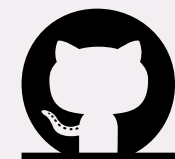# Applied Linguistics

LG 451/456 — Semester 2, 2021 (Jan-May 2022)

CLASS 11: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Sakol Suethanapornkul

Outline: Week 11

- Recap: (Quantitative) research in AL

- Qualitative research in AL

  - Quantitative-qualitative dichotomy

  - Examples of qualitative research

  - Data collection

- Installment II: Research question(s) & method
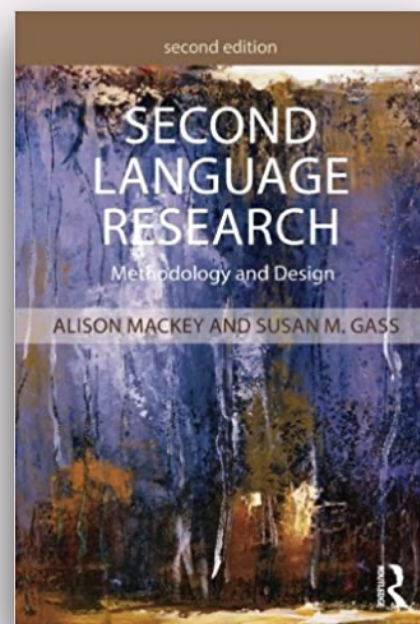
- Looking ahead: Week 12

Recap

What is research?

Research is a detailed study of a subject, especially in order to *discover* (new) *information* or *reach* a (new) *understanding*
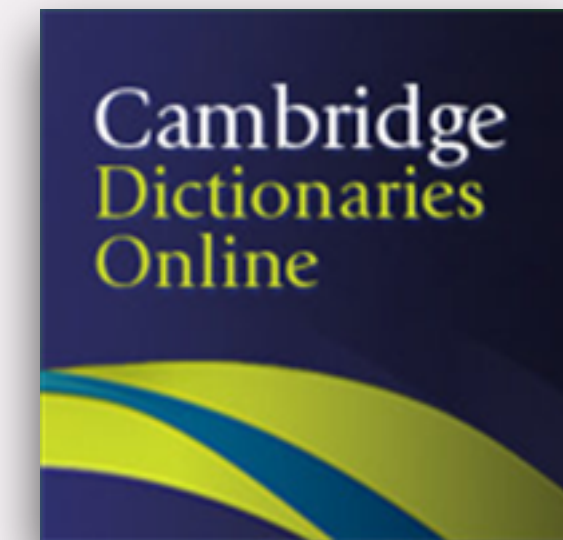
Cambridge Dictionary

"In its most basic and simplest form, research is a way of finding out answers to questions

Mackey and Gass (2015, p. 1)

Methodological frameworks

Two basic types of methodological frameworks in any areas of linguistics:

- **Quantitative methods**

  - identifying (systematic) patterns and/or structures from data

- **Qualitative methods**

  - interpreting meanings and/or relationships

Quantitative research approach

An approach used to explore or determine the relationship between variables

- correlation or cause-effect

- **deductive** (theory verification)

- objective measurement of variables (numbers, statistical analyses)

- **generalizability** (extension of findings from study conducted on a sample to the target population)

Variable

- a characteristic that differs from group to group or from person to person

- language proficiency, vocabulary knowledge

Deductive

- I start with a theory

- I have a hypothesis based on theory

- I seek evidence to confirm or reject hypothesis

Qualitative Research

This part is adapted from Alana Newell's Introduction to Qualitative Method slides

Quantitative-Qualitative dichotomy

Quantitative-Qualitative dichotomy

Quantitative	Qualitative
Tests hypothesis that is constructed *prior to data collection*	Responsive to changes that occur during the study; *may shift focus*
Can generalize findings when data are based on random samples of a sufficient size	Can *explain how and why phenomena occur in the participants' own words*
Pre-determined methods	Emerging methods
Instrument-based questions	Open-ended questions

Quantitative-Qualitative dichotomy

Quantitative	Qualitative
Statistical analysis and interpretation	Text and image analysis, theme and pattern interpretation
Focuses on a relatively **small number of concepts** (concise and narrow)	Attempts to understand a particular **phenomenon in its entirety** (complex and broad)
Begins with preconceived ideas about how the concepts are interrelated	Has few preconceived ideas and stresses **the importance of people's interpretations of events and circumstances**

Quantitative-Qualitative dichotomy

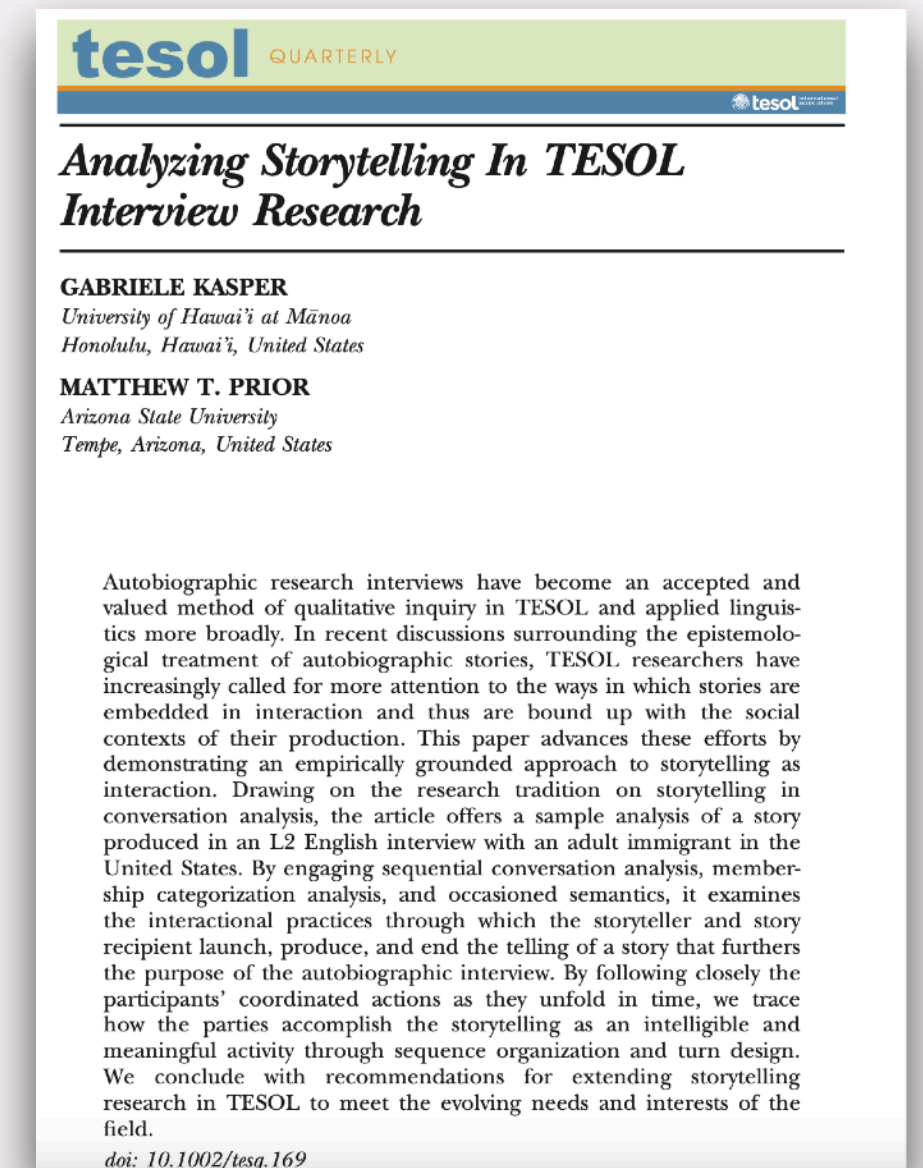| Quantitative	Qualitative
Collects information under **conditions of control**	Attempts to **capture that context in its entirety**
Emphasizes objectivity in the collection and analysis of information	**Assumes that subjectivity is essential** for the understanding of human experience
Analyzes numeric information through statistical procedures	Analyzes narrative information
Investigator does not participate in the events under investigation	**Involves sustained interaction** with the people being studied

Examples of qualitative research

- Narrative research – 1-2 individuals

  - Researcher studies the lives of individuals

  - Retells stories about lives chronologically

- Phenomenological research – 3-10 individuals

  - Studies events and occurrences from the experiences of individuals

  - Researcher describes phenomenon from each perspective, tries to capture the different understandings, uncover meaning or essence

tesol QUARTERLY

Analyzing Storytelling In TESOL Interview Research

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Autobiographic research interviews have become an accepted and valued method of qualitative inquiry in TESOL and applied linguistics more broadly. In recent discussions surrounding the epistemological treatment of autobiographic stories, TESOL researchers have increasingly called for more attention to the ways in which stories are embedded in interaction and thus are bound up with the social contexts of their production. This paper advances these efforts by demonstrating an empirically grounded approach to storytelling as interaction. Drawing on the research tradition on storytelling in conversation analysis, the article offers a sample analysis of a story produced in an L2 English interview with an adult immigrant in the United States. By engaging sequential conversation analysis, membership categorization analysis, and occasioned semantics, it examines the interactional practices through which the storyteller and story recipient launch, produce, and end the telling of a story that furthers the purpose of the autobiographic interview. By following closely the participants' coordinated actions as they unfold in time, we trace how the parties accomplish the storytelling as an intelligible and meaningful activity through sequence organization and turn design. We conclude with recommendations for extending storytelling research in TESOL to meet the evolving needs and interests of the field.

doi: 10.1002/tesq.169

Examples of qualitative research

8 Encountering Multilingualism in Study Abroad: Sojourners' Orientations to Linguistic Diversity and Language Hierarchies in Barcelona

Brandon Tullock

- Ethnography – 1 culture-sharing group

  - Exploration and documentation of shared patterns, language, etc. in a shared culture

  - Often involves observations and interviews

- Case Studies – 4-5 individuals

  - Researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case: a program, event, activity or process

  - Bounded by time; involves variety of data collection procedures

Data collection: Selecting participants

- Research participants purposefully selected

  - People who have the background you are interested

- Sample size depends on the research design

  - 4-5 for case studies, 1-2 for narrative research, etc.

  - A set number initially; then saturation (stops when new themes emerging)

Data collection: Observations

- Researcher takes field notes – unstructured or semi-structured

  - Can be concealed, observer only or a participant

  - Keep descriptive and reflective sections separate

  - Concentrate on writing detailed descriptive notes

  - Jot down questions, hunches, etc. after sessions

- Generally open-ended with participants freely sharing their views

Data collection: Interview

- Researcher conducts face-to-face, telephone, or online group interviews

- Generally open-ended questions

  - may be semi-structured or unstructured

Testing motivations
Why did you decide to get the XX test?
Why did you think it was necessary to do it?

Experience of getting the test results
How was getting the results? How did they tell you?
Did they explain the results in a way that is easy to understand?

Perceived needs for testing
Which women do you think should worry about X test?
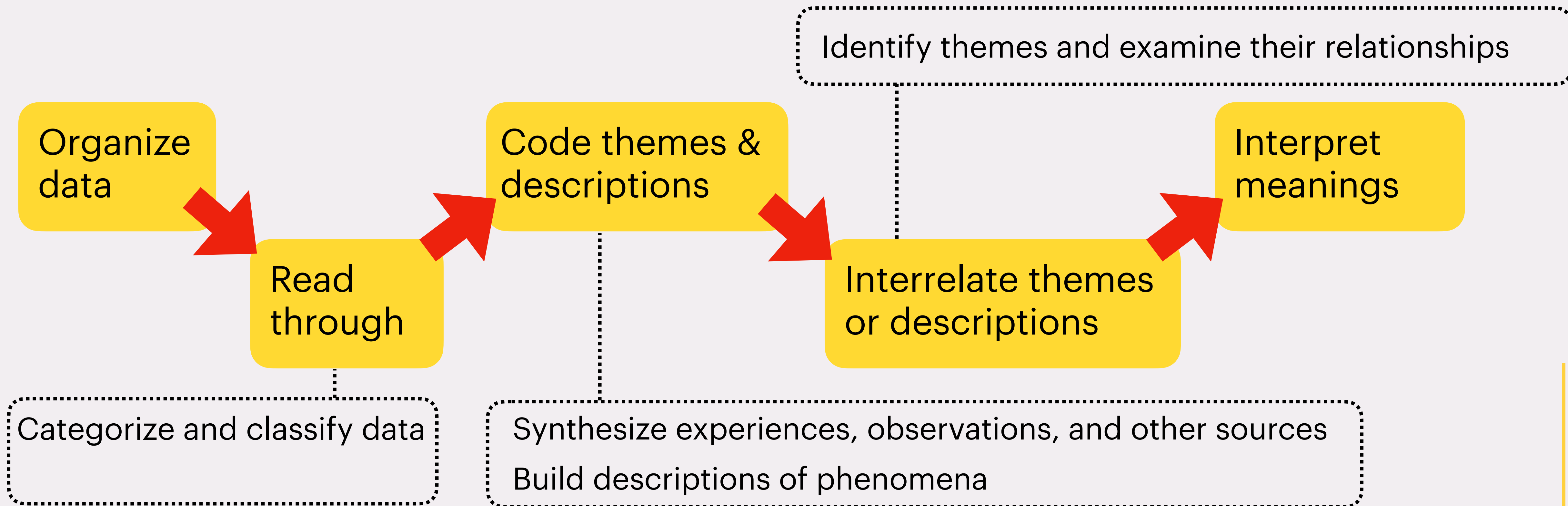Which women should have it done?

Example: Semi-structured questions for health outcomes

Data collection: Documents

- Researcher collects documents during a research process
  - Public documents (e.g., newspapers, meeting minutes, social media)
  - Private documents (e.g., journals, letters)

Qualitative data

Analysis differs with each design, but there are several general steps*:

Identify themes and examine their relationships

Organize data

Code themes & descriptions

Interpret meanings

Read through

Interrelate themes or descriptions

Categorize and classify data

Synthesize experiences, observations, and other sources

Build descriptions of phenomena

* Repeat as needed

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Project: 2nd installment

Recap: Installment II

- Updated version of Installment I

- **Specific research questions** that you can guide your data collection

- With a focus on research method, installment II should answer Qs:

  - What kind of data will you collect?

  - How often will you collect this set of data?

  - Who are you going to collect the data from?

  - How do you plan to analyze the data?

  - In what way do the data answer your research questions?

Installment II: Group work time

- We will break into groups and spend some time on the Installment II

Next week...

- **<u>Topic</u>**: Language, identity, and power

  - 3rd reading facilitation!

- **<u>Reading</u>**:

  - Wei Chapter 9

- **<u>Assignment</u>**:

  - Installment 2 due at the end of week (Friday 04/01/2022)