

Research methods in Applied Linguistics: Mixed methods research

Bárbara Eizaga Rebollar

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2.2.3. Mixed methods research

It involves the mixing of quan & qual research methods or paradigm characteristics.

1. Purpose

3 main purposes for combining methods:

- a) Achieve a fuller understanding of the target phenomenon by looking at it from different angles.
- b) Verify one set of findings by presenting converging results obtained through different methods (*triangulation*).
- c) To reach audiences that would not be sympathetic to one of the approaches if applied alone.

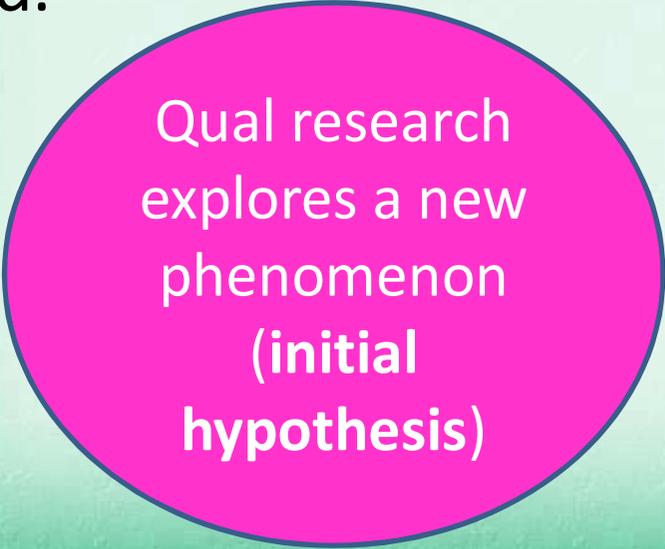
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a) Expanding the understanding of a complex issue:

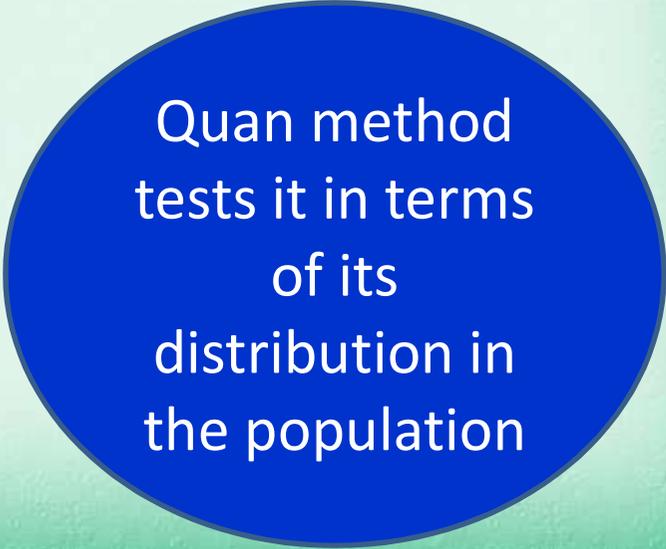
Mixed methods are valuable to examine an issue in a complex educational or social context.

4 functions:

➤ *Complementary function:* It measures different facets of a phenomenon, yielding a richer understanding of the social world.



Qual research
explores a new
phenomenon
(initial
hypothesis)



Quan method
tests it in terms
of its
distribution in
the population

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- *Development function*: Qual & quan methods used sequentially  the results of 1st method inform the development of 2nd.
- *Initiation function*: Varied methods are used to generate discrepancies, meant to be provocative through the recasting of questions leading to new perspectives.
- *Expansion function*: Expand the scope of the study by including multiple components, e.g.
 - qual method*  explore the processes of an instructional programme.
 - quan method*  assess the programme outcomes.

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b) Corroborating findings through *triangulation*:

Triangulation  generation of multiple perspectives on a phenomenon by using various data sources, investigators, theories, or research methods.



Ensures research validity (*validation-through-convergence*).

c) Reaching multiple audiences:

The outcome of a mixed methods research has more selling points than a monomethod.

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2. Compatibility of different research paradigms:

Additive mixing → multiple data collected using different strategies, methods so that the mixture results in complementary strengths & non-overlapping weaknesses.

Mixed methods research is ideal to link micro- & macro-level analyses

the *individualistic* perspective: attitudes, beliefs & values

the *societal* perspective: sociocultural norms, intergroup relations, interethnic conflicts, etc.

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3. Main mixed methods research

Most common: questionnaires + semi-structured interviews

Typology:

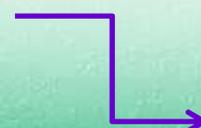
1. Questionnaire with follow-up interview (QUAN → qual):

Questionnaires examine the interrelation of the variables measured, but **cannot interpret unexpected results.**

 In a follow-up (individual or group) interview, respondents explain the obtained patterns.

2. Questionnaire preceded by interview (qual → QUAN):

Focus group interview for background information or to narrow down the variables

 Item pool questionnaire

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3. Interview study with follow-up questionnaire

(QUAL→ quan): Qual data can't tell us about the distribution of a phenomenon in a population but a questionnaire can, allowing us to generalize hypotheses.

4. Interview study preceded by questionnaire (quan→QUAL)

Flexible design: it can be used for most sampling purposes (extreme or typical cases, or individuals with certain traits), but questionnaire can't be anonymous.

5. Concurrent combinations of qual & quan research

(QUAL/qual+QUAN/quan): both methods used in a parallel & separate way to broaden research perspective & to test how different findings complement each other.

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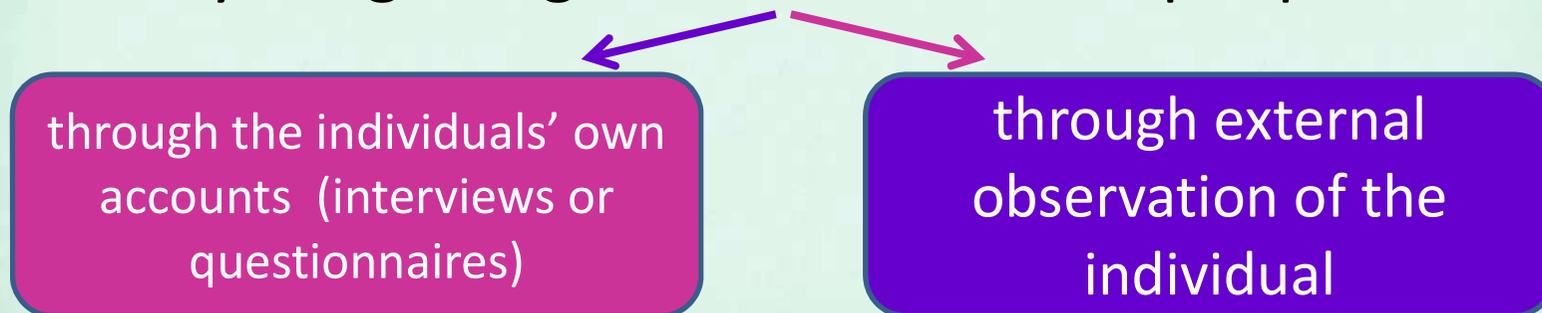
6. Experiments with parallel interviews (QUAN+qual):

Good to get at the research participants' perspectives and meanings behind the experimental research findings.

7. Longitudinal study with mixed methods components (QUAN+QUAL)

8. Combining self-report & observational data (QUAL+QUAN):

2 ways of getting information about people are



Classroom observation studies with self-report measures.

References

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- Kroll, T. & M. Neri (2009), 'Designs for Mixed Methods Research', in S. Andrew & E. J. Halcomb *Mixed Methods Research for Nursing and the Health Sciences*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell.