Chapter Four

# Ethical Considerations in Research

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For beginning researchers undertaking their first major research project, can often be a time of mixed emotions. Initial meetings with supervisors or research collaborators involve addressing questions around the nature and scope of the research question, the methodological tools that will be used to collect data and the ease with which entry into the field of research is possible. The research paradigm that will be adopted is also a vital point of clarification that should be discussed during these initial scoping stages. Similarly, distinctions between methodology and methods should be understood so that the novice researcher is aware of basic concepts and terminology particular to the research process (Nyame-Asiamah & Patel, 2009; Bouma & Ling, 2004). Becoming familiar with the language of academic research is therefore an important first step when starting a scholarly investigation.

In addition to understanding the discourse of academic research, being aware of what constitutes *ethical research* is an essential part of planning for a research project. This matter of ethical research is the basis of this chapter. At all times the researcher should ensure that participants are safe from harm and are protected from unnecessary stress. This is the field of ethics.

*Unethical* research that is carried out almost always leaves participants and researchers feeling vulnerable and exposed in negative ways. Unethical behaviour that is displayed by researchers can also compromise the validity and trustworthiness of data that is collected. This is especially the case if participants feel that their physical or mental well-being is threatened in some way (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001; Escobedo, Guerrero, Lujan, Ramirez, & Serrano, 2007). In order to avoid unwanted research dilemmas such as this, it is therefore important to ensure that careful planning and ethical standards are adhered to (Bouma,& Ling 2004). Good research then has at its core a commitment to ensuring that strategies for collecting data are responsible; that at all times research attends to a professional code of conduct that ensures that safety of all the participants involved.

Research that is conducted in settings where participants are non-native speakers of English can involve additional ethical reflections for researchers. Non-native speakers of English are variously categorised as speaking English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as an additional language (EAL). I shall use the term 'EAL' to cover all these categories. The important work of Joanna Koulouriotis (2011) draws attention to the complexities that arise when conducting research with non-native speakers of English. Cultural boundaries, translation issues, perceptions of power and authority are all 'ethical considerations inherent in and raised by ESL research' (p. 1). Koulouriotis further reiterates the point that a great proportion of research in ESL 'is conducted by teacher-researchers and/or researchers in countries where ethical concerns may not be addressed formally or by encompassing human rights legislation' (p. 1). With this in mind, this chapter examines four themes of ethical deliberations that researchers working in the field of EAL should consider. These four themes are: informed consent; deception; privacy and confidentiality and cross-cultural representation. Based on William Tierney's (1997) principle of ethnographic fiction, this chapter uses a series of 'fictional vignettes' that draw attention to the human story and the emotional distress that can emerge when research goes awry. The reader is invited to read the text as a script and to see the interactions, encounters and exchanges as these occur. Narrative is used because we often remember the 'story' and the meaning we attach to it long after the words on the pages cease to be. Our feelings and the energy of a story can

also have a way of bubbling up to the surface at different times. During these times resonating stories can provide us with an emotionally charged account to fall back on when making sense of social and professional situations.

## Informed Consent

Nhung is Vietnamese and lives in Ho Chi Minh City. He is an experienced teacher and thinks pretty highly of his ability to inspire and transform young people's lives. For the past ten years Nhung has taught English at a local secondary school and has favoured the use of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method. Nhung's believes that the CLT method is an effective language teaching approach that provides students with opportunities to enhance their English language skills in meaningful ways. Not all of the teachers at the school share Nhung's passion for the CLT method. There are some teachers who prefer to use grammar textbooks and grammar drills when teaching English. Nhung frequently enters into debates with some of these teachers believing the grammar translation method to be disconnected to the lived experience or life-worlds of his Vietnamese students. He believes that peer-mentoring sessions need to be factored into the school calendar so that he can share his expertise with other staff members. In particular Nhung thinks that Phuong, a first year out teacher, could benefit from working with him more closely.

Nhung is enrolled in a Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and is in his final year of study. He is currently completing his minor thesis and has devised his research question on the impact of using the CLT approach in improving English language proficiency.

Nhung speaks to the principal about his research project and states that he would like to work with Phuong to collect his data. He has known the principal for many years and has a strong professional relationship with him that is based on mutual respect. Nhung is therefore hopeful that the principal will be excited about the prospect of Nhung mentoring a junior colleague. The principal agrees to Nhung's research idea and commits to telling Nhung of this exciting opportunity during the day.

> The lunchtime bell has rung. Phuong has just been told by the principal that she will be involved in Nhung's research project. 'You know you are very lucky to be singled out by Nhung,' he exclaims. 'He wants to mentor you and show you how you can improve your teaching practice.'
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> Phuong can't believe her luck! Out of the 50 teachers at the school, Phuong dislikes Nhung the most. She finds him arrogant and pushy and is irritated by his habit of butting into other people's conversations. She is upset that her teaching appears to be seen in a negative way and feels incredibly embarrassed by this unsolicited opportunity. Phuong is on a one-year contract at the school and does not want to be seen to behave in any way that might disadvantage her future employment at the school. As a result, she chooses not to disclose her true feelings and agrees to work with Nhung.

As seen in the case above, informed consent is a fundamental component of conducting ethical research. Informed consent can be given either verbally or through signing a consent form. Verbal consent is often employed if a participant is illiterate or is not physically present during the research process. Participants who decide to become involved in scientific research should do so willingly and on a voluntary basis (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Locke, Acorn, & O'Neill, 2013). Prior to giving consent, individuals should be clear on the aims, methodology and potential risks they may encounter as a result of being involved in the research. The issues of language and communication connect here. McKay (2006, p. 28) suggests that teachers who are working with non-English students should use a language that students are familiar with. Using the native language of students will and does help to minimise the risk of poor communication. Effective communication pertaining to the parameters of a research proposal helps to ensure that students are fully aware of what is required of them should they choose to participate. Hawkins & Emanuel (2008, p. 28) makes note of the benefits of this kind of transparency in that it, heightens the awareness and sensitivity of the researchers. Knowing that others know what you are doing, and why, can be a useful way of instigating a sense of accountability that may itself serve to reinforce ethical conduct among researchers.

As detailed above, Phuong felt pressured by the school principal to participate in Nhung's research project. Children can also feel anxious or scared when research is forced upon them. Safeguarding children from being pushed into an unwanted research encounter is fundamental to conducting ethical research.[11] Morrow and Richards (1996, p. 98) highlight that 'the biggest ethical challenge for researchers working with children is the disparities in power and status between adults and children'. With a large proportion of EAL research conducted by teacher researchers on their students, the issue of explicit and implicit power relationships is an important aspect to consider. Stocker (2012, p. 54) makes clear that teachers who are researching language contexts can 'put students' freedom of choice and speech at risk' by virtue of students feeling pressured to participate. Ethical research involving children and students should therefore consider the rights of young people so that negative feelings are minimised and avoided.

Hood, Kelley and Mayall (1996, p.118) refer to the 'risk' element of research involving children when they are viewed as 'the object of the enterprise to be studied'. This kind of standpoint can be attributed to inexperienced or naïve researchers who view children's perceptions and voices as incompetent or untrustworthy (Smith & Taylor 2000, pp. 3-4). When young people's voices are silenced or ignored, there is less likelihood that the data collected is authentic or of any real value to the research being conducted. Coercing participants like Phuong to participate in a study can also impact on the quality of data being collected. According to Mitchell (2004. p. 1430), 'the sorts of data collection that require student assent are very likely to fail to give useful data if there is any perception (let alone reality) of coercion: collecting good interview data, for example, requires students happy to elaborate on initial comments'. Creating research settings that encourage children or adults to freely give their opinions on aspects of language teaching and learning is essential to conducting effective research with favourable outcomes. On returning to the narrative, we can see how coercion is only one kind of pitfall that needs to be avoided in the process of ethical inquiry. We will look now at deception in research and how this must also be carefully considered in the conduct of respectful and collaborative research.

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[1]    Parental/guardian consent is needed when researchers work with students who are under the age of 18 years.

## Deception

Nhung's thesis submission deadline was soon approaching. He had spent two weeks observing Phuong's English language class and was pleased with the detailed field notes he had collected. The postgraduate student was at the final stage of collecting his data and this involved conducting a focus group session with ten of Phuong's students. In Nhung's estimation, giving students the opportunity to talk about their language teacher's approach would generate stronger evidence to suggest that her grammar translation approach did little to evoke innovative language teaching. Most importantly, these data findings would serve to strengthen the need to ensure that all English language teachers at the school embedded CLT strategies in their classroom practice.

The time finally came for Nhung to invite Phuong's students to participate in a focus group session. When he asked for volunteers there was complete silence in the classroom. No hands were raised; not one student expressed an interest in wanting to participate. The reason for this lack of excitement was simple. Throughout his time in the classroom, Nhung had heavily critiqued and criticised the students' level of English language proficiency in a public way. Many of the students felt embarrassed and humiliated when their mistakes were brought to the attention of their peers and Miss Phuong. These kinds of displays of their work had not been carefully explained to the parents and their children prior to consent being given. The only information they were given was that Nhung would observe the students and Miss Phuong at the back of the class and that he would run a final focus group session at the end of his study. Overall the students believed that they and their parents had been tricked into giving consent and this angered them greatly. What Nhung failed to explain were the kinds of personal, social and psychological risks that could be encountered if the students chose to participate. The research was far from Nhung's description of 'having a warm and caring intent so as to benefit of the students' English language learning'.

Phuong also felt uncomfortable with Nhung's presence in her classroom. The entire experience had left this beginning teacher feeling exposed and discombobulated. After Nhung's appraisal of her teaching mistakes, Phuong wondered whether she had the right set of skills to be able to teach English in an effective way. In his last two sessions, Nhung had insisted that he videotape Phuong while she was teaching. Filming her teaching approach was not a data collection technique that had been outlined on the consent form that she had signed. Like her students, Phuong believed that she had been deceived by Nhung and was angry that he had not been more transparent about the data collection techniques that he intended to use throughout his project.

Deception is another significant attribute that constitutes unethical research. Deception in this chapter is referred to as the 'intentional misrepresentation of facts related to the purpose, nature, or consequences of an investigation' (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008, p. 67). While there is abundant research that documents why deception may be used in research (Kimmel, Smith, & Klein, 2010; Bortolotti & Mameli, 2006; Nicks, Korn, & Mainieri, 1997), this chapter will focus on when the use of deception is problematic and outweighs the potential benefits to participants involved. Essentially, deception in research can occur in two main stages: the recruitment phase and when the research is conducted. During the recruitment phase, to misinform participants about the true nature of the investigation or to provide only selective pieces of information concerning how the study will be conducted can have adverse consequences in the long term. For both the students and Phuong, as seen in their reflections above, not being given a true and accurate account of what their involvement entailed left them feeling 'cheated' and tricked into participating. In the case of conducting ethical research, it is important that the researcher provides an honest and transparent account of all stages of the data collection process. Giving out consent forms and information sheets that clearly detail the research process helps to maintain a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants involved in a study.

Critics argue that in circumstances where there is a loss of trust in the researcher that this almost always impacts on the quality of their relationship with their subjects (Lawson, 1997; Pierce, 2009). Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008) make note of the fact that if participants feel deceived, they may respond in ways that can seek to 'threaten' the collection of accurate and trustworthy data. This is especially the case when participants believe that there is a hidden agenda to the study. This may result in 'responding in a manner that they think that the researcher desires, or they might try to outguess the researcher and sabotage the study' (p. 67). The participants in Nhung's study were left feeling exposed in many ways because of his research approach and as a result did not want to be involved in his focus group session. There was little in the way of a trustworthy environment here for Phuong and her students. If Nhung's research project sought to critique and investigate the English language skills of the participants involved, then he had a moral commitment and a duty of care to have ensured that this information was clearly conveyed to his participants during his first encounter with them. If Nhung intended to use film as part of his data collection strategy then it was incumbent on him to have informed Phuong from the beginning that this was his intention. An important criticism of deception then is that participants can feel violated when they have been subject to research procedures that they did not initially agree to (Gillespie, 1991). Feelings of mistrust and anger can be minimised when participants are carefully informed about their role and are clear on what is expected of them during each stage of the research process (Drew, Hardman, & Hosp, 2008).

Deception can also involve the inaccurate portrayal of data findings or sample size (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). Fabricating, altering or omitting data findings are all examples of deceitful action that can have negative consequences in that it 'corrodes a researcher's integrity and commitment to truth and jeopardises community support for research' (Lawson, 1997, p. 19). Reusing another researcher's data findings and claiming this work as one's own is also viewed as dishonest conduct. In this case, plagiarism occurs where there is no acknowledgement of another person's research through adequate referencing to the author/s work. In addition, researchers who give false information or withhold certain information related to their study are seen to behave in a deceptive way. Asking a participant to engage in an ac-

tivity that is essentially immoral or dangerous and where a person has been misled on the safety aspect of his/her involvement also counts for 'deception by omission' (Athanassoulis & Wilson 2009). In all of these instances a researcher has a duty of care to ensure that a professional code of conduct is adopted so that the safety of participants is at all times preserved and maintained.

## Privacy and Confidentiality

It had been the researcher's last day of observing Phuong's class and taking field notes. The beginning teacher was happy that this project had finally ceased and she looked forward to restoring a sense of connection with her students. The past couple of weeks had been an anxious time in many ways for everyone except Nhung. During the first week Phuong overheard Nhung speaking about her teaching style to another colleague and how much it needed to 'improve'. In a loud voice he went on to explain how his presence in the classroom would help to facilitate remarkable changes in Phuong's ability to engage her students in a more enlightening way. During the second week Phuong returned an English language book to the staff study area. When she walked past Nhung's desk, a desk that other teachers walked by each morning, she came across his field notes. This is what she saw:

Date: 2$^{nd}$ June 2014
Participant Observation Field Notes: Written by Nhung Tran
Teacher Being Observed: Phuong Nguyen: English Language Class
Language Focus: Adjectives and Adverbs
Class: Form Two: 35 Students, 20 girls and 10 boys

Overview of the Class
Today Phuong began her lesson by asking her students to open their textbooks to page 10. She told the class that they would be examining adjectives and adverbs and went on to explain their syntactic function in the English language. Phuong gave a brief introduction on the meanings

associated with these terms and wrote up a few examples on the board. She finished her introduction by writing down a list of exercises that she wanted the students to complete. The class didn't seem interested at all in completing the textbook exercises. I noticed that a couple of boys had big frowns on their faces when they began the grammar exercises and didn't appear to be motivated at all. I also observed that none of the students seemed to want to initiate a conversation around how they could use adjectives and adverbs in everyday English conversations.

Phuong really has a dull presence in the classroom and has no idea of how to embed any higher order thinking skills into her lesson planning. I found the lesson to be quite uninspiring and boring. There is so much more that Phuong could be doing to involve her students in more practical and meaningful ways! Despite me showing her how to embed some CLT strategies into her teaching she has chosen to ignore my suggestions. I find this frustrating and don't understand why she does not want to improve her teaching style!

As demonstrated in the case above, privacy and confidentiality are significant aspects of the conduct of ethical research (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008). Whilst these terms are often used interchangeably they have their own distinct meanings. Privacy relates to controlling the kind of information that is released about an individual or a group of people who are involved in a research project. Protecting a participant's privacy means controlling the way in which he or she is presented in the public domain (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011). 'Confidentiality', in contrast, refers to the way in which *data* is managed and stored. This applies to who has access to the data collected and the degree to which data is shared with others outside of the research project. Privacy then is aligned with protecting the individual where confidentiality protects the dissemination of data in ways that minimise participants' exposure to potential scrutiny or harm (Sieber, 1992). With this in mind, researchers have a duty of care to ensure that at all times information that could easily identify a person or community is screened so as to protect their anonymity. Wiles et al., (2008) extends definitions of confidentiality by stating that researchers have a duty of care to ensure that they

do not openly discuss or disclose observations or discussions that involve participants in their research studies (p. 418). To do so could raise a number of damaging outcomes that may lead to participants being stigmatised or viewed in a negative way by those outside of the study.

Ethical guidelines and research protocols all emphasise the importance of using pseudonyms during the research process to safeguard the identities of research participants (Smyth & Williamson, 2004). In addition, the term 'data cleaning' is used by Kaiser (2009, p. 5) to describe the process whereby researchers 'remove identifiers to create a clean data set. A clean data set does not contain information that identifies respondents, such as name or address'. However it is worth noting here that removing or changing a name does not automatically mean that a participant's identity or an institution's identity remains anonymous. An individual or institution's identity could be recognised by other people who have access to the published data because of the inclusion of other identifiable information. Researchers therefore need to make a decision as to the kind of information they include and the extent to which this information could lead to deductive disclosure.

Kaiser goes on to assert the need to store such de-identifying identified information in a place that is secure and protected. It is worth noting here that many university research ethics application forms ask that researchers keep their data in a locked cupboard so as to minimise the risk of a participant's anonymity being exposed.[22] In the case of Nhung, leaving his field notes in the public gaze is a serious breach of privacy and confidentially. Nhung did not store his observation notes in a safe place and this seriously compromised his ability to keep Phuong and her students safe from harm. Phoung is likely to seriously doubt her professional capabilities as a result of having read the notes that were taken about her teaching approach. Knowing that there is a strong possibility that other colleagues saw Nhung's negative comments about Phuong is likely to evoke feelings of shame and embarrassment for the graduate teacher. All of these feelings can have a considerable influence on Phuong's ability to foster a collaborative relationship with Nhung and with her peers.

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2    See the following websites for Canterbury Christ Church University: http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/support/ computing-services/Policies-Procedures/Data%20protection%20v2%203.pdf and the University of Aberdeen: http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/documents/Protecting_information_policy_v5_Dec13.pdf

McDermid, Peters, Jackson and Daly (2014, p. 31) discuss the challenges that can arise when research involves subjects where there are pre-existing collegial associations. They contend that 'participants may experience physical and emotional distress and be at risk of reprisal or retaliation if their anonymity is inadvertently breached in their organisations'. There is no doubt that Nhung has considerable status and power at the school; that he can influence the decision that is made by the school principal as to whether or not Phuong is a good teacher to invest in. Phuong's employment situation means that her contract will be unlikely to be renewed if she is labeled or portrayed as an incompetent English language teacher. Job insecurity and unemployment is certainly not what Phuong signed up for when she agreed to participate in Nhung's research. Indeed, Nhung demonstrates all of the signs of a careless and unethical researcher who has no awareness of the destructive impact of his actions on the lives of people surrounding him. His actions serve to remind us that when conducting research in worksites one must acquire a delicate and well thought out approach; that relationships between colleagues can become complex when guidelines and protocols associated with the conduct of ethical research are ignored. Any research that involves colleagues needs to have as its starting point the knowledge that worksites, 'are enmeshed in a network of membership affiliations, and an individual becoming a researcher can set him or her apart and affect relationships with other group members' (McDermid et al., 2014, p. 29). Overall protecting and preserving constructive and respectful relationships is central to the research process. Initiating and maintaining ethical research standards

On the Friday evening following Nhung's departure, Phuong wrote an email to her best friend Trung. In her email she outlined the range of intense emotions that had consumed her throughout her involvement in Nhung's research project. In her email, Phuong outlined why she had found it difficult to embed CLT strategies into her classroom practice and how for the most part, she felt victimised and misunderstood by the researcher. Phuong's email is recorded below:

Dear Tran,

I hope all is well. It has been some time since we have made contact with each other.

I hope you don't mind but I am feeling really angry about a situation that I have been involved in over the past two weeks. I really do need to share this with someone who I trust and I know that you will understand my standpoint and not judge me in a negative way.

Basically I have been involved in a research project and have had a senior teacher observe my classes to assess my proficiency in English language teaching. During this time I have found his presence in my classroom to be quite traumatic. The major reason for this is because I have not been able to adopt some of the teaching strategies (underpinned by a communicative language teaching approach) that he wanted me to use. I know there are reasons for not wanting to teach this way. And I do feel like a failure and a fraud and I really do need to work harder so that I can become a better English language teacher and make my English classes more exciting for my students.

But Tran, the fact remains that my English is not as proficient as it should be. I have only been teaching English for 6 months and I am still not confident in my ability to embed conversational activities into my lessons or to use techniques that may cause too much chatter in the classroom. What I am most concerned about here is that if I allow my students to freely participate in English conversation that I will not be able to understand some of the English terms that might be used. This will embarrass me even further and I have my reputation to uphold if I am to secure a full time position here. This is why I like using grammar books because I feel most comfortable and competent when sharing my knowledge of syntax and language rules. Despite my confidence here, when I tried to tell the researcher about why I like using text-books in my English classes he was quite dismissive of my reasoning. What soon became apparent to me is that he was not prepared to listen to what I had to say. Rather, all he was interested in doing was telling me what I should be doing to motivate my students to want to learn English.

> I feel so confused. I can't go and speak to the Principal about this experience for I fear that he will not renew my contract if he thinks that I am talking negatively about a senior member of staff. I know that by going to the Principal that it will be perceived as undermining Nhung's expertise and research capability. The researcher has a lot of colleagues at this school who respect his work so I also run the risk of being labeled as a trouble-maker and of being alienated. I believe that my career is too important so I will keep quiet and will simply have to deal with the undesirable mental state that I am currently in.

is therefore essential to reducing the risk of adverse situations, like those experienced by Phuong, from arising.

## Cross-Cultural Representation

Ethical issues often arise when research is conducted in diverse cultural contexts (Mabelle, 2011). The researcher who brings along an ethnocentric stance to the research arena interprets social phenomena in a jaded way. Marshall and Batten (2003, p. 140) support this assertion when they argue that 'the academic perspective, despite some theoretical grounding in diversity, remains an extension of the dominant culture's base of largely European Western Values, ethics and norms'. Researchers who fail to consider the lived experience of participants, choosing instead to be an 'expert' and to have an over-arching sense of power in the field, invariably silence those voices that really matter. Researchers who overlook cultural variance in the way people think and who dismiss alternative viewpoints run the risk of damaging the integrity and reliability of the data findings (Crigger, Holcomb & Weiss, 2001; Liamputtong, 2010). In the case of Nhung, his persistence in espousing a Western philosophy of teaching and learning led him to ignore personal and professional motivations that encourage English language teachers to teach in particular ways. Rather than attempt to understand the cultural narrative that led Phuong to teach the way she did, Nhung chose to exert a sense of power over his interpretation of Phuong's pedagogical approach. The students' reactions to Nhung are also important here in that they too felt cheated and undermined by his approach. This inhibited their eagerness

to further elaborate on their perceptions of effective language teaching in a focus group session. This is unfortunate because Nhung never really understands the motivation behind Phuong's resistance to embedding a communicative teaching approach into her practice. As a result his data collection and data analysis is severely hindered. This compromises Nhung's ability to answer the research questions he sets about the role of CLT in EAL classrooms in an authentic and meaningful way.

In his research, Ellis (1994) makes a number of claims as to why many Vietnamese teachers are not willing to incorporate a communicative approach to their teaching. He writes,

> On the surface it seemed that Vietnamese resistance to adopting the communicative approach lay squarely with class sizes, grammar-based examinations, lack of exposure to authentic language etc., however, on closer investigation it became clear that the Vietnamese teachers would have to make radical changes to some of their basic cultural beliefs if they wanted to accommodate the approach being proposed (p. v).

Ellis' draws our attention to the way in which cultural legacies influence the ease at which teachers can shift from one paradigm of teaching to another. Historical legacies, socio-cultural ideologies and institutional systems of power are all significant factors that influence pedagogical approaches in EAL contexts. Harmer (2007, p. 70) further elaborates on the complexities and challenges experienced by EAL teachers when they attempt to integrate CLT methodologies into their teaching. We see this when he argues that the CLT approach favours 'native-speaker teachers' in that there is the expectation that language learning is based on 'a relatively uncontrolled range of language on the part of the student'. The EAL teacher in the communicative classroom is then expected to be able to effectively respond to conversational encounters in ways that demonstrate his or her own proficiency and mastery of the language. If EAL teachers are not so confident in their English pronunciation or language comprehension, they are less likely to want to promote this kind of teaching approach in their classroom. Nhung's failure to delve into the cultural challenges faced by a non-native English speaker in an English language teaching role had implications. First, he was not sensitive to or aware of the rationale behind Phoung's preference for the using

textbooks in her class. Second, his lack of cultural awareness meant that he enforced a privileging of one kind of teaching strategy above another. Ethical research does not claim power over a participant's thoughts or actions. Instead ethical research attempts to unpack and examine the phenomena being explored so as to answer the question, 'What is really going on here?'

Research that involves cross-cultural teaching and learning approaches must consider contributing factors that make up the classroom milieu (Marshall & Batten, 2003). Hiep's (2007) study of three Vietnamese teachers and their attempts to implement CLT approaches also highlights the important role that institutions play in facilitating successful teaching and learning outcomes. His research findings indicate that when embedding new pedagogical approaches, Vietnamese EAL teachers need to be supported by 'peers, students and policy makers' and 'should not be left alone in the process'. Ethical research therefore considers systemic and institutional factors that are influencing the success with which goals and outcomes can be achieved. In the case of Nhung, there was a need for his research to be critical of the kinds of resources, leadership, peer-mentoring and time allowance afforded to Phuong during her trialling of the CLT methodology. An absence of this level of critique meant that a superficial level of data collection and data analysis was generated. This resulted in not presenting an accurate view of why Phuong found it difficult to successfully embed CLT teaching activities into her classroom practice.

Cross-cultural research must also inquire into the multiple dimensions that make up participant identities. McNae and Strachan (2010, p. 43) stress the need to challenge and be critical of cross-cultural research that focuses only on ethnic diversity. They assert that culture can also be thought of as 'youth, aged, gay, lesbian, religious, rural, urban, prison, poor, wealthy and differently abled'. Engaging in respectful and responsive dialogue helps researchers to have an understanding of broader contexts that lead people to think and perform in certain ways. Researchers need to also be cognisant of how their political ideologies can impact on the ways in which they interpret and represent social phenomena. For example, researchers who identify with political and social ideologies found in feminism, queer theory, Marxism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism or post-modern theory, will interpret social occurrences through a particular lens. Ensuring that a researcher's

ideological standpoint and positionality do not get in the way of an accurate interpretation and portrayal of the data is essential to the conduct of ethical research. Further, when thinking about how researchers interact with participants from different cultural contexts, it is important that political ideologies do not interfere with respectful cultural interactions. For the feminist researcher whose research topic involves dealing with Saudi Arabian officials who have a particular view of the world and women, the researcher needs to be measured, considered and not impose his or her views on the story that is told. It is during the data reporting back phase when the researcher can voice his or her criticality in ways that also take into consideration the cultural situation in which the research has arisen. In summary all kinds of identities need to be considered, represented and understood in ways that an enable a truthful account of the research that has been conducted.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various deliberations that must be considered by a researcher if research is to be conducted in an ethical way. The importance of ensuring that individuals feel safe and are not coerced or deceived into participating in a research project is central to the ethical dimensions of the research process. Ethics, as discussed, involves a critical dimension; to ignore the institutional, cultural, historical and political standpoints that people bring to the research arena, devalues and silences those elements that influence why people respond and behave in particular ways. Essentially, ethical research opens up collaborative and respectful dialogue between the researcher and his or her participants. Making public the lived experiences of participants in ways that bring about transformative change is what effective research is all about—otherwise why do it? If research serves only to reinforce dominant positions that seek to further marginalise and silence individuals who are the least advantaged, then one must question the integrity of the researcher and the motivations for why the research is being conducted in the first place.

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