

Glossary of Qualitative Research Terms

The definitions in this glossary define key words commonly used in qualitative and mixed methods research. Throughout the book, these key words are indicated in **bold** when they are particularly relevant to the topic of the chapter, and are also listed at the end of that chapter.

The words are listed alphabetically. In the definitions, words in *italics* are also listed in the glossary. The chapter in which the key word is primarily addressed is noted in parentheses at the end of each definition; however, many of the terms can be found in additional chapters as well; please refer to the subject index for these.

Key Word	Definition
accounts	In an <i>interview</i> , an account is a representation of a situation. Successful analysis depends on treating what the participants say as subjective accounts that the researcher must interpret, rather than factual <i>reports</i> than can be simply accepted at face value. (Interviews, p. 192)
acting	Acting refers to the second step in the <i>action research cycle</i> . Acting means putting practical strategies in place to change and improve a teaching or social situation; the next step is <i>observing</i> these changes. (Action Research, p. 115)
action research	Action research is a <i>research approach</i> . 'Action' refers to the process of identifying issues relevant to a teaching or social situation; 'research' refers to the processes of systematically collecting, documenting, and analyzing data. <i>Data</i> can be numerical as well as textual. In the field of <i>applied linguistics</i> , action research is often used by teachers when they investigate their own classrooms. (Action Research, p. 114)
action research cycle	The action research cycle is the process or spiral of research in <i>action research</i> . It involves four steps: <i>planning</i> , <i>acting</i> , <i>observing</i> , and <i>reflecting</i> . (Action Research, p. 115)
adjacency pairs	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , adjacency pairs are paired utterances such as question-answer and compliment-response. The nature of the first-pair-part (for example, how the question is asked) conditions the structure of the second-pair-part (for example, how the question is answered). (Discourse Analysis, p. 250)

Key Word	Definition
analytic memos	Analytic memos are personal notes (including ideas, questions, hunches, and speculations) a researcher makes during the <i>research process</i> about the collected <i>data</i> , and includes the researcher's ideas and <i>interpretations</i> . (Ethnography, p. 102)
annotated bibliography	Annotated bibliographies are summaries and brief commentaries of individual published works. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 291)
applied linguistics	Applied linguistics is the study of language in use. It can be divided into two broad areas. The first focuses primarily on language itself, and is called language analysis. The second investigates the contexts and experiences of language use. Both areas employ qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research methods. (Introduction, p. 4)
artifacts (also artefacts)	Artifacts are things that people within a <i>cultural group</i> make and/or use. (Ethnography, p. 93)
autoethnography	An autoethnography is a study of the self over a long period of time. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 294)
axiology	Axiology is the study of value. In <i>qualitative research</i> , there is an assumption that all research is value-laden, and includes the value systems of the researcher, the theory, <i>research methodology</i> , and research <i>paradigm</i> , as well as the social and cultural norms of the researcher and <i>participants</i> .
behavior	In <i>ethnography</i> , behavior refers to what people within a cultural group do and the acts that they perform. (Ethnography, p. 93)
biased questions	Biased questions are <i>questionnaire items</i> that put one group of people in a bad light based on gender, religion, ethnicity, and so on. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 208)
boundedness	Boundedness is a term used in <i>case study</i> to refer to the parameters of a case. These could include the individual or entity, for example a school, under investigation and the <i>settings</i> in which social action takes place. (Case Study, p. 68)
case study	Case study is a <i>research approach</i> . It creates an in-depth description and analysis of a <i>bounded system</i> – one individual, institution, or educational context. By concentrating on a single (or few) case(s), this approach can describe a particular learning or teaching process or research <i>setting</i> in great detail. The focus of a case study can either be on the case itself or on an issue which the case(s) illustrates. Case study uses multiple sources of <i>data</i> and <i>data collection methods</i> , and it often combines both <i>qualitative</i> and <i>quantitative research</i> approaches. (Case Study, p. 68)
categorical content analysis	Categorical content analysis is a method of <i>data analysis</i> that identifies <i>categories</i> by selecting utterances from a text, which are then classified and grouped together. (Narrative Inquiry, p. 51)
category	Researchers create a category in the <i>data analysis</i> process by grouping together related codes, either as examples or components of a particular concept. (Narrative Inquiry, p. 52)

Key Word	Definition
citing	Citing means referring to the work of an author by name (and usually by year of publication, depending on stylistic conventions) in the body of a research report. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 291)
claim	A claim is a new understanding or finding in research. It is a term that tries to capture both what the researcher feels definite about stating and the gaps or limitations in this new knowledge. (What Makes Research 'Qualitative?', p. 26)
closed-response items	Closed-response items are <i>questionnaire</i> items in which <i>participants</i> select from a limited list of options provided by the researcher by circling them, making an 'X' and so on; participants are not requested to respond in their own words. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 201)
closing	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , closing is the action which shuts down an interaction. It is composed of at least one adjacency pair, such as 'see you later' – 'bye'. (Discourse Analysis, p. 243)
co-construction	Co-construction is the idea in <i>discourse analysis</i> that language use is a product not just of its speaker but also those who are interacting with that speaker. (Discourse Analysis, p. 245)
coding	Coding is one aspect of <i>data analysis</i> . When researchers <i>code</i> , they are trying to make sense of the <i>data</i> by systematically looking through it, clustering or grouping together similar ideas, phenomena, people, or events, and labeling them. Coding helps researchers find similar patterns and connections across the data. It helps researchers get to know the data better and to organize their thinking, and it also makes storage and retrieval of data easier. (Narrative Inquiry, p. 51)
coding system	A coding system is created during <i>data analysis</i> . It is a list of the labels of the <i>categories</i> created when the researcher is <i>coding</i> . Frequently these labels are derived from the data itself (in which case they are called <i>emic</i> terms), but often they are terms created by the researcher (in which case they are called <i>etic</i> terms). In <i>verbal reports</i> , these labels attempt to capture the intentions of all of the thought units mentioned by the <i>participants</i> . (Introspective Techniques, p. 224)
collective case study	In a collective case study the researcher uses more than one case, so as to better shed light on a particular issue. A collective case study often focuses on exploring an issue rather than describing one case in detail, by comparing and contrasting different cases. (Case Study, p. 70)
concordancing software	Concordancing software is software that lists occurrences of any word or phrase from a given text, along with a certain number of words on either side of it. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 211)

Key Word	Definition
confirmability	Confirmability is the concept that researchers should fully explain or disclose the <i>data</i> that they are basing their <i>interpretations</i> on, or at least make those data available. Confirmability can be improved by maintaining precise data records and keeping all data for additional scrutiny. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 215)
consequentialism	Consequentialism is the belief that ends justify means; that is, that the results of actions determine their rightness or wrongness. Any particular action is neither intrinsically good nor bad; rather, it is good or bad because of its <i>results</i> in a particular context – its consequences. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 270)
constant comparative method	The constant comparative method is a method of <i>data analysis</i> from <i>grounded theory</i> in which the researcher constantly compares new <i>data</i> to data already placed in existing <i>categories</i> , to help develop and define that category and decide if a new category should be created. (Narrative Inquiry, p. 51)
constructivism	Constructivism is the belief that that there is no universally agreed upon reality or universal 'truth'. Rather, meaning is socially constructed by individuals interacting with their world. Through that interaction, each individual creates his or her own unique understandings of the world. As a result, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality, so multiple 'truths' exist. These interpretations change, depending upon time and circumstances, so reality is not universal but person-, context-, and time-bound. (Introduction, p. 6)
context	Context refers to the physical, psychological, social, and/ or temporal factors of authentic language in use. (Discourse Analysis, p. 243)
conventions	Conventions are customary stylistic choices in writing that scholars within disciplines agree upon as a group to use, such as ways of citing sources and formatting a reference list. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 295)
conversation analysis (CA)	Conversation analysis is a sociological approach to <i>discourse analysis</i> which attempts to describe the systematic properties of conversation. It focuses upon the sequential organization of 'talk-in-interaction', in terms of machinery, rules, and structure. Example topics include <i>openings</i> and <i>closings</i> in telephone talk or e-mail. (Discourse Analysis, p. 244)
corpus/corpora	A corpus is a collection of authentic spoken and/or written texts created so that researchers can see how language is commonly used. Some corpora are extremely large and are stored electronically; this allows researchers to easily search the corpora for individual words or phrases. Detailed information about the context of collection and/or of use is also usually provided. (Discourse Analysis, p. 243)

Key Word	Definition
correction	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , correction is the actual remedy of a language error. (Discourse Analysis, p. 247)
credibility	Credibility is the concept that researchers should maximize the accuracy of how they define concepts and how they characterize the people they are investigating – with a particular focus on how the various <i>participants</i> feel about the <i>interpretations</i> the researcher makes. Credibility can be enhanced by using prolonged engagement, careful <i>observation</i> , <i>triangulation</i> , peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and <i>member checks</i> . (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 215)
critical ethnography	Critical ethnography is a type of <i>ethnography</i> that examines cultural systems of power, prestige, privilege, and authority in society. Critical ethnographers study marginalized groups from different classes, races, and genders, to advocate the needs of these participants (adapted from Creswell, 2007). (Introduction, p. 12)
critical theory	Critical theory is a perspective that views society as fundamentally conflictual and oppressive due to historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggle, so critical theory is openly ideological, emancipatory, and transformative. Because critical theorists are interested in the power asymmetries which underlie society, critical theory explicitly wants to empower marginalized groups, often by researchers and members of the marginalized group collaboratively doing research together. (Introduction, p. 12)
cultural portrait	A cultural portrait is a term used in <i>ethnography</i> to refer to a detailed and rich holistic description of a cultural group. (Ethnography, p. 94)
culture	‘Culture is an abstract concept used to account for the beliefs, values, and behaviors of cohesive groups of people. It is a narrower term than race (which accounts for biological variation); a racial group may contain many different cultures, and a cultural group may contain members of different races. Although a cultural group may refer to a particular nationality, cultures may cross political boundaries and a nation may contain many cultural groups.... Within a cultural group, behaviors are patterned and values and meanings are shared.’ (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 53) (Ethnography, p. 93)
data	Data is information created in or collected from a <i>setting</i> (from <i>participants</i> , <i>observations</i> , <i>artifacts</i> , and so on, about people, phenomena, ideas, events, or the context) in response to a <i>research question</i> . (What Makes Research ‘Qualitative’?, p. 27)
data analysis	Analysis is a major aspect of the <i>research process</i> . There are many ways to do data analysis in <i>qualitative research</i> , but the goal is largely the same – to understand the data that has been collected, and organize it into groups or <i>categories</i> , to prepare for data <i>interpretation</i> . (Introduction, p. 10)

Key Word	Definition
data collection	Data collection refers to the process of collecting information systematically through <i>data collection methods</i> . (Action Research, p. 117)
data collection methods	Data collection methods in <i>qualitative research</i> include <i>observation, interviews, open-response questionnaire items, verbal reports, diaries</i> , and so on. (Introduction, p. 5)
data saturation	As researchers collect <i>data</i> and simultaneously create <i>categories</i> through <i>data analysis</i> , they will get to a point at which these categories are 'saturated' – no new information adds to their understanding of the category. (Introduction, p. 10)
deception and consent	Deception and consent are universal ethical concerns about the rights of <i>participants</i> to be informed honestly and openly, and not to be coerced into participating in a study. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 276)
deductive thinking	Deductive thinking is a way of reasoning that works from the more general to the more specific. It begins with a general theory, which generates predictions about specific phenomena. These theories can be tested empirically by seeing if the predictions are true. The opposite is <i>inductive thinking</i> .
dependability	The idea of dependability emphasizes the need for researchers to account for the ever-changing context and shifting conditions within which research occurs. In their published accounts, the researcher should describe the changes that occur in the <i>setting</i> and how these changes affected the way the researcher approached the study. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 215)
descriptive case study	In a descriptive case study, the researcher presents a detailed, contextualized picture of a particular case or <i>phenomenon</i> . The <i>research purpose</i> is simply to gain a deep understanding of the case or phenomenon itself, not to generalize this case to other cases or contexts. (Case Study, p. 70)
diary studies	Diary studies are first-person or third-person <i>case studies</i> in which individuals keep a reflective journal using <i>introspection</i> and/or <i>retrospection</i> . (Introspective Techniques, p. 228)
discourse	Discourse refers to authentic spoken or written language produced in a particular context. (Discourse Analysis, p. 244)
discourse analysis	Discourse analysis is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches to understanding authentic language use in particular social contexts, including cohesion, contextual, interaction, speech act, and <i>conversation analysis</i> . (Discourse Analysis, p. 243)
documenting	Documenting means providing evidence for an assertion or a finding in a research report. (Writing Up, p. 291)
double-barreled questions	Double-barreled questions are <i>questionnaire</i> items that include two or more issues in the one question. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 207)

Key Word	Definition
embarrassing questions	Embarrassing questions are <i>questionnaire</i> items that include swear words or might otherwise be embarrassing to some <i>respondents</i> . (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 208)
Embedded Design	Embedded Design is a <i>mixed methods</i> design. One type of <i>data collection</i> and <i>analysis</i> (quantitative or qualitative) is embedded or nested within a larger study with a different form of <i>data</i> as the primary database. The embedded database plays a secondary, supporting role. (Mixed Methods, p. 143)
emerging theories	Emerging theories is a term used in <i>observation</i> to refer to theories that explain <i>behavior</i> that is seen during the observation process. (Observation, p. 174)
emic	Emic is a special term that refers to the <i>participants'</i> insider viewpoint of a <i>phenomenon, setting, or cultural group</i> . This is in contrast with an <i>etic</i> view, which prioritizes the researcher's outsider viewpoint. (Ethnography, p. 97)
entering the field	Entering the field refers to the research activity of choosing a research <i>setting</i> and gaining access to the site. (Observation, p.169)
epistemology	Epistemology is the study of knowledge. It addresses questions like, 'What is knowledge?', 'How is knowledge acquired?', and 'How do we know what we know?' (Introduction, p. 5)
ethic of care	The ethic of care addresses the effect of any action on the human relationships in a given context. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 272)
ethic of rights and responsibilities	The ethic of rights and responsibilities upholds the unconditional worth of human beings and the respect to which they are entitled. It recognizes that these universal rights impose corresponding responsibilities on the researcher to respect and uphold them. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 271)
ethic of social justice	The ethic of social justice is an ethical theory that argues for the redistribution of resources and opportunities to achieve equity and to overcome prior discriminatory practices. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 272)
ethical codes of conduct	Ethical codes of conduct are codes written to guide ethical practice in a profession or in the conduct of a research study. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 273)
ethical principles or theories	Ethical principles or theories are guiding principles or theories that inform <i>ethical codes of conduct</i> . (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 280)
ethics in action research	Ethics in action research means ensuring that research is done in an educationally and morally responsible way that does not affect the educational aims of the classroom. (Action Research, p. 121)
ethnography	Ethnography is a <i>research approach</i> . It is the in-depth study of a cultural group that typically includes extended <i>observation</i> of that group 'in the field'. The aim of the study is to develop a detailed cultural picture, or cultural portrait, of the group. (Ethnography, p. 92)

Key Word	Definition
etic	Etic is a term that refers to the researcher's outsider viewpoint of a <i>phenomenon</i> , <i>setting</i> , or cultural group. This is in contrast with an <i>emic</i> view, which prioritizes the <i>participants'</i> insider viewpoint. (Ethnography, p. 97)
experimental study	An experimental study is a research study that follows strict scientific methods and procedures. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 292)
explanatory case study	An explanatory <i>case study</i> is used to explain cause-effect relationships related to a <i>phenomenon</i> . It is often used as the basis for comparing a case to other cases. An explanatory case study is frequently a long-term, or <i>longitudinal case study</i> , and often uses <i>quantitative research</i> approaches. (Case Study, p. 71)
Explanatory Design	Explanatory Design is a <i>mixed methods</i> design in which quantitative <i>data</i> is collected and analyzed first and qualitative data is collected and analyzed second. Qualitative data and <i>data analysis</i> are used to help elaborate on or further explain the quantitative results. (Mixed Methods, p. 139)
exploratory case study	When little is known about a case, the researcher can use an exploratory <i>case study</i> . This helps to define the boundaries and the main aspects of the case and lays the groundwork for subsequent, possibly more quantitative studies by helping define questions and hypotheses. (Case Study, p. 70)
Exploratory Design	Exploratory Design is a <i>mixed methods</i> design in which qualitative <i>data</i> is collected and analyzed first, to lay the groundwork or to inform subsequent quantitative <i>data collection</i> and <i>data analysis</i> . (Mixed Methods, p. 140)
feminist theory	Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into the academic field, looking at women's roles and lives in society. The goal of feminist research is to understand the nature of inequality, and it focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality, to promote women's rights, interests, and issues. Feminist researchers endeavor to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships with <i>participants</i> and avoid objectification. (Introduction, p. 12)
field notes	Field notes are detailed notes written or recorded while observing in the research <i>setting</i> , or made during or after interviewing research <i>participants</i> . Some researchers also include their own personal ideas in their field notes, while others put them in <i>analytic memos</i> . (Ethnography, p. 96)
fieldwork	Fieldwork refers to the research activity of collecting <i>data</i> through <i>observation</i> (and other means) in the 'field', the designated research <i>setting</i> or settings. (Ethnography, p. 96)
fill-in items	Fill-in items are <i>open-response questionnaire items</i> that require the <i>respondents</i> to provide relatively brief bits of personalized information, such as name and address. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 202)

Key Word	Definition
foreshadowed problems	Foreshadowed problems are issues or obstacles that you anticipate that you will face when you observe in the research <i>setting</i> . They help you to plan your <i>observations</i> . (Observation, p. 169)
framing a study	Framing a study means introducing and concluding a study with the conceptual or theoretical issues that the writers have used to explain their findings. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 289)
gatekeeper	A gatekeeper is a person whose permission or approval is necessary for a researcher to gain access to a research site or <i>setting</i> . (Ethnography, p. 97)
gatekeepers of journals	Gatekeepers of journals are editors of print and electronic journals and the reviewers who evaluate submissions. Their job is to select the best quality articles they can for their publications. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 289)
grounded theory	Grounded theory is a qualitative <i>research approach</i> . The researcher uses qualitative <i>data collection methods</i> like <i>interviews</i> to collect information until <i>data saturation</i> is reached, then groups ideas together into <i>categories</i> using the <i>constant comparison method</i> , to develop a context-specific, or 'substantive' theory. (Introduction, p. 15)
indirect probes	Indirect probes are indirect questions used in interviews when using more direct questions could be problematic. (Interviews, p. 191)
inductive thinking	Inductive thinking works from the specific to the more general, taking specific observations or instances, noting patterns, then extrapolating from them to create general conclusions or a general theory. The opposite is <i>deductive thinking</i> .
informant	An informant is a person from within the <i>cultural group</i> being studied who provides the researcher with 'insider' information. (Ethnography, p. 99)
informed consent	Based on the principles of beneficence and respect for persons, informed consent helps to ensure that <i>participants</i> understand their role in a study, agree to participate voluntarily, and can withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 276)
inquiry	An inquiry refers to an orientation of wondering, questioning, and being off-balance about a <i>phenomenon</i> or situation; this orientation then propels the <i>research process</i> . (What Makes Research 'Qualitative'?, p. 27)
instrumental case study	An instrumental case study is a <i>case study</i> conducted with the goal of shedding light on a particular issue, problem, or theory, rather than with the goal of simply understanding the issue or research <i>setting</i> for its own sake. (Case Study, p. 70)
interpretation	An interpretation is the researcher's explanation of why <i>participants</i> behave or think in the way that they do. In <i>qualitative research</i> , this is usually based on the <i>data</i> , and is developed through <i>inductive thinking</i> . (Observation, p. 173)

Key Word	Definition
interpretive analysis	Interpretive analysis emphasizes the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the <i>data</i> , and the self-reflective nature of <i>qualitative research</i> . (Introduction, p. 5)
interview guide	An interview guide, or interview schedule, is a list of topics and questions that the researcher writes before an interview. It helps the researcher prepare for the interview, ensuring that all of the important areas of interest are being considered, and it can also guide the interview itself. (Interviews, p. 186)
interview moves	Interview moves are actions taken by an interviewer during the interview, such as checking/reflecting a <i>respondent's</i> reply, following up that reply with further questions or probing aspects of it more deeply. (Interviews, p. 190)
intrinsic case study	An intrinsic case study is a <i>case study</i> conducted out of interest in the case itself, without the goal or expectation of illuminating any particular issue. They tend to be primarily descriptive. (Case Study, p. 69)
introspection	Introspection is the process by which individuals reflect on their thoughts, feelings, motives, and reasoning processes. (Introspective Techniques, p. 220)
introspective techniques	Introspective techniques are <i>data collection methods</i> , such as <i>diaries</i> and <i>verbal reports</i> , which are used to find out what <i>participants</i> think about something as they reflect on their experience with it. (Introspective Techniques, p. 220)
intuition	Intuition is the researcher's instinctive or common sense response to an ethical issue that has arisen in the course of the conduct of a study. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 280)
jargon	Jargon refers to insider or technical vocabulary related to a particular field that can be used pretentiously or because there are no other suitable terms. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 292)
leading questions	Leading questions are poorly written <i>questionnaire items</i> that suggest or indicate a particular answer to the <i>respondents</i> . (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 207)
life history research	Life history research is a genre of <i>narrative inquiry</i> that distinguishes itself from other genres by the extent to which it takes into account the social, historical, and cultural contexts within which the story is situated. While life history research may focus on a particular period or aspect of a person's life, these are usually considered within the context of the person's whole life. (Narrative Inquiry, p. 47)
literature review	A literature review is the section in a research report in which published works related to your study are synthesized and discussed. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 291)
longitudinal case study	A longitudinal case study is a <i>case study</i> conducted over a relatively long period of time. The length of this period may vary depending on the nature of the case and the researcher's interest in it. (Case Study, p. 71)

Key Word	Definition
making the familiar strange	Making the familiar strange is a mental attitude held by researchers of trying to see well-known, taken-for-granted settings afresh or in a novel way. (Observation, p. 171)
member checks	The term member checks refers to the process of researchers taking the <i>data</i> back to the <i>participants</i> and asking whether their <i>interpretations</i> fit with what the participant intended to say or do. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 266)
memoing	As researchers collect, analyze, and interpret <i>data</i> , they write up thoughts, ideas, reflections, and insights about the <i>participants</i> , research <i>setting</i> , <i>phenomenon</i> , and also the <i>research process</i> and study itself; this is called memoing (Case Study, p. 76)
mixed methods research	Mixed methods research is a <i>research approach</i> . It is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and ‘mixing’ quantitative and qualitative <i>data</i> at some stage of the <i>research process</i> within a single study in order to understand a <i>research problem</i> more completely. (Mixed Methods, p. 136)
mixing	Mixing refers to the way quantitative and qualitative <i>data</i> and results are integrated during the <i>research process</i> in <i>mixed methods research</i> . (Mixed Methods, p. 137)
multiple case study	In a multiple case study the researcher uses more than one case, so as to better understand a particular issue. A multiple case study often focuses on exploring an issue rather than describing one case in detail, by comparing and contrasting different cases. (Case Study, p. 70)
narrative inquiry	Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research approach. It employs a variety of <i>data collection methods</i> , particularly <i>interview</i> , to elicit, document, and analyze life experiences as they are recounted by the individuals who live them. (Narrative Inquiry, p. 46)
natural settings	Natural settings refer to the ordinary, everyday worlds of <i>participants</i> – where they live, work, and study. These natural settings include such places as homes and workplaces, staffrooms, classrooms and self-access centers, and online chat rooms. These settings are complex, dynamic, and multifaceted. (Introduction, p. 7)
nominalization	Nominalization refers to strings of nouns and noun phrases that can often be unpacked into nouns, verbs, and prepositional phrases. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 299)
non-consequentialism	Non-consequentialism is the belief that ends do not justify means. Rather, universal standards, such as individual rights and responsibilities, social justice and care, exist to guide all behavior, regardless of their consequences. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 270)
nonobservational methods	Nonobservational methods refer to <i>data collection methods</i> , like <i>interviews</i> or <i>diary studies</i> , which researchers use to obtain <i>data</i> that they cannot acquire through <i>observation</i> . In <i>action research</i> , these methods are used to respond to the question, ‘What do I need to know about this situation?’ (Action Research, p. 117)

Key Word	Definition
nonparticipant observation	Nonparticipant observation is the technique of observing the research <i>setting</i> without taking an active role in it. (Observation, p. 167)
observation	Observation is a <i>data collection method</i> . The researcher watches and makes detailed notes of the research <i>setting</i> . The researcher could be a <i>participant observer</i> or a <i>nonparticipant observer</i> . (Observation, p. 166)
observational methods	Observational methods refer to <i>data collection methods</i> , like <i>observation</i> , which researchers use to obtain <i>data</i> empirically by observing the research <i>setting</i> . In <i>action research</i> , these methods are used essentially to respond to the question, 'What do I need to see in this situation?' (Action Research, p. 117)
observing	Observing refers to the third step in the <i>action research cycle</i> . It means collecting information about the changes the teacher has made, and their impact on the classroom or social situation; the next step is <i>reflecting</i> about these changes. (Action Research, p. 115)
observer's paradox	Observer's paradox refers to the idea that any observation of authentic communication (by researchers, video cameras, and so on) influences that communication, making it less authentic. (Observation, p. 177)
ontology	Ontology is a set of beliefs about the nature of reality, and considers the question, 'When is something real?' For example, <i>positivists</i> believe that there is one universal reality, independent of people. On the other hand, <i>constructivists</i> believe that reality is constructed in the minds of the <i>participants</i> . (Introduction, p. 5)
open interviews	Open interviews are interviews that develop naturally, rather than being guided by a pre-prepared <i>interview guide</i> or list of questions. They are also known as 'open-ended', 'in-depth', and 'unstructured' interviews. (Interviews, p. 185)
open-response items	Open-response items are <i>questionnaire</i> items in which <i>respondents</i> write their own answers, rather than selecting responses from a limited list of options provided by the researcher. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires , p. 201)
paradigms	Researchers, explicitly and implicitly, develop conceptual frameworks which fashion how they carry out their research. These frameworks are shaped by each researcher's view of the world, and are also informed by how other academics conceptualize research. In the social sciences, a number of generally accepted models have been developed that articulate these conceptual frameworks, and they are called paradigms. They are often distinguished by their beliefs about <i>ontology</i> ('What is reality?'), <i>epistemology</i> ('What is knowledge?') and <i>axiology</i> ('Is truth value-free or value-laden?'). <i>Positivism</i> and <i>constructivism</i> are two examples of paradigms. (Introduction , p. 5)

Key Word	Definition
participants	Participants are the people in the research study. They are also called <i>respondents</i> (particularly when data is collected using <i>interviews</i> or <i>questionnaires</i>); in <i>quantitative research</i> , they are often referred to as 'subjects'. (Introduction, p. 7)
participant observation	During participant observation, the researcher fulfills two roles simultaneously – being both a <i>participant</i> in a social <i>setting</i> and also an observer studying the interaction taking place there. (Observation, p. 167)
pause	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , a pause refers to the silence that occurs within a speaker's turn. (Discourse Analysis, p. 249)
personal values	Personal values are deeply-held values that inform one's practice and center on the kind of person one is and hopes to be in the world. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 281)
phenomenology	Phenomenology is a <i>research approach</i> . A phenomenological study describes the meanings that several individuals have of experiencing a single <i>phenomenon</i> . The purpose of a phenomenological study is to reduce individual experiences of such phenomenon to a description of the basic 'essence' of that experience, by creating a composite description of that experience for all of the participants. In a broader sense, phenomenology as a school of philosophical thought underpins all <i>qualitative research</i> , because of its interest in understanding and representing the subjective experience of <i>participants</i> . (Introduction, p. 15)
phenomenon	A phenomenon is a term used to describe something that can be seen or experienced by the human senses. It could be something physical like an object or something constructed like an event or feeling. (Introduction, p. 7)
pilot study	A pilot study is a preliminary study in which a researcher tests and refines <i>data collection</i> and <i>analysis methods</i> and <i>procedures</i> . (Narrative Inquiry, p. 49)
planning	Planning refers to the first step in the <i>action research cycle</i> . It means identifying an issue or focus area for which change or improvement is desired; the next step is putting practical strategies in place to change and improve a situation through <i>acting</i> . (Action Research, p. 115)
positionality	In the <i>constructivist paradigm</i> , positionality refers to the idea that researchers can locate themselves close to or far from the <i>participants'</i> way of seeing the world. In <i>critical theory</i> , positionality refers to the notion that researchers implicitly or explicitly locate their research within society through the beliefs and attitudes that underpin the study. (Case Study, p. 73)

Key Word	Definition
positivism	<i>Positivism</i> is the belief that there is only one, fixed, agreed-upon reality, so research must strive to find a singular, universal 'truth'. Positivists see the world as real, as something that exists independently of themselves. These people believe that they can measure this 'reality'; in fact, the purpose of their research is to measure it as precisely as possible, so as to make predictions about what will happen in the future. To create accurate predictions, the researcher should be detached and 'objective'. (Introduction, p. 6)
postmodernism	Postmodernism is an ideological perspective that questions the early twentieth-century emphasis on science and technology, rationality, reason, and positivism. In this postmodern world, everything is contested. Multiple interpretations of the same <i>phenomenon</i> are possible, depending upon where one is standing. There are no absolutes, and no single theoretical framework for examining social and political issues; rather, diversity and plurality should be celebrated, and no one element privileged or considered more powerful than another. (Introduction, p. 12)
pragmatism	Pragmatism is a perspective in social research that encompasses both <i>qualitative</i> and <i>quantitative research</i> . It is not based on a particular view of what 'reality' or 'knowledge' is – instead, pragmatic researchers focus on the impact or consequences of their research, choosing the qualitative and quantitative <i>research approaches, methods, and techniques</i> that best meet their <i>research purposes</i> . Pragmatism represents the philosophical underpinnings of <i>mixed methods</i> research and more broadly much practical qualitative research that is carried out without the researcher considering too deeply what truth or knowledge are. (Introduction, p. 13)
prestige questions	Prestige questions are <i>questionnaire</i> items that people are likely to answer one way or another because they think that it will make them look better. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 208)
privacy and confidentiality	Privacy and confidentiality refers to the notion that the rights of <i>participants</i> to have their privacy protected through assurances that the data they offer, as well as their identities, will be held in confidence. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 275)
Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association	This is a major handbook used in some fields of social science that explains how to write up research reports for publication. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 299)
qualifying data	Qualifying data is the statistical process of transforming quantitative <i>data</i> into qualitative data through cluster or factor analysis. (Mixed Methods, p. 142)

Key Word	Definition
qualitative research	In qualitative research, researchers try to understand participants' experiences with the central <i>phenomenon</i> (the focus of the study) in a <i>natural setting</i> , using <i>research approaches</i> such as <i>ethnography</i> or <i>case study</i> . Instead of numbers, researchers collect words (text, such as <i>interviews</i> or <i>observation notes</i>), and images (pictures or audio-visual footage) about the <i>phenomenon</i> of the study. As much as possible without preconceived hypotheses or ideas, they analyze the <i>data</i> for common patterns (themes) in order to allow multiple <i>interpretations</i> of participants' individual experiences. (Introduction, p. 5; Mixed Methods, p. 137)
quantifying data	Quantifying data is the process of transforming qualitative <i>data</i> into quantitative data by counting <i>codes</i> , <i>categories</i> , and themes. (Mixed Methods, p. 142)
quantitative research	Quantitative research is a <i>research methodology</i> in which numeric data is collected and statistically analyzed in an objective and unbiased manner to prove or disprove a hypothesis so that the results can be generalized from a sample to a larger population. (Mixed Methods, p. 137) Quantitative research refers to <i>research methods</i> that draw on numerical (often statistically based) <i>warrants</i> like frequency and probability, and therefore make use of numerical or countable <i>data</i> . (What Makes Research 'Qualitative?')
quasi-experimental study	A quasi-experimental study is one that follows scientific methods and procedures to the extent that it can, but not fully. For example, in classroom research existing groups and teaching processes often cannot be changed for the sake of research. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 292)
questionnaires	Questionnaires are instruments for the collection of <i>data</i> , usually in written form, consisting of <i>open response items</i> (or questions) and/or <i>closed response items</i> (or questions), which require a response from <i>respondents</i> . (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 201)
reflecting	Reflecting refers to the fourth and final step in the <i>action research cycle</i> . Researchers think carefully about what they have observed, and consider planning further <i>action research</i> in the next cycle. (Action Research, p. 115)
reflexive	Being 'reflexive' means critically thinking about the <i>research process</i> and your role in it. (Observation, p. 176)
repair	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , repair refers to the sequentially organized system for clearing up problems of speaking, hearing, and/or understanding in talk. (Discourse Analysis, p. 242)
report	In an <i>interview</i> , a report is a neutral description of a situation. (Interviews, p. 192)

Key Word	Definition
research approach	A research approach is a tradition such as <i>narrative inquiry</i> , <i>case study</i> , <i>ethnography</i> , <i>phenomenology</i> , <i>grounded theory</i> , and <i>action research</i> , which employs generally accepted <i>research methods</i> . (Introduction, p. 5)
research method	A research method is a systematic and rigorous way of collecting and analyzing information. In <i>qualitative research</i> this includes <i>observation</i> , <i>interviews</i> , <i>open-response items in questionnaires</i> , <i>verbal reports</i> , <i>diary studies</i> , and <i>discourse analysis</i> . (Introduction, p. 17)
research methodology	A research methodology is a theory of how inquiry should occur. It defines the kinds of problems that are worth investigating and frames them, determines what <i>research approaches</i> and <i>research methods</i> to use, and also how to understand what constitutes a legitimate and warranted explanation. (Schwandt, 2007) (Introduction, p. 5)
research narrative	A research narrative is a way of organizing a qualitative research report to reflect the story of the <i>research process</i> . (Observation, p. 175)
research process	The term research process refers to what you actually do in carrying out a research project, compared with the research cycle, which is a formalized description of that process. (What Makes Research 'Qualitative?', p. 29)
research question	A research question is a question that orients, shapes, and provides direction for a research study, which may be refined or changed during the <i>research process</i> . (What Makes Research 'Qualitative?', p. 26)
research techniques	A research technique is a specific procedure for obtaining information. The same research technique, such as asking open-ended questions, could be employed by a number of different <i>research methods</i> . (Introduction, p. 5)
respondents	The term respondents is used in <i>questionnaires</i> and <i>surveys</i> to refer to the <i>participants</i> who respond to or answer the questions. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 201)
retrospective reports	Retrospective reports are types of <i>verbal report</i> in which individuals reflect on their thought processes after they complete a task. (Introspective Techniques, p. 222)
semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews are interviews based on a plan or <i>interview guide</i> , which aim to cover key topics and questions, but which are allowed to develop as naturally as possible and not necessarily in the planned order. (Interviews, p. 185)
sequence	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , a sequence is an episode of talk, composed of at least two <i>turns</i> , with identifiable boundaries of action. (Discourse Analysis, p. 246)
setting	The setting is the place where the research study is carried out. 'Place' here refers to more than just the physical location; it also includes the people, <i>artifacts</i> , language used, and intangible aspects (like beliefs) of that location. (What Makes Research 'Qualitative?', p. 26)

Key Word	Definition
short-answer items	Short-answer items are open-response <i>questionnaire</i> items that require responses that are a few phrases or sentences long, but not as long as a paragraph. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 203)
structured interviews	Structured interviews are interviews in which all the questions are written out in advance, often using an <i>interview guide</i> . (Interviews, p. 184)
survey study	A survey study is a data collection method which uses questionnaires and is typically distributed to many people. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 292)
textual mentor	A textual mentor is an exemplary piece of writing that models aspects of good research and writing. Other writers can learn to improve their own writing from it. (Writing Up Your Research, p. 289)
theoretical sampling	Theoretical sampling is a procedure in <i>grounded theory</i> for selecting <i>participants</i> on the basis of whether or not they will contribute to the development of the theory. (Introduction, p. 17)
thick description	Thick description refers to the rich, vivid descriptions and <i>interpretations</i> that researchers create as they collect <i>data</i> . It encompasses the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, and motivations that characterize the <i>participants</i> , research <i>setting</i> , and events. Thick description helps researchers paint a meticulous picture for the reader. (Ethnography, p. 99)
think-alouds	Think-alouds are a type of verbal report in which <i>participants</i> report on their thought processes while they are completing a task. (Introspective Techniques, p. 222)
thought units	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , thought units are segments of the transcribed text that reflect a particular thought or idea. (Discourse Analysis, p. 224)
timing	In a <i>mixed methods</i> study, timing refers to the sequence or order of collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative <i>data</i> . (Mixed Methods, p. 138)
transcribing data	Transcribing is the process of converting verbal <i>data</i> to written data for <i>analysis</i> . (Interviews, p. 192)
transcription notation	Transcription notation refers to transcribing conventions, used for systematically representing features of talk in a visual format. (Discourse Analysis, p. 243)
transferability	Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of <i>qualitative research</i> can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or <i>settings</i> . That decision is made by the reader; the qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by thoroughly describing the research <i>setting</i> using <i>thick description</i> , and clearly stating the assumptions that were central to the research. (Open-Response Items in Questionnaires, p. 215)

Key Word	Definition
triangulation	Triangulation refers to the process of using multiple sources for <i>data</i> gathering, multiple methods, multiple researchers, and/or multiple theoretical perspectives to build richer and deeper analyses and understandings of the topic under inquiry. (Introduction, p. 11)
Triangulation Design	Triangulation Design is a <i>mixed methods</i> design in which quantitative and qualitative <i>data</i> are collected and <i>analyzed</i> concurrently and then compared, in order to understand the research problem more completely. (Mixed Methods, p. 141)
trust and betrayal	There are universal ethical concerns that building trust with participants may entail some betrayal of that trust once the data gathering is complete. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 278)
trustworthiness	The term trustworthiness refers to standards for judging the quality and usefulness of qualitative research studies, which are composed of criteria for methodologically competent practice and ethically sensitive practice. (Ethics and Trustworthiness, p. 264)
turn	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , a turn refers to one person's allocation of talk. (Discourse Analysis, p. 250)
turntaking	In <i>discourse analysis</i> , turntaking refers to the organizational system of talk where one person speaks, stops, another starts, stops, and so on. (Discourse Analysis, p. 249)
verbal reports or verbal protocols	Verbal reports or verbal protocols are oral records of an individual's thought processes. (Introspective Techniques, p. 222)
vignette	A vignette is a short narrative description that captures the essential characteristics of a person or event. (Case Study, p. 83)
visual diagram	A visual diagram is a graphical representation of the research procedures used in a <i>mixed methods</i> study. (Mixed Methods, p. 150)
warrant	A warrant is a reasoned justification for accepting and believing in a research <i>claim</i> or finding. (What Makes Research 'Qualitative?', p. 26)
weighting	Weighting refers to the relative importance or priority given to each type of <i>data</i> in a <i>mixed methods</i> study. (Mixed Methods, p. 138)

Sources: Each contributor, and also Brown & Rodgers (2002), Creswell (2007, 2009), Mackey & Gass, (2005), Nunan (1992), and Schwandt (2007).

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