



Book Review

Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches

H. Russell Bernard & Gery W. Ryan

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, (2010).

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Since a good portion of study abroad research involves more than quantitative data, the need to be adept at a range of qualitative methodologies is obvious. Bernard and Ryan provide a lucid overview of today's leading social science qualitative research methodologies. The main strength of their work is its comprehensiveness: a wide variety of data collection and analysis procedures are elucidated.

Readers familiar with the basic principles of social science research will likely prefer to skim through this book – particularly its first six introductory chapters. Although parts of this text are best suited to novice readers, it also contains valuable nuggets for all those engaged in social science research. For example, the coding rubric on page 99 judiciously outlines some ways to increase inter-rater coding agreement.

Some Great Features

This book offers many excellent features. Reading it carefully, readers can begin to recognize which methodology is appropriate for different types of research questions. The authors are not ideologically rigid and many theoretical views and practical research methodologies are discussed.

Foreign language researchers will appreciate how methodological decisions can be influenced by language fluency levels. For instance, not much language proficiency is required to conduct raw word counts or map lexical collocations. However, to discern missing data or to identify specialized word uses - which Marshall and Rossman (1989) refer to as *indigenous typologies* - considerable linguistic (and cultural) fluency is needed. Study abroad researchers in Japan writing in English need to be especially sensitive about how terms such as *amai*, *hikikomori*, *kokusaijin*, *setsunai* and *yoroshiku* are interpreted since these words do not translate well into English.

The coverage of *grounded theory* in Chapter 12 and *content analysis* in Chapter 13 are particularly cogent. Bernard and Ryan reveal how these approaches draw from different philosophical positions and how each have strengths and weaknesses. In an oblique criticism, they write that, “many studies today that fly under the banner of grounded theory are based on the analysis of already collected interview texts” (p. 270). In other words, *theoretical sampling* – an iterative process of concurrent data collection, coding, theory-building (Glasser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45) and a key element of grounded theory – appears to be missing from some so-called “grounded theory” studies. While examining one content analysis study, readers are briefly introduced to Homans' (1958) social exchange theory – a notion with intriguing implications for study abroad research.

The authors also deserve plaudits for outlining several possible reasons why some data are never recorded. Perhaps one informant may consider some data too embarrassing to express, while a different informant might regard it as too obvious to merit mentioning. Recording/transcription errors are yet another possibility. Distinguishing between these various scenarios requires considerable interpretive skill. Indeed, of all the types of data analysis methods outlined in this book, trying to notice “patterns within silence” in order to interpret missing information is perhaps the most difficult.



One final nice feature of this text is that it introduces software programs often used in qualitative research. Readers will find the descriptions of ANTROPAC, UCINET, SYSTAT, and ATLAS.ti far from detailed – but enough to generate curiosity and perhaps stimulate some to delve into the literature further.

Some Criticisms

This text is not without problematic issues. In my view, a primary one concerns its use of space: 48 of its 451-pages are devoted to references that could easily be placed online. The 8-page author reference also belongs on the Internet. Moreover, I was disappointed to find that the recommended resources at www.qualquant.net/AQD link lead to a password-protected website consisting mostly of advertisements.

Perhaps my biggest criticism of the text is how so many words are alluded to without sufficient explanations. For example, on page 56 *interview protocols* are briefly introduced, but not explained in adequate detail. Moreover, *axial coding* (p. 270) receives a very scant description. Part of the problem is that there are a vast number of terms in qualitative research and usage is far from uniform.

Although the authors' writing is generally clear, this is not invariably so. For example, the distinction between *prompting* (a disfavored practice of putting words in interviewees' mouths, p. 31) and *phased-assertion* or *baiting*, which is lauded as a "particularly effective probing technique" (p. 33) seems unclear. Moreover, the ways these two practices differ from *aided recall* (offering interviewees a list of possible responses, p. 38) and *semantic cueing* (suggesting items from a list, p. 168) should be explained further.

One final quibble: while discussing *folk taxonomies* (vernacular naming systems embedded in a given culture) on p. 185 the authors seem unduly Americo-centric by suggesting an informant be "a native speaker of American English." To me the notion of "native speakerism" (Holliday, 2006, pp. 385-387) merits further deconstruction.

The Bottom Line

Despite its limitations, this text is valuable for study abroad researchers. Not only does it contain ample information about interesting social science studies, but it also raises many intriguing research possibilities. For example, after reading about an ethnological classification system developed by Murdock in the 1940s and now maintained by the Human Relations Area Files, Inc. it became clear how this list could be helpful in cataloging study abroad data. However, in Japan it seems that little – if any – study abroad research so far has employed this coding system. Matsuzawa (1992) suggests that many researchers in Japan are simply unaware of this coding system.

One factor potential buyers of this book need to consider is the large number of other qualitative research texts in English already on the market. For example, Creswell's *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (1998) covers much of the same ground as this text. Those looking for more technical detail might prefer Cooper, Hedges, and Valentine's *Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis* (2009). Though methodological junkies will want to read all of these and other related texts, ordinary classroom teachers will likely settle for just one or two. If you are hesitant about purchasing this book, a look at one of its online chapters at http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/30485_Chapter3.pdf might help you reach a decision. Another option is to go at the checklist at the end of this review. If over half of the items in that list seem unfamiliar, this book is probably a useful investment.

- Reviewed by Tim Newfields
(Toyo University)



Main Learning Objectives for Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches

To ascertain whether or not this text might be helpful for you, go through this simple checklist that outlines some of its main learning objectives. Add 1-point for each “NO” answer and if your total score is over 12 out of 25 possible points, consider purchasing this (or a similar) book on qualitative research.

1.	I understand the key differences/similarities between <i>qualitative</i> and <i>quantitative</i> research.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 1
2.	I grasp the main <i>goals</i> of qualitative research and its most common data <i>forms</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 1
3.	I am clear about how the most common <i>data collection techniques</i> differ.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 2
4.	I am familiar with the most prevalent <i>interview formats</i> and <i>domain elicitation</i> procedures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 2
5.	I understand the main types of in depth <i>interview probes</i> and when they should be used.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch. 2, 8
6.	I know how to increase interview accuracy by means of <i>cued recalls</i> , <i>aided recalls</i> , and <i>landmarks</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 2
7.	I am acquainted with the main ways to identify <i>data themes</i> (i.e. categories/codes/units).	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 3
8.	I am aware of the merits/demerits of the main techniques for <i>classifying textual data</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 3, 13
9.	I realize when to use <i>structural codes</i> , <i>thematic codes</i> , and various types of <i>memos</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 4
10.	I know how the standard ways to measure and enhance <i>inter-rater reliability</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 4, 13
11.	I recognize <i>profile matrices</i> and <i>proximity matrices</i> differ.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 5
12.	The basic principles behind <i>multidimensional scaling</i> (MDS) are clear to me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 5, 8
13.	The key steps generally used in building <i>conceptual models</i> are familiar to me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 6
14.	I have some idea about how to classify different types of <i>qualitative variables</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 7
15.	I can surmise what <i>levels of aggregation</i> are appropriate for what types of data.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 7
16.	The rudiments of <i>cultural domain analysis</i> (CDA) and <i>cluster analysis</i> make sense to me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 8
17.	The most widespread methods used in developing <i>folk taxonomies</i> are clear to me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 8
18.	I can segment texts into their main components through <i>KWIC analyses</i> and <i>semantic network analyses</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 9
19.	The leading approaches to <i>discourse analysis</i> are familiar to me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 10
20.	I understand the four main traditions of <i>narrative analysis</i> in the social sciences.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 11
21.	I can spot some of the core differences between the leading approaches to <i>grounded theory</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 12
22.	The basics of <i>schema analysis</i> are understood by me.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 14
23.	I can describe the key differences between <i>analytic induction</i> and <i>qualitative comparative analysis</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 14
24.	I know how to construct <i>ethnographic decision models</i> (EDMs) and evaluate their validity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 15
25.	I can decide which <i>sampling methodology</i> is most appropriate for my research.	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N	Ch 16

Works Cited

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