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Qualitative research, methods and data

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Qualitative research is "any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss/Corbin: 10). It is in depth investigation of phenomena, taking as many variables into consideration as possible. It is interpretive, employing often naturalistic approaches to people's lives, experiences, emotions, behaviour, as well as cultural phenomena, social or political interaction, etc. It is "multi-method in focus" and an attempt "to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin/Lincoln 1994: 2). The assumption in qualitative research is that a person who experiences or perceives a phenomenon can also give the most precise description of it.

Data in qualitative research are derived from a variety of empirical material, such as observations and explanations from personal perception, case studies, field notes, life stories, diaries, interviews, questionnaires, all kinds of texts and documents, as well as films or videotapes. Accordingly, a wide range of interconnected methods is used in an attempt to explore the complexity of a phenomenon holistically, because it is assumed that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

In TS, the most popular qualitative methods are introspective methods, such as think-aloud (TA), retrospection, interviews, questions and questionnaires. Using these methods, researchers hope to increase knowledge about, for example, translators' intentions, problems, strategies, decisions, attitudes and preferences. By investigating translation processes, for example, observers can register pauses; although why the translator stops writing and what he/she thinks during the pause, observers do not know. They have to rely on individual reports and interpret what the translators tell them.

References

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