

# In search of research methodology for Applied Linguistics

**Rahman Sahragard**  
(Shiraz University)

## **Abstract**

There are a few issues that are the concern of this paper. First, when it comes to research paradigms, the novice researcher may be confused as to what kind of research has been undertaken to do in terms of the underlying philosophy. Even when known, the same researcher opts for one which is more in fashion or may lead to more tangible results. Second, up to the early 1990s, the consensus among language researchers was to follow in the footsteps of scientific research. So a large number of studies on language dealt with issues such as 'research design', 'population and sample selection', 'treatment', etc. The tendency among the new generation of researchers, however, and the resurgence of post-modern movement has made it inevitable for the applied linguists to look more at the other end of the continuum which deals with individual cases, small practices, and local events with no tendency for generalization. This approach has not been wholly recognised by some researchers, however. To them any deviation from the procedures of scientific research cannot gain the status of real and useful investigation. The present writer believes that these are just extremes and a solution not the solution lies in adopting procedures that look at all aspects of the phenomenon under investigation. Finally, in spite of the clear advantage of having multiple perspectives over single-method studies, in practice, a majority of studies favour the latter.

## **The Challenge of Paradigms**

The two paradigms mentioned in the abstract are *quantitative* and *qualitative* methodological paradigms (Hammersly, 1992). The present study seeks to draw on these paradigms in a complementary (if not equally balanced) fashion. An essential preliminary point is to note that the choice of paradigm depends fundamentally on the purpose of the research envisaged and on the nature and focus of the research questions. This choice includes, of course, the increasingly common practice of combining methods within and across paradigms in what might be termed paradigm mixes and paradigm blends.

The quantitative paradigm is derived from positivism that holds that the world is made up of observable, measurable, and quantifiable facts (Glense and Peshkin, 1992). The essential aim is to explain causal relationships and to have generalised knowledge. In contrast, the qualitative paradigm is rooted in the humanities, which focuses on holistic information and interpretative approaches (Husen, 1994). Both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms consist of sets of different research methods that are founded on separate philosophical assumptions about social life (Hammersley, 1995). There are important epistemological differences between the two approaches in that they use diverse principles and knowledge about the social world (Bryman, 1988). The essential aim in quantitative research is to produce knowledge that is as value-free as

possible and that can be generalised (Borg and Gall 1989). Quantitative researchers try to find out particular explanations and predictions to generalise from a sample to a population (Glense and Peshkin, 1992). In contrast to this approach, qualitative research adopts a phenomenological perspective in viewing reality as a social phenomenon that develops through an individual or co-operative social definition of the situation. The aim of qualitative research is to understand and view reality from the actors' perspective (Firestone, 1987). Qualitative research gives more emphasis to the study of subjects holistically (or participants as they are now more commonly referred to, implying more interaction between perspectives and experiences) rather than to the generalisation of the results. Therefore, the main purpose is to compile a body of knowledge that is unique to an individual case or specific context (Borg and Gall, 1989). There is a range of qualitative methods for data elicitation, but generally, the two most frequently used methods are observations and interviews. In qualitative research, the research design focuses on participation and interaction with individuals or groups of people (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). If examination of social interaction and first-hand information about social processes is required, participant observation and interviewing are essential and appropriate research methods. In this kind of research, researchers try to reduce the distance between themselves and the case (Bryman, 1992). Therefore, qualitative research provides rich, context-bounded and naturalistic information (Bullock, Little and Millham, 1992). If it has an ethnographic emphasis, it aims to understand and interpret participants' interpretations of their social worlds. For some, qualitative research may be judged by its capacity to emancipate, empower or otherwise make free these participants and its validity can be supported by techniques of member validation (Seale, 1999). However, this assumes particular kinds of research and participants, and there is no general consensus on the political desirability of such an orientation because there is no general consensus on either politics or research styles.

In contrast to such qualitative research processes, quantitative research refers to the implementation of measurements and in gathering and analysing them assigns numerical values to the research subjects or to their attitude, opinions, and other attributes (Bullock et al, 1992). It involves several data gathering and analytic methods such as survey techniques, experiments, structured observation, content analysis and parametric and non-parametric statistical analysis. It emphasises causality, measurement and generalisability (Bryman, 1992). Both quantitative and qualitative paradigms rely on different epistemologies. Furthermore, both of them provide different kinds of data that also each have advantages and disadvantages. Because of this, most research depends on one type of data and leads to selective and limited information. Each type of method serves research purposes with different data that are used to explain particular sides of a subject or reality. This is also the main limitation of relying on a single type of data. Therefore, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same research project is desirable. The use of paradigm mixes and blends may be held to consolidate methodological strengths and offset limitations.

Denzin (1994) reiterates that “the social world is socially constructed and its meaning, to the observers and those observed, is constantly changing” (p. 6462). Therefore, to find valid information for all perspectives seems difficult. On the other hand, to get some valid perspectives on reality with a single method can be questionable, certainly from the counter-viewpoints of contrasting research perspectives. In addition to this, Patton (1990) mentions that “fieldwork is not a single method or technique” (p. 244). It comprises a variety of methods such as surveys, experiments, structured observation, ethnography and interviews. Each of them is used to gather different kinds of data. Therefore, using multiple sources can give a wide range of information, unlike the use of a single method. Patton (1990) also points out that each method has particular strengths and weaknesses. As single methods may not provide enough information for the purposes of validity, multiple sources or combinations of data types may advance validity and strengthen conclusions. Denzin (1989) argues that the combination or integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods in the same study can be a more acceptable approach than using a single one. He refers to this integrative approach as ‘triangulation’ in research. Triangulation uses multiple sources of data collection and provides a deeper understanding of social phenomena. Therefore, triangulation can be a solid alternative to single-method validation, provided that data sources are comparable or that data collection procedures focus on some common or comparable area (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). In addition to this, it extends the quality of data and trustworthiness of results (Robson, 1993). Denzin (1989) expands the general triangulation definition and claims that “triangulation is the use of multiple methods in the study of the same object” (p. 236), and further suggests that there are four basic types of triangulation: 1. Data triangulation, 2. Investigator triangulation, 2. Theory triangulation, and 4. Methodological triangulation. In addition to this classification, Patton (1990) suggests ‘analyst’ triangulation, that is using multiple analysts to review findings. Combining methods in this way invokes other difficulties, of course, such as greater commitment of researchers’ (and participants’) time and effort, and the need to master more methods and to ensure methodological compatibility of focus and object.

Denzin (1989) points out that by “ selecting dissimilar settings in a systematic fashion, investigators can discover what their concepts have in common” (p. 237). Patton (1990) also indicates that triangulating data sources includes “comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means” (p. 467).

### **Common Methods of Research: Naturally occurring data**

Anthropologists and sociolinguists have repeatedly called for collection of naturally occurring data (see for example Wolfson 1983, 1986; Roberts, Davies and Jupp 1992). The advantages of gathering natural data as summarised by Cohen (1996:391-2), are:

1. The data are spontaneous.
2. The data reflect what the speakers say rather than what they think they would say.

3. The speakers are reacting to a natural situation rather than to a contrived and possibly unfamiliar situation.
4. The communicative event has real-world consequences.
5. The event may be a source of rich pragmatic structures.

And the disadvantages (*idem.*) are:

1. The speech act being studied may not occur naturally very often.
2. Proficiency and gender may be difficult to control.
3. Collecting and analysing the data are time-consuming.
4. The data may not yield enough or any examples of target items.
5. The use of recording equipment may be intrusive.
6. The use of note taking as a complement to or in lieu of taping relies on memory.” (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993 cited in Cohen, 1996)

In the same line, Wolfson (1983) stresses using “ethnographic fieldwork” as the only reliable method of data collection about the way speech acts function in interaction. Ethnographic fieldwork (or observation) can be done using notes, recording on audio or videotapes, etc. According to her, ethnography is the most satisfactory source of reliable and varied data for research in pragmatics. There are practical difficulties in obtaining naturally-occurring recordings as data, and Wolfson acknowledges that this kind of research involves spending a considerable amount of time for collecting data and transcribing them. Stubbs (1983) states that a minimum of 20 hours is normally required to transcribe a 50 to 60 minute conversation. This is for a normal transcription without any special signs, markings or tables. The depth of the detail of the transcription, clearly, is based on the kind of investigation and the information one hopes to recover from the transcript. Nonetheless, where there are time restrictions, the time spent on transcription may limit the amount of data that can be transcribed.

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) also point out that sometimes the object of the research does not occur when recording: some theoretically important speech acts may be infrequently used in natural contexts. It may take several hours or sessions for recording sufficient instances to be collected.

In observation of naturally occurring data, there is also the problem of the ‘observer’s paradox’, as referred to by Labov (1972). He believes that people may not speak naturally when they notice that they are being observed or recorded. Therefore, the presence of a tape recorder or an observer has an undesirable effect on the quality and the quantity of data obtained. In such situations, the subjects perceive the context of observation as formal and adjust their speech style accordingly, thus presenting the observer with some invalid data. One way of avoiding this problem is to shift informants’ attention from form to content by introducing topics of high involvement (Labov, 1966). Such topics override the formal constraints in the production of naturally occurring interaction. Another way of side-stepping this problem has been secretly recording the interaction and obtaining the subject’s consent to use the data afterwards. This

approach poses major ethical issues, though, and should be avoided. Milroy (1987) argues that people have the right to refuse to have their voice recorded, as they might express reservations about being photographed. Besides ethical issues involved in secret recording, there are some practical constraints as well. A researcher, who apparently spies in gleaning data, finds the job quite arduous and may eventually be deprived of access. Secondly, a well-hidden microphone is not likely to receive sound as well as it otherwise would, which may result in data of doubtful quality and value (Labov, 1981). The same is true for a video camera that may not be able to capture the full scope of the situation. The focus and scope of a video recording is very limited and depends on the camera-holder's perception (Saville-Troike, 1996).

So if a study uses naturally occurring data through ethnographic field notes, this overcomes some of the practical and ethical difficulties, but leads to a reliance on memory, note-taking skills, and selectivity, besides the researcher's ability to note or recall not only words but also contexts. The researcher also needs to see such fieldwork as learnable skill, to treat it reflexively as a non-obvious method, and to recognise that there are still lingering difficulties regarding obtaining participants' consent after noting their words (Emerson et al., 1995). However, such difficulties are recognised and writing field notes is, after all, part of a longstanding tradition in anthropology and sociology, if much less so in applied linguistics. As with all research methods, it has its inherent constraints and problematic aspects.

### **Participant-Observation**

The main difference between participant-observation and other types of observation is that in participant-observation the researcher is a native member of the society or has been immersed there for a substantial period (Saville-Troike, 1996). This method is a common method of collecting data. According to Saville-Troike (1996:119), "the key to successful participant-observation is freeing oneself as much as humanly possible from the filter of one's own cultural experience. This requires cultural relativism, knowledge about possible cultural differences, and sensitivity and objectivity in perceiving others."

Saville-Troike (1996) further elaborates that the necessary step toward participant-observation is for the researcher to be involved in group activities frequently over a period of time and take up a role in the group. In this way, the researcher acquires the necessary background knowledge and develops relationships of trust with members of that community. He or she then can benefit from testing hypotheses about rules of communication by breaking them and observing or eliciting reactions (Saville-Troike, 1996).

### **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviewing lies between structured and unstructured interviews. It refers to a situation in which the interviewer sets up a general structure for the interview, but details this structure by asking extra, spontaneous questions depending on the interaction process

during the interview. The interviewer extends questions using prompts, probes, and follow up questions to get the interviewees to clarify and expand their answers (Drever, 1995). This is more flexible than structured interviewing and provides the opportunity to probe and expand the interviewee's responses. The interviewer remains almost free to build up on interaction within a particular subject area, to ask questions spontaneously and to establish conversation relating to particular predetermined issues (Patton, 1987).

Cohen and Manion (1994) define such interviews as "a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation" (p. 271).

The aim of interviews is neither to test a hypothesis nor to evaluate a program. The broad purpose of interviewing is "an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 1991:3). In a semi-structured interview, the main focus is the other individual's stories and thoughts (Seidman, 1991). By interviewing, the interviewer gains access into another individual's world in order to perceive, learn and understand the meaning of the topic from the other person's perspective (Patton 1987). The interview is therefore a very helpful method, especially where it is used to learn something that cannot be directly observed. Kvale (1996) emphasises the importance of obtaining the interviewee's meaning of the underlying general themes not only through words; the interpretation of the themes of the interviewee's voice intonation, eye contact, vocalisation, and facial expressions that reflect the emotional circumstance is also very important.

Broadly speaking, semi-structured interviews involve activities such as asking open-ended questions, listening, and recording the answers given by the interviewee. In addition to being active in the talk, the interviewer has to be able to be sensitive, attentive, and understanding (Patton, 1987). Because a semi-structured interview has a largely conversational style, there is the possible disadvantage that what respondents say is, in part, influenced by preceding contributions to the jointly constructed talk by the interviewer. Further, there is a tension between naturalness and consistency which needs to be recognised in conversation-type interviews: the more natural the conversation is, the less consistent the contribution of the interviewer is likely to be across interviews; the more consistent the attempts of the interviewer to control the contributions, the less natural the interview will seem to the interviewee. Consistency is, of course, generally valued in research but as a principle of interviewing it needs to be reconciled with naturalness. Naturalness is quite crucial to interviews designed to promote respondents' expression of experience or elicit how they understand key concepts. Without such naturalness, any data elicited may be less authentically what respondents believe or know and more of a construct of the interview situation. Yet it may be recognised that most research interviews are, in fact, constructs in this way: given a different context of conversation many respondents would give different replies. Like other

disadvantages of other research methods, the limitations of this general construct can only be recognised and, perhaps, compensated by the use of complementary methods.

According to Keats (1994:3004) there are several factors that affect the consistency of the research interview: “the structure of the interview schedule; the development of listening skills; probing and empathy; the control of bias; training of interviewers; coding, scoring; and analysis of the responses.”

An obvious further disadvantage of interviews is a possible lack of validity in responses. It is likely that some respondents may evade telling the truth or might provide biased information. They may do this in order to present themselves or their responses to conform to what they perceive as the purpose of the interview or what the interviewer expects. Because of this, interviews should be used as complementary methods alongside other methods. Another important concern is the ethical issues in analysing interview data. It is the researcher who reduces data, refines them, codes them and analyses them according to those codes. So what is considered important and valuable to collect, analyse, and report relies mainly on the researcher’s point of view rather than that of participants (Merriam, 1988). Thus, a report may fail to represent the actual information which might be seen if investigated by other researchers or by the participants themselves.

### **Introspection**

Introspection is a way of collecting data only about one’s own speech community (Saville-Troike, 1996). As such it is an important skill to develop not only for data collection itself, but also for finding answers about language and culture from the perspective of both the researcher and the subjects. The researcher has to differentiate between beliefs, values, and behaviours. This “exercise in itself will provide information and insights on the group and on the individuals” (Ibid. p.118).

Saville-Troike proposes two steps to follow for developing introspective skills: 1. Asking “individuals to formulate very specific answers from their own experience to various questions about communication [and 2. Recognising] the significance of differences between answers which reflect cultural ‘ideals’ or norms and the ‘real’, or what actually occurs” (Ibid. p. 118). The distinction between ideal and real should not be interpreted negatively or in true and false senses; these are just two levels of behaviour. The important thing about them is that the researcher should refer to them and treat them accordingly. Thus, “even when researchers are sure they know about patterns of language use in their own speech community, it is important to check hypotheses developed on the basis of their own perceptions with the perceptions of others, and against objective data collected in systematic observation” (Ibid. p. 119).

Wolfson, however, (1989) argues against the use of native speakers’ perception in the data. According to her, native speakers have the competence to use their own language appropriately and also to pass judgement on other speakers’ usage such as children or learners that

may break the rules. However, even though speakers are able to explain whether an utterance or usage is acceptable, they cannot predict reliably the whole range of possible expressions that speakers will use (Wolfson, 1989). Wolfson (1983) argues that this may be because the knowledge of the sociolinguistic rules of their language is “below the level of conscious awareness” (p. 83). However, this is less likely to be the case when native-speakers who are themselves linguists introspect.

Brouwer, Gerritsen and DeHaan’s (1979) study is among the first to point towards the inadequacy of native speakers’ intuitions. They looked into the ways in which men’s and women’s speeches differ in Dutch. The researchers’ hypothesis was that men’s and women’s speech differ with regard to the following: the number of words used in dealing with a task, the use of diminutives, polite forms and expressions indicating insecurity such as repetition, hesitations, self-corrections. The list of these differences was based on the authors’ own intuitions and the existing sociolinguistic literature on sex differences in speech. The authors’ secretly recorded 309 women and 278 men buying a train ticket in the central station in Amsterdam. Contrary to their expectations, the data revealed that differences in speech had to do with the gender of the addressee rather than with that of the speaker. It is “important to point out that even such supposedly transparent aspects of language use as differences in men’s and women’s speech have been found, once empirical analysis is done, to be very different from what native speakers would have expected” (Wolfson 1989:41).

According to Blom and Gumperz’s (1972) informants in a study of code-switching in a small town in Norway, the strongly favoured use of the native dialect Ranamal signified a positive sense of local pride and represented an acceptance of the community’s common culture and heritage. However, the recording of a friendly gathering showed that speakers code-switched considerably between the local dialect and Bokmal, the standard variety, mainly for stylistic reasons, for example when a speaker wanted to validate her status as an intellectual. This study demonstrates how native speakers’ actual linguistic usage can differ widely from their self-reports and how native speakers may mistakenly believe their ideal to be their actual usage. It is important to point out, however, that even faulty perceptions, are “unquestionably valuable and important in many ways” (Wolfson, 1989:44) because arguably what respondents believe about language is an important element in the total linguistic picture of what people do with language. However, the pitfalls inherent in such perceptions and beliefs are recognised and remedied. Intuitions enable speakers of a language to recognise inaccuracies and inappropriate speech behaviour as well as give them insight into the meanings behind various means of expression (Wolfson, 1989).

### **Written Data: Questionnaires**

There are different forms of questionnaires. Some are used in quantitative studies to gauge learner variables, both cognitive and affective such as Strategy Inventory for Language

Learning (Oxford, 1986), Attitude Motivation Test Battery (Gardner, 1960, 1968), and Self-efficacy Questionnaire (Sadighi et al, 2003).

Other forms used in qualitative studies are meant to elicit language data. These are also known as a discourse completion test or task. Levenston and Blum (1978) first developed this procedure to study lexical simplification. Blum-Kulka (1982) then adapted this procedure to investigate speech act realisation. Since then DCQs have been widely in use mainly in testing foreign language learners' performance (see, for example, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1986, Beebe 1985, Takahashi and Beebe 1987, Eslamirasekh 1993, Maeshiba et al. 1996). In DCQs subjects can provide written or spoken responses to prompts. A more fashionable method is videotaping subjects while they act out a response in a role-play. Based on observation of naturally occurring data, researchers might set up situations in their DCQs. This would reduce one aspect of this artificiality. The written procedure usually involves presenting a prompt and space for a response. For example:

You promised to return a textbook to your classmate within a day or two, after photocopying a chapter. You kept it for almost 2 weeks.

*Classmate:* I'm really upset about the book because I needed it to prepare for last week's class.

*You:* \_\_\_\_\_

(Cohen, 1996:390)

This kind of DCQ is open-ended but other controlled formats may also be followed, such as presenting the subjects with multiple responses and asking them to choose the best possible answer. If the respondents cannot decide, they then may provide their own answers.

The most obvious advantage of using DCQs over methods such as ethnographic observation is that a sizeable corpus of data can be collected in a relatively short time since a DCQ can be administered to large groups simultaneously (Cohen, 1996). Beebe and Cummings (1985) conclude that DCQs are highly effective means of :

1. gathering a large amount of data quickly;
2. creating an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that will occur in natural speech;
3. studying the stereotypical, perceived requirements for socially appropriate (though not always polite) response;
4. gaining insights into social and psychological factors that are likely to affect speech and performance; and
5. ascertaining the canonical shape of refusals, apologies, partings, etc., in the minds of the speakers of that language. (p. 13)

However, data elicited using DCQs do not satisfactorily represent the following:

1. the actual wording used in real interaction;
2. the range of formulas and strategies used (some, like avoidance, tend to be left out);
3. the length of response or the number of turns it takes to fulfil the function;
4. the depth of emotion that in turn qualitatively affects the tone, content, and form of linguistic performance;
5. the number of repetitions and elaborations that occur; or
6. the actual rate of occurrence of a speech act-e.g., whether or not someone would naturalistically refuse at all in a given situation. (Beebe and Cummings 1985:14)

Among other advantages of DCQs is that it is possible to compare a large number of responses. As many responses are collected through the same prompt, significant factors like age, sex, status, and role-relationships between the participants and the DCQ situation they find themselves in are held constant. However, it is very difficult to control such factors in ethnographic methods.

A much reported disadvantage of DCQs is the relative unreliability of results (Beebe and Cummings, 1985). Beebe and Cummings discovered differences between written and oral role-plays. Among other differences, they found that “written role-plays bias the response towards less negotiation, less hedging, less repetition, less elaboration, less variety, and ultimately less talk” (p. 3). This finding very clearly indicates that researchers should be wary of assuming that a DCQ will yield similar or comparable results whether delivered in the written or the oral mode or whether using open or multiple-choice formats (Rose, 1994; Hinkel, 1997).

A number of studies have shown that the DCQ method is an effective way of detecting differences in the performance of learners in a foreign language and native speakers’ responses. For instance, Faerch and Kasper (1989) and Rintell and Mitchell (1989) mention that second language learners are prone to more extensive responses than native speakers. Faerch and Kasper argue that such responses should be considered in a positive light rather than as a proof of inadequacy because they indicate that learners are trying to avoid misinterpretation, giving prominence to the maxim of manner (be clear, be brief, be orderly) over that of quantity. Holmes (1992) states that “lack of experience in analysing the socially relevant variables in another culture means learners inevitably draw on formulaic responses, as well as on their mother tongue” (p.123). She adds that it is likely that the differences between role-plays and natural conversation are greater in native speakers than foreign learners because of this lack of experience.

Aside from DCQs being a very effective means of collecting great amounts of data in a short time, they also provide an excellent complement to ethnographic studies by corroborating results (Wolfson, Marmor and Jones, 1989). Detailing the advantages of oral DCQs, Rintell and Mitchell (1989) state that “the subjects have the opportunity to say what and as much as they would like to say, and their spoken language is thought to be a good indication of their ‘natural’ way of speaking” (p. 251). They also maintain that although their data appear in two modalities,

written dialogue and oral role-play, they do not really reflect the differences between spoken and written language. This is because the task in both of them was to respond with what the person in each situation would say, and therefore both modes presumably elicit oral responses (although it is not common to write oral responses to written prompts outside DCQ contexts). A reservation expressed elsewhere is that the extent to which the subjects' responses correspond to what they would actually say in real life is a factor that has to be considered in the analysis. It is doubtful if this would be a close correspondence since DCQ contexts are highly reduced versions of any authentic situation; the latter must therefore contain more variables which potentially affect speech act realisations. Besides, subjects, especially foreign language learners, may avoid words they would choose in real life, simply because they cannot spell them, and include words they know how to spell, but would not consider appropriate. Thus the written format may skew self-reports of purported oral responses. The disadvantages of DCQs are therefore that they seem somewhat artificial or experimental tasks and the precise relation of DCQ responses to those apparently similar comments that might be made in real situations remains unknown and difficult to ascertain. Successful DCQ research probably includes giving respondents familiarisation tasks; if it is in a foreign language it needs to make allowances for the time needed and for learners' limitations of producing speech acts in such tasks.

## **Conclusion**

It was earlier pointed out that the adoption of an appropriate method or methods for a particular research project is of paramount importance. Use of multiple methods (methodology triangulation) has long been a fashion in social sciences to reduce problems attached to single methods. It is, however, only recently that scholars in language related studies have opted for combining different data gathering methods. Kasper and Rose (1999) review 28 cross-sectional and longitudinal pragmatic studies done up to the year 1998. Among these studies only 2 employed more than one method. It is important to note, however, that the significant contributions of different elicitation techniques to different research issues need vigorous empirical scrutiny (Kasper and Dahl, 1991). "As in all data-based research, a good method is one that is able to shed light on the question(s) under study" (Ibid. p. 245).

Much has been said about the adoption of appropriate methodology or methodologies. Commenting on methods used for collecting data on language use, Kasper and Dahl (1991) express the view that it is rather hard to collect sufficient instances of data solely through observation of authentic conversation. Conversely, "tightly controlled data elicitation techniques [namely questionnaires] might well preclude access to precisely the kinds of conversational and interpersonal phenomena..." (Ibid. p. 245). As reflected earlier, a remedy to this proves to be using multiple methods in collecting data.

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