Chapter 16
Education Research in an Intercultural Context:
An Instance of Interpretation, Induction, and Deduction

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ABSTRACT
This chapter presents a research framework for a study that focused on the development of a second language vocabulary acquisition model in a tertiary setting. The study was an investigation of lexical inferencing strategies specifically employed by second language (L2) learners, and of whether the explicit teaching of effective vocabulary strategies benefited learners in developing vocabulary. The framework presented here draws on theories of learning from the fields of education, applied linguistics, vocabulary development, and cognitive psychology. Several theoretical standpoints on vocabulary development, including factors such as lexical representation; theoretical constructs in reading comprehension; vocabulary processing in tertiary L2 learners; and socio-linguistics were considered in the design and inquiry process of the study, which was set in an intercultural context. The association of components of this research exercise to research paradigms is discussed.

INTRODUCTION
In this chapter a research undertaking relating to an inherently intercultural subject, second language learning, is used to illustrate some critical considerations in the design, implementation, and outcomes of research in education. The form adopted in the chapter is to identify critical elements in the research design and implementation in order to discuss the principles that apply and the implications for the concept of a research paradigm. This involves specifying the methodology, the rationale or underpinning for the research methods employed, as well as the methods employed.

Improving intercultural education and intercultural communication are seen as important goals for the 21st century (Batelaan & Coomans, 1999; Davis, Brown, & Ferdig, 2005). Nevertheless, realizing
intercultural education is perceived as challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, a cohesive body of research in the area is wanting, partly due to the fact that researchers in intercultural communication and education come from multiple fields. Secondly, variation between educational systems can add to the complexity of intercultural education perspectives.

Intercultural perspectives regarding the research methods gaining dominance in education research are featured in this chapter. In the chapter analyses of research methods employed from an empirical study conducted by the author are drawn on to investigate patterns of English vocabulary inferencing strategies among adult second language (L2) learners in pedagogical contexts, and the effects of explicit instruction of inferencing and vocabulary learning strategies in advancing vocabulary development (Giridharan, 2010). The chapter is informed by literature on approaches in education research that highlight the consideration of cultural contexts while adopting research methods.

It is not uncommon for intercultural education researchers to apply multiple research methods to study the phenomenon being investigated. This is the case for the study reported here, where one phase of the study involved qualitative data and data analysis methods that were employed as a means to understand the phenomena from different perspectives, which aligns with the interpretivist paradigm, while the second phase moved on to generate a grounded theoretical model, which aligns with the inductive form of the neo-positivist paradigm. A second phase of the study applied quantitative methods nested in a neo-positivist paradigm in the deductive mode to validate models.

This layered approach sits with the bricolage metaphor. Denzin and Lincoln (1999, as cited in Rogers, 2012) attempted to define qualitative research based on Levi-Strauss’ (1966) bricolage metaphor. Levi-Strauss used this metaphor while studying qualitative research methods that were applied throughout the 20th century and more recently, which found that significant changes had occurred to traditional qualitative methods positioned in positivist paradigms and that the approaches applied had moved to more interpretive and constructivist approaches. The bricolage metaphor is based on a concept of a critical, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry and constitutes a summary of the way in which researchers accept “flexibility and plurality by amalgamating multiple disciplines, multiple methodologies, and varying theoretical perspectives in their inquiry” (Rogers, 2012, p. 4). Quantitative and qualitative observations provide intercultural researchers with different ways of operationalizing and measuring theoretical constructs and practical concepts. While quantitative methods can provide a high level of measurement precision and supportive statistical evidence, qualitative methods can supply a greater depth of information about the nature of communication processes in a particular research setting.

**RESEARCH PARADIGMS**

**Some Paradigm Possibilities**

Researchers in education often have to struggle with large, complex issues. This, coupled with the scarcity of capable research teams able to work with large data sets, means that research in education can focus only on certain sections of the issue investigated, and this makes it challenging to connect the study to overarching frameworks that could indicate that the topic area is moving in new directions (Newby, 2010). Educational research designed to explore educational problems, understand learner behavior and actions in educational settings, develop and test educational theories, and improve educational practice can be based on differing and competing views of the social sciences such as views involving causal
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