

**‘ELT for a Global World’**



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# Individual differences

A seminar course for TEFL students

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# Conducting case study research

# Scientific research

- Asking questions in order to understand the world
- Systematic and principled inquiry
- Find regularities, patterns in data
- Reach conclusions that are sensible, credible, interpretable
- Different frameworks for carrying out research

# Quantitative vs. Qualitative research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
General framework	To confirm hypotheses about phenomena (positivism) Use highly structured methods (e.g. questionnaires, structured observation)	Seek to explore phenomena (phenomenology) Use semi-structured methods (interviews, focus groups, participant observation)

# Quantitative vs. Qualitative research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Analytical objectives	Quantify variation Predict causal relationships Describe characteristics of population	Describe variation Describe and explain relationships Describe individual experiences, group norms

# Quantitative vs. Qualitative research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Question format	Closed-ended	Open-ended
Data format	Numerical	Textual

# Quantitative vs. Qualitative research

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Flexibility in design	<p>Design is stable from beginning to end</p> <p>Design is subject to statistical assumptions and conditions</p>	<p>Some aspects of the study are flexible (e.g. interview questions)</p> <p>Data collection and research questions are adjusted according to what is learnt</p>

# Validity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Hoepfl, 1997)

## *Quantitative*

- **Internal validity** (inference regarding cause-effect relationships; data gained in research can be used to explain the phenomenon)
- **External validity** (results can be generalized to wider population)
- **Reliability** (repeatability of observations & of measures)
- **Objectivity** (value-free, no bias)

## *Qualitative*

- **Credibility** (are the results credible from the perspective of the participant?)
- **Transferability** (achieved by thoroughly describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research)
- **Dependability** (emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs)
- **Confirmability** (the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others)



# Case study defined (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000)

- A case study is a specific, holistic, often unique instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle
- The study of an instance in action
- The study of an evolving situation
- Case studies portray “what it is like’ to be in a particular situation”

# Elements of case study

- Rich, vivid and holistic description (“thick description”) and portrayal of events, contexts and situations through the eyes of participants (including the researcher)
- Contexts are temporal, physical, organizational, institutional, interpersonal
- Chronological narrative
- Combination of description, analysis and interpretation
- Focus on actors and participants
- Let the data speak for themselves (do not over-interpret)

# Types of case study

## Yin (2002)

- Exploratory (pilot)
- Descriptive (e.g. narrative)
- Explanatory

## Stake (1995)

- Intrinsic case studies (to understand the case in question);
- Instrumental case studies (examining a particular case to gain insight into an issue or theory);
- Collective case studies (groups of individual studies to gain a fuller picture)

# Strengths of case studies (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000)

- Rooted in real contexts
- Regard context as determinant of behaviour
- The whole is more than the sum of the parts (holism)
- Strong on reality
- Recognize and accept complexity, uniqueness and unpredictability
- Lead to action (link to action research)
- Can focus on critical incidents
- Written in accessible style and are immediately intelligible
- Practicable (can be done by a single researcher)
- Can permit generalizations and application to similar situations

# Problems with case studies (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000)

- Difficult to organize
- Limited generalizability
- Problems of cross-checking
- Risk of bias, selectivity and subjectivity

# Triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 )

- Methodologies
- Data
- Researchers
- Theory (interpretive paradigms/lenses)

# Generalizability/ Transferability

- From the single instance to the class of instances
- From features of the single case to classes with the same features
- From the single features of part of the case to the whole of the case

# What can be a CASE?

- A person
- A group
- An organization
- An event
- A process
- A program



# Data in case studies

- Observations (structured to unstructured)
- Field notes
- Interviews (structured to unstructured)
- Documents (existing or created by researcher)
- Numbers

# Stages in case study research

- Start with a wide field of focus
- Progressive focusing
- Draft interpretation/report (avoid generalizing too early)

# Designing your own case study

# Initial steps

(Hancock & Algozzine, 2006)

- Setting the stage
  - What are you going to study?
- Determining what you know
  - Review of literature/previous studies
- Selecting a design
  - Quantitative/qualitative?
  - Exploratory? Explanatory/instrumental?  
Intrinsic/descriptive? Collective?

# Getting information from interviews

(Hancock & Algozzine, 2006)

- Consider:
  - Who you want to ask
  - Develop interview guide
  - Consider context
  - Ways of recording
  - Ethical considerations
- Unstructured/semi-structured/structured
- Listen rather than talk
- Avoid uninformative, biased, double-barrelled questions

# Getting information from observations

(Hancock & Algozzine, 2006)

- Consider:
  - What to observe
  - Develop observation guide
  - Gain access
  - Recognise biases
  - Ethical considerations
- Structured/unstructured observations
- Record detailed and concrete observations instead of vague, overgeneralised ones

# Getting information from documents

(Hancock & Algozzine, 2006)

- Consider:
  - Who has the information
  - What part of it is needed
  - Where is it
  - When was it prepared
  - How will it be collected
- Possible sources
  - Internet
  - Public and private records
  - Physical evidence
  - Instruments created by researcher

# Individual differences covered in course

- Language learner beliefs
- Language aptitude
- Learning styles
- Learning strategies
- Age
- Motivation
- Self-regulation
- Anxiety
- Willingness to communicate
- Special needs: dyslexia



# Recall instruments used to study them in the empirical articles presented

- Language learner beliefs
- Language aptitude
- Learning styles
- Learning strategies
- Age
- Motivation
- Self-regulation
- Anxiety
- Willingness to communicate
- Special needs: dyslexia
- Interviews?
- Observation?
- Documents?
  - Questionnaires
  - Tests
  - Etc.

# Triangulation

- Which of the empirical studies presented by your fellow students used triangulation?
- For example:
  - Mezei & Csizér (2005) – Motivation
    - Interview with teacher, students
    - Questionnaire with students, teacher
    - Observation of class
  - Ahlquist (2013) – Age (young learners)
    - Interview with teachers
    - Interview with some students
    - Observation
    - Questionnaires
    - Samples of learner writing

# Analysis

(Hancock & Algozzine, 2006)

- Refine research question in the light of the data
- Focus on research question
- Collect and interpret relevant data only
- Develop a method for labelling, storing and gaining access to information
- Use all available resources
- Use a systematic procedure for analysis
  - E.g. content analysis
    - Determine categories
    - Apply categories
    - Count number of entries
    - Consider patterns in light of relevant literature/theory

# Presentation of findings

- Make sure your presentation includes
  - Brief reference to the theoretical background
  - Your research question(s)
  - Detailed explanation of
    - Methods used for data collection (do not forget to justify your methods)
    - Steps of data analysis
  - YOUR FINDINGS (i.e. research results and how you interpret them)
  - What you (as a language teacher) benefitted as a result of conducting this case study/pedagogical implications

# References

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