

# Research Methods

## April 22, 2017

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# Plans for Today

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- Questions/Clarifications about syllabus and assignments
- Getting Started with Your Research Proposal
  - Framing & Defining your Research Project
  - Deciding Upon a Research Methodology
  - Qualitative Research
- Group Presentations of Critical Analysis:
  - Group A
  - Group B
  - Group C

## **Afternoon tasks:**

- Groups D and E work on critical analysis
- Online assignment (send via email by Friday, April 28):  
Research topic and Literature review

# Questions & Clarifications

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- Syllabus
- Assignments
  - **New due date for last assignment: May 9**  
**Online Assignment: Research Proposal: Data Analysis Methods (5), Potential obstacles & proposed solutions (6), References (7) and Appendices (8)**

# Getting Started with your Research Proposal

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# Constraints and Impediments

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- ❑ Time factors
- ❑ Additional workload
- ❑ Limited support from colleagues and administrators
- ❑ Anxiety about teaching practices and research skills
- ❑ Skepticism about usefulness of research
- ❑ Tensions about research and teaching
- ❑ Anxiety about producing the written report



# Recommendations

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*Fully integrate your research into your normal teaching practice*

- Relevance
  - The research should explore issues that are relevant to the teacher-researcher
- Reflection
  - The research should promote opportunities for reflection for both the teacher and the learners



# Recommendations

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- Learner development
  - The research should be relevant to the learners and should aim to benefit them
- Teacher development
  - The research should contribute to the teacher's own professional development
- Theory building
  - Gaining greater understanding of second language teaching and learning processes should contribute to theory-building in the field



# Finding a focus

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- Research questions are likely to emerge from a mismatch or gap between what is planned for the classroom and what actually happens
- Therefore, research questions arise from an intersection between theory and practice





# Sources of Research Questions

(Cheng, 2015, p. 40)

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- observations, interests, and experiences of the researcher
- application of theory
- clarification of contradictory findings or confirmation of findings
- extension of study to different participants
- extension of the study using different methods
- development of more effective interventions



# Possible questions for an initial focus

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- ❑ What is happening in my classroom that I am concerned about?
- ❑ What could I do to get more information about this issue?
- ❑ How will I go about collecting this information?
- ❑ What could I do to change what is happening?



# Possible statements for an initial focus

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- ❑ I would like to improve the ...
- ❑ I am perplexed by...
- ❑ I have an idea that I would like to try in my class: ...
- ❑ I don't think I know enough about ...
- ❑ My students don't seem to ... What can I do about this?
- ❑ Why do some students in my class... and others...  
How can I find out what is happening?



# Practical advice

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- Limit the scope and duration of the research
  - Set a realistic timeframe
  - Focus on a small issue
- Focus on one issue at a time
  - Try to investigate one issue through a number of different methods so that different perspectives emerge



# Practical advice

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- Choose areas for research that are of direct relevance to you and your school circumstances
  - Relevance will make your research project more motivating and engaging
- Link questions for your research with the broader context in which your teaching takes place
  - This will ensure that your research becomes relevant to others in similar positions



# Examples of starting points

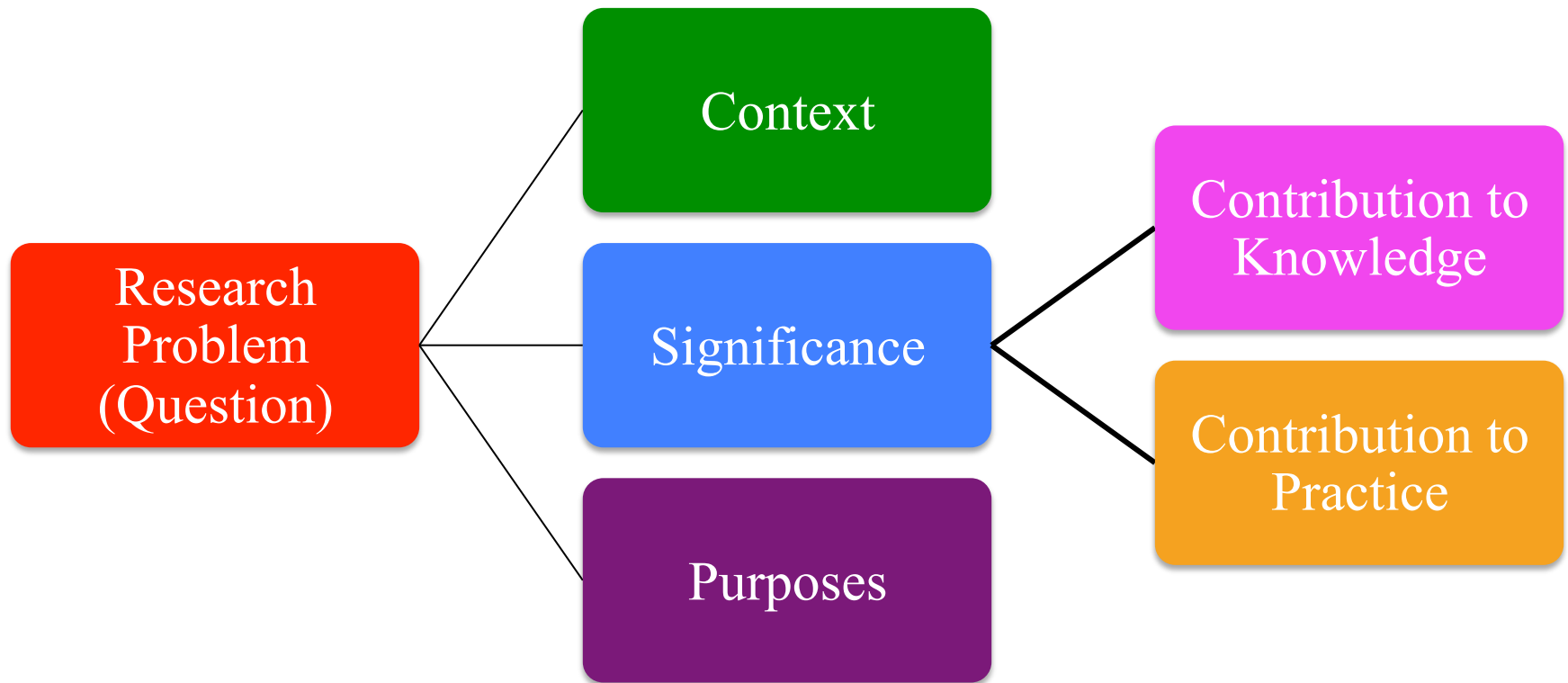
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- ❑ Affective factors
- ❑ Classroom groupings
- ❑ Course design
- ❑ Materials and resources
- ❑ Learning strategies
- ❑ Classroom dynamics
- ❑ Teaching specific skills
- ❑ Assessment

# Components of a Research Problem

(Cheng, 2015, p. 41-42)

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# Theory in question formulation

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- Two theoretical dimensions are likely to inform your research process:
  - Current theory and research that guide practice in the field (Review of the Literature)
  - Personal assumptions, values and beliefs that the researcher brings into the research (Researcher's Views)



# Review of the Literature

(Cheng, 2015, p. 42-43)

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The Literature Review is a summary and synthesis of existing research on your topic

- Can help establish the link between existing knowledge and your research question
- Can help you choose appropriate methods for your research project
- Can help you define the research gap that you are going to address in your project



Primary  
Sources

Secondary  
Sources





# Ethical considerations

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- ❑ Ensure that your research is viable, that an appropriate research design has been established and appropriate data collection techniques chosen
- ❑ Explain the research purpose and procedures to all parties involved (e.g., students, parents, supervisors, colleagues)
- ❑ Allow participants the right to refuse to participate in the research
- ❑ Ensure anonymity by eliminating any kind of material that could identify the participants (e.g., use pseudonyms)

# Steps in Framing a Research Project

1. Clarify the source(s) of your research problem:
  - observations, interests, and experiences of the researcher
  - application of theory
  - clarification of contradictory findings and/or confirmation of findings
  - replication
  - extension of the study to different participants
  - extension of the study using different methods
  - development of more effective interventions
2. Identify the components of your research problem – its context, purpose, and significance. It is a useful strategy to start your research project by stating, in one sentence, your research purpose: “My study aims to ...”
3. Conduct the literature review and check to see whether you have achieved the following or aspects of the following:
  - redefining the research problem
  - establishing a conceptual or theoretical framework
  - developing significance
  - identifying methodological limitations
  - identifying contradictory findings
  - developing a research hypothesis



# Group Presentations

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- Review of rubrics for presentations
- Presentations:
  - Group A: Critical Analysis of Ochoa et al. (2016)
  - Group B: Critical Analysis of Yoon (2013)
  - Group C: Critical Analysis of Johnson et al. (2016)



# Afternoon Tasks

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