

A COMMPARISON OF QUALITATIVE VS. QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGIES

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GOALS

QL: Interpretational- to understand the focus from the perspective of those who are a part of it and to construct a theory to account for the observable.

QT: Verificational- to establish relationship between variables (events, categories, behaviors, or attributes, which are usually associated with more abstract constructs), to explain cause of changes in these variables, and to develop a formal theory to account for relationships observed within the system under study.

PERSPECTIVE

QL: emic (from within)

QT: etic (known in advance and imposed from without)

DATA COLLECTED

QL: Categorical (big things)

QT: Numerical

METHODOLOGY

QL: Inductive- What is going on here? (narrative data; interview; collection in the field; bottom up collection; subjective, value; insider; labor intensive; precise method defined as you go along; writing accompanies research)

QT: Deductive- I have a hypothesis to prove! (discrete data; collection in the laboratory; top-down collection; objective; facts; outsider; non-intensive, methods defined in advance, writing after the fact)

ROLE OF RESEARCHER

QL: plays a crucial role, is the instrument of the research and s/he becomes immersed in the field site and the data; always danger of biases corrupting.

QT: plays a neutral role, and once design is determined, anyone should be able to do the research.

UNDERLYNG EPISTEMOLOGY

QL: Phenomenology/Post-positivistic (subjective)

- a. There are multiple realities of ways of understanding any situation
- b. These are socially constructed through both individual and collective definitions of a given situation.

QT: Positivism/Naturalism (objective)

- a. Sense experience is the source and basis for what we know
- b. Any account of knowledge is constructed in terms of sense experiences.
- c. There are social facts with a single objective reality
- d. They can be appreciated by everyone
- e. They can be separated from feelings and beliefs.

Seldom is a piece of work either purely qualitative or quantitative, that is, purely interpretative or verificational.

In data collection and analysis, there is the constant testing out of the emerging thesis, collection of more data to check it out, retesting, etc. This may be done publicly in the case of more qualitative studies, less publicly, e.g. in the pilot studies that lie behind the one reports (and there may be many) is a give and take: get some data; form a theory; test it out; evaluate the results; revise the theory

RANGE OF STUDIES

QL: ethnography; case study; multi-field; historical study; ethnomethodological; natural history; ethnography of communication, observation, participant observation.

QT: true experimental research; quasi-experimental research; correlational research; survey research; ex post facto research.

CONTINUUM OF DESIGNS

- a. What happens in L2 classroom?
- b. What sorts of teacher-student interaction occur in an L2 classroom?
- c. What is the distribution of teacher wait-time with students?
- d. To what extent does the wait-time of a teacher correlate with the teacher's assessment of the student's ability?
- e. How well does the teacher wait-time predict student satisfaction?

"TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE IS TO STRIKE A BARGAIN, AND WHAT IS PURCHASED ALWAYS HAS ITS PRICE."

John Locke