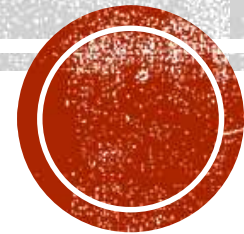# CHALLENGES IN ANALYSING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND IDENTITIES

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OUTLINE

1. The study
   - context
   - focus
   - data

2. Challenges in the analysis:
   - epistemological and ontological assumptions
   - analytical frameworks
   - handling the data

1. THE STUDY: ELT IN COLOMBIA

English facilitates the participation of Colombia in "processes of universal communication, the **global economy** and **cultural openness**" (MEN, 2006b, p.6)
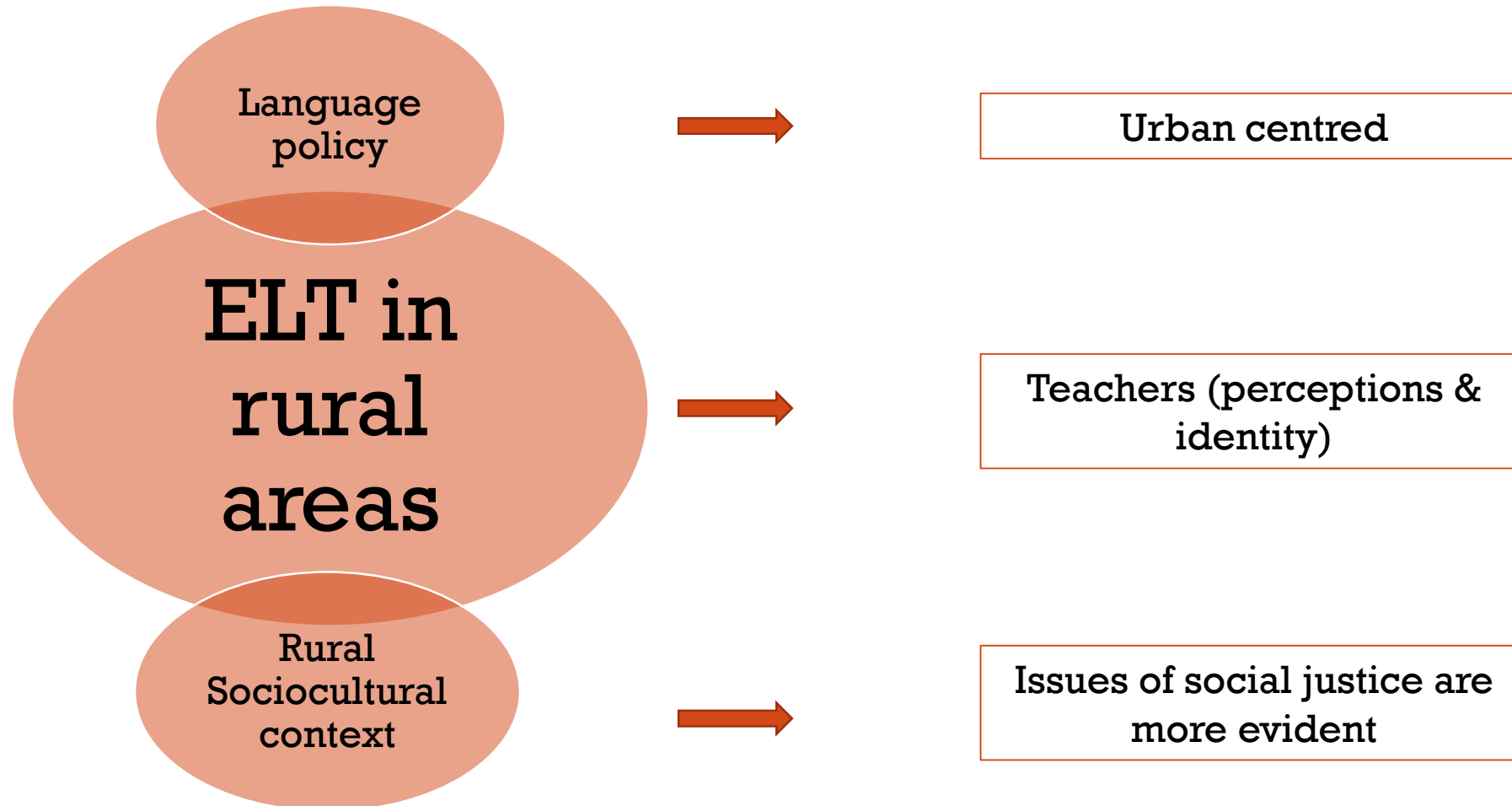
"English opens **opportunities** to have a **better job** and **better future** not only in Colombia but also abroad" (Presidencia-de-la-Republica, 2014).

"To be able to teach hundreds of thousands of Colombians to have a second language, English, in this case, is also to **grow peace**." (Santos, 2014)

The ELT policy contributes to **social justice**, and inclusion in so far as the policy makes English accessible to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. (MEN, 2014)

1. 1 FOCUS

Language policy → Urban centred

ELT in rural areas → Teachers (perceptions & identity)

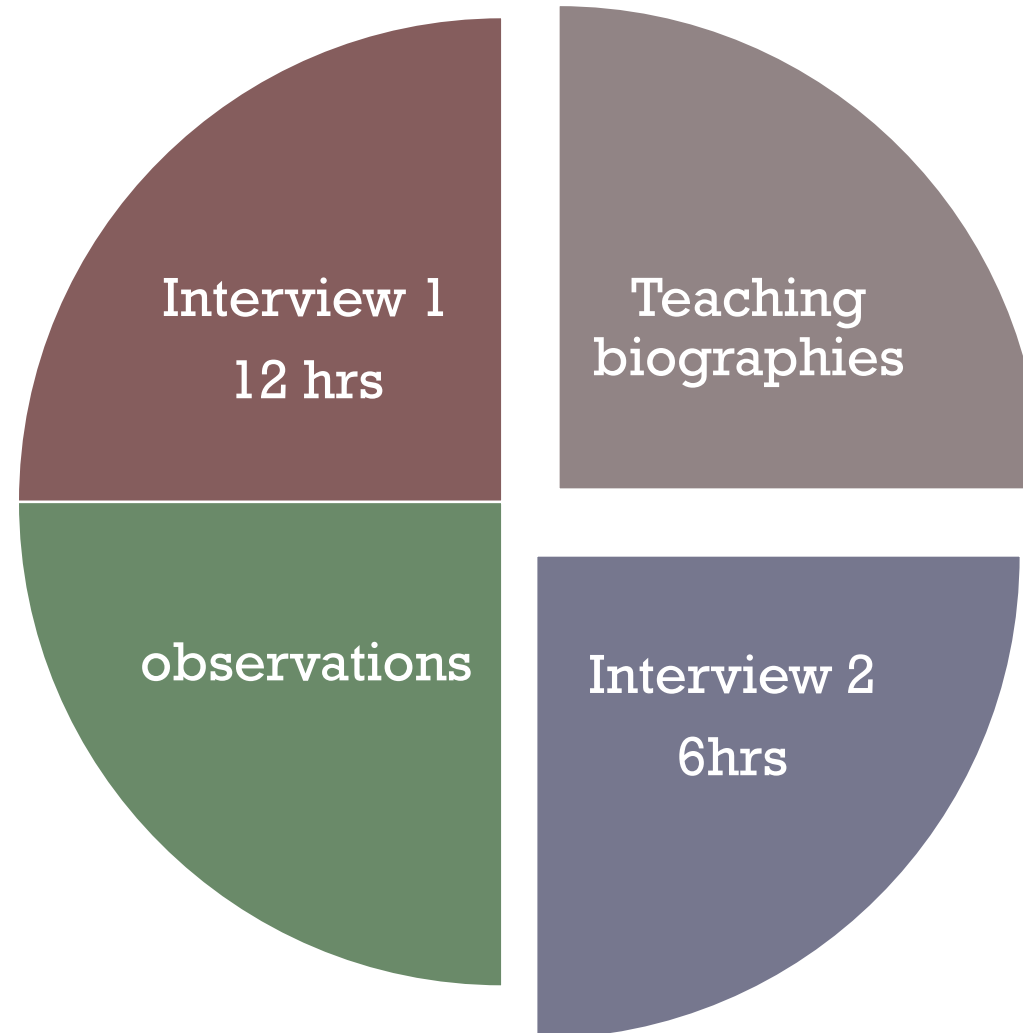**Rural Sociocultural context** → Issues of social justice are more evident

1.3 DATA

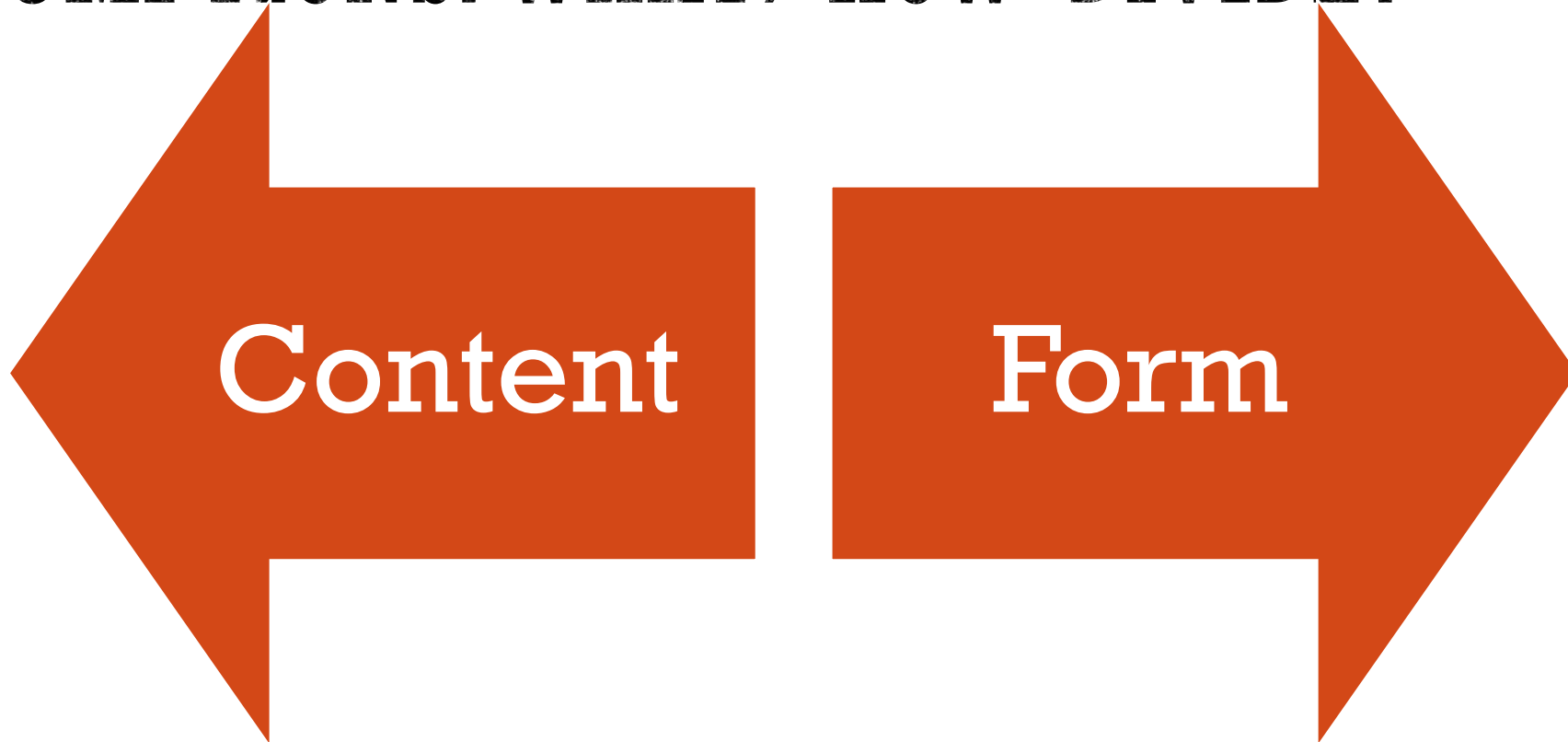- 10 teachers
- 7 schools/municipalities
- 4 different regions

2. CHALLENGES IN DATA ANALYSIS: COMPLEX CHOICES

- Epistemological and ontological assumptions

- Choosing analytical frameworks

- Handling the data: issues of transcription, translation and data presentation

2.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS: WHAT/HOW DIVIDE?

Content

Form

perceptions and identities

2.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Clandininin (2007) Creswell (2007), Chase (2005)

Narrow: Methodology

Conventional

Stories 'reveal' reality

Stories 'construct' reality

We make sense of the world in narrative forms

Broad: Paradigm

Spector-Mersel (2010); De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012); Somers (1994)

EXAMPLE 1: WAYS TO APPROACH DATA

- As a teacher, **one is a friend**, especially as a woman and as a mother I felt –I had that feeling of wanting to **protect the students** a little but one knows that in the professional field, one can reach only certain point and one cannot do more than one can do to solve their situation. (Ana: INT1)

2.2 'CHOOSING' A FRAMEWOK

Framework	Features	Good… but
Thematic analysis	The "told" rather than the "telling" Useful to theorise across cases by means of themes	Did not solve the problem of going beyond the what
Structural analysis	Emphasis mainly on "the telling" Labov: Abstract, orientation… Gee: Episodes …	Too focused on language, narratives risk being decontextuaised.
Dialogic/performance analysis	Narrative as a dialogic process, co-construction, poliphony (Baktin), performance of idetities (Goffman)	Neither theory seemed to fit research aims
Visual analysis	Stories contained in images	Not focus of study

(Riessman 2008)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Sample of the use of a matrix in data analysis

Research questions	What perceptions do English language teachers have around their professional role and identity in rural Colombia? How do the rural sociocultural context and current language policy impact these teachers' perceptions and practices? What role do language policy and matters of social inequality play in the configuration of these teachers' professional identities?	
Themes	**Excerpts**	**Comments**
Ideas about working in a rural location	Pues mis expectativas antes, cuando terminé la universidad era trabajar en un pueblo o en una ciudad, no me miraba en el área rural (.2) pues porque me parecía le::jos, que de pronto no había muchos recur::sos, me imaginaba de pronto una escuela más feita, no conocía, no tenía conocimiento de las escuelas rurales (...) Y cuando llegué me di cuenta que era un colegio muy bonito con infraestructura bonita, me gustó (EVA:INT1)	Eva's initial ideas of what it was to work in rural areas seem to come from a misrecognition and negative ideas of rural location.
	R: ¿Antes de irse a trabajar en una zona rural, qué ideas tenía de cómo iba a ser su experiencia? M: Sí claro. Yo creo que lo que uno piensa antes de enfrentarse a esta situación es muy diferente a lo que piense después de haber realizado o de estar realizando un trabajo en la parte rural. A mí me parecía al comienzo, aunque para mí no es desconocido porque tal vez como lo manifesté, yo soy del campo, nací en Sutamarchán en una vereda, entonces me crié en el campo. (...) para mí, la educación rural, pues ya sabía y yo quiero mucho eh a la parte rural. A los niños del campo los quiero	Although Maria was from a rural area herself, once she became professional, she also had second thoughts about going to work in a rural location, since being a professional now meant that probably she deserved something better, better meaning

Themes Emerging in the matrix

- Ideas about working in a rural location
- Opportunities of the rural context
- Common difficulties
- Current feelings
- Who students are
- Views on the role of English
- Economic issues in rural locations
- Resources
- Hours of instruction
- Aspirations of teachers and frustrations
- The role of parents
- Struggle of finding a job
- What my visit meant
- Other challenging issues

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- **Strength**: sensitivity to recurrent motifs salient in participants' stories (p. 166)

- **Weaknesses**:
  - Lack of a theoretical premise (list of –obvious/trite– observations)
  - Lack of established procedure for matching of instances to categories
  - Overreliance on repeated instances
  - Exclusive focus on what is in the text
  - Lack of attention to **how** language is used

(Pavlenko 2007)

SUGGESTIONS

- Consider context (macro-micro)
- Thematization as a preliminary step but not as analysis
- Guide conceptual categorisation by a specific theoretical framework (e.g., Theories of social justice)
- Consider the form of stories (e.g. Positioning theory)

EXAMPLE 2: EVOLUTION OF THEMES

Themes Emerging in the matrix	Evolution of these themes as developed in first draft of observations	Final organization of themes in light of theory
Ideas about working in a rural location Opportunities of the rural context Common difficulties Current feelings Who students are	Views on the rural context - Preconceive negative ideas - More positive a-posteriori impressions - Feelings of comfort - Feelings of stability	A misrecognised rural context in the architecture of ELT programmes - Making rurality invisible - English as key to success and as part of reality - **Making English fit: a reinterpretation of ELT goals** - Uncertain access to the promise of English Rurality in cultural hierarchies - Feelings of comfort and stability: the other face of rurality
Views on the role of English	The importance of English - English as key to success - English as part of reality	
Economic issues in rural locations	Challenges and objectives of ELT - Making English fit* - Insufficient resources and inappropriate infrastructure - Number of Hours of Instruction - Limited Access to Higher Education - Poverty	The impact of unfair socioeconomic structures on ELT ELT and Human development - On aspirations and unfreedoms
Resources and Hours of instruction	Thought to be more pertinent in chapter on practices	
Aspirations of teachers and frustrations	Initially dropped but reincorporated later on in light of theory.	
The role of parents struggle of finding a	Dropped as not directly related to questions	

2.3 HANDLING DATA

- Transcription

- Translation

- Fitting the data

2.3.1 TRANSCRIPTION

Full, detailed →

Accuracy

Readability

Representation

← Partial
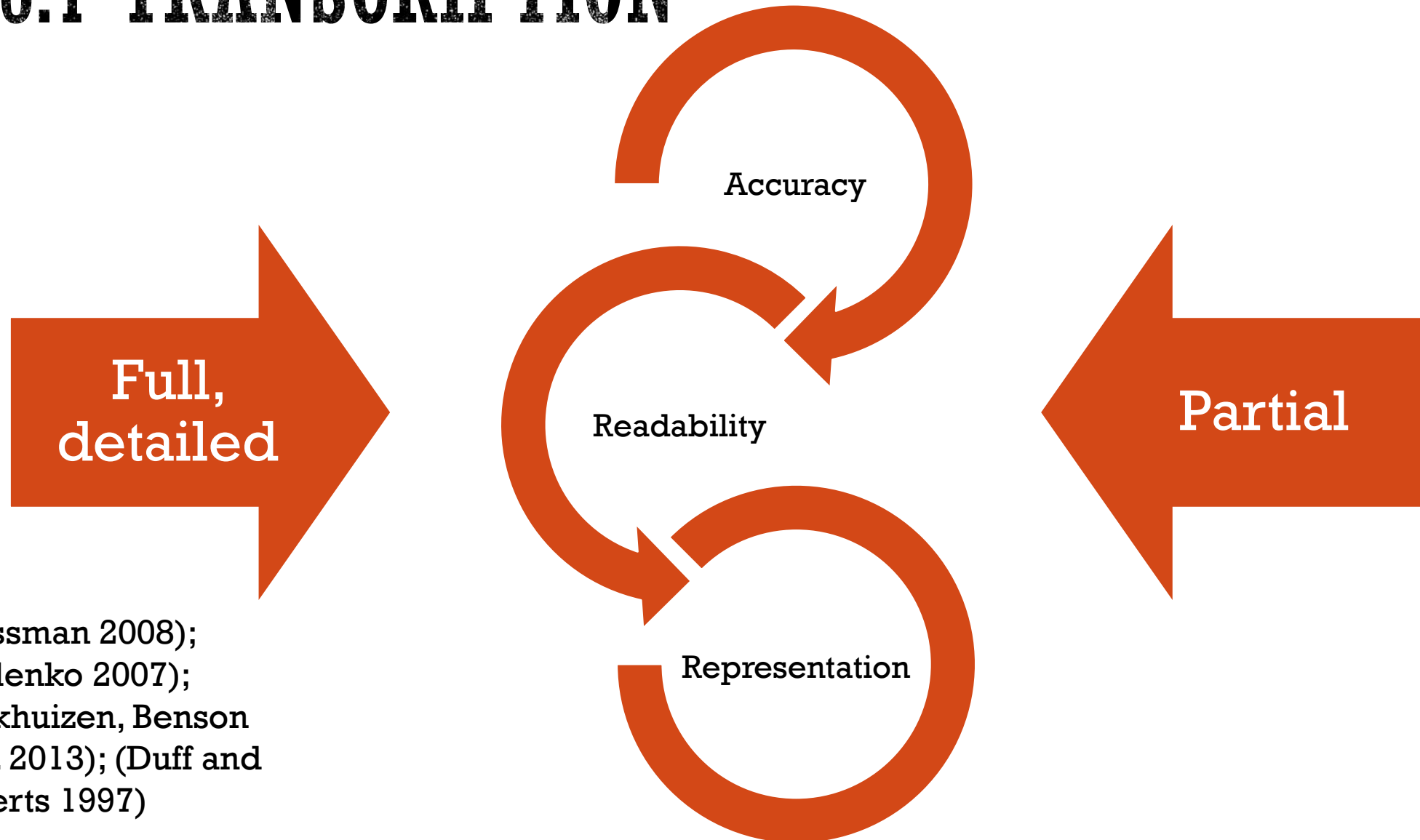
(Riessman 2008); (Pavlenko 2007); (Barkhuizen, Benson et al. 2013); (Duff and Roberts 1997)

- All transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written. (Duff and Roberts 1997, p. 168)

- As transcribers, we need to manage the tension between accuracy, readability, and representation—remembering that we are transcribing people when we transcribe talk. p. 170

accuracy, readability, representation

2.3.2 TRANSLATION

- In what language should data be analysed?

- Should all data be translated?

- To what extent meanings are lost in translation?

EXAMPLE 3: WHAT COUNTS AS A STORY?

Original	Translation?
"¡Uy profe! ¿se la fumo verde?"	"ah teacher! ¿are you in the drugs or something?"
Yo no soy un profe cuchilla	I am not a 'demanding' teacher
Yo soy una persona echada p'lante	I am a 'pushing forward' person
Nunca me comí el cuento	I never bought that idea

2.3.3 PRESENTING THE DATA AND MAKING IT FIT
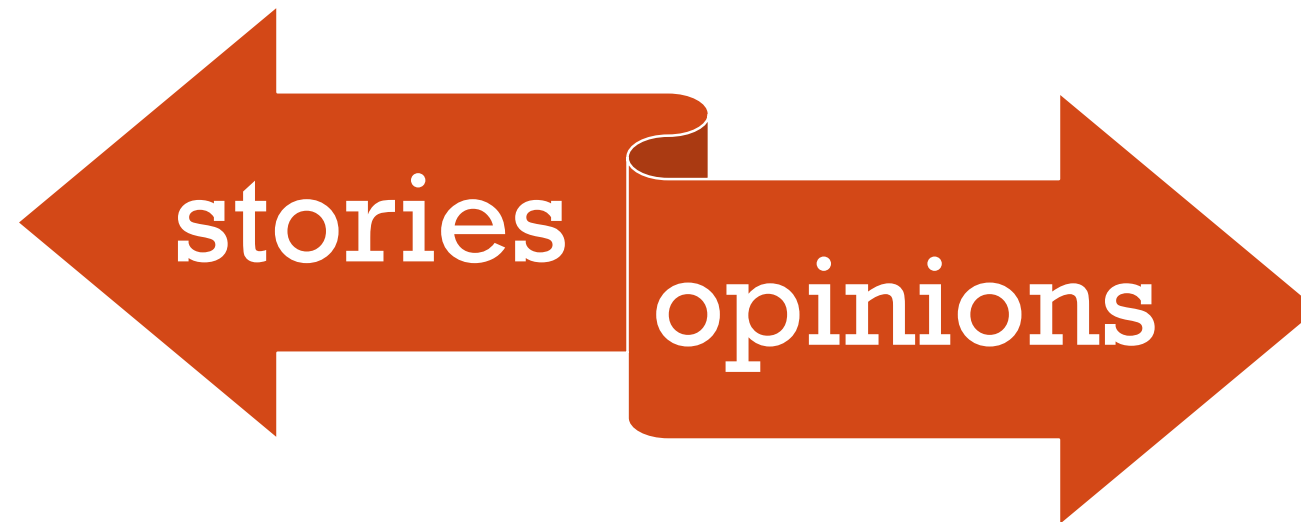
stories

opinions

- What to do with pieces of data that look more like opinions rather than stories? Can I still use these?

EXAMPLE 4: WHAT COUNTS AS A STORY?

- My ideal objective is that students leave school curious to know more […] I have the objective of seeing [name of school] obtaining good results in external examinations, in English examinations. That is my objective, to position the school with a good level of English. This is the global objective, like the objective of the community. And that students in 11th grade don't leave saying "finally, I passed English!" that's is not the idea, the idea is that they say "I like that song, let's try to translate it and sing it." That would be a very nice achievement, to see students do that. (Jairo: Int1)

NARRATIVES AND NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Analysis of narratives Vs. Narrative analysis (blurry boundaries)

Emplotment: Configuration of events into a coherent story

(Polkinghorne 1995)

OTHER 'MUNDANE' CONCERNS

- Would it be ok to use a set of different ways to present the data as evidence in the discussion of findings?

  Extended stories

  Short accounts, cleared up of researcher's interventions

  Short lines included in the discussion,

  Excerpts of interview transcription including turns

- Would that affect the strength of the argument?

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Considering form and content at the same time is not always pertinent/relevant. Having a solid theoretical framework may be enough. It all depends on the purposes of the study. However, there needs to be coherence with epistemological and ontological assumptions.

- It is not about choosing but tailoring your framework of analysis.

- There is a great deal of complex decision making in processes that seemed to be rather straightforward

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