’s educational philosophy and allows the exploration of humans’ experiences through their stories. For example, Murray (2008, 2009) positioned himself as a narrative inquirer and life-history researcher, collecting language learning stories of Japanese to inquire into how they attained a level of English proficiency without living or studying overseas. He argued that language learning, as a life-time process and a constantly changing experience, was not limited to a single event that could be studied at a discrete point in time. He advocated the use of narrative inquiry as the appropriate research method to investigate the experience of language learning, to document process and changes that occur over time.

Another feature of my study that requires a narrative inquiry approach is the focus on the individual teachers. Narrative inquiry is about letting participants’ voices be heard (Murray, 2009). It begins with experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Thus, this research approach fits with this study’s objectives to document individual teachers’ processes of English proficiency development in their everyday living and teaching contexts. By including narrative inquiry in the research design, the study can embrace the uniqueness of the individual teachers and lead to deeper insights to complement the distant panoramic shot of the population based on quantitative survey data.

The fourth reason justifying the inclusion of narrative inquiry is its ability to provide deep insights into the environments where the participants live and tell their stories. In my project, this is the English learning and teaching contexts in Vietnam. While “context is crucial to meaning making” (Phillion & Connelly, 2004, p. 460) and the interpretation of narratives needs to be placed within a broader social, cultural, and historical context (Murray, 2009), narrative inquiry can offer unique opportunities to understand local social practices of language education and the place of English in particular socio-cultural contexts. For this to happen, it is essential to have a shared understanding of the socio-political and educational context between the researchers and the researched (Hayes, 2013). Due to my educational and work-related background as a language teacher and teacher educator, I have the advantage of a shared understanding of the contexts. With my advantage, a narrative inquiry approach can contribute to a deepened understanding of the participants’ narratives while exploring the different contextual factors influencing their English proficiency development.

To explore the context and its influences on participants’ English learning, I adopt frameworks developed by
Barkhuizen, and Clandinin and Connelly. Clandinin and Connelly suggested researchers place themselves within a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to interpret participants’ experiences. The first dimension, temporality, allows moving backward and forward between the past, present, and future. The second is the personal and social dimension referring to the participants in the story, their own experiences, and interactions with others. The third dimension is that of the physical settings in which the story is located.

Barkhuizen argued that narrative inquiry, a context-sensitive approach, was capable of reflecting the context at three different but interconnected levels. He illustrated the interconnectedness of these levels in a model of three concentric circles while presenting the narratives of two language teachers in South Africa. The central level is that of the individual teacher’s personal “story” showing their inner thoughts, emotions, ideas, and theories of language teaching. The second, “Story” level is related to the teachers’ working environment where they have less control and power over the complex variables constructing their teaching practice. The biggest, “STORY” level refers to the broad socio-political context where the teachers have even less power over the conditions influencing their teaching practice. Barkhuizen suggested exploring all three levels because they were interrelated and at times difficult to distinguish.

Finally, as an NNES teacher myself, this research project is an inquiry into my own profession. The adoption of narrative inquiry is appropriate because it allows me, as a researcher, to acknowledge the involvement of my subjectivity in the research process. This is a common characteristic of qualitative research in general. However, narrative inquiry pushes this common characteristic to the extreme, as researchers have to reveal their position, acknowledge their subjectivity in the research design, data collection, interpretation, and presentation of findings. Only in this way can researchers win participants’ trust. Yet, in order to get the whole story, researchers also need to honor that trust and its responsibility (Murray, 2009). The researchers have an opportunity to look into not only the participants’ world but also their own world with more insights, especially when the researchers and the researched share a mutual understanding of the context. Thus, the current study allows me to inquire into fellow teachers’ experiences of language learning while enabling me to have a deeper and more critical understanding of my own experience and our shared English teaching and learning context. For me, this is a privilege not available through other research methods.

**Narrative Inquiry Analysis**

As narrative inquiry is still “a field in the making” without clear boundaries, and an agreed framework of data collection and analysis (Chase, 2011, p. 421), this section locates my approach to narrative inquiry data analysis in this study within the method’s diverse literature.

While all narrative researchers share a common interest in the study of narratives or stories as the fundamental unit accounting for human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), they have different understanding of “narrative” and, therefore, analyze the data in different ways. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) pointed out that “each inquirer needs to develop the criteria appropriate to her or his work” due to the variety of work under the umbrella term “narrative inquiry” (p. 476). Chase confirmed this diversity as she reviewed
the narrative inquiry field and commented on its lack of a well-developed protocol and framework for use.

Among the many attempts to categorize narrative inquiry analysis, I find Barkhuizen’s (2013) model the most practical and applicable to the current study. His definition was proposed as a diagram with eight interrelated dimensions and three levels of context. This model illustrates how studies with different methods of collecting and analyzing narrative data are located at different contextual levels and along the eight dimensions. Each dimension is presented as a continuum, namely, epistemology, methods, content, form, practice, co-construction, categorization, and storying. Three concentric circles represent the three levels of contexts that comprise the talk, telling, and macro-context levels.

These three levels are different from the three levels consisting of the personal story, Story, and STORY levels that were discussed earlier. While the former (talk, telling, macro-context levels) are proposed to distinguish different methods of data collection and analysis, the latter (personal story, Story, STORY) are used to illustrate the power of narrative inquiry to explore the context of the participants’ experience. Barkhuizen explained the first level of context as that of talk-in-interaction where the interest of the narrative inquirers lies in the text level and a conversation analysis approach is often adopted. The second (Telling) and the third (macro-context) are beyond-the-text levels of context. Telling is the local context of the narrative telling with regard to the physical setting, language choice, the purpose of talk, and conditions of interaction (e.g. time constraints, permission to talk), whereas the third level is the broader socio-cultural and socio-historical context. The discussion herein explains how I locate my study in Barkhuizen’s model of narrative inquiry data collection and analysis.

Regarding the three levels of context, my interest in this study does not lie in the textual context of narrative. My project focuses on the third, broadest context of English learning and teaching in Vietnam as it inquires how this context determines and influences teachers’ language learning. However, I recognize that the local context of narrative telling also plays a role in the construction of narratives and in turn affects the results and findings of the study. For example, I conducted the semi-structured interviews at the training venues where the participants were preparing for the CEFR’s B2 standardization test. The narrative inquiry interviews were also conducted during a period when the NFL Project 2020 was imposing the CEFR’s B2 standard. This location and time of data collection could have influenced the participants’ choices of events or stories to share as well as their attitudes toward the training course and MOET’s policy.

Regarding the first two continua, namely, narrative epistemology and narrative methods, my study takes the middle position between the two. It subscribes to the belief in narrative as a way of knowing about the world and that narrative inquiry can provide rich and insightful data into participants’ language development, but it also makes use of quantitative survey data and semi-structured interviews as supplementary materials for the narrative research. In this way, my study generates both an overview of the larger population and close-up details of some individual experiences.

Regarding the two dimensions of content and form, Barkhuizen (2013) pointed out that narrative inquiry research in the area of language learning and teaching has mainly been concerned with narrative content.
My study follows this tradition with the focus being on the content of the narratives rather than the form of participants’ stories.

For the next two continua of practice and co-construction, my study is located at the “less” position, as it does not focus on exploring how narratives are co-constructed or embedded in social practices. It does, however, acknowledge the influence of the researcher as an audience of the participants’ narratives, which in some respects resembles the contextual co-construction of narratives during data collection and analysis.

Finally, I locate my study in the middle position of the last two dimensions of categorization and storying. These dimensions are referred to in the literature as two major uses of narratives in the field of language teaching and learning, namely, investigating narratives and writing narratives (Barkhuizen, 2013). As discussed earlier, Polkinghorne refers to these two major uses of narratives as analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. The former refers to research using stories as data to produce paradigmatic analysis, or in other words, thematic, content, or grounded theory analysis. It involves continuous re-reading of data, coding and categorization of data extracts, and reorganization of them under thematic headings. The major themes and their subthemes are presented and illustrated by extracts from the narrative. The latter, narrative analysis, refers to research that uses actions and events as data and then produces stories as the result of data analysis. My study combines both methods: the participants’ narratives were composed based on the repeated interviews and then thematically analyzed. The analysis of these stories provides a window into the world of the participants’ language learning as it is socially situated in the Vietnamese context.

Having justified the reasons for incorporating narrative inquiry into my research project, I now outline my data collection and analysis procedures. As there are many ways to do narrative inquiry, my intention is not to provide a how-to formula but rather to explain the steps I followed in carrying out one particular study. In short, there are six steps:

- Step 1: Develop research design;
- Step 2: Prepare interview questions;
- Step 3: Select the participants and establish a rapport with them;
- Step 4: Conduct and transcribe the interviews;
- Step 5: Compose each participant’s narrative from the data; send them to the participants for their comments and revise as requested;
- Step 6: Look for emerged themes across different narratives.

Narratives can open the door for the researcher and consumers of research to enter the participants’ worlds. In my research, I chose to present five narratives, each consisting of three main parts, namely, teaching career, teaching context, and language learning history and development activities. These themes were chosen to resemble Barkhuizen’s three interconnected levels of context and Clandinin and Connelly’s three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. I also provide details regarding how each participant was recruited and where the interviews took place, in line with narrative inquiry’s interest in contextual factors. Although I, as the researcher, have constructed the narratives in this way, and provide a short summary at the end of each narrative, the narratives remain as data for analysis.
section, at this point in the research it is the participants themselves who take center stage as we read their narratives. The following table summarizing the five stories is hoped to provide an example so that the readers can have an overall view of the Stage 5 product of narrative inquiry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narratives (the participants’ names are in bold)</th>
<th>Teaching context and experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kim</strong>: “The job has chosen me.”</td>
<td>Public secondary school; 14-year teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching career: A reluctant turns professional English teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching context: A rural school trying to prove itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hoa</strong>: “It’s because of the children.”</td>
<td>Public secondary school; 12-year teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching career: A devoted and kind-hearted teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>An</strong>: “My parents got me the job.”</td>
<td>Public primary school; 6-year teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching career: A disheartened teacher with ambivalent feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching context: An average public primary school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ly</strong>: “My personality suits the job.”</td>
<td>Private language center; 2.5-year teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching career: A young and professionally trained teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching context: A successful private language center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ngoc</strong>: “So far I still enjoy doing my job.”</td>
<td>Private primary school; 6-year teaching experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching career: A successful and contented teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching context: A small-sized but modern private school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narratives reveal how the five participants became teachers, their English learning histories, and English proficiency development activities. These teachers had different initial reasons to join the profession. Kim’s career choice was pushed by family-related influences. She had been trained and had worked as an interpreter, but then chose teaching as a fallback career after her marriage. Hoa was directed toward the profession due to her failure in the university entrance exam. Teaching was a temporary job for her at first. Yet, during the practicum she found the joy of teaching and, since then, was passionate about her job. An was influenced by her parents who not only guided her into the teacher training program but also found her a job. Ly’s career choice was driven by intrinsic motivations and self-perceptions regarding her personality and teaching abilities. Ngoc pursued the profession mainly due to the task return, or the benefits of teaching as a secure job with a stable income, and a high social status. Across-story analysis of these five stories (Stage 6) has revealed three emergent themes, namely, the different motivations for English development; the differences among private, public schools, and private language centers; and the close interactions among
Conclusion

I set out to understand how other Vietnamese EFL teachers perceived their current language proficiency and described their everyday English proficiency development. I was particularly interested in the individual teachers' narratives of battling contextual and personal circumstances to maintain and develop their language proficiency. Reflecting on the process of undertaking this research, I have learned an inspiring lesson that narrative inquiry can provide deeper insights into participants' experiences than other qualitative research methods. As a humane way of doing research, it enables participants' voices to be heard and more importantly lets us listen to these voices in their context.

Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. What are the characteristics and advantages of a narrative inquiry research?
2. How important is it to establish rapport with the participants in narrative inquiry? Why is this so?
3. Why does the author choose to use narrative inquiry in this case? In what other research inquiries would you see narrative inquiry as a useful method?
4. Describe the stages in the research design used in this case and discuss the significance of each stage. How were the data collected and analyzed? What are the pros and cons of this approach?

References


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