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Mind the Gap: Unexpected Pitfalls in Doing Classroom Research

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Inherent in classroom research are the inevitable, and often unanticipated, challenges experienced by researchers. This article moves beyond the main issues highlighted in the literature and identifies some of the problems the authors encountered when conducting two common methodological procedures, classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews (SRIs), as part of our dissertation research investigations. The paper first surveys what the literature describes as the main areas of concern with these two procedures. It then pulls away from these resources to explore actual difficulties we experienced that we believe are inadequately addressed in the literature. Using illustrations from our dissertation projects, we examined several recurring challenges we faced, including participant discomfort with specific types of SRI questions and different forms of participant-researcher interaction during non-participatory classroom observations. For each of these problems, we provide a series of recommendations for researchers who plan to use similar methodological protocols in classroom research. Key Words: Classroom Research, Classroom Observation, Stimulated Recall, Qualitative Research.

Classroom research has a relatively long tradition in education, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics. One of the main impetuses for this is the realization that in order to understand what happens when teachers and learners come together, researchers must actually go "where the action is" (Nunan, 1989, p. 76). For the purpose of aiding researchers for investigations within classroom settings, numerous resources exist that detail various theoretical frameworks and methodological procedures for conducting classroom research (e.g., Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; McKay, 2006; Nunan & Bailey, 2009; Silverman, 2006). Even though this literature provides fairly comprehensive guidance in how to conduct classroom research, we find them inadequate when it comes to preparing researchers for some of the unexpected challenges that may occur. In essence, many researchers have needed to adopt a "learning-by-doing approach" (Hobbs & Kubanyiova, 2008, p. 495) as they have embarked on new or different kinds of research projects.

This article provides a snapshot of some of the unanticipated difficulties the two authors encountered while researching the classroom practices and thought processes of English as a second language (ESL) teachers. These descriptions of problematic events or behaviors and possible solutions are provided in order to help future researchers to avoid similar challenges in their own research. We find these types of challenges to be neglected in the previous literature, even in literature that has focused specifically on potential difficulties with conducting research on language teachers (Hobbs & Kubanyiova, 2008). In particular, we focus on problems we experienced with two

common qualitative methodological procedures: classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews (SRIs). For each procedure, we begin with a brief review that identifies typical difficulties discussed in the literature. Following the review, we point out two unexpected behaviors that we faced and provide illustrations from our classroom observation and SRI data. We then offer recommendations on how to avoid these challenges or precautionary measures that can be taken to reduce their potentially negative impacts.

The Motivation

Before continuing, it may be useful to discuss the motivation behind the writing of this article. We were PhD candidate-colleagues working under the sponsorship of the same dissertation advisor. The dissertation project of the first author focused on the beliefs, knowledge, and perceptions that ESL teachers have in relation to pronunciation pedagogy and how these cognitions were reflected in their actual classroom practices. For the second author, his dissertation research was a textual and contextual analysis of ESL classroom discourse from a genre-oriented perspective. During the data-collection phase of our respective dissertation projects, we decided to meet regularly to discuss our progress and to brainstorm how to address any complications that might be arising. During these discussions, we discovered we were experiencing similar challenges as we moved through the data collection process.

In our respective explorations of the thought processes and pedagogical practices of the ESL teachers who volunteered as participants in our individual dissertation research studies, we used similar research methodologies, including classroom observations and SRIs. Each of us read the major resources on these types of research methodologies. We felt we had relatively firm understandings of the typical issues that could occur as we initiated our research. Nevertheless, there were unanticipated events or behaviors that occurred as we progressed through our projects. With our limited experience in conducting classroom research, we seemed to lack some of the skills that more experienced researchers possess. These researchers have likely faced similar difficulties, but have internalized ways of dealing with them, and thus may not have considered including these issues in discussions of research methodology. From what we can determine, the most common recommendation for ironing out typical, but rarely discussed, difficulties in conducting research is to first carry out a pilot study (Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Nunan, 1992), which both of us had previously carried out. This is excellent advice; however, what may be at least as valuable are more detailed and descriptive reports from researchers who have experienced challenges during their research endeavors. With a pilot study, the idea is that researchers will learn about and work out the “kinks” involved in classroom research. Yet, with a pilot study the sample population is still considerably limited. In comparison with the participant-populations of numerous research studies conducted over the past several decades, the potential problems that may arise during a pilot study phase will likely be fewer than the issues that have occurred in the combined research of earlier studies.

The Literature: Pitfalls with Classroom Observations

The literature on classroom observation as a research methodology is quite comprehensive, providing detailed information on the strengths and weaknesses of both classroom observation and observation in general. Observations are valued for their authenticity and objectivity as well as for their potential for exposing the researcher to both everyday or habitual behaviors and unexpected events or actions (Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, the observation process offers a certain flexibility enabling researchers to focus their observational "lens" as they start to notice patterns of interest from one observed class to the next. This focus, of course, may shift as new patterns surface in the data (Silverman, 2006). Observations also permit the collection of large amounts of general data (Borg, 2006) or more specific data on phenomenon of interest (Gass & Mackey, 2007). For each observed class, data can be gathered on different types of communication features (whether paralinguistic or linguistic) as well as on actions, behaviors, and events. Furthermore, when coupled with electronic data-collection devices, such as video recorders, the data can be viewed, analyzed and re-analyzed in-depth from multiple perspectives at a later date. As Mackey and Gass (2005) explain, "[o]ver time and repeated observations, the researcher can gain a deeper and more multilayered understanding of the participants and their context" (p. 176).

Inaccurate Identification, Perceptions, and Personal Bias

Despite the advantages of in-class observations, there are also limitations. One of these may include inaccurate identification of classroom patterns. In searching for regular patterns in the classroom, researchers may mistakenly identify one or more behaviors, actions or events as typical of a particular teacher when, in fact, they may not be representative of his or her classroom practices at all (Borg, 2006; Evertson & Green, 1986). These types of misidentifications are most likely to occur when based on only a limited number of observations. Likewise, perceptions of researchers can also be distorted by either premature judgments or personal biases. Premature judgments can be made due to time and energy expended conducting preparatory literature reviews (i.e., assumptions made based on prior research), whereas personal biases can form based on the interests or values held by observers (Cohen et al., 2007; Evertson & Green). Similarly, however, while having in-depth familiarity with previous research is usually beneficial as preparation for conducting new research, it is equally important to be cognizant of how this information might influence the research. Thus, a dilemma and basic feature of human cognition is that when we observe classrooms, we tend to see what we are expecting to see (Fanselow, 1988).

Researcher's Effect on Participants

Among the various limitations of classroom observation, one of the more frequently cited disadvantages is the effect that the researcher's presence can have on participants. Two frequently discussed reactivity effects, in particular, are the "observer's paradox" (Labov, 1972) and the "Hawthorne effect" (Landsberger, 1958). The observer's paradox refers to any influence(s), whether positive or negative, that the presence of an

observer might have on those observed (Gass & Mackey, 2007), such as changes in performance, behavior, attitude or other feelings or actions (Allwright & Bailey, 1991). Similarly, the Hawthorne effect also refers to changes in the performance or behaviors of a participant, but these changes are typically positive (Gass & Mackey), at least from the perspective that participants may be modifying their typical behaviors in an attempt to aid observers in their research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Other difficulties with classroom observations include, but are not limited to, the enormous amount of time involved in both gathering and analyzing data, the difficulty of sifting through the large volume of data collected, the inadequacy of using classroom observations as the sole source of data, and the possible neglect of participants' perspectives. For the most part, only highly visible events and overt behaviors can be captured through observational research. More subtle events or high inference information, such as participants' intentions, rationales, and motivations, are more likely to be missed (Borg, 2006; Cohen et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; Evertson & Green, 1986; Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Encounters in the Classroom: Teacher-Participant/Researcher Dynamics

The challenges addressed in the literature, however, did not always adequately prepare us for the reality of conducting classroom observations. Even after the researcher has made participants aware of the researcher's role as non-participant in the classroom, the researcher may still experience persistent efforts by the teacher-participant to involve the researcher in classroom activities.

Scenario One: Personal Asides to the Camera/Researcher

In the case of one teacher-participant in the first author's dissertation research study, the teacher-participant had a cordial in-class relationship with the researcher. Both the participant and researcher had known each other for almost four years prior to the initiation of the project and had a very comfortable working relationship as colleagues in the department's ESL program. During observations scheduled as part of the study, this cordiality sometimes took on the cloak of collegial "commiseration" as articulated by the teacher-participant. The teacher had a group of students who could, and frequently were, in her words, "hyper" in class. On several occasions, she engaged in personal "asides" directed explicitly to the video camera tucked away in one corner of the classroom and lamented the trials of working with this group of students. During the fifth observation of this class, the teacher approached the camera, and from about a foot away, smiled, bobbed her head from side to side several times, and said with an ironic inflection, "Monday."

In earlier observations, the researcher had attempted to reduce the amount of researcher-participant interaction in class. During the second observation, the researcher wrote in her field notes, "I made too much eye contact. Need to look at screen during lectures." Here, the researcher had noticed that the act of making eye contact while

watching the teacher-participant seemed to attract the teacher's attention a great deal. In that same observation, perhaps as a result of some eye contact, the researcher noted that there was "more talking to [the researcher] than with other teachers" (i.e., other teacher participants). During the third observation, the teacher's behavior continued despite the researcher's best efforts to deflect it. As researchers, we are aware that video cameras can be invasive (Bailey, 2006; Borg, 2006) and that researchers need to do their best to place recording equipment in locations where they are less likely to result in participant reactivity. However, in this instance, the nature of the dissertation research coupled with the relatively small classroom space necessitated physically moving the camera during the lesson to follow the teacher's movements in order to document her gestures and facial expressions; thus, such distractions became difficult to avoid. Nevertheless, in follow-up interviews, the teacher claimed that the presence of the camera and the researcher had no effect whatsoever on how she would normally teach and that such a presence merely provided someone who could, in her words, "commiserate" with her as she attempted to move through her lesson with an overactive class.

Scenario Two: Requests for Researcher Participation in Class Activities

Similarly, the second author had several occasions in which two teacher-participants unintentionally drew the researcher into the classroom discourse. In one lesson involving a review of the California Gold Rush, knowing that this researcher was from California, the first teacher-participant turned to the researcher, smiled, and asked, "Does anyone else in the room remember when California became a state? Are there any Californians in the room?" Noticing that the teacher was gazing at the researcher, all of the students turned to the researcher as well. The teacher noticed the researcher's lack of response and immediately continued with her talk. On a separate occasion, the same teacher asked the researcher a question while the students were engaged in group work. Although the researcher made great attempts to limit such contributions, he nevertheless engaged in the conversation to maintain a good working relationship with this teacher, who was a colleague.

This type of behavior was also encountered in another teacher-participant's class. In the first lesson observed, the teacher asked the researcher to join a pair of students to work on an oral task because there were an uneven number of students that day. The researcher hesitantly joined the students and worked on the task. Fortunately, this lesson took place during a pilot recording when the researcher was making sure that the recording equipment was working properly. However, the teacher was unaware of the researcher's specific purposes at the time. In another lesson, the same teacher drew the researcher into the classroom discourse again and asked the researcher if he would work with the students: "Can you help or are you gonna need to stay over there?" This time, however, the researcher subtly shook his head to indicate he could not. Realizing that the researcher seemed reluctant to participate, the teacher quickly instructed the students: "If there's somebody who's extra, go to me."

Recommendations Regarding Classroom Observations

These illustrations of classroom interaction between researchers and teacher-participants demonstrate some of the diverse forms that reactivity effects may take. While we are warned to reduce the effect of the observer on participants for purposes of collecting classroom data, this effort can be particularly difficult when participants actively try to include the researcher in the classroom discourse.

Emphasizing the Researcher's Non-Participatory Role

To address this challenge, one of the best methods to reduce classroom interaction is to discuss these types of behavior with participants prior to the observation. During pre-observation interviews, explicitly informing participants that the researcher intends to be "a fly on the wall" and would like to essentially be as non-participatory as possible may be the most direct approach. Particularly for researchers with limited experience with classroom research, one way to initiate this conversation is to discuss with teachers that it is quite common, and normal, for participants to want to include researchers, especially colleagues, in classroom activities or discourse. The researcher could then take the opportunity to discuss why such a move to include the researcher or to interact with the researcher would be counterproductive for the purposes of the research study. To avoid making the teacher feel uncomfortable on this point, the researcher could ask the teacher to try to do his or her best to avoid initiating such interactions during class.

Included in the researcher's non-participant role is the distribution of handouts in class. We found that asking teachers to provide materials either before or after class helps to reduce the amount of time teachers spend interacting with observers during classroom lessons.

Addressing Repeated Attempts to Include the Researcher in Classroom Activity

Even with these precautions, participants may continue to talk or in other ways interact with observers during the class or request their involvement in an activity. In the event that a teacher asks the researcher to participate in an activity, respectfully declining to participate the first time this occurs should help to avoid a similar request at a later date. Also, as noted with the participants who repeatedly interacted with the observers, it may be necessary to remind participants more than once about the researcher's need to maintain a non-participant observer's role in the classroom. If data collection is scheduled to continue over numerous classes, such reminders can be planned and timed as a normal part of post-observation conferences. Of course, such reminders must be done as diplomatically as possible; otherwise, researchers risk offending participants who generally want to be cordial with researchers during in-class observations. Nevertheless, one or two reminders about the researcher's non-participant role may be insufficient to effectively encourage participants to avoid interactions with the researcher during observations. Using a combination of several techniques may be beneficial, such as verbal reminders before the beginning of each lesson, avoidance of eye-contact, and note-taking during the observation (and thus looking busy and "uninterruptable").

The Literature: Pitfalls with Stimulated-Recall Interviews

The staple of nearly all classroom research involving qualitative data is the interview. In our investigations, we both employed semi-structured interviews and stimulated recall interviews (SRIs) as two means of examining the thought processes and knowledge bases of ESL teachers. SRIs are a type of retrospective verbal report, in which participants receive a stimulus – typically a segment of an audio/video recording or a written transcript of a particular teaching event involving the participant – and then attempt to recount their cognitions (i.e., thoughts or decision-making rationale) at the time the event took place. One of the widely discussed benefits of using SRIs in classroom research is the additional information that serves to contextualize observations of various events, actions, behaviors, and other phenomena in the classroom by allowing teachers and/or students to voice their perspectives on situations in which they were involved (Calderhead, 1981; Dörnyei, 2007; McKay, 2006; Nunan, 1992). When conducted effectively, such interviews can provide researchers with insight into the thought processes and personal theories that motivate various types of teacher behaviors and actions (Kormos, 1998; Meade & McMeniman, 1992). In addition, SRIs are frequently used in conjunction with other research methods (e.g., classroom observations). Conducting such interviews permits data triangulation and is one means of mitigating researcher biases (Allwright & Bailey, 1991; McKay), thereby providing more complex and multilayered perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation (Silverman, 2006).

Generating Reliable Thought Processes

As with any type of interview-based research, SRIs present challenges to both researchers and interviewees. One of the negative critiques of SRIs is the degree to which such retrospective reports may or may not generate reliable accounts of thought processes experienced by the participant during the event encapsulated by the stimulus. Gass and Mackey (2000) warn that "humans are essentially sense-making beings and tend to create explanations, whether such explanations can be justified or not" (p. 5). Rather than verbalizing real thoughts, participants may instead tend to articulate their beliefs about what they may have thought at the time of the event (Bartels, 2005; Borg, 2006) or, as described by Yinger (1986), participants may instead generate "reflection-on-action" (p. 273). Unfortunately, it is difficult to confirm the extent to which SRIs can actually produce accurate reports of participants' thought processes (Calderhead, 1981; Tuckwell, 1982). Calderhead notes that researchers may have to rely mainly on trust when accepting the veracity of retrospective reports. Even if seemingly accurate reports can be elicited, the completeness of those reports may also be questioned. Ericsson and Simon (1993) suggest that lack of knowledge or faulty memory may result in incomplete reports of cognitive processes. In fact, participants may not register commonplace behaviors or thoughts as necessitating verbalization and therefore fail to provide precise descriptions of these processes (Borg). The above issues, as well as factors such as duration of time between the recorded event and the SRI (Bartels) and participant confidence or anxiety in verbalizing cognitive processes (Calderhead), may also have an adverse affect on participants' memories. As McKay (2006) reports, describing thought processes is

"highly unnatural and obtrusive" (p. 60) for participants, which can lead to difficulties in articulating their internal thoughts.

Encounters in SRIs: Problems with Questions

Despite the challenges with SRIs, they are frequently used in classroom research because they continue to be one of the most effective methods for eliciting information about teachers' and students' thought processes at the time particular classroom behaviors or actions originally took place. Nevertheless, the literature gives little guidance on some of the pitfalls researchers might encounter as they begin to use SRI procedures. Of particular note are the advantages and disadvantages of asking certain types of interview questions.

Scenario One: Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Question Types

Partly in response to the concerns highlighted above, but also due to the nature of the topics and goals of our research, the two of us asked slightly different types of questions during our SRIs. The first author followed the steps and interview questions outlined in Gass and Mackey (2000, pp. 56-60). For example, "What were you thinking here?" "Can you tell me what you were thinking at that point?" or "I see you're laughing…there, what were you thinking then?" For the second author, the research focused on teachers' use of language in the classroom and the reasons underlying their discursive choices. Therefore, examples of the questions he used included: "Can you tell me what you were doing here? Why?" "Why did you say that here?" or "Why did you phrase your language like that here?" The end result was that first researcher asked mainly "what" questions while the second asked mostly "why" questions. The purpose of "what" questions is to directly elicit what teachers were thinking at the time an observed event was taking place, which enable researchers to follow the thought processes of participants as they were unfolding, assuming, of course, that participants can accurately recall these processes from memory. However, one of the disadvantages of asking "what" questions is that participants are not necessarily asked explicitly to provide the rationale for what they actually did during that observed event. They may not even be cognizant of the reasons underlying what they do at the moment when they are doing something, as certain behaviors can become habitual or routinized over time. Thus, the advantage of using "why" questions is that participants' perceptions of their rationale for their decision-making processes can be directly accessed, though some of the limitations of asking "what" questions may apply also when asking "why" questions. The second author used SRIs to later ask participants to describe their reasons for particular words they said or actions they performed in the classroom, thus gaining a glimpse into their perceived underlying reasonings for their pedagogical and discursive practices.

Scenario Two: Emotional Implications of Question Types

Delving deeper into the use of "why" versus "what" questions in SRIs is the possible effect they may have on participants' emotions. With us, as doctoral candidates investigating the online thought processes of ESL teachers, the teacher-participants (all of

whom have earned MA degrees) may have felt professionally intimidated to some extent even though the researchers entered the interactions with the best of intentions. Although the teacher-participants were all highly experienced ESL teachers and well educated, our observations of their classes could be perceived, albeit incorrectly, as evaluations of their teaching, especially since we were colleagues in the same ESL program.

While several factors may have been involved, the "what" verses "why" questions may have had some influence on how the participants interpreted and reacted to the research enterprise. The second author noticed that some of the teacher-participants in his study seemed to respond with some degree of irritability to the "why" questions that were asked as part of the SRIs. In one SRI session, the researcher was interested in understanding the reasons behind one participant's linguistic choices. Upon asking the participant why those particular phrases were used, the participant responded in a manner that indicated a noticeable discomfort with the question. In an effort to ease the tension, the researcher said in what was intended as a soft mitigating tone, "That's not a judgment," to which the participant immediately responded, "Yeah, okay, okay, well (laugh) it kind of is, I guess, it's bizarre when, yeah, people say like I hear you saying, and I'm like, okay, yeah." In this turn, the participant began with a rapid succession of agreement markers followed quickly by the discourse marker "well" and a burst of laughter, signaling that what was uttered might need to be qualified. Although the utterance is prefaced with laughter and is hedged, the participant explicitly states with the stress on the word "is" that the line of questioning was perceived, at least to this participant, as being judgmental of her linguistic behaviors.

Following this reaction, the researcher made further attempts to mitigate what seemed to be becoming a fairly tense situation with an attempt to recover better rapport, saying, "Yeah, because I hear other teachers do the same thing…because I do the same thing." Realizing that the word "why" in some ways may invoke a sense of interrogation, the researcher shifted the wording of his questions as the interview progressed. He removed the "why" questions from his speech to ease the tension and to lessen the anxiety he perceived that this participant was experiencing; for example, "One thing I also notice in terms of your language, and again it's not a judgment, is I often hear, *what I'm going to have you do is*. And we'll see an example right here. And I wonder if that is something that you consciously use as a way to tell students about what you expect them to do or. . .?" Alternatively, he observed that participants might also counter the "why" questions with their own questions, asking the researcher: "What would you have done?" or "How would you have said that?"

For the first author, however, the "what" questions only once sparked a challenging response from a participant. At the end of one video clip, the first author asked, "[Is there] anything else you want to add there?" The participant responded with "No, I mean, I don't know" and continued to reiterate that she did not know. She then asked, "What are you thinking?" to which the researcher responded, "I have no thoughts." Laughing, the teacher replied, "You are such a liar!" The teacher continued to laugh, but she revealed her suspicion that the researcher may have a hidden reason for asking the question.

Recommendations regarding SRIs

Our experiences with the SRIs lead us not only to advise researchers to choose with care both the type of questions they ask participants but also to provide recommendations for how to reduce participant emotional reactivity to certain question types.

Reducing Participants' Emotional Reactivity to Questions

As the scenarios described above have depicted, the different question types have inherent advantages and disadvantages. In particular, asking "why" questions generated the greatest negative reactivity on behalf of the teacher-participants since asking participants to generate rationale for their actions or words, can sometimes be perceived as threatening. One way to help deflect or mitigate the amount of uneasiness teachers might experience as they participate in SRIs is to clearly establish the purpose of the research agenda ahead of time. From the start and frequently throughout the entire project, reassure participants that the research focuses on the thought processes underlying what they do and not on making judgments about how they teach. This agenda may have to be reiterated several times throughout the project, whether at the beginning of or during an SRI.

Timing of "What" versus "Why" Questions

Because questions that ask participants to articulate their cognitive processes can be perceived as threatening to a participant's personal sense of "face," researchers need to be especially mindful of and sensitive to participants' affective states. This sensitivity requires being selective with the types of questions to be asked and, perhaps even more importantly, thoughtful regarding when the questions are asked. One way to reduce such participant negative reactivity is to focus on "what" question types in the first half of an SRI session. Later, during the second part of the SRI session, the researcher could review selected parts of recorded lessons to request further information about the rationale underlying observed behaviors. Sequencing "what" and "why" questions in this manner may help to reassure participants that the purpose of the study is to explore, and not to evaluate, the cognitions and behaviors of the teacher-participant.

Cultivating Rapport with Participants

As part of the SRI process, teachers may ask researchers what they might do or say in the same situation as observed in the video. Under these circumstances, providing a non-committal response such as "Oh, I'm not really sure," may ensure that the researcher's influence on participants' commentaries is kept to a minimum. Furthermore, using the phrase "Oh, I'm not really sure," rather than the more direct and explicit "I have no thoughts" or "I don't know" may also serve to establish a better rapport between both parties. Particularly at such moments, researchers need to keep in mind that one of their challenges is to work hard and make use of whatever professional and social skills they may possess to lessen any impact they might have on participants' commentaries. The

more researchers do to demonstrate the exploratory nature of the research and attempt to eliminate from both their speech and their behaviors any feature that might appear to be critical or evaluative of the participants, the less threatened teacher-participants may feel about participating in the research study.

Conclusion

Conducting classroom research offers researchers and teachers potential for rich insights and understandings into classroom practices, especially when multiple data-gathering procedures are utilized. Yet, attempts at gathering data tied to classroom practices and the underlying thought processes behind these practices can sometimes lead to unforeseen challenges, even when researchers are well intentioned and well versed with the literature of research methodology. In this article, we focused on some of the challenges of collecting data for classroom research we encountered. We focused on classroom observations and SRIs since these served as the basis for our investigations. However, we believe that the area of classroom research would benefit from the availability of additional grounded reports addressing some of the unforeseen challenges that occur when classroom researchers conduct not only observations and SRIs, but other methodological procedures as well. The inclusion of thick descriptions and illustrations from such research data would be most welcome.

Too few research reports reveal or discuss the difficulties investigators may have encountered during processes of data collection, thus leaving novice researchers with an impoverished perspective on complications that may arise when conducting classroom research. By writing about and sharing in detail some of the challenges that we, as dissertation writers, experienced in our own investigations, it is our hope that our experiences will serve to support the future endeavors of other researchers, particularly novice researchers. We also hope that this article will serve to encourage the inclusion of other challenges encountered in classroom investigations to help both novice and experienced researchers avoid (or at least sidestep) some of the pitfalls of their own explorations into the intriguing world of classroom life.

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