In Johnson and Golombek’s (2002) edited book, *Teachers’ narrative inquiry as professional development*, they advocate for narrative inquiry *by* teachers *for* teachers: “Inquiry into experience enables teachers to act with foresight. It gives them increasing control over their thoughts and actions; grants their experiences enriched, deepened meaning, and enables them to be more thoughtful and mindful of their work” (pp. 6–7). This same idea is expressed years later by Pulvermacher and Lefstein (2016) who, after their study in which pre-service teachers inquire into their professional vision, conclude: “Narrative inquiry is seen as an important way of constructing knowledge about teaching, and of becoming cognizant of one’s knowledge” (p. 264). What these, and many other, scholars are claiming is that in the process of conducting a narrative inquiry about one’s own practice and professional development, teachers make meaning of those experiences. They understand them better and because of this are able to make more informed decisions about their future work. Knowledge is constructed and reflected upon, and an awareness for action of that knowledge is acquired.

When narrative inquirers elicit and analyse data from other participants, i.e., the focus is not on themselves, the aim remains the same. That is, to gain knowledge of the participants’ experiences from their perspective. Fenstermacher (1997) recognises that this is what narrative inquiry does:

One of the truly valuable contributions of narrative inquiry in education is the revelation of the intentions and beliefs of teachers. Through narrative, we begin to understand the actor’s reasons for action, and are thereby encouraged to make sense of these actions through the eyes of the actor.

*(p. 123)*

Narrative inquiry is therefore a sense-making or knowledge construction activity (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 35) for both researcher and narrator. Applied to research, I have used the term *narrative knowledging* to refer to “the meaning making, learning, or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analyzing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports” (Barkhuizen, 2011a,
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As can be seen from this definition, different participants engage in narrative knowledging at various mutually informing stages of the research process, including (co)narrators (which could include the researcher), researchers, and consumers of research reports. Narrative knowledging is both a cognitive (meaning making) and a social (storytelling) activity, hence the verb knowledging. Part of the value of the concept lies in its serving as a reminder of the scope of any narrative inquiry project and of the potential for the kind of sense-making that takes place at all stages of the project. Therefore, in planning and actually conducting an inquiry it is useful to consider both before and during the project what sense-making, and by whom, is going on at all times. Doing so also helps to continually focus the analytical purpose of the inquiry.

Narrative inquiry has as its central concern the stories narrators tell about their life experiences. When examining further the processes and outcomes of narrative inquiry, however, this brief and simple statement very quickly runs into trouble. As Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007) caution, “Narrative inquiry is much more than the telling of stories” (p. 21). For instance, ‘story’ means different things to different researchers: from long autobiographical accounts (big stories), to snippets of conversation that to some do not look much like stories at all (small stories), to extracts of interview data in story form (short stories). For different narrative inquirers, ‘stories’ are relevant to their work in different ways: for example, as a process during data collection (the telling), as an outcome of data collection (the told), or the story the researcher tells about the data collected (the re-told). Another complication has to do with where the inquirers’ analytical focus lies when they begin to examine the stories, whatever they look like, and whoever constructed them, at whatever stage of the inquiry: what the stories are about (their content), the way they have been organised or structured (their form), the way in which the events in the stories were experienced, in life, or told, in the story (their context), or any combination of these.

In applied linguistics, these complex epistemological and methodological issues have in recent years been raised, summarised, reviewed, and debated in numerous commentaries that have taken the form of handbook entries, review articles, special issues of journals, edited books, and monographs. Examples of recent articles and chapters include the following: Pavlenko’s (2007) article in Applied Linguistics, which describes and critiques current analytical methods and makes recommendations for more rigorous approaches for the analysis of autobiographical narratives; my research timeline of narrative research in language teaching and learning published in Language Teaching (Barkhuizen, 2014), which starts with the early diary studies in language acquisition research and ends with current research that strongly identifies as narrative; my article on ‘narrative knowledging’, which introduces the special-topic issue on narrative research in TESOL published in TESOL Quarterly (Barkhuizen, 2011a); Benson’s article in the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics (2014), which reviews studies published since 2008; his handbook entry in the Palgrave Handbook of Applied Linguistics Research Methodology (Benson, 2018), which focusses more specifically on narrative writing as analysis; De Fina’s (2016) book chapter on narrative analysis, which provides some broad theoretical–methodological distinctions among narrative approaches and then discusses more specifically interactionally oriented studies; and Golombek and Johnson’s (2017) article in the journal Profile, which reaffirms their belief, first expressed in their 2002 book (Johnson & Golombek, 2002), in the educational value of narrative inquiry for teachers by teachers, and grounds their definition of narrative inquiry from a sociocultural perspective.

The special-topic issue of TESOL Quarterly (Barkhuizen, 2011b) mentioned earlier included a number of full-length and shorter articles that address a range of methodological issues in narrative research couched in actual narrative studies. My edited book, Narrative Research in
Applied Linguistics (Barkhuizen, 2013), included chapters by experienced narrative researchers that did the same, and all illustrated aspects of the narrative analysis framework I proposed in the introduction chapter. De Fina and Georgakopoulou’s (2012) excellent book, Analyzing Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives, offers an overview of a wide range of methodologies and analytical modes but particularly focusses on narrative as textually and discursively constituted and organised. Their Handbook of Narrative Analysis (2015) is currently the most authoritative work on narrative research in (applied) linguistics. Its 23 chapters covering nearly 500 pages include essays and studies that comprehensively discuss the theoretical foundations of narrative research as well as methodological practices. Dealing more with the fundamentals of narrative inquiry is the introductory text by Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014), Narrative Inquiry in Language Teaching and Learning Research. This book draws on a database of more than 175 studies to present concrete examples of narrative methods used to collect and analyse oral, written, and multimodal data, and to report findings.

Besides these handbooks and textbooks on narrative inquiry and the useful review-type articles and chapters, there is also plenty of empirical work that has been published in recent years. Narrative studies are appearing in a widening range of research journals in applied linguistics and related fields. All these articles locate the studies they report within particular narrative theoretical orientations, explicitly describe their methodological approach, and demonstrate the narrative methods they employ in actual studies.

In short, there is a lot of information about narrative inquiry in this rapidly expanding corpus of applied linguistics literature – information that is constructive and instructive, but often contradictory and potentially confusing. Much has been said about this epistemological and methodological state of affairs (Davis & Dwyer, 2017). On the one hand there are those who argue that the lack of a “consistent field or a definitive approach” (p. 2) in narrative inquiry is its strength, allowing opportunities for methodological creativity, especially when newly embraced in disciplines such as TESOL (Barkhuizen, 2011a). On the other hand, commentators such as Michael Bamberg (see interview in Davis & Dwyer, 2017) warn that an “anything goes” attitude might see the purity of narrative “ultimately, potentially at least, disintegrate” (p. 228). Evidence of this is already seen in studies that claim to be narrative in some sense but are essentially qualitative in nature without any story in sight. Freeman (2015) has referred to this phenomenon, where the ubiquity of narrative and the looseness with which its features are defined and employed in practice, as “narrative fatigue due to overkill” (p. 22, emphasis in original).

In this chapter, I am not going to attempt a grand synthesis of this vast literature, or to present a new overarching model of narrative inquiry in applied linguistics. Twenty-five years ago, Carter (1993), writing in the field of general education, echoed my current observation regarding the rather complex and diverse thinking and practices associated with narrative inquiry: “Anyone with even a passing familiarity with the literatures on story soon realizes, however, that these are quite turbulent intellectual waters” (p. 5). Perhaps in some small attempt to calm these waters, at least in language teaching and learning, I dig down in this chapter to what to me are the core dimensions of narrative inquiry – dimensions that reflect the fundamental features of narrative inquiry. These dimensions not only characterise what inquirers actually do but signal the kind of decisions they make at every stage of the research process. Each dimension is a continuum, and any methodological action or decision would lie at some point along the continuum. In the remainder of the chapter I describe the five core dimensions and demonstrate their meaning with reference to recent narrative studies. Although the dimensions are presented separately, it is important to note that they are very much interconnected, and although not all dimensions are active in every narrative inquiry – the dimensions being pertinent to the design of a particular study – those that are active should be considered in relation to one other.
Dimension one: narrative study and narrative inquiry

The first dimension (see Figure 16.1) makes a distinction between those approaches to narrative analysis that focus more on the structure of narrative and those that focus more on ‘narrative as method’ to investigate a phenomenon, that is, to find out what the narratives are about. The former (towards the left side of the continuum) are concerned with studying narratives to determine what their linguistic and organisational structure is. In other words, narratives as text are the object of study, and is typically the work of (socio)linguists, or narratologists when the texts are of a literary nature. Here, researchers “focus on storytelling styles and ways of telling as cultural constructs, i.e. that describe the characteristics of stories or the way they are told” (De Fina, 2016, p. 329). Towards the right side of the continuum, researchers are concerned with narratives as method, that is, using narrative as a means to explore “the content of the narratives: what they are about; what was told; and why, when, where, and by whom” (Barkhuizen, 2011a, p. 401). As De Fina (2016) says, these are “studies that use stories and storytelling as a methodological tool to investigate individual and group experiences and identities” (p. 329). Sometimes a distinction is made in terminology between narrative study (towards the left side of the continuum) and narrative inquiry (the right side). In this chapter, the concern is narrative inquiry. However, we must remember that each dimension is a continuum, so there will always be some elements of one approach within the other, the amount of overlap depending on where along the continuum the approach used in any narrative inquiry lies.

A study by Weinberg (2015) effectively shows that any particular narrative inquiry typically occupies a length of space along the continuum rather than a specific point. In Weinberg’s study, the length is rather substantial. The study aimed to explore a university student’s experience of learning an endangered Native American Indigenous language, Lenape, in a course at an American college. The learner was a non-heritage learner, and the course was established as part of the effort to support the revitalisation of Lenape. The student, the only participant reported on in the published article, produced a multimodal digital narrative (available on YouTube) incorporating Lenape narration, English subtitles, images, video, and music, as part of his course project. Important here is that the organisation and narrative structure of the digital story is the focus of analytical attention (towards the left side of Figure 16.1). This was taken into account by the student when the multimodal text was constructed:

> The rich array of visual, musical, and spoken channels unfold together, creating opportunities to analyze the ways the various channels converge or comment on each other. The nature of the text also means that it was consciously planned and went through several revisions before reaching its final form.
>

(Weinberg, 2015, p. 128)

The researcher’s analysis involved careful unpacking of the multiple smaller stories that combined intricately and meaningfully to generate the full narrative, a narrative organisation that
reflects a moral worldview that sees the learning and speaking of Lenape as more than merely the learning of a new lexicon and grammar. At the same time, the analysis revealed themes in the content of the stories related to learning, motivation, and identity, ultimately offering “a new master narrative of language learning that places an individual’s structures within a historical arc of colonization and revitalization” (p. 128), thus situating it simultaneously towards the right side of the continuum in Figure 16.1.

**Dimension two: narrative and interaction**

In autobiographies and autoethnographies, stories are constructed by the narrator and then usually shared later with an audience, for example, in a published book or article. In other types of narrative others are involved more directly in the construction of the narrative data, though still somewhat passively, such as teacher educators who read and respond to reflective journals (or multimodal digital narratives) produced by pre-service teachers in a teacher education course. However, in face-to-face interaction, like in conversations and interviews, stories are co-constructed; thus storytelling always involves the collaboration of a conversational partner (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). Though even here the mutual level of participation may differ. Ochs and Capps (2001) refer to this variability as *tellership*; “the extent and kind of involvement of conversational partners in the actual recounting of a narrative” (p. 24). The second core dimension concerns the analysis of stories that are constructed in the process of talk-in-interaction, where the talk is considered to be storytelling. Kasper and Prior (2015) distinguish between analytical approaches to interviews that emphasise stories in interaction and stories as interaction, the latter prompting emic conversation analytical methods which bring to light “the important role of storytelling as doing social actions such as . . . constructing identities and social relationships in the here-and-now of the ongoing talk” (p. 230). In other words, the stories as interaction approach to analysis (towards the left side of the continuum in Figure 16.2) focuses on how the stories take shape interactionally – that is, the collaborative, co-constructed performance of the stories. Discourse and conversation analysts are interested in this type of narrative work. Towards the right side of the continuum, researchers are interested in analysing excerpts of (or whole) interviews or conversations for what they are about, that is, their content. The analysed text (which may or may not be in story form, see dimension four) is thus extracted from the interactional data, rather than analysed as interaction. Again, a reminder that the dimension is a continuum, and so any analysis of the content of interaction data (towards the right side) will inevitably also pay attention, to some extent, to the language, structure and organisation of the interaction itself (towards the left).

Lee and Kinginger’s (2018) study examined the narratives told in classroom interaction by a post-sojourn study abroad student in the United States. The student had spent a semester in China and then returned to a small advanced level Chinese language class, in which he was far more proficient than his fellow students. The researchers had a number of research questions, but primarily they were interested in the challenges and advantages of teaching and learning in this upper level Chinese language classroom, through the lens of the focal student’s re-entry process. The student shared stories of his study abroad experiences, which often stimulated

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**Figure 16.2  Narrative and interaction**
classroom discussion and small group activity, but also “provided mediational affordances that the teacher harnessed to achieve pedagogical goals” (p. 590). The researchers (working towards the left of dimension two) showed this through a detailed discourse analysis of the narrative text focusing, for example, on the structure of the narrative, as well as discourse features such as his use of reporting verbs, lexical items, voice pitch, speed of talk, and use of translation. As always, the narratives – excerpts of classroom interaction – are about the student’s life and what he remembers about his study abroad experiences. So even though the analytical focus in this study is on the discursive shape and shaping of the story, what they are about in the context of the classroom interaction also matters.

Very much towards the right side of the second continuum (see Figure 16.2) lies the study by Ishihara and Menard-Warwick (2018). Their aim was to investigate second/foreign language teachers’ translingual practices – drawing on diverse semiotic resources that derive from more than one language – in relation to their identity development. They conducted life history interviews with 24 language teachers, though in their article two participants are reported on. Their interviews are thematically analysed and interpreted. Interestingly (see dimension five), they report their findings in the form of two narratives, which include excerpts of interview data (stories-from-interaction) and their commentary. At the same time attention is necessarily paid, though to a lesser extent, to the discursive unfolding of the interactive storytelling. They conclude their report with a discussion comparing the cases.

**Dimension three: narrative research and researcher engagement**

Discussions of researcher ‘engagement’ in research projects are sometimes couched in terms of subjectivity and objectivity – simply, the extent to which the researcher influences the quality of the data collected and the validity and reliability of the data analysis. Researcher engagement in narrative inquiry takes on a special meaning, however, because central to the research endeavour are the lives and stories of the research participants: the narrators. One could argue that this situation is the same in all types of qualitative research (Holliday, 2015), but narrative inquiry typically involves the sharing of “narratives about some life experience that is of deep and abiding interest” to participants (Chase, 2003, p. 274), whether in (life history) interviews, informal conversations, participant observations, or even more public social media spaces. Stories can be extremely personal and often cover confidential, ethically delicate topics that have to be handled very sensitively by researchers. As Josselson (2007) says, narrative inquiry “is inherently a relational endeavour. Every aspect of the work is touched by the ethics of the research relationship” (p. 537). It is this relationship that is the essence of engagement in narrative inquiry – engaging with the lives of research participants.

In Khan’s (2016) *narrative ethnography* he engaged intimately with six teachers in three small rural schools in northwest Pakistan. Khan was interested in the teachers’ views of the regional language-in-education policy and how they actually implemented it in their teaching. He spent many hours with them over a three-month period, talking to them, visiting their classrooms, and spending time in the school community. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) say, Khan’s inquiry work was “in the midst” of the ongoing action, placing it very much towards the
right side of the dimension in Figure 16.3. It is from this vantage point where thorough insights into the participant’s meaning making are gained. As an insider, Khan shared “the same community, ethnicity, culture, and religion as the teachers” and so he “knew about how the rural population generalises about westerners, how they relate English to the colonial past, [and] how critical they are of the system of governance” (p. 65). The stories shared by the teachers in the politically volatile local region of the schools had to be treated very cautiously, starting with their co-construction, through their interpretation, and particularly in their re-telling.

A rather interesting and somewhat complicated case of engagement is evident in the study by Choi, Gaines, Park, Williams, Schallert, Yu, and Lee (2016). I list all seven researchers here (instead of using et al.) since they were all involved in the study, but to varying degrees, and this is important for what I am saying about engagement. The study was set in a semester-long undergraduate pre-service teacher education course. The researchers aimed to investigate the student teachers’ developing bilingual educator identities by examining the small stories (Georgakopoulou, 2015) or narratives-in-interaction they shared online during the course. Time was set aside in each class for students to interact in the form of text-based synchronous chatting on a web-based platform. All researchers analysed the text, using a small story approach, which employs microgenetic, conversation analysis methods (see the left side of dimension two) to “explore preservice teachers’ situated social identities, reflecting the dialogic nature of the process by which an understanding about the self and teaching develops” (p. 5) (see also Prior & Talmy, this volume). Engagement at this level, for these researchers and for others using text-based, small story analysis, is somewhat restricted, therefore, and would be located towards the left side of dimension three (see Figure 16.3). Five of the seven researchers engaged only with the text. Two others, however, were more closely involved with the student teacher participants. One was the course instructor and the other was a teaching assistant, and so they had intimate knowledge of the course, in-depth engagement with the pre-service teachers, and “insider perspectives” (p. 9) of their stories, all of which they shared with the research team at regular meetings – thus shifting the engagement level for the two of them and the team towards the right side of this dimension.

Dimension four: storied data

The fourth dimension concerns the form of the data that narrative inquirers generate (rather than the method of analysis, see dimension five). Sometimes the data look very much like a story: for example, a teacher writes a story in a journal or tells a story in response to an interview prompt. (These data would be located towards the right side of the continuum in Figure 16.4.) Interview prompts, of course, can also elicit responses that do not resemble stories at all. In addition, other forms of data generated in studies classified as narrative would hardly fit classical criteria of story. Researchers have varying ideas about what a story is, and cultural variation further means that applying any one definition is unrealistic. Small stories, for instance, usually do not ‘look like’ stories at all, and would find themselves towards the left side of dimension four (see Figure 16.4). They are potentially merely snippets of talk that have no pre-defined narrative structure (Georgakopoulou, 2015). Multimodal digital stories
Core dimensions of narrative inquiry

(i.e., not written), like the one referred to in Weinberg’s (2015) study (see dimension one), and visual narratives (e.g., drawings, photographs; see Kalaja & Melo-Pfeifer, 2019), do not easily fit traditional conceptions of what story is, and would be hard to place along dimension four. Nevertheless, this dimension draws attention to the nature of data in narrative studies, which may be more or less in story form.

In a longitudinal narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, 2016), I investigated the language teacher identity development over time of an English teacher in New Zealand, an immigrant from the Pacific Island of Tonga. In the early stages of the inquiry, in addition to collecting other types of data such as written reflective narratives for coursework purposes, I conducted a series of interviews with this teacher while she was a pre-service teacher at university. I then interviewed her nearly nine years later when she was teaching at a high school. The interviews focused on her early life and education in Tonga, her life as an immigrant in New Zealand, her past language learning experiences, her (pre-service) teacher education, her imagined future teaching experience, and later her current teaching. Important for this dimension is that, although the interviews were designed and carried out as narrative interviews (Chase, 2003; Kasper & Prior, 2015), much of the teachers’ text, as to be expected, was not in the form of stories, and consisted of, for example, short answers, some of her own questions, clarifications, and factual information – and therefore that data would fall towards the left side of Figure 16.4.

However, embedded within the interview text were what I called short stories, “excerpts of data extracted from a larger set of data such as conversations, interviews, written narratives (such as teacher journals), and multimodal digital stories” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 660). Short stories are analysed thematically for their content and also for scales of context in which they are lived and told. Important here is that the short stories are in story form, and thus distinguishable from other types of (qualitative) data extracts (from interviews) that represent lived experience. For the purposes of short story analysis (Barkhuizen, 2016), I suggest that short stories have the following features, and thus lie towards the right side of Figure 16.4:

1. They narrate experiences from the past or the imagined future. They tell about something that happened or will happen in the life of the person telling the story.
2. They include reflective or evaluative commentary on those experiences – comments which portray emotions and beliefs associated with the experiences.
3. They typically have a temporal dimension. In other words, something happens over a period of time.
4. They embody ‘action’. Something happens in the story in some spatiotemporal context.
5. Stories always make reference, implicitly or explicitly, to who was involved in the story action (characters in the story world), when the action took place (time), and where it happened (place and space).

Dimension five: analysis of narrative and narrative analysis

Polkinghorne (1995) makes a distinction between two major kinds of narrative analysis. One of these is familiar to qualitative researchers and lies towards the left side of dimension five (see Figure 11.5). This is conventional thematic or content analysis and involves searching or coding data for themes, categorizing these, and looking for patterns of association among them. Polkinghorne calls this approach “analysis of narratives”. Narrative inquirers commonly analyse narrative data in this way, including digital and visual narratives. What Polkinghorne calls “narrative analysis” (the right side of Figure 16.5) involves configuring data content into a coherent storied whole: i.e., the outcome of analysis is a story. In other words, the researcher
turns data (e.g., notes from classroom observations, teacher reflections, interviews, responses from a student survey) into a story. Polkinghorne’s two broad analytical approaches are not always distinct, however. There is obviously some similarity in the methods used, and also in the later presentation of the findings (i.e., a story or a discussion of separate, extracted themes), and hence some movement back and forth along the continuum in Figure 16.5. Constructing a story is itself a process of analysis (Benson, 2018), but the story product could undergo a further phase of thematic analysis (back towards the left side of continuum five); that is, the inquirer codes the content of the constructed story for themes, which could then be divided into sub-themes and/or grouped together into meaningful categories.

Moate and Ruohotie-Lyhty’s (2017) study of the foreign language learning biographies of six Finnish English speakers focused on the ways emotions are part of their bilingual identity stories. The participants were pre-service teachers completing an undergraduate degree in education. The data for the study consisted of three narratives written by each participant over a three-year period. They were between 1,000 and 2,000 words long, and they covered topics that addressed their relationship with English in the past and also anticipated the kind of relationship they would like to nurture between their own students and English in the future. The analysis consisted of developing “individual intrapersonal dialogues” through a thematic analysis of all the data for each participant and then sequencing of short extracts of data to trace the bilingual journey – the narrative – of each participant. Then, a selection of these extracts were juxtaposed with those of other participants to form “imaginary interpersonal dialogues”. This again involved a thematic analysis to determine the relatedness of the juxtaposed extracts used in the interpersonal dialogues. This unique and very effective method of analysis falls towards the left side of continuum five.

Ngo’s (2018) study examined one teacher participant’s L2 writing cognition development using a sociocultural theoretical framework. The study offers interesting insights into this topic, but with regard to dimension five illustrates very nicely analysis towards the right side of the continuum in Figure 16.5. The researcher used multiple sources of data – interviews with the focal participant, policy documents and media reports, institutional documents such as course guides and exam papers – to construct a narrative that presents the teacher’s “cognition developments chronologically and [the] sociocultural resources that mediate those shifts” (p. 84). The narrative is divided into four sections, each representing one of the major shifts. It weaves in direct quotes from the interview data as well as references to the other data. The narrative makes for a very readable and informative account of the teacher’s experiences. Ngo, in a second stage of the analysis, then performs a thematic analysis of the narrative he constructed (moving now to the left side of Figure 16.5) to more explicitly make connections with relevant theory and literature.

Conclusion

In 1993, Carter, writing in the field of general education, had the following to say about narrative inquiry: “Much needs to be learned about the nature of story and its value to our common enterprise, and about the wide range of purposes, approaches, and claims made by those
who have adopted story as a central analytical framework” (p. 5). Twenty-five years later, in applied linguistics I do believe we have moved on from such a position, perhaps more so in the areas of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics (a narrative study analytical perspective – see dimension one) than in language teaching and learning. This is not to say there have been few methodological developments in the latter area. As I said at the start of this chapter, almost all major journals in this field now publish studies framed as narrative, many of which show evidence of methodological innovation, particularly in multimodal digital and visual narratives (as seen in the brief reviews of recent studies in this chapter).

However, in spite of these developments I believe we fall short of the sense of the growing maturity that Chase (2018) believes is apparent in the social sciences more generally: narrative researchers, she claims,

are paying greater attention to the distinctiveness of narrative as human activity, the particularities of narrative inquiry, and the specific ways that narrative inquiry can promote social change. This maturity is both theoretical and methodological – it lies in consideration of the field’s activities, limits, and considerations.

(p. 546)

Narrative inquiry as method is relatively recent in applied linguistics, and we have already come a long way. However, there is plenty more to do. Suggestions for future work – both theoretical and methodological – in language teaching and learning, are prompted by Chase’s statement above: What does narrative mean in language education? How is language teaching and learning narrative activity? How do we find out? How is narrative inquiry distinct from other qualitative methodologies? Should we set such boundaries, or promote methodological and epistemological flexibility? What is the purpose of narrative inquiry in the particular studies we carry out – why narrative in these studies? How can narrative inquiry bring about social change in the research and teaching work we do? I hope the five dimensions I have presented in this chapter prompt both reflection and action on these questions.

References


