



# HOW TO MAKE MOTIVATION RESEARCH FRUITFUL? IDEAS AND PITFALLS TO AVOID

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# TODAY'S TOPICS

- Research ideas and **good** research
- Research design and **good** research
- Mixed-methods research and **good** research

# WHAT IS GOOD RESEARCH LIKE?

Normally we talk about **reliability** and **validity**.

**BUT**: Is that all? Is a valid research study necessarily **good**?

There are lots of studies that meet the requirements of reliability and validity and yet are **NOT** good because they are...

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... **BORING!**

# WHAT IS GOOD RESEARCH LIKE?

Good research is **INTERESTING!**



# HOW TO DO INTERESTING RESEARCH?

The key is good **IDEAS**.

# WHAT ARE “GOOD” IDEAS?

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- Something which – if true – is VERY important
- Something you REALLY believe in or is PERSONALLY important

All these attributes share one thing in common: if you talk about them to friends or colleagues, they will be **INTERESTED** to hear about what you found.

# WHAT ARE “BAD” RESEARCH TOPICS?

- The motivation of Venezuelan language learners
- Motivation and self-esteem
- A case study of two Finnish learners of English
- Demotivation in Vietnamese secondary schools
- How to motivate Saudi language learners
- Directed Motivational Currents in a Polish primary school

# WHAT ARE “BAD” RESEARCH TOPICS?

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- The motivation of Venezuelan language learners
- The motivation of Venezuelan language learners who beat the odds in adverse conditions
- The motivation of exceptional language learners in Venezuela
- Unusual motives to learn English in Venezuela
- How to maintain L2 motivation in Venezuela in spite of bad teaching
- Motivated learners versus demotivated parents in Venezuelan language education

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- Motivation and self-esteem
- Can there be motivation when self-esteem is lacking? OR: What happens to motivation when self-esteem plummets?
- Does increased self-esteem automatically promote motivation? OR: Can we save motivation by promoting our learners' self esteem?
- “I don't want to learn English and I'm proud of it!”  
When self-esteem works against motivation

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# WHAT ARE “BAD” RESEARCH TOPICS?

- Directed Motivational Currents (DMCs) in a Polish primary school
- The DMC that turned the school upside down
- “I never believed it would work but it did!” DMCs in a Polish primary school
- The Motivational Current that swept opposition and lethargy away: A true story from a Polish primary school



# RESEARCH DESIGN

## Main principle:

Interesting research can only be achieved through a **CREATIVE** research design.

# BAD RESEARCH DESIGNS

- One-off administration of a questionnaire to a somewhat mixed sample

# POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- One-off administration of a questionnaire to a somewhat mixed sample
- Possible ways of improvement:
  - Unique sample/samples
  - Some twist in the questionnaire
  - Multiple administration
  - Adding a retrospective interview component



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What about applying very **sophisticated statistics** to compensate for the uninspiring nature of the survey?

**NO!**

# BAD RESEARCH DESIGNS

- Interview study consisting of single interviews using a convenience sample

# POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS

- Interview study consisting of single interviews using a convenience sample
- Possible ways of improvement:
  - Multiple interviews with each participant
  - Principled sampling procedure
  - Following a truly emergent design
  - Seeking out additional interviewees who may disagree
  - Running someone's ideas past another interviewee



# COMPLEX RESEARCH DESIGNS

- Special sampling procedures



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- Special sampling procedures
- Multi-phase studies
- Truly ethnographic or emergent qualitative study
- **Mixed methods design ???**

# MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

- **Main assumption:**

It is possible to combine QUAL and QUAN methods in a way that brings out the best while cancels out the weaknesses of each method.

- **Rationale:**

Understanding complex issues requires a complex design (e.g. macro/societal and micro/individual level analyses)

# MIXED METHODS RESEARCH – BUT...

- Mixing methods is **not** good per se!
- In fact, it can be a **distraction** to serious research!
- Certain principled mixtures **CAN** combine different methods in such a way that their strengths are added up...
- ... **BUT** too many of the mixed methods studies I see do not do it.

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**WHY?**

# CHALLENGES OF MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

- It is hard to be sufficiently trained in both qualitative and quantitative research methodology.
  - It is difficult to properly integrate the results of the two research components.
  - There is a temptation to cover the uninspiring aspect of one's research efforts by simply including a qualitative and a quantitative component and thus claiming that it is mixed methods research.
- Mixing methodologies does not make a study more **idea-rich** or **interesting!**

# CONCLUSION

- Research methodology has traditionally focused on one key aspect of research: the **craftsmanship** necessary to produce valid and reliable results.
- Such professional craftsmanship is necessary because its absence can invalidate a study.
- **BUT:** Professional research skills do **NOT** guarantee good research.
- There are too many well-crafted and incredibly **boring** studies that **nobody** in their right mind would want to hear about!

## Please remember:

- The key to doing good research is to have **good ideas**.
- Good research is something that other people are **interested** to hear about.
- Interesting research can only be achieved through a **creative** research design.
- Mixing methodologies does **not** make a study more idea-rich or interesting!



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**

