

Chapter 6

Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Inquiries

Truong Cong Bang

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8840-252X>

University of Economics and Law, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam & Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines conceptualizations and applications of validity in qualitative research within applied linguistics and language education. It outlines the importance of addressing validity given the complexity of language phenomena and contextual embeddedness of language research. Strategies to enhance ethical qualitative practice are discussed. Limitations of existing validity approaches for these fields are critiqued and alternative perspectives proposed. Additionally, the chapter analyzes myriad validity considerations regarding the multifaceted nature of language and aims of language-focused inquiries, providing case study examples. Methodological and ethical strategies to strengthen qualitative research validity are explored, emphasizing reflexivity and researcher positionality. The chapter argues for embracing expanded conceptual lenses aligned with ethical priorities to realize rigorous, equitable and justice-oriented qualitative practice.

INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research has become increasingly vital for expanding our understanding of applied linguistics and language teaching and learning processes (Yahya et al., 2023). Through methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, qualitative approaches allow for an in-depth examination of the complex phenomena involved in language education (Costa et al., 2022). However, as qualitative research continues to gain prominence in these fields, addressing issues of validity has become imperative.

Validity refers to the trustworthiness and credibility of research findings, ensuring that interpretations accurately represent participants' realities and the phenomena under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-2603-9.ch006

Ensuring Credibility and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Inquiries

Concerns around validity in qualitative research have been debated for decades, with seminal discussions emerging in the 1980s and 1990s on how to evaluate qualitative evidence and establish quality standards (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Lather, 1993; Maxwell, 1992). More recently, validity has been the subject of extensive methodological discussions as qualitative approaches continue diversifying (Cian, 2021; Miksza et al., 2023).

The multifaceted nature of language phenomena makes validity particularly pertinent in applied linguistics and language education research. Language learning, teaching, use, and policies are shaped by a complexity of intersecting factors, including linguistic, psychological, sociocultural, political, and historical dimensions that interact in intricate ways (Block et al., 2012; Kramsch, 2006; Norton, 2013). For instance, language practices are mediated by the cultural norms, power structures, and lived experiences within particular communities (Beebe & Giles, 1984). They are also situated within broader sociohistorical discourses that frame language ideologies and shape opportunities for language learning and use (Genç, 2023).

Qualitative approaches are well-suited to unpacking this complexity by centering diverse stakeholders' lived experiences and perspectives, such as those of language learners, teachers, and policymakers (Duff, 2008; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). However, to ensure insights are credible and can reliably inform applied fields, researchers must systematically address validity through rigorous methodological strategies (Jixing & Shiyi, 2019). This is crucial for developing effective policies and practices, as well as advancing scholarly understanding of sociocultural dimensions of language.

This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the conceptualization and application of validity in language-related qualitative research. It outlines the importance of validity for producing meaningful insights that enhance our understanding of learning, teaching, and educational environments. The goal is to delve into this vital issue and offer guidance to applied linguistics and language education researchers seeking to demonstrate the rigor and credibility of their qualitative studies.

CONCEPTUALIZING VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Validity represents a central quality standard underpinning the rigor and perceived credibility of scholarly research. However, validating qualitative research has proven complex given extensive epistemological debates across paradigms (Cho & Trent, 2006; Whittemore et al., 2001). Positivist perspectives that dominated early conceptualizations assume an objective, knowable reality whereby validity denotes the truthfulness with which findings match an external world (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Maxwell, 1992). This stance advocates methodological controls to reduce biases and establish causality. Yet the applicability of imposing such natural science models to qualitative approaches has undergone substantial critiques from postpositivist, constructivist, critical, feminist, and postmodern paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lather, 1993; Richardson & Pierre, 2005).

Postpositivists reconceive validity via critical realism as imperfect efforts to represent presumed existing realities, while constructivists argue individuals intersubjectively co-create knowledge and meanings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2005). These perspectives highlight the inescapable subjectivity and contextual embeddedness of qualitative inquiries. Critical, feminist, and postmodern paradigms further interject skepticism by situating research within sociopolitical power dynamics and rejecting the possibility of neutral, objective results (Lather, 1993). These clashing worldviews undergird extensive conceptual and

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

www.igi-global.com/chapter/ensuring-credibility-and-trustworthiness-in-qualitative-inquiries/346600

Related Content

Mastering Technology-Enhanced Language Learning, Computer-Assisted Language Learning, and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Kijpokin Kasemsap (2019). *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 144-167).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/mastering-technology-enhanced-language-learning-computer-assisted-language-learning-and-mobile-assisted-language-learning/219668

Attention-Sharing Initiative of Multimodal Processing in Simultaneous Interpreting

Tianyun Liand Bicheng Fan (2020). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 42-53).

www.irma-international.org/article/attention-sharing-initiative-of-multimodal-processing-in-simultaneous-interpreting/257029

Explicitness of Attribution in Academic Discourse

Hongwei Zhanand Xiangjun Shi (2022). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-13).

www.irma-international.org/article/explicitness-of-attribution-in-academic-discourse/304075

The Promotion of Sports and Outdoor Activities in Accessible Tourism: A Linguistic Perspective

Stefania Gandin (2026). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-17).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-promotion-of-sports-and-outdoor-activities-in-accessible-tourism/405425

In Through the Looking Glass: The Discord Between Practice and Education

Angela Sasso (2020). *Handbook of Research on Medical Interpreting* (pp. 397-420).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/in-through-the-looking-glass/246132