Master 1 Course (S2): 2024-2025

Research Methodology course

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Lecture 1: Sampling: An In-Depth Exploration

Sampling is a foundational component of **quantitative research**, as it directly influences the **validity, reliability**, and **generalizability** of findings. Researchers often begin with two critical questions:

1. **How many participants do I need?** (Sample size)
2. **Who should I include in the study?** (Sample composition)

These questions are more than logistical—they are **methodological imperatives** that must be addressed early in the research design process. The answers significantly affect:

- Planning and scheduling
- Budget and resources
- Methodological integrity

To understand sampling, we must first define three central concepts: **sample**, **population**, and **representativeness**.

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1. Sample, Population, and Representativeness

- **Population**: The **entire group** of people the research is interested in. For example, "all EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in Taiwanese secondary schools."
- **Sample**: The **subset of the population** that the researcher actually includes in the study. E.g., "three classes of EFL students from selected Taiwanese schools."
- **Representativeness**: A **representative sample** mirrors the key characteristics of the population it is drawn from (e.g., age, gender, proficiency level). This ensures the findings can be **generalized** to the larger population with confidence.

🔍 ***Example***: If the population includes both urban and rural schools, a sample drawn only from urban schools would **not be representative**, potentially skewing the results.

Representativeness is crucial because it determines **how accurately findings from a sample can be generalized** to the broader population (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).

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2. Why Not Study the Whole Population?

While studying every member of the population (a **census**) would theoretically ensure maximum accuracy, it is often:

- Impractical
- Time-consuming
- Expensive

Instead, **well-designed sampling strategies** allow researchers to obtain **reliable results** from a smaller group of people, using **fewer resources**.

✓ *For instance*, national opinion polls can predict election outcomes with samples of just 1,000–3,000 people.

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3. Types of Sampling Procedures

Sampling strategies in quantitative research are broadly categorized into:

A. Probability Sampling (Statistical Sampling)

Ensures **randomness** and **objectivity**, providing higher chances of representativeness. These methods are **more scientific** but also **more resource-intensive**.

B. Non-Probability Sampling (Practical Sampling)

Used when probability sampling is not feasible. Although **less scientifically rigorous**, it offers **pragmatic solutions** in real-world research scenarios.

A. Probability Sampling Techniques

These methods rely on **random selection**, where every member of the population has an **equal chance** of being chosen.

1. Simple Random Sampling

- Participants are chosen entirely at random (e.g., drawing names from a hat or using a random number generator).
- Helps avoid **selection bias**.
- Ensures each individual in the population has an **equal probability** of being selected.

📌 *Example*: Numbering every EFL learner in a region and using a random number generator to pick 300 of them.

2. Stratified Random Sampling

- The population is divided into meaningful **subgroups** (strata), such as gender, age, or education level.

- Then, random samples are selected **proportionally** from each group.

📌 *Example*: In a study on language motivation, you may divide participants by gender and select equal proportions of male and female students randomly.

This method increases **precision** by ensuring all key subgroups are adequately represented.

3. Systematic Sampling

- Every n^{th} individual is selected from a list (e.g., every 5th student on a school roster).
- It is simpler than random sampling but can introduce bias if there's an underlying pattern in the list.

⚠ *Limitation*: Systematic sampling assumes that the list is randomly ordered.

4. Cluster Sampling

- The population is divided into clusters (e.g., schools, cities), and **entire clusters are randomly selected**.
- All members within selected clusters are studied.

📌 *Example*: Instead of selecting 500 students individually across a region, you randomly choose five schools and study all students in those schools.

Efficient for **geographically dispersed populations**, though the trade-off may be **reduced precision**.

B. Non-Probability Sampling Techniques

These methods do **not rely on random selection**, and while they may introduce bias, they are often the **only feasible approach** in applied research settings.

1. Quota Sampling

- Similar to stratified sampling but **without random selection**.
- The researcher ensures the sample meets certain **predefined quotas** based on important characteristics (e.g., gender, language background), but participants are chosen **non-randomly**.

📌 *Example*: 50 bilingual and 50 monolingual learners are needed. The researcher recruits them as they become available.

2. Dimensional Sampling

- A more structured version of quota sampling.
- Ensures that **every combination of key characteristics** is represented in the sample.

📌 *Example*: Ensuring at least one participant in each age group and gender category.

3. Snowball Sampling

- The researcher starts with a few participants and asks them to **refer others** who fit the criteria.
- Especially useful for **hard-to-reach populations** (e.g., undocumented immigrants, gang members).

📌 *Example*: Interviewing one bilingual teenager and asking them to refer others with similar language experiences.

4. Convenience (Opportunity) Sampling

- Participants are selected based on **ease of access**.
- Common in classroom-based or institutional research where the researcher uses **available students**.

📌 *Example*: A university professor surveying their own students.

Although widely used, this method has **limited generalizability** unless supplemented with purposive selection criteria.

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4. Determining Sample Size

A. Common Misunderstanding

Most researchers ask, "How **small** a sample can I use?" rather than “How large should it be?”—seeking **efficiency** over abundance.

B. General Guidelines (Rules of Thumb)

- **Survey studies**: Sample = 1%–10% of the population (minimum ~100)
- **Correlational studies**: At least 30 participants
- **Experimental studies**: Minimum 15 participants **per group**
- **Factor analysis or multivariate methods**: 100+ participants

C. Statistical Considerations

- To achieve **normal distribution**, most statistical tests require samples of **at least 30** (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991).
- Smaller samples may require **non-parametric statistics** (e.g., Mann-Whitney U, Chi-square).

D. Sample Composition

- If the sample includes **subgroups** (e.g., male vs female), ensure **each subgroup meets the minimum size** requirements for statistical power.

📌 *Example*: If 60% of your population is female and 40% male, and you need 30 participants per group, your total sample should be **at least 75**.

E. Safety Margin

Build in **extra participants** to account for:

- Dropouts or attrition
- Incomplete data
- Unexpected subgroups

 Tip: If aiming for 100 responses, recruit **at least 120**.

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5. Final Considerations

- In **quantitative research**, the **quality of sampling** directly affects the **validity of conclusions**.
- If using **non-probability sampling**, researchers must:
  - Clearly **describe limitations**
  - Explain **why the sample is still relevant**
  - Avoid **overgeneralizing** the findings

🔔 *Important*: The **majority of research** in applied linguistics uses **non-probability sampling** due to practical constraints. This is acceptable **as long as the limitations are transparently acknowledged**.

✅ **Summary: Key Takeaways**

Concept	Description
Population	The full group you want to generalize findings to
Sample	The subset of people you actually study
Representativeness	How closely your sample mirrors the population
Probability Sampling	Random, scientific, and more representative
Non-Probability Sampling	More practical, but with limited generalizability
Sample Size	Depends on research design, statistical needs, and subgroups
Transparency	Always report sampling limitations and justify choices

Lecture 2: Surveys

Introduction

Surveys are one of the most widely used tools in language teaching and educational research. Whether you're trying to understand students' attitudes, evaluate teaching methods, or assess language learning needs, surveys can provide valuable insights.

□ What Is a Survey?

A survey is a research method used to collect data from a group of people using questionnaires or interviews. In language teaching, surveys help us gather information about:

- Learners' experiences and attitudes
- Teaching practices and classroom environment
- Effectiveness of instructional methods
- Needs analysis for curriculum development

📝 Types of Surveys

There are three main types of surveys in language teaching:

1. **Descriptive Surveys**
    - Aim: To describe attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.
    - Example: Surveying students' attitudes toward using English outside the classroom.
2. **Analytical (Explanatory) Surveys**
    - Aim: To explain relationships between variables.
    - Example: Investigating whether the use of group work is related to learners' speaking fluency.
3. **Evaluative Surveys**
    - Aim: To assess a program, course, or teaching material.
    - Example: Evaluating student satisfaction with a new English textbook.

🔧 Designing a Survey in Language Teaching

Step 1: Define the Purpose

Be clear about what you want to find out. This will help you choose the right questions.

Step 2: Identify the Target Population

Decide who will complete the survey: students, teachers, parents, etc.

Step 3: Choose the Format

- Closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple choice, Likert scale)
- Open-ended questions (to allow deeper responses)

Step 4: Pilot the Survey

Try the survey on a small group first. Fix unclear or confusing items.

Step 5: Distribute and Collect Data

Surveys can be done online, on paper, or face-to-face.

Step 6: Analyze the Results

Use statistics for quantitative data or coding for qualitative data to identify patterns and themes.

📊 Sample Questions for a Language Learning Survey

- "How confident do you feel when speaking English in class?"
- "How often do you use English outside the classroom?"
- "Which classroom activities help you learn best?"
- "What difficulties do you face in learning new vocabulary?"

✅ Advantages of Using Surveys in Language Teaching

- Can reach a large number of participants
- Cost-effective and easy to distribute
- Useful for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data
- Helps inform teaching practices and curriculum planning

⚠️ Limitations and Cautions

- Responses may not always reflect true opinions (social desirability bias)
- Poorly designed questions can lead to misleading results
- Requires careful analysis to avoid misinterpretation

🔒 Ethical Considerations

- Ensure informed consent
- Guarantee anonymity and confidentiality
- Avoid leading or biased questions
- Be transparent about how data will be used

Conclusion

Surveys are a powerful tool in language education, helping us better understand our learners and teaching contexts. With careful planning, thoughtful design, and ethical use, surveys can lead to meaningful improvements in language teaching and learning.

Lecture 3: Questionnaires in Research

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1. Introduction & Definition

A **questionnaire** is a **structured research instrument** consisting of a series of written or printed questions designed to gather **information from respondents**. It is one of the most commonly used tools in **quantitative research**, but can also be adapted for qualitative studies.

Questionnaires are widely used in fields such as:

- Education
- Sociology
- Psychology
- Market research
- Applied linguistics

They allow researchers to collect **standardized data** from large groups efficiently and economically.

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2. Types of Questionnaires

There are two broad categories:

A. Structured Questionnaires

- Primarily used in **quantitative** research.
- Include **closed-ended** questions.
- Standardized format.
- Suitable for statistical analysis.

Example: A Likert scale survey on students' attitudes toward online learning.

B. Unstructured or Semi-Structured Questionnaires

- Used more in **qualitative** or mixed-methods research.
- Include **open-ended** questions that allow for elaboration.
- Designed to explore ideas, experiences, or beliefs.

🗣️ Example: Asking teachers to describe challenges they face in remote teaching.

🛠️ 3. Questionnaire Construction: Basic Components

When designing a questionnaire, it typically includes **three main sections**:

1. Introduction / Cover Letter

- Explains the **purpose** of the study.
- Ensures **informed consent**.
- States confidentiality and how the data will be used.

Example: "This survey is part of a study on how university students manage their academic stress. Your responses will remain anonymous."

2. Demographic Information

- Collects background details (e.g., age, gender, education, occupation).
- Helps identify subgroups in the analysis.

3. Main Body (Substantive Questions)

- Focused on the **research objectives**.
- Should be logically organized by themes or topics.
- May be divided into **sections** (e.g., Section A: Motivation; Section B: Learning strategies).

❓ 4. Types of Questions

Question types should be selected based on research goals and analysis plans.

A. Closed-ended Questions

These questions offer **preset answers**.

Common types:

- **Yes/No**
- **Multiple Choice**
- **Likert Scale** (e.g., Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree)
- **Ranking** (e.g., Rank the following in order of preference)

✓ Pros: Easy to analyze
✗ Cons: May restrict depth of response

B. Open-ended Questions

Allow respondents to **answer in their own words**.

Example: “What do you think are the most important challenges of remote learning?”

✓ Pros: Rich, detailed data
✗ Cons: Time-consuming to analyze

C. Semantic Differential Scale

Respondents rate an item between **two bipolar adjectives**.

Example: "My language class is... (Boring — Exciting)"

✍ 5. Key Principles for Writing Good Questions

- **Be clear and concise**: Avoid jargon or ambiguous terms.
- **Ask one thing at a time**: Avoid double-barreled questions (e.g., “How often and how much do you exercise?”).
- **Use neutral wording**: Avoid leading or loaded questions.
- **Ensure options are exhaustive and mutually exclusive**.
- **Keep it short**: Respect the respondent’s time.

👍 6. Advantages of Questionnaires

- ✓ **Cost-effective**: Cheap to administer, especially online.
- ✓ **Scalable**: Can reach a large audience quickly.
- ✓ **Standardized**: Ensures consistency across responses.
- ✓ **Anonymity**: Encourages honesty, especially with sensitive topics.
- ✓ **Versatile**: Can collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

⚠ 7. Limitations of Questionnaires

- ✗ **Superficial responses**: Especially with closed-ended questions.
- ✗ **Low response rate**: Especially with email or online surveys.
- ✗ **Misinterpretation**: Questions might be misunderstood.
- ✗ **Lack of flexibility**: Cannot clarify unclear answers in real time.

- ✕ **Self-report bias**: Responses may be influenced by social desirability.

⚠ 8. Common Pitfalls to Avoid

1. **Vague or unclear questions**
2. **Too many open-ended items** (can overwhelm participants)
3. **Overly long questionnaires** (may lead to fatigue or dropout)
4. **Inconsistent response formats** (switching between scales can confuse)
5. **Biased or leading questions**
6. **Neglecting to pilot-test the questionnaire**
7. **Double questons**

□ 9. Implementation: Administering the Questionnaire

A. Mode of Administration

- **Paper-based**: In-person, classrooms, mailed surveys
- **Online**: Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics
- **Face-to-face**: Interview-administered questionnaires

B. Timing & Distribution

- Choose a **convenient time** for your target audience.
- Ensure **clear instructions**.
- Provide **a deadline** and consider **reminders** for online surveys.

C. Pilot Testing

Before full distribution:

- Test the questionnaire on a small group (5–10 people).
- Look for:
  - Clarity
  - Question order
  - Technical issues
- Adjust as needed before large-scale implementation.

📊 10. Data Collection and Analysis

- Closed-ended responses → **Quantitative analysis** (e.g., descriptive stats, t-tests)
- Open-ended responses → **Content or thematic analysis**
- Ensure **anonymity** and **ethical data handling**

📌 11. Ethical Considerations

- Get **informed consent**
- Ensure **voluntary participation**
- Guarantee **confidentiality and anonymity**
- Allow participants to **withdraw at any time**

✅ 12. Conclusion

Questionnaires are a powerful tool for collecting data in research. When well-designed and implemented carefully, they allow for:

- Large-scale data collection
- Standardized analysis
- Efficient use of time and resources

However, to maximize their effectiveness, researchers must:

- Write clear and appropriate questions
- Select the right type of questionnaire
- Be mindful of sampling and ethical issues
- Pilot test the tool and report limitations honestly

Lecture 4: The Qualities of Good Research

✨ Introduction

Good research is not just about collecting data or following a method — it's about ensuring that the **process, outcomes, and interpretations** are **trustworthy**, **meaningful**, and **applicable** beyond the immediate study.

To evaluate the **quality** of any research, whether quantitative or qualitative, we rely on several core criteria:

- **Reliability**
- **Validity**
- **Generalizability**
- **Credibility**
- **Trustworthiness**

Each of these dimensions serves as a **benchmark** to assess whether the research findings can be **trusted**, **replicated**, and **applied** more broadly.

✓ 1. Reliability

➤ Definition

Reliability refers to the **consistency** or **stability** of the measurement. A research study is reliable if repeating it under the same conditions would produce the **same results**.

➤ Types of Reliability

- **Test-retest reliability**: Are results consistent over time?
- **Inter-rater reliability**: Do different observers give similar results?
- **Internal consistency**: Do items within a test measure the same construct?

➤ Threats to Reliability

- Poorly worded or ambiguous questions
- Inconsistent administration conditions
- Subjectivity in scoring or observation
- Respondent fatigue or misunderstanding

📌 *Example*: If a language proficiency test gives significantly different results when given to the same student a week apart, it may lack test-retest reliability.

🎯 2. Validity

➤ Definition

Validity refers to whether the research **measures what it intends to measure**. A study may be reliable but still **not valid** if it consistently measures the wrong thing.

➤ Types of Validity

- **Content Validity**: Do the items cover the full range of the concept?
- **Construct Validity**: Does the test relate to theoretical concepts?
- **Criterion Validity**: Do the results correlate with other accepted measures?
- **Face Validity**: Does the test appear to measure what it should?

➤ Threats to Validity

- Poor research design
- Unclear operational definitions
- Inappropriate measurement tools
- Confounding variables

⚠ *Example*: A questionnaire measuring language motivation may lack content validity if it only asks about classroom participation but ignores intrinsic interest or external rewards.

🌍 3. Generalizability (External Validity)

➤ Definition

Generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be **applied to other contexts**, populations, or settings beyond the sample used.

➤ Why It Matters

If research results only apply to one unique group or situation, their practical value may be limited.

➤ Threats to Generalizability

- Small or unrepresentative samples
- Convenience sampling
- Context-specific results
- Overgeneralizing from limited data

⚠ *Example*: A study conducted on university students in one country may not be generalizable to working adults in another cultural context.

□ 4. Credibility (Primarily in Qualitative Research)

➤ Definition

Credibility is the **qualitative equivalent of internal validity**. It refers to how believable and convincing the findings are, from the **participant's and reader's perspective**.

➤ How to Enhance Credibility

- **Member checking**: Asking participants to verify interpretations
- **Triangulation**: Using multiple data sources or methods
- **Peer debriefing**: Discussing findings with other researchers
- **Prolonged engagement**: Spending enough time in the field

➤ Threats to Credibility

- Researcher bias or selective interpretation
- Lack of transparency in data collection or analysis
- Failure to understand the participants' perspectives

💡 *Tip*: In qualitative studies, showing **thick descriptions** and direct quotes from participants helps improve credibility.

🔐 5. Trustworthiness (Overall Quality in Qualitative Research)

Trustworthiness is an **umbrella concept** that covers several aspects of quality in qualitative research:

Component	Equivalent in Quantitative Research	Focus
Credibility	Internal validity	Accuracy and plausibility
Transferability	External validity (generalizability)	Applicability to other settings
Dependability	Reliability	Consistency of findings
Confirmability	Objectivity	Neutrality and freedom from bias

📌 *Example*: A researcher writing detailed field notes, using multiple data sources, and explaining decisions transparently improves trustworthiness.

□ 6. Additional Quality Indicators

📏 Objectivity

- Research must be free from personal bias.
- Achieved through transparency and standardized procedures.

📄 Transparency

- Clear explanation of **methodology**, **data collection**, and **analysis**.
- Enables replication and peer review.

□ Replicability (in Quantitative Research)

- Can other researchers repeat the study using your method and achieve similar results?

⚠ 7. Common Threats Across All Dimensions

Threat	Impacted Quality	Description
Sampling bias	Generalizability	Over- or under-representation of groups
Measurement error	Reliability & Validity	Inaccurate tools or processes
Social desirability bias	Validity & Credibility	Respondents give "acceptable" answers
Researcher bias	Credibility & Objectivity	Personal assumptions affect interpretation

Threat	Impacted Quality	Description
Inadequate documentation	Transparency & Replicability	Poor reporting of methods or decisions

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□ 8. Practical Tips for Ensuring Research Quality

1. **Use validated instruments** when possible.
2. **Pilot test** tools and procedures.
3. Choose **appropriate sampling methods**.
4. Document everything clearly and consistently.
5. Engage in **reflexivity** – be aware of your own biases.
6. Include **limitations and delimitations** in your report.
7. Use **multiple data sources** where applicable.
8. In qualitative work, maintain an **audit trail**.

✅ Conclusion: Why Quality Matters

Ultimately, research is only as valuable as its **trustworthiness**. Whether you're analyzing survey data or conducting interviews, paying attention to **reliability, validity, generalizability, and credibility** ensures that your findings are:

- Scientifically rigorous
- Ethically sound
- Meaningful to others
- Usable for theory, practice, or policy

Good research doesn't just seek to answer questions — it does so in a way that others can believe in, build on, and apply.

🎓 Lecture 5: Grounded Theory – A Systematic Approach to Theory Building

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📌 1. Introduction & Definition

Grounded Theory (GT) is a **qualitative research methodology** aimed at the **generation of theory** that is *"grounded"* in data. Unlike other research approaches that begin with a theoretical framework, GT begins with **data collection**, and theory **emerges from the data** itself through an inductive process.

Definition:
"Grounded theory is a systematic methodology involving the construction of theory through the analysis of data." – Glaser & Strauss (1967)

Rather than testing existing theories, GT is **data-driven**, and it seeks to **discover patterns, processes, and structures** in social phenomena **as they naturally occur**.

□ 2. Origins and Historical Background

Grounded Theory was first introduced in **1967** by **Barney Glaser** and **Anselm Strauss** in their landmark book:

"The Discovery of Grounded Theory"

It emerged as a reaction to:

- The dominance of **positivist, quantitative methods**
- The **lack of systematic rigor** in qualitative research at the time

Their goal was to create a **methodologically sound** way of conducting qualitative research that could **stand up to scientific scrutiny** while remaining rooted in lived experiences.

🏴 3. Core Characteristics of Grounded Theory

- **Inductive reasoning**: Moves from data to theory
- **Constant comparison**: Comparing data incidents to each other
- **Theoretical sampling**: Data collection guided by emerging theory
- **Coding**: Systematic labeling and categorizing of data
- **Memo-writing**: Reflective notes for theory building
- **Theoretical saturation**: Data collection ends when no new themes emerge
- **Interpretivist**
- **Iterative**

□ 4. Examples of Grounded Theory Research

- **Healthcare**: Exploring how patients adapt to chronic illness
- **Education**: Understanding how teachers develop their classroom identities
- **Sociology**: Investigating the coping strategies of unemployed workers
- **Linguistics**: Examining the social processes behind language choice in multilingual settings

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□ 5. The Three Main Versions of Grounded Theory

Over time, different interpretations of GT have evolved, leading to three **distinct approaches**. Each retains the foundational aim—building theory from data—but differs in **epistemological assumptions** and **practical methods**.

◆ A. Classic Grounded Theory – Barney Glaser

□ Epistemology:

- **Objectivist**: Assumes that theory exists in the data and can be *discovered*.

Stages: constant comparison

□ Key Features:

- Minimal preconceptions; avoid literature review early on
- Emphasizes **emergence over forcing**
- Focus on **core category** around which the theory is built

📌 Summary:

Glaser believes that the **researcher should remain as neutral as possible** and let the **data speak for itself**, without imposing structure.

◆ B. Strauss & Corbin's Version (1990, 1998)

□ Epistemology:

- **Post-positivist**: Recognizes some subjectivity, but seeks **systematic procedures**

□ Stages

- Open coding
- Axial coding
- Selective coding

□ Key Features:

- More **structured and prescriptive** than Glaser
- Emphasizes **coding paradigm**: Conditions → Actions → Consequences
- **Axial coding** is introduced to link categories
- Encourages use of **research questions and literature** earlier in the process

📌 Summary:

Strauss & Corbin's version is useful for those who want more **clear steps and analytical tools**, but critics say it can **force data into preconceived frameworks**.

◆ C. Constructivist Grounded Theory – Kathy Charmaz

Epistemology:

- **Constructivist**: Recognizes that **data and theories are co-constructed** by researchers and participants.

Stages:

General coding

Focused coding

Key Features:

- Emphasizes **reflexivity** and **researcher subjectivity**
- Views theory as an **interpretation**, not a discovery
- Less rigid structure; promotes **flexibility in coding and analysis**
- Encourages researchers to be **transparent** about their positionality

📌 Summary:

Charmaz's GT is ideal for researchers who acknowledge their **role in shaping the research**, making it popular in **feminist, critical, and interpretivist research traditions**.

Comparison Table: The Three Versions

Feature	Glaser (Classic)	Strauss & Corbin (Systematic)	Charmaz (Constructivist)
Epistemology	Positivist/Objectivist	Post-positivist	Constructivist/Interpretive
Role of Researcher	Neutral observer	Structured analyst	Co-constructor of meaning
Coding Process	Open → Selective → Theoretical	Open → Axial → Selective	Initial → Focused → Theoretical
Use of Literature	Post-analysis	Pre- and post-analysis	Used flexibly throughout
Goal of Theory	Discovery	Explanation	Interpretation

💪 6. Strengths of Grounded Theory

1. ✓ **Theory Generation**: Offers a way to **develop new theories** grounded in real-life experiences.
2. ✓ **Flexibility**: Can be adapted across disciplines and research paradigms.
3. ✓ **Depth and Richness**: Focuses on the **complexity of social processes**.
4. ✓ **Participant-centered**: Emphasizes the voice and perspective of the **people studied**.

5. ✓ **Rigorous procedures**: Provides structured tools like coding and memo-writing for systematic analysis.

⚠ 7. Limitations of Grounded Theory

1. ✕ **Time-consuming**: The iterative process of data collection and analysis takes **a lot of time**.
2. ✕ **Risk of researcher bias**: Despite efforts at neutrality, complete objectivity is impossible.
3. ✕ **Ambiguity in implementation**: Different versions may confuse novice researchers.
4. ✕ **Over-emphasis on method**: Strict procedures (especially in Strauss & Corbin's version) may lead to **mechanical analysis**.
5. ✕ **Under-theorizing**: Some GT studies stop at categorization and don't fully develop theory.

□ 8. When to Use Grounded Theory?

Grounded Theory is most suitable when:

- **Little is known** about a phenomenon
- Existing theories are **inadequate or missing**
- The goal is to understand **processes, actions, and interactions**
- You want to build a theory that emerges **organically** from the field

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📝 9. Conclusion

Grounded Theory remains one of the **most influential qualitative research methodologies**. Whether approached through Glaser's objectivism, Strauss & Corbin's structured coding, or Charmaz's constructivism, GT empowers researchers to develop **context-rich**, **data-driven theories** rooted in participants' lived experiences.

However, successful application requires a **deep understanding of the chosen version**, a commitment to **methodological rigor**, and careful **reflexivity** throughout the research process.

Ethnography 6: An Overview

1. Origins and Foundations

Ethnography is a qualitative research approach that originated in **anthropology**, where it was traditionally used to study the beliefs, behaviors, and social patterns of distant or unfamiliar societies. The goal was to **immerse oneself in a community** to understand its culture from an insider's perspective.

Over time, ethnography has been adapted across disciplines—including **education, sociology, and applied linguistics**—to investigate more familiar or localized settings such as **classrooms, workplaces, and online communities**.

Expanding the Concept of 'Culture'

While early ethnographic studies focused primarily on ethnic or tribal cultures, modern ethnography takes a broader view. As Harklau (2005) notes, **'culture'** now refers to any **bounded unit**—a group or context that has identifiable norms, practices, and values. These can include:

- A high school classroom
- A corporate organization
- An online gaming community
- A language immersion program

This redefinition allows ethnography to be applied in diverse contexts, not just geographically or ethnically distant societies.

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2. Ethnography in Applied Linguistics

In the field of **applied linguistics**, ethnography is used to explore how language is not merely a cognitive process but also a **social and cultural practice**. It recognizes that:

- **Language learning** occurs within particular social environments.
- **Classroom interactions** are shaped by power dynamics, identities, and cultural expectations.
- **Discourse** (how people talk and what they mean) can reveal how learners engage with content, teachers, and each other.

By conducting **contextualized analysis**—examining language use in real-life settings—ethnographers aim to uncover **deeper meanings and hidden structures** that influence communication and learning.

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3. Core Characteristics of Ethnographic Research

a. Descriptive

Ethnographers aim to **paint a detailed picture** of what life is like in the setting they study. They document social practices, language use, relationships, routines, and artifacts to understand how things operate from the **participants' point of view**.

b. Exploratory / Method of Discovery

Ethnography is not hypothesis-driven in the traditional scientific sense. Instead, it is **open-ended and flexible**—research questions may emerge and evolve during the study. The goal is often to **explore the unknown** or little-understood aspects of a social group.

c. Comparative

Researchers often compare:

- **Official vs. unofficial discourses** (e.g., curriculum vs. student talk)
- **Insider vs. outsider views**
- **Different cultural settings**

This helps identify **contradictions, gaps, or resistance** within social structures.

d. Naturalistic

Ethnography takes place in the **natural setting** of the participants—not in controlled environments like labs. This allows the researcher to **observe authentic behavior** in its real context.

e. Symbolic World of Participants

Understanding how people assign meaning to their actions and surroundings is central to ethnography. This includes:

- Language and communication
- Rituals and routines
- Shared beliefs and values

f. Participant Meaning

Rather than imposing outside interpretations, ethnographers strive to **understand the world as participants see it**.

g. Emergent Nature

The design is **not fixed in advance**. New themes, questions, or challenges may emerge that reshape the focus of the study.

h. Prolonged Engagement

Ethnographic studies typically require **long-term immersion**, often from **6 to 12 months** or more. This allows the researcher to gain trust, witness patterns over time, and experience events from multiple angles.

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4. Key Methods in Ethnography

- **Interviews**: Semi-structured or unstructured, focusing on participants' perspectives.
- **Document Analysis**: Studying written materials like meeting notes, lesson plans, or community posters.
- **Field Notes**: Ongoing, detailed observations written during or after time in the field.
- **Diaries**: Personal accounts by participants or the researcher to capture reflections and experiences.
- **Direct Observation**: Watching behaviors and interactions. The researcher may be:
    - **Overt**: Known to the group as a researcher.
    - **Covert**: Hidden role, observing without participants' awareness.

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5. The Ethnographic Research Process

a. Gaining Entry

The first step is becoming accepted by the group under study. This might involve formal permission or informal participation (e.g., "hanging around" until trust is built).

b. Defining the Field

Clarify the **boundaries of the research site**—who belongs, where the setting starts and ends, what events or practices are relevant.

c. Building Rapport

Creating trusting relationships is essential. Participants are more likely to be open if they feel respected and understood.

d. Participant Observation

The researcher does more than observe—they **participate** in daily routines while taking detailed notes. They aim to understand:

- Roles
- Rules
- Social hierarchies
- Patterns of interaction

e. Asking Questions

Ethnography combines observation with active questioning. This helps clarify meanings and identify **participant interpretations**.

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6. Overt vs. Covert Ethnography

Covert Ethnography

- The researcher's identity is **not revealed**.
- Allows access to **natural, unfiltered behavior**.
- Ethical concerns: Participants don't give informed consent.
- Can restrict access to certain areas (e.g., staff rooms).
- Used in sensitive settings (e.g., gangs, protests).
- **Example**: James Patrick (1973) conducted covert research with a Glasgow gang.

Overt Ethnography

- Researcher is **open** about their role.
- Requires **negotiating access** with:
  - **Gatekeepers**: People who control access (e.g., school principals).
  - **Key informants**: Trusted insiders who help the researcher navigate.
- Easier to meet ethical standards, but participants may **change their behavior** under observation ("observer effect").

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7. Managing Field Relationships

- **Key Informants**: These individuals offer valuable insights but may be biased.
- **Front Management**: Ethnographers must maintain relationships even with people they disagree with—requires tact and empathy.
- **Acceptable Incompetence**: Playing the learner role can encourage participants to explain things more fully.
- **Going Native**: Over-identifying with the group can cloud judgment.
- Researchers aim to balance:
  - **Martian (outsider)**: Offers objectivity.
  - **Convert (insider)**: Offers insight and understanding.

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8. Field Challenges

- **Marginality**: Feeling like an outsider.
- **Fear of Rejection**: Worrying that participants won't accept the researcher.
- **Loneliness**: Especially in unfamiliar or isolated settings.
- **Risk of Discovery**: For covert researchers, being found out may end the study.
- **Team Ethnography**: Working with others can help manage these pressures and offer different perspectives.

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9. Social Dynamics and Exclusion Techniques

Participants may try to **exclude or control the researcher** by:

- **Code-switching**: Using language the researcher doesn't understand.
- **Changing topics**: Avoiding sensitive issues.
- **Not inviting** the researcher to key events.

These acts can be **data in themselves**, revealing boundaries, trust levels, and power dynamics within the group.

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10. Strengths of Ethnography

- Excellent for **exploring unknown settings or practices**.
- Offers **rich, holistic insights** into people's lived experiences.
- Focuses on the **meanings participants give** to their actions.
- Captures the **complexity and contradiction** of real-life social processes.

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11. Limitations of Ethnography

- **Time-Intensive**: Long-term involvement is difficult for many researchers.
- **Insider/Outsider Dilemma** (Hornberger, 1994): Balancing empathy with critical distance can be hard.
- **Subjectivity**: The researcher's presence may influence the setting.
- **Ethical Issues**: Especially in covert research or vulnerable communities.
- **Generalizability**: Findings are deeply contextual—may not apply beyond the studied group

Lecture 7: What is Program Evaluation?

Program evaluation is a vital part of improving educational quality. It allows educators, curriculum designers, and institutions to judge whether their programs, materials, and methods are effective and appropriate.

Nunan (1992) defines program evaluation as *"the systematic collection of information for the purpose of making decisions about a language program."*

Rossi et al. (2004) define evaluation as *"the systematic application of social research procedures for assessing the conceptualization, design, implementation, and utility of intervention programs."*

Together, these definitions highlight that evaluation is:

- Systematic
- Evidence-based
- Decision-oriented
- Focused on improving educational effectiveness

📚 Focus Area: Textbook Evaluation

Textbooks are often at the heart of a language program. They influence what is taught, how it's taught, and what learners are expected to achieve. Therefore, **textbook evaluation** is a crucial subset of program evaluation.

It involves a detailed review of the textbook's:

- Content
- Organization
- Pedagogical approach
- Relevance
- Effectiveness in meeting learners' needs

🔍 Key Aspects of Textbook Evaluation

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1. Generation and Presentation

- **Generation** refers to how the textbook is created, including:
  - Alignment with curriculum standards
  - Appropriateness for the learners' proficiency level and context
  - Contribution of experts or research in its development
- **Presentation** involves visual and structural elements:
  - Readability (font size, spacing)
  - Use of illustrations and colors
  - Clear layout of lessons and units
  - Presence of glossaries, indexes, and clear instructions
  - Supplementary materials such as CDs, apps, or teacher's guides

A well-presented book supports better engagement and ease of use.

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2. Content

Evaluating content focuses on:

- **Linguistic accuracy** (grammar, vocabulary, spelling)
- **Relevance** to learners' real-world needs
- Cultural **appropriateness and diversity**
- Logical **progression** from simple to complex
- Adequate coverage of all four language skills
- Real-life communication tasks and authentic language

Does the textbook reflect modern usage and prepare learners for real contexts?

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3. Methodology

Methodology refers to the teaching and learning approaches implied by the textbook:

- Is the method **communicative**, **task-based**, or **traditional grammar-translation**?
- Are learners encouraged to interact and communicate?
- Is **learner autonomy** supported?
- Are **critical thinking** and **problem-solving** incorporated?
- Are the tasks **meaningful and varied** (e.g., role-plays, debates, listening practice)?

The chosen methodology should match the institutional goals and learners' preferences.

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4. Topics

Topic selection impacts learner interest and engagement:

- Are topics age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and inclusive?
- Do they reflect learners' lives and the global world?
- Is there a good **variety of themes** (e.g., health, travel, environment, technology)?
- Are topics engaging enough to motivate learners to speak, write, and think?

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5. Assessment Methods

Assessment is central to tracking progress and guiding instruction:

- Are there regular quizzes, unit reviews, and tests?
- Are there **self-assessment tools** or peer-evaluation activities?
- Do assessment methods align with **learning outcomes**?
- Are there opportunities for both **formative** and **summative assessment**?

Assessment within textbooks should be meaningful, manageable, and fair.

✅ Cunningsworth's Textbook Evaluation Checklist (1995)

Cunningsworth (1995) provided one of the most practical tools for evaluating English language textbooks. Here are the main categories in his checklist:

1. Aims and Approaches

- Do the aims match learners' needs and course objectives?
- Is the teaching approach suitable for the context?

2. Design and Organization

- Is the book logically organized?
- Is there a clear progression of material?

3. Language Content

- Are grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation appropriately covered?
- Is there attention to both form and function?

4. Skills

- Are the four skills integrated or treated separately?
- Are skills practiced in realistic contexts?

5. Topic

- Are topics interesting, relevant, and appropriate?
- Do they stimulate learning and conversation?

6. Methodology

- What teaching methods are implied?
- Are learners active participants in learning?

7. Teachers' Materials

- Are there teacher's guides, answer keys, extra resources?
- Are teachers supported in using the book effectively?

8. Practical Considerations

- Is the book affordable and accessible?
- Is it durable, attractive, and easy to use?

Conclusion

Program evaluation—especially textbook evaluation—is crucial for ensuring that the learning process is effective, relevant, and responsive to learners' needs.

By using structured frameworks like those of **Nunan**, **Rossi et al.**, and **Cunningsworth**, educators can make informed decisions that lead to improved teaching and better learning outcomes.

Lecture 8: Ethics in research

1. Definition

Ethics in social sciences refers to a set of principles that ensure research is conducted responsibly, safely, and with integrity.

There are at least three major roles of ethics.

First, ethics ensure that your study complies with the ethical guidelines of your institution. If your research does not follow these guidelines, it may not be approved. Each institution has its own ethical standards that must be followed during the research process.

Second, ethics protect the rights and well-being of research participants. By following ethical considerations, you ensure that participants are safeguarded from harm or injury.

Third, ethics ensures that the results are valid and reliable.

2. Unethical research

Here is an example of unethical research: The case of Nazi human experimentation during World War II. In Germany, Nazi medical doctors conducted inhumane experiments on a large number of concentration camp prisoners, including children. These individuals were forced to participate in the experiments without their consent. In fact, no voluntary participation or informed consent was obtained. The experiments caused severe trauma, disfigurement, permanent disability, and even death. Some of the most notorious experiments included sterilization, artificial insemination, head injury experiments, exposure to mustard gas, freezing experiments, malaria infection studies, and surgeries on twins involving bone, muscle, and nerve transplantation.

Ethical Principles that Guide Research:

Honesty

Researchers must report data, results, methods, and procedures truthfully. This includes being transparent about how the data was collected and the status of the publication. Researchers should never falsify, fabricate, or misrepresent data or findings.

Objectivity

Researchers should maintain objectivity and scientific rigor at all times. They must avoid any form of bias in all aspects of research, including experimental design, data analysis, interpretation, peer review, and grant writing.

Confidentiality

Researchers are responsible for protecting confidential information. This includes materials such as manuscripts, grant proposals, or any private communication received during the research and publication process.

Competence

Researchers are expected to be knowledgeable and skilled in their field of specialization. They should continuously maintain and improve their professional competence through lifelong learning and education. Additionally, they should take steps to promote competence and high standards in science.

Integrity

Researchers must keep their promises and honor agreements, including those made with donors, institutions, or research participants. They should strive for consistency between their words and actions, upholding honesty and ethical behavior at all times.

Legality

All research must adhere to legal standards. Researchers are required to follow relevant laws, institutional regulations, and governmental policies throughout the research process.

Maturity and Openness

Knowledge should be open and accessible. Researchers are encouraged to share their findings, ideas, and resources openly and responsibly, contributing to the advancement of science and the broader research community.

Respect for Intellectual Property (IP)

Researchers must respect the intellectual property rights of others. This includes honoring copyrights, patents, and proprietary data or methods. Using another scholar's work without permission or proper acknowledgment is unethical. Plagiarism must be strictly avoided.

Responsible Publication

The primary purpose of publishing should be to advance knowledge, not simply to build a personal academic record. Researchers should avoid publishing in predatory journals or producing duplicate or wasteful publications that do not contribute meaningfully to the field.

Non-Discrimination

Researchers must avoid all forms of discrimination based on sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or any other personal characteristics. A respectful and inclusive research environment should be maintained. Senior researchers have a responsibility to educate, mentor, and support students and junior colleagues fairly and professionally.

Human Subject Protection

Researchers must uphold the dignity, rights, and privacy of human participants at all times. When conducting research involving human subjects, they should take all necessary precautions to minimize potential harm or risks. At the same time, they should aim to maximize the benefits that participants or society may gain from the research outcomes.

Commitment to Social Responsibility

Researchers should not conduct research solely for personal or career advancement. Instead, they should aim to contribute positively to society. Research should strive to promote social good, address social issues, and reduce potential harm to communities and individuals.

Informed Consent

Before beginning any research, participants must be clearly informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study. Participation should be voluntary, and researchers must obtain explicit and informed consent from all participants.

Right to Withdraw

Participants must be assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty or negative consequences. This is especially important when working with vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, or people with disabilities. Researchers must create a safe and respectful environment where participants feel empowered to make this choice.