Ethnographic study: What is it and how do you conduct it?

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Abstract

Ethnographic method has been utilized in broader fields rather than in anthropology and sociology as it used to be. As stated by Fraenkel and Wallen (2007), in education specifically, ethnographic study is perceived as a research paradigm that can yield more comprehensive perspectives than do other forms of educational research. Thus, it can be another research option to and is useful for any intellectual fellows in the university level, particularly in Rajabhat Universities in which its philosophy is consonant to this paradigm, who needs to strengthen local communities by taking a frame-breaking action in conducting a large scale research rather than using survey, questionnaires, comparing pre-test and post-test results of students' performance, or classroom action research. This paper, therefore, aims to review what ethnographic study is and how to conduct it. An overview of some key

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concepts and characteristics of ethnography is presented as the first part, whereas a research process which includes some ideas in selecting site study, selecting participants, formulating ethnographic questions, selecting research instruments, conducting fieldwork and analyzing, is illustrated as the second part of the paper. Through this longitudinal process, some critics view ethnographic study to be labor - intensive, time - consuming, andhighcost. Forthese reasons, academics, university lecturers, school teachers, trainers and material developers in the field of education, rarely conductit. However, it has been broadly accepted that it is a research paradigm resulting not solely rich and first hand data of deep insights into patterns of thought and behavior of people under study but it is also providing the researchers with practical skills and theoretical aspects of qualitative research. The paper ends with some forewarnings in conducting this type of research.

Keywords : ethnographic study, field-based research, fieldwork, human instrument

บทคัดย่อ

ปัจจุบันระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงชาติพันธุ์มิได้ใช้เฉพาะงานด้านมานุษยวิทยาและสังคมวิทยาเท่านั้น ในวงการศึกษา Fraenkel และ Wallen (2007) ได้ให้ทัศนะว่า ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงชาติพันธุ์วรรณนาสามารถช่วยให้ผู้วิจัยเก็บข้อมูลได้อย่างครอบคลุมกว่าระเบียบวิธีวิจัยทางการศึกษารูปแบบอื่นๆ ดังนั้นจึงกล่าวได้ว่าระเบียบวิธีวิจัยนี้สามารถนำมาเป็นอีกทางเลือกหนึ่งที่สามารถก่อให้เกิดประโยชน์สำหรับนักวิชาการและคณาจารย์ในมหาวิทยาลัยได้เป็นอย่างดี โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งคณาจารย์ในมหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏทั่วประเทศที่ประสงค์จะทำงานวิจัยเพื่อพัฒนาท้องถิ่นโดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยที่นอกเหนือไปจากกรอบการวิจัยที่ใช้แบบสำรวจ แบบสอบถาม การเปรียบเทียบผลสัมฤทธิ์ระหว่างก่อนเรียนกับหลังเรียน หรือการวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการในชั้นเรียนไปสู่งานวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพที่มีความเข้มข้นมากขึ้น ด้วยเหตุนั้นบทความปริทัศน์นี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทบทวนวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับที่มาลักษณะเฉพาะ และ

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัยโดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงชาติพันธุ์วรรณนาเป็นประเด็นหลัก โดยในส่วนแรกนั้นจะเป็นการทบทวนแนวคิดหลักและลักษณะเฉพาะของงานวิจัยประเภทนี้ ส่วนในที่สองเป็นการอธิบายรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับวิธีวิจัยโดยเริ่มจากการให้แนวคิดในการเลือกพื้นที่วิจัย วิธีการเลือกผู้ให้ข้อมูล วิธีการตั้งคำถามวิจัย วิธีการเลือกเครื่องมือในการรวบรวมข้อมูล วิธีการลงภาคสนาม และวิธีการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ทั้งนี้เนื่องจากการใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยประเภทนี้ผู้วิจัยต้องใช้เวลาเก็บข้อมูลภาคสนามด้วยตนเองทุกขั้นตอนอย่างเข้มข้นและต่อเนื่องเป็นเวลานาน รวมทั้งมีค่าใช้จ่ายที่ค่อนข้างสูง นักวิจารณ์บางคนจึงมีความเห็นว่าระเบียบวิจัยนี้เป็นภาระหนักสำหรับผู้วิจัย ดังนั้น นักวิชาการ คณาจารย์ ครูในโรงเรียน ผู้ฝึกอบรม และนักพัฒนาหลักสูตรการฝึกอบรมในวงการศึกษาจึงเลือกที่จะใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยนี้ค่อนข้างน้อย อย่างไรก็ตาม แม้จะมีข้อวิพากษ์เหล่านี้อย่างต่อเนื่องแต่ผลที่ได้จากการใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยนี้ก็ยังเป็นที่ยอมรับอย่างกว้างขวางว่าผู้วิจัยมิเพียงได้รับเฉพาะข้อมูลปฐมภูมิที่ครอบคลุมในแทบทุกมิติจากการลงภาคสนามที่สามารถช่วยให้ผู้วิจัยมีข้อมูลมากพอที่จะตีความรูปแบบการคิดและพฤติกรรมของผู้ถูกวิจัยได้ด้วยความเข้าใจอย่างลึกซึ้งเท่านั้นแต่กระบวนการวิจัยนี้ยังทำให้ผู้วิจัยเรียนมีโอกาสได้เรียนรู้ทักษะและความรู้ความเข้าใจในทฤษฎีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพมากขึ้นด้วย นอกจากนั้น บทความนี้ยังได้นำเสนอข้อควรระวังที่ผู้วิจัยจำเป็นต้องตระหนักถึงในการทำวิจัยประเภทนี้ไว้เป็นประเด็นสุดท้าย

1. Introduction

At present ethnographic method has been applied in various fields, for instance, business (Briody et al., 2013), multi-national corporations (Cefkin, 2009; Jordan and Yamauchi, 2008), healthcare and medical education (Rice, 1999; Vassar & Goodson, 2011), and digital communication (Varis, 2016). In relation to education, as previously mentioned by Fraenkel and Wallen (2007), they proposed that ethnographic study can be better suit in this field than other form of educational research if researchers attempt to collect in -

depth information and to fully understand the entire context of social groups. To make it clearer, ethnographic study in education is employed to gain the insight into, for example, how teachers and students negotiate power in project-based learning, how the interns learn new knowledge and skills on their job training, how administrators identify and act out while taking roles or to conduct researches for community development and community services.

Regarding to what has been presented above, it can be seen that conducting ethnographic study is very beneficial especially for Rajabhat University lecturers because its key concept is actually related to the university's philosophy. To make this point more explicit, Rajabhat University Act 2004 has been stated that Rajabhat Universities are the Public Higher Education Institutions to aid local community development of all regions in Thailand (The Office of the Council of State of Thailand, 2004: 2). For the implementation of the philosophy, each Rajabhat University may stipulate its university mission statements slightly differently. In this case, to fulfill some of those mission statements, lecturers have to be responsible for conducting research and providing academic services for local community development besides teaching and improving academic efficiency in their career paths. This implies that the university lecturers may need to try new research paradigms (i.e. ethnographic method) to be sufficient to promote substantial professional development and to compete at national/international level in the field of research.

It needs to be aware that, however, one of the weaknesses of this research is that it has been criticized to be labor-intensive, unsystematic, and time-consuming (e.g. Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007; Padgett, 1998; 2004; Riemer, 2009). Some critics (e.g. Denscombe 2003; Sangasubana, 2011), even mention their concerns about validity and reliability. Notwithstanding, according to the author's experience, this research paradigm is very useful for any researchers who are seeking to gain more theoretical aspects of qualitative researches and to improve practical research skills, particularly in conducting fieldwork. Concerning these criticisms and claims, they form a backdrop to review and illustrate what is ethnography, its characteristics and how do people conduct it.

2. What is ethnography?

Ethnography is extensively accepted as field-based research (Agar, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 2010). Traditionally, ethnography was utilized particularly in anthropology, but, since the 1960s, along with the increasing acceptance of qualitative research, it has been deployed by researchers in other fields, for instance sociology, linguistics, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics and even, at present, in business, medical education and digital communication. Ethnography can be defined as "writing about people" or "a description of a people" (Angrosino, 2007 : 1). It gives voice to people in their own local context (Fetterman, 2010 : 1) or generally known as emic perspective. Besides, it is typically relying on verbatim quotations and a 'thick' description of events. To make it more specific, Clifford Geertz (1973 : 6) states :

> "…, doing ethnography is establishing rapport, selecting informants, transcribing texts, taking genealogies, mapping fields, keeping a diary, and so on. But it is not these things, techniques and received procedures that define the enterprise. What defines it is the kind of intellectual effort it is: an elaborate venture in, to borrow a notion from Gilbert Ryle, "thick description".

To what Geertz (1973) illustrated above, it can be seen that the 'thick description' refers to the role of an ethnographer who must present not only the facts of the data from the field but also the researcher's commentary, interpretation and the interpretations of those commentary and interpretation

Moreover, Moreover, some researchers may use both emic and etic orientations as markers along a continuum of ethnographic study to ensure the validity and usefulness of the data collected (e.g. Fetterman, 2010; Morris et al., 2004). By involving both emic and etic orientations into the study, researchers start collecting data from emic perspectives and "then try to make sense of what they have collected in terms of both the native's view and their own scientific analysis" (Fetterman, 2010 : 22).

Furthermore, ethnographic study seems to be preferred by researchers who are particularly interested in a bottom-up rather than top-down approach. Thus, it is suitable to for lecturers of the 21st century who are concerning on learner centered approach, challenging to build new paradigms and having a good sense of creative and publishing (Kereluik, et al, 2013).

3. Characteristics of ethnographic study

There are many paradigms of qualitative research and each of them can be differentiated by the characteristics. Ethnographic study, according to Atkinson & Hammersley (1998), has been a subject of controversy. Consequently, different authors and ethnographers seem to view characteristics of ethnography in slightly different ways from other qualitative paradigms. Also, there are different points of views among ethnographers even though they may share some key concepts.

As proposed by Watson-Gegeo (1988) and Wood (1996), in addition, ethnography is viewed as an open approach, inductive more often than inductive, which a researcher cannot pre-determine the results, indicates that a theoretical framework directs the ethnographer's attention to certain aspects of situations and kinds of research questions. Wood (ibid: 5, 51) further expressed that one of the distinct characteristics of ethnography is that "a researcher is the chief instrument and is a person who interacts with theory and methods in the research process".

Similarly, Nunan (1998) describes how ethnographers start their ethnographic work under the condition of minimum intrusion and to avoid controlling or changing situations under the site study. The research is relatively long term and entails the collaborative involvement of several participants including the researchers themselves. Moreover, the generalization and hypotheses emerge during the course of the data collection and interpretation, rather than being predetermined by the researchers.

Because of the characteristics of ethnographic study as presented above, faith and a strong commitment to achieve the purposes of study is required in order to conduct ethnographic study because researchers cannot anticipate what they will encounter in the field (Wood, ibid). Furthermore, Angrosino (2007) also demonstrated some interesting characteristics of ethnography. Firstly, ethnography is field-based since it is conducted in a real setting with real people involving real dynamic phenomenon. Secondly, using personal senses as primary modes of data collection makes the researcher a key research instrument. Thirdly, the researcher uses multiple data collection techniques in order to triangulate conclusions. Fourthly, the researcher needs to have a long term commitment to interact with people they are studying for an extended period of time. Lastly, the process is inductive, dialogic and holistic because the conclusions and interpretations can be commented upon by those being study.

Accordingly, the characteristics of ethnography that most of the professional researchers and ethnographers normally refer to are 1) open approach, 2) inductive 3) a researcher is the chief instrument, 4) unobtrusive, 5) time consuming and 6) collaborative or involving a diverse population.

4. How to conduct ethnographic study

There are a number of ideas and suggestions on how to conduct ethnographic study recommended by experienced ethnographers. As proposed by Woods (1989), and Atkinson (1977), they suggest that to conduct ethnographic research more effectively, researchers should personally experiences and gradually improve their ethnographic research skills through the whole procedure by themselves. However, the idea of how to conduct ethnography from this group of scholars seems so broad and hard to follow by novice researchers as compared to the later recommendations made by Creswell (2007).

To this particular point, Creswell (ibid) initially recommends that, the researchers should determine if ethnography is the most appropriate design to study the research problems. After that, they should identify and locate a group to study and select a cultural theme or issue to formulate research questions. Subsequently, the crucial parts are to conduct fieldwork and to analyze data before transforming all salient themes to the final product or what is called “a credible, rigorous, authentic story” (Fetterman, 2010: 1) from the field through the perspectives of local participants and the interpretation of the participants’ daily activities and cultures.

To illustrate a clearer picture of how to conduct ethnographic study as suggested by Creswell (ibid), six steps include : (1) selecting site study; (2) selecting participants; (3) formulating ethnographic questions; (4) selecting research instruments; (5) conducting fieldwork; and (6) analyzing data, are discussed in detail with some examples from the author’s experiences in conducting her doctoral thesis.

4.1 Selecting site study

Ethnography is appropriate if “the needs are to describe how a cultural group works and to explore the belief, language, behaviors, and issue such as power, resistance and dominance” (Cresswell, 2007 : 70). This suggests that patterns of thought and behavior of the cultural groups become important criteria for site selection. Furthermore, Angrosino, (2007) recommends selecting a site with a minimum of obstacles from gatekeepers, a site in which researchers will not be more of a burden than they are worth to the community. The reason behind these suggestions is that some communities may be involved in crime, health, or drug problems which may need entry requirements (i.e. consent form and/or vaccination certificates or other as needed by the participants). In addition, some communities may expect researchers to live in the community during the period of data collection or working for them (paid or unpaid). Before selecting the site, hence, researchers need to make sure that they can do their parts while they are collecting data in the field.

Apart from the experts’ recommendations, researchers can also choose the site due to their own areas of interest and/or of the community reputations and its problems. For instance, as a lecturer who is interested in communication and language uses in a community based tourism business can choose a site that is attracted by a variety of visitors such as tourists, study visitors, business dealers, researchers, academics, and documentary and film makers. In addition, the community may have been won several tourism awards at national and international levels.

4.2 Selecting participants

In most cases of conducting ethnographic study, selecting participants or informants concurrently occurs during the period of data collection. Generally, a judgmental sampling strategy is used to select appropriate participants from research site (Fetterman, 2010). However, it is most likely that various sampling strategies need to be selected depending on what is going on in the field and which research questions the researchers want to pursue in the study. For example, researchers can start selecting participants by immersing themselves in the day-to-day lives of the members of research site by following the local courtesy using reputational case (Cohen, et al, 2003) to visit community headmen and some well-known seniors to pay respect, inform them the researchers' role and purposes of study. At this stage, the researchers can gain not only the participants (i.e. key informants) but also some data. Later, they can use big-net approach (Creswell, 2007; Fetterman, 2010) by mixing and mingling with many unknown community members to gain trust and to build rapport as well as to familiarize with the community context before narrowing the research focuses to specific themes, issues, and/or individuals depending on situations, research questions, and some emerging data. Concurrently, the researchers occasionally shift to using snowball approach (Heckathorn,1997; Wellington, 2001) to pursue some specific data from particular participants recommended by previous participants and/or driven by some emerging themes.

Likewise, opportunistic sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007), is simultaneously used by researchers to select some community visitors who happen to be available during period of researchers' fieldwork and rarely have some subsequent visits (e.g. trekkers, tourists, researchers, documentary makers or study visitors). Furthermore, to achieve the completion of the data collection, purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) can be also conducted to select some outside experts mentioned by the inside participants to validate the data and/or to fill the gap of some inter-related themes.

Anyway, to select participants, researchers would better select informants who are able to provide information that most relevant to the purposes of study. In many cases, however, a combination of sampling strategies is recommended because it can create an effective and appropriate approach to achieve the purposes of the study.

4.3 Formulating ethnographic questions

Due to ethnographic characteristics, conducting ethnographic study should try to avoid predetermination of what is going on in the site study because its main focuses are on data from emic or actor's perspectives. Consequently, it is generally recommended that the researchers would rather set broad research questions or central questions as guidelines for data collection in the initial stage rather than designing specific predetermined research questions for the whole study. The reason is that methodologically ethnographic research questions can be developed in *situ* (Fetterman, 2010; Woods, 1996) and be able to fine-tune them based on the emerging themes from the field. For example, if researchers conduct a one-year-fieldwork, they will experience that research questions evolve through different stages. Thus, the researchers can initially formulate some broad questions based on the purposes of the study before going out to the field.

With the broad questions, researchers can simultaneously start selecting participants and collecting data by mingling with members of the site study for rapport and trust building. After gaining piles of data, the researchers need to conduct interim data analysis (Angrosino, 2007; Woods, 1996) to see which direction it would lead the researchers to further pursue or to dig deeper in detail to achieve the purposes of the study.

Furthermore, in preparing ethnographic questions, researchers should also prepare some basic questions to detect patterns of thoughts and behaviors of the participants from their daily activities apart from those of key research questions mentioned above. Fundamental ethnographic questions recommended by Wolcott (1990) include: "What is going on in the community?" and "What do people in this community have to know (individually and collaboratively) in order to do what they are doing?" Similarly, LeCompte & Schensul (1999 : xv) suggest to ask "What is happening in this setting?; Who is engaging in what kind of activities? And with whom?; Why are they doing what they're doing?; or What do they think they're doing?" These questions enhance researchers to discover what people actually do and the reason they give for doing it before the researchers can assign to the actions and interpretations of the information provided by their own personal experiences.

4.4 Selecting research instruments

Similar to other types of qualitative research, ethnographic study needs to have research instruments to collect data. However, one of the distinct characteristics of ethnographic study as earlier proposed is "a researcher is the key instrument" (Angrosino, 2007) in data collection. In this case, a researcher is expected to be well prepared and highly-skilled to conduct participant observation and interviewing in order to make less potential bias and to avoid unsuspected difficulty they may encounter in the field.

The key instruments are supposed to build a rich descriptive picture of what is happening in the site study through the extensive and immersion in the site study (Woods (1996). To this issue, Woods (ibid: 51) explains that "the researcher does not stand above and outside the research … the researcher interacts with theory and method to conduct field work". This "implies symbolic interactionist principles to the research process itself" (ibid). Similarly, Fetterman (2010 : 33) clarifies that "[w]ith a research problem, a theory of social interaction … and a variety of conceptual guidelines in mind, the ethnographer strides into a culture or social situation to explore its terrain and to collect and analyze data."

Apart from being a human instrument, the researcher, following ethnographic theories, must go to the site along with the other instruments such as field notes; an accumulating written record of ethnographers' observations and experiences from their participant observation (Emerson et al., 1995), and interviews (i.e. structured, unstructured, in-depth, and/or post - hoc interviews), still photographs and/or video. Another significant instrument for ethnographic data collection is document or archival research (Angrosino, 2007). Some of the documents that highly recognize include researches, newspapers, photo albums, population census, voting rolls, minutes of meeting, and maps.

In the actual fieldwork, however, researchers may encounter some difficulties in separating which types of instruments are used to report in the findings because the boundary is not clear. According to Buddharat et al. (2011), taking a role of a human instrument using other instruments (i.e. participant observation and interviews) to collect data, in some cases, is hard to specify which types of instruments actually used since two instruments can blend into each other and it is hard to see a clear boundary. For instance, while a researcher was walking along the road to conduct participant observation, she met a group of community members. Together they stopped and talked. During that informal conversation, the researcher had learned about daily activities in the community which she gradually noted down in her field note. Concurrently, the data also suggest some points which related to her existing themes. The researcher, thus, asked the informants to clarify the details and asked them to provide deeper information. In this case, it is difficult to separate the instruments between field notes and interviews since it is hard to specify the boundary of the two instruments. This incident seems to be unsystematic however it usually occurs in a real situation. This experience supports what Woods (1996 : 51) states that the incident “is not to imply that the researcher can use the instruments to collect the data instinctively, but rather the researcher can go with the flow" to gain information from the actors' perspectives and to fulfill the purposes of the research.

In summary, it is significant to note here that no matter what kinds of instrument are used to collect data by a key instrument (i.e. researcher), a constant validity check or triangulation for the accuracy of the data between or among the instruments or even with the participants is a major concern in ethnographic study. It is strongly recommended that the researchers should be aware of subjectivity and should stay on guard against distortion and contamination (Fetterman, 2010) to make sure that the collected data are representative, rigorous, fair, and credible to the culture group in the field.

4.5 Conducting fieldwork

In ethnographic research, data collection is done through fieldwork. Fieldwork refers to the way researchers are going out for data collection by "living with and living like those who are studied" (Fetterman, 2010: 8). This concept implies that a researcher enters the field and interacts on a daily basis with the members in the site study. In the actual situation, ethnographic fieldwork usually occurs as a series of interrelated activities rather than sequential activities. Consequently, some critics (e.g. Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007; Padgett, 1998; 2004) may consider the way of conducting the fieldwork and collecting data to be an unsystematic way. Howsoever, due to the fact that what is happening in real life is not static and systematic so that it is why ethnographic method is an adaptive method of studying it.

To conduct fieldwork, a researcher generally follows ethnographic characteristics by taking a role as a human instrument with other instruments (i.e. observation, interviewing and archival research) to collect data. In the field, the researcher is "immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants" (Cresswell, 2007 : 68). This implies that the researcher does not solely observe events but also "participates in ongoing events in ways that directly and immediately involve inscription" (Emerson et al., 1995 : 18). Accordingly, doing fieldwork requires great effort and strong commitment from the researcher. In the field work, a researcher must create an accumulating written record or a field note (Emerson et al., 1995). Field notes can be hand written and/or electronic one (e-field notes); audio-recorded during observations and informal conversations. Besides, conducting fieldwork to gain rich data, the author personally experienced that it is not only labor intensive, time consuming, and cost a lot of money but it is also exhausted and unmotivated through the longitudinal study.

Since fieldwork is labor intensive and time consuming, guidelines for observations and interviews can be very helpful for inexperienced researchers. The guidelines can be designed concurrently with the purposes of the research and research questions. The researcher can prepare predetermined guidelines to gather data such as the physical characteristics, location, climate, public utilities, infrastructure, occupations, economy, traditions, and ways of life. Then after gaining some ideas from ongoing fieldwork and reviewing the literature, the guidelines can then be modified to focus on more specific issues based on emergent themes related to research questions.

Apart from observations, various types of interview should be another option to collect rich data. For instance, according to author's experience in the field (Buddharat, et al. 2011), unstructured interviews can be good options after casual conversations and sometimes they may lead to in-depth interviews if the researcher needs to dig deeper into details. Most of the questions in unstructured interviews should be broad questions addressed to key informants in order to listen to their lines of thought while they were explaining. Semi-structured interviews can be good options when researchers want to gather specific data directly related to research questions and to cross validate emerging data from field notes and other types of interview (ibid). In-depth interviews are recommended to conduct after healthy rapport and trust with key informants is established and when the researchers want to go for in-depth information on repetitive emerging themes to achieve the purposes of the research (ibid). Post-hoc interviews can also use to recheck unclear information or to gain more information from individuals or groups of participants (ibid).

It is necessary to reiterate that, in ethnographic fieldwork, various instruments are used in combination; none of them is alone capable of yielding the whole picture of a living community (Angrosino, 2007 : 36). According to Genzuk (2003), it can be summarized that fieldwork is a highly personal experience. The fieldwork procedures involve the researchers' capabilities and skills in capturing what is going on in the real setting in which it is almost always uncontrollable and unobtrusive. The validity and meaningfulness of the results obtained depend directly on the researcher's abilities in conducting this type of research.

4.6 Data Analysis

During fieldwork, researchers may be able to collect great quantities of data and materials. Therefore, data analysis and interpretation can be complicated and challenging. However, it should be recognized that "there is no single formula accepted by all researchers that can serve as a strategy for the analysis of data collected in the field" (Angrosino, 2007 : 69). To analyze data in ethnographic study, Angrosino (ibid) proposes two main forms of data analysis; descriptive analysis and theoretical analysis. Concerning the former one, descriptive analysis is the process starts with the management of field notes and interviews (or data from other types of instruments) into a clearly organized format. After the field notes and interview data are managed, the researchers must read through the whole set of data several times. In doing so, the researchers will be able to reflect what will be salient themes to answer the research questions and to understand the participants' patterns of thoughts and behaviors. The researchers, next, move on to another step of narrative description and identifying themes from the data. The researchers can take "only themes that emerge from data or they can move to identify themes on the basis of theories or theoretical analysis. By this, the researchers should consider the patterns that can be suggested by literature or demonstrating how the findings related to the interpretation of other researchers or they oppose to other findings that stimulate to other research (Angrosino, ibid).

Fetterman (2010), furthermore, suggests several methods to analyze data from ethnographic study. One of them is using key events. Key events come in all forms. Some forms tell more about a culture and patterns of thoughts and behaviors than others, but all provide a focus for analysis. Events such as funerals, weddings, and rites of passage, also offer an excellent opportunity for in-depth analysis. Some events are clear representations of social activities, whereas others provide a huge amount of embedded meaning. By employing key events, they not only help the researchers to understand a social group but also to explain the culture to others. In brief, key events illustrate how participation, observation, and analysis are bound together during fieldwork.

In addition, thematic analysis is perceived as a "process of working with raw data to identify and interpret key ideas or themes" (Matthews and Ross, 2010 : 373). Some researchers, therefore, may choose this method to analyze data in ethnographic study even though it is based on the concept of grounded theory (Boyatzis, 1998; Punch 2009). To make the point clearer, six steps of data analysis proposed by Braun and Clark (2006) is illustrated as guideline of how to analyze ethnographic data.

Step 1: Familiarization with data

To be familiar with the data, the researchers start analyzing the data by reading and re-reading all types of collected data to identify possible themes[4] or some potential codes. At this step, the researchers should be familiar and comfortable in generating initial codes that address and support research questions. In applying this concept to actual data analysis, researchers can start the step by transcribing the interview data into text as hand written field notes for convenient reasons in retrieving the data extracts as references for report the findings. The data from post-hoc interviews can be used for validity check so that they can be directly integrated intpo the missing information during the data-analysis process and writing stage. Subsequently, key research questions (including sub-questions) must be set as criteria before starting to generate codes.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

Generating initial codes or coding is the cyclical way researchers repeatedly read the data back and forth to look for words, phrases, segments, or other portions of text by marking, labeling, highlighting, and/or giving comments on the participants' information, opinions, concepts, ideas, actions, activities, etc. Furthermore, emerging themes with the extracted data of each subject to use as references for findings are taken by selecting whatever is explicitly stated as important, repeated matters, strong sound - bites, and/or surprising matters. In each emerging theme, the subjects' names, dates and methods of data collection are recorded for subsequent retrieval and referent reasons.

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[4] Themes are "typically groupings of codes that emerge either during or after the process of developing codes" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007 : 485) while a code is a basic meaning unit of "words, phrases, segments, or other portions of text" from the raw data (Lichtman, 2003 : 248).

Step 3: Searching for themes among codes

Searching for themes among codes is the way the researchers identify relationships or connections among codes "to combine codes into overarching themes" (Braun and Clark, 2006 : 96). By re-examining the emerging themes among the codes, the researchers could focus on broader patterns or themes in the data and between different levels of the existing themes. At this point, the researchers could also consider how codes and themes are related to each other in order to form overarching themes in the data.

Bear in mind that the process of generating initial codes rarely completed in one time but "each time, the researchers should strive to refine codes by adding, subtracting, combining or splitting potential codes" (Saldana, 2009 : 19). Accordingly, at this step, the focus on themes among codes to see how they are related to each other is the major concern so that the researchers can form overarching themes in the data. The researcher should reread and reconsider the initial themes and extracts of the whole set of data before moving to the next step.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

Reviewing themes is the way researchers rework their initial themes. In this step, researchers look at how the themes support the data and the overarching theoretical perspective. Braun and Clark (2006: 96) state that, "[i]f the analysis seems incomplete, the researcher needs to go back and find what is missing". Also, in this stage, the researchers may collapse some existing themes into each other or some other themes may need to be condensed into smaller units. The researchers should compare the emergent themes between interview transcripts and field notes to make the best sense for research findings.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

The researchers should define and name the themes to know which aspects of data are being captured, and what is interesting about the themes. Braun and Clark (2006 : 97) suggest that "identification of the themes' essences relates to how each specific theme affects the entire picture of the data." Thus, at this step, the researchers should know what current themes consist of and be able to explain the full sense of the themes and why they are salient to form an accurate story of the participants' experiences.

Step 6: Producing the final report

To write the final report, Braun and Clark (2006) mention that the researchers must decide which themes make meaningful contributions to understanding what is going on within the data and which themes and sub-themes make meaningful contributions to answering research questions. After that, the researchers should also conduct member checking to see whether the analyzed descriptions are accurate in representing the participants' experiences. After the member checking process, the researchers finally present extracts connected with the themes "in support of increasing dependability through a thick description of the result", Braun and Clark (ibid : 97).

5. Forewarning in conducting ethnographic study

As earlier mentioned, ethnographers need not solely time to learn about theory but also time to gain empirical experiences from the field. Hence, some forewarnings are also reviewed. According to Sangasubana (2011), some forewarnings for unskilled researchers are related to reliability and validity. Reliability in a field-based research addresses the question of whether the researchers are able to collect consistent and credible data as well as checking the reliability during the coding process. One way to do it is to use 'inter-coders (Creswell, 2007) or outside reviewers to code the data. Stemler (2001) mentions that researchers may need to concern both intra-rater and inter-rater reliability.

As for validity, Erlandson et al. (1993) indicates that the credibility of the findings is enhanced via triangulation, that is, among other things, utilizing several sources of data.

To clarify the research validity, Sangasubana (2011) also describes that validity can be checked through ecological validity, natural history, member checking and pragmatic validity and transferability. Ecological validity is the degree to which the data collected and described by the researcher reflects the world of those under study. Natural history is a full description and disclosure of the researcher's actions, assumptions, and procedures for others to evaluate. If the study is credible or accepted by others inside and outside the field site, it is valid in terms of natural history. Member checking is the way the researcher validates the information by taking the field results back to those under study to judge for adequacy and accuracy from their perspectives. Finally, Sangasubana (ibid) further suggests that the ethnographic study should have pragmatic validity and transferability which is the degree to which the study results and conclusions have relevance beyond the study itself.

Furthermore, balancing the requirements of both participating and observing can be very difficult for novice researchers. However, once the researchers become more familiar with the setting and are able to develop relationships and rapport with their participants, they may be drawn into the lives of those people more as participant observers than as observers (Singleton & Straits, 2005).

6. Conclusion

Ethnographic study, while it is considered to be labor intensive, unsystematic and time consuming, is an excellent method to investigate patterns of thoughts and behavior of participants in different contexts, cultures, backgrounds, professions, and geographic regions. Through a longitudinal research process, it not only provides a rich and first hand collection of data for the researchers but also various theoretical aspects and skills of research. Oftentimes, ethnographic study is the source of determining variables for further research and can therefore serve as the starting point for larger original studies. Ethnographic study, hence, can be another adaptive research paradigm for any lecturers, academics, and policy makers in the university level who aim to keep pace on their career paths and to strengthen their community development or to compete at higher and broader level in the field of research.

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