Comparative Evaluation of the Qualitative and Quantitative Research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Policy at Primary Education in Indonesia and Other EFL Contexts

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Abstract

The two dichotomous theories of positivism and interpretivism, respectively, underpin quantitative and qualitative methods to social research. Despite the fact that there are many other research paradigms, positivism and interpretivism are more commonly used in social research than other paradigms. These paradigms appear to be at odds not just in philosophical ideas, but also on a practical level, particularly in relation to research findings that are significant to educational policy-making. In this sense, there are still heated discussions about the research method that is more useful and transferrable to policy development. This study will look at the benefits and drawbacks of using qualitative and quantitative methodologies in educational policy research, specifically in the setting of English as a foreign language (EFL) in elementary school. The research begins with a philosophical introduction to social research, followed by a look at paradigmatic contestations between the two views, as well as their strengths and limits. The discussion continues with an explanation of current EFL policy developments, followed by a comparison of papers from respective quantitative and qualitative approaches, an assessment of the dominant research approach in EFL policy, and the ethical difficulties that must be addressed. The findings of this study show that no single approach can adequately address all facets of social processes. Each approach is tailored to certain goals and focuses, and neither can be used in place of the other. As a result, the most important consideration in deciding which technique to use in social research is the nature of the topics that will be explored.

Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to social research are grounded on two dichotomous paradigms referring to positivism and interpretivism respectively. Despite a vast array of research paradigms, the positivism and interpretivism are more predominantly applied in social research compared to other paradigms (Villiers and Fouche, 2015). The paradigms deal with ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Scotland, 2012; Slevitch, 2011; Webber, 2004). These research paradigms provide philosophical intent or underlying theoretical framework and motivation for researchers to conduct study (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Thus, the knowledge and understanding of these philosophical paradigms are essential in conducting research as the choice of methodology is inextricable from researcher' view pertaining the world and knowledge construction (Hitchcock and Hughes 1995 cited from Cohen et.al., 2011; Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

The rivalry of these paradigms seemingly occurs not only in philosophical

theories, but also in practical level particularly relating to research results which are relevant to educational policy-making process. In this regard, there are still strident debates of which research approach is deemed to provide more relevant and transferable evidence to policy improvement. It is believed, for example, that quantitative research is more preferable for policy makers in relation to its use of large samples and objective analysis (Desch, 2014; Somekh, 2011). On the other hand, social researchers perceive the qualitative approach is more suitable to study human beings and their life contexts which become the main concern of social research (Somekh, 2011). The interpretivists perceive the quantitative approach fails to provide in-depth elaboration of complex phenomena such as happening in school contexts (Somekh, 2011).

Regardless of these discrepancies, both approaches are commonly used in social research including educational policy in EFL contexts including Indonesia with their respective strengths and weaknesses (Villiers and Fouche, 2015; Bryan, 1988). To find out which approach provides more robust and transferable evidence for developing the English teaching policy at primary education, this study is set to critically analyze the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in educational policy research in English foreign language (EFL) in primary education between the research conducted in Indonesia and other EFL contexts. The study begins with an introduction of philosophical foundations to social research, followed by examining paradigmatic contestations between the two perspectives, and their strengths and limitations. The discussion continues to explicate current development in EFL policy, followed by a comparison of articles from respective quantitative and qualitative approach, evaluation of the dominant research approach in the EFL policy, and the ethical issues required. The discussion is, then, ended with a conclusion and suggestion.

Theoretical Review
Positivist and Interpretivist underpinnings in Social Research

Originated from the Ancient Greeks to mean a 'model' or an 'example,' the term paradigm possesses different and multiple meanings (Corbetta, 2003). However, it can be simply defined as 'a set of linked assumptions about the world or reality' (Kuhn, 1962 cited in Slevitch, 2011; de Villiers and Fouche, 2015). Paradigm denotes 'the maturity of scientific fields which highlights what to study (relevance of social phenomena), why to study (formulating explanatory hypotheses, and how to study (through which methods)' (Kuhn, 1962 cited in Porta and Keating, 2008). The paradigm is of paramount importance in conducting research as it acts as a guiding map for scientists in order the research to meet criteria as a science.

It is fundamental to acknowledge both paradigms at the very outset before determining which research approach to choose (Waring, 2013). Villiers and Fouche (2015) suggest that 'different paradigms show rivalry in their ontological and epistemological assumptions which eventually lead to particular methodologies and method'. These paradigms have different suppositions what deemed good research should be carried out. Both positivism and interpretivism have different assumptions about social reality and the relationship between researchers and the researched (Clarke, 2001). Therefore, the decision to choose a particular research approach is linked to what the researcher believes about social world. The inclination of researchers to believe in a paradigm will lead them to follow specific research methodologies and methods which are distinguishable to other paradigms.

Positivism, associated to a French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857) as its founder in the nineteenth-century, is considered a milestone in social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The birth of positivism was driven by the interest to replace paradigmatic traditions which were predominated by theological- and metaphysical-based explanations against society and their life dynamics. These traditions were believed as a scapegoat from stagnancy in social sciences compared to significant advancement made by natural

sciences. Unlike religious and metaphysical paradigms which overlooked the use of reasoning, Comte felt that social sciences similar to natural sciences could be explained logically and rationally through observations utilizing five senses (Barbie, 2004). Thus, he proposed sociology to follow scientific procedures of research methodology which emphasizes on revealed facts rather than dogmatic speculations (Benton & Craib, 2000 cited in Hasan, 2016).

Positivism is distinguishable from interpretivism based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions. Ontologically, the positivisists believe that there is only a single objective reality to exist ultimately (Waring, 2013; Slevitch, 2011; Crotty, 1998). This idea develops from objectivism asserting that social phenomena and their meaning are external facts beyond the reach and influence of human beings (Bryman, 2016). To reach this one-ultimate reality, scientific procedures should be rigorously followed (Slevitch, 2011; Crotty, 1998). Thus, it is critical that researcher and the researched are independent entities, and one can study a phenomenon without influencing it or being influenced by it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In contrast, the interpretivism, originating from Max Weber's thought (1864-1920) as the founding father, stems from distinct ontological position. The interpretivist insists that understanding is the main concern of social sciences (Crotty,

1998); therefore, it takes the ontological position of constructivism which puts an emphasis on the necessity of subjective interpretations in understanding social phenomena and their actions rather than being dependent on direct observation as proposed by positivist (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Rather than considering social realities as singular objective reality external to social actors, realities can be socially and psychologically constructed (Slevitch, 2011), and be in constant state of revision (Bryan, 2016). This paradigm implies potentially-multiple realities of social phenomena as a result of inter-subjective interpretations of investigators and investigated subjects (Slevitch, 2011; McKenzie and Knipe, 2006).

As the consequence of this ontological position, the positivist takes an epistemological position which implies that knowledge should be studied objectively and observed from the outside dispassionately as if physical facts are being analyzed (Durkheim cited in Hasan, 2016). According to this paradigm, the so-called science should be based only on facts which are gathered through directly five-sense observations and be withdrawn from value intervention and speculation (Crotty, 1998). In this case, it is necessary to distinguish fact from value with the former referring to science and the later referring to something else (Hasan, 2016; Slevitch, 2011). This view is in opposition with the interpretivists' view stating that it is impossible to be value-free in research as

there is intensive interaction between investigators and investigated. Indeed, constructivism provides ample opportunities for researchers to take part in understanding social reality as an ongoing accomplishment of social actors instead as merely something external for them and possibly constraining as well (Bryman, 2012). One similar physical movement of raising one hand between people is not merely comprehended as a single but multiple ways depending on an actor's cultural context and intention whether a sign for questioning, greeting, or stopping a bus (Shchwandt, 2000).

The final aspect of the paradigm is methodology. Methodology is a reflection of preceding ontology and epistemology. Since there should be only a singular objective reality which should be withdrawn from one's subjective interpretation, the positivisits call for the use of mathematical (statistical) instruments as the analytical tool as well as the involvement of large-scale sample and data through experiments and surveys (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Weber, 2004). To distinguish it from interpretivism, Corbetta (2003) maintains that positivist features can be identified from four aspects such as conceptual framework, observation and measurement techniques, statistical instrumentation, procedures of natural science inference. The principle aim of positivist investigation is to measure and analyze causal relationship among phenomena measured in variable forms

within a value-free framework in order to allow prediction (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Corbetta, 2003), and generalization to whole population is possible to make.

On the other hands, the interpretivists suggest that social sciences are fundamentally different from natural sciences; therefore, they require different logic of research procedures (Bryman, 2016; Dilthey cited in Crotty, 1998) with 'no privilege to single methodological practice, and usable in many separate disciplines' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Rather than placing an emphasis on causal relationship between variables, the interpretivists' main purpose is to acquire meaningful and rich understanding of any social phenomena by grasping the intention, belief, thought, or desire from the inside of social actors themselves (Atkins and Wallace, 2012; Bogdan and Biklen, 2007; Shchwandt, 2000). Therefore, the interpretivists prefer the use of case studies, ethnographies, phenomenology, and hermeneutics (Weber, 2004; Slevitch, 2011) through observation, interview, and participatory activities as dominant data gathering techniques (Slevitch, 2011). For data analysis, the interpretivists commonly apply thematic analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, and grounded theory (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

Strengths and weaknesses of Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Although both methods refer to competing views on social reality, they are both used in social research including educational policy studies (Villiers and Fouche, 2015). Both approaches are of relevance for policy makers as both address different dimensions of social problems (Clark, 2001) as well as different aim to illuminate (Asberg et al., 2011). The quantitative approach is, for example, considered superior to efficiently address the 'macro level' issues involving huge number of participants through surveys. Qualitative research, on the other hand, has limitations on this issue, but very strong on the 'micro-level' with in-depth elaboration of the investigated cases. Although both approaches are, in nature, contrasting one over another, it is noted that they are at the same time complementary (Trafimow, 2014; Kelle, 2006; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005). In practice, 'quantitative approaches rarely deny the value of qualitative approach or vice versa as in the case of the former viewing the latter as an importantly exploratory way of conducting social research' (Bryman, 1988). Despite these differences, it is essential to acknowledge the usefulness of each approach in educational policy studies by addressing their strengths and limitations.

Advantages and disadvantages of quantitative research

There are some benefits of applying quantitative approach in social sciences such as EFL policy. The most distinct strengths of this approach lie on its scope of findings and nature of data (Bryan, 1988). First, the

quantitative approach takes a nomothetic mode of reasoning where the results establish general law-like findings which make them applicable in different contexts of time and space (Bryan, 1988). This means that the results of the quantitative research can work not only for the contexts of the investigated sample, but can also be inferred into wider population where the sample drawn. Its prevalent nature of involving large and representative sample makes the results generalizable to targeted population with likely similar results. Second, this method relies on a value-free analysis with the advantages of statistical tools. As a result, the quantitative data are regarded as reliable, rigorous, and hard which makes the results possible to be verified, and therefore, can stand in their own right (Bryan, 1988). Another importance of value-free analysis is that the results are free from biased analysis because the researcher do not intervene the interpretations. These features have made the quantitative approach more preferable among policy makers for the foundation of their policy-making process (Desch, 2014; Bryan, 1988).

However, strident criticisms are also addressed to this approach for its inherent weaknesses on some critical issues. One of the criticisms is relating to the accuracy of generalization. The generalization can appropriately be made not only when the ideal size of randomized sample has been fulfilled, but most importantly how the sample can be accurate representation of whole populations (Ari, et al., 2009). Indeed, Bryan (1988) suggests that '…this tradition of nomothetic is often exaggerated. Survey is often not based on random sample and, even when they are, they refer to highly restricted populations. Another prevalent flaw lies on the abstraction of quantitative findings (Bryman, 1988; Firestone, 1987) pertaining its emphasis on macro-level and superficial interpretations (Coffey 1999 cited from Hasan 2016). As the results, 'some variables may be hidden from the researcher and only become known when their effects are evident' (House, 1991 cited in Scotland 2012). These weaknesses provide 'information gap' since some potential but hidden factors beyond measured variables will be ignored (Luis and Canadas, 2014; House, 1991 cited in Scotland 2012).

Advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research

The qualitative approach also has some advantageous features (Rahman, 2017). The employment of idiographic mode of reasoning is a dominant attribute making it possible to reach a 'concrete depiction of detail, portrayal of process in an active mode, and attention to the perspective of those being studied' (Patton 1980 cited in Firestone, 1987). Social research which commonly deals with the complexity of human beings and their live settings is insufficient to simply be understood from generic perspectives. The positivistic

generalization ignores the intentionality of the individual where their actions are not fully understood (Scotland, 2012), but this reasoning mode can yield evocative data obtained by researcher's direct experience and perceptions (Villiar and Fouche, 2015). In addition, the idiographic mode is aimed to bring into consciousness any hidden social forces and structures including the participants' perspectives, both process and agency (Scotland, 2012). Apart from that, the ability of generating new concepts and theories is another advantage of this research. As Stebbins (2012) argued the concept becomes the most important component of science and the single most initial step to this is through 'immaculate description' (Stebbins, 2012, cited in Hussein, Hirst, and Osuji, 2014). The potential of creating the concept is obvious in the qualitative approach as in the case of the grounded theory (Hussein, Hirst, and Osuji, 2014).

Despite these strengths, some criticisms are also embedded in the qualitative method. OA key concern is the scope of its findings which only applies to the context of the research itself and cannot be extended to the wider population as quantitative findings do (Atieno, 2009). Generalization which is deemed useful to policy makers are absent because its research usually produces highly contextualized qualitative data, and interpretations of this data involving subjective individual constructions (Scotland, 2012). Although it has transferability, the 'knowledge produced by the interpretative paradigm is usually fragmented and not unified into a coherent body' (Scotland, 2012). Another distinct limitation is relating to the validity of qualitative data. Its reliance on subjective views is vulnerable from misleading interpretations especially for new researchers (Hussein, Hirst, and Osuji, 2014). As a result, the qualitative data cannot stand in its own right before further verified (Bryan, 1988); therefore, they are not of the interest of policy makers.

Method

To find out which approach between the qualitative and quantitative approaches provides more robust and convincing research evidence in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in primary education, the researchers selected four articles for the analysis. These articles studied the English teaching practices in primary education from three different EFL contexts namely Turkey, Thailand, and Indonesia. Two articles conducted using respective qualitative and quantitative methods were conducted in the Indonesian EFL context, one quantitative-based article was carried out in Turkey, and the last qualitative-based article was carried out in Thailand. All the papers for analysis are as follows:

1. Erkan, S. (2015) 'Evaluation primary school students' achievement of

objectives in English lessons', Educational Research and Reviews, 10(15), pp2153-2163.

2. Rachmajanti, S. (2008) 'Impact of English instruction at the elementary schools on the students' achievement of English at the lower secondary school', TEFLIN Journal, 19(2), pp160-183.

3. Nguyen, L., Hamid. H., and Renshaw, P. (2016) 'English in the primary classroom in Vietnam: students' lived experiences and their social and policy implications', Current Issues in Language Planning, 17(2), pp191-214.

4. Zein, S. (2016) 'Pre-service education for primary school English teachers in Indonesia: policy implications', Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 36(sup1), pp119-134.

The paper focuses the analysis on the methodological, finding, and discussion sections in order to figure out of which method provided more robust research findings which can contribute to the development of the EFL policy in the primary level.

Result

The practices of English as foreign language (EFL) policy at primary schools

The preceding discussion notifies that both approaches are, to some extent, incompatible since each approach might be only superior for itself. Hence, which approach should be the main reference for education policy studies should be more on data collection methods, analysis, and reporting qualities rather than on theoretical approaches to research (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006; Clarke, 2001). The objectiveness of numbers and the deepness of words are both required to understand the world realities like education (Miles and Huberman, 1994; cited in Asberg et al. 2011). Furthermore, Lund (2005) suggests that 'the fruitful discussion of similarities and differences between both approaches is argued not on the philosophy of science, but on actual empirical research instead.' In the other words, the decision to choose which approach should be based on its suitability in answering particular research questions and not on technical matters of qualitative and quantitative distinctions (Bryan, 1988).

Accordingly, this section is intended to see the extent these two research approaches can provide transferable and relevant research evidence in policy-making process regarding the EFL teaching practices at primary education. Two journal articles from respective qualitative and quantitative camps are selected for comparison. These articles deal with the EFL policy practices at primary education in Indonesia and other countries.

The first paper by Erkan (2015) employed a quantitative-survey design with two principal aims: 1) to examine 'how far specific objectives of English program for primary school were achieved by students at

the fourth and fifth grades, and 2) whether this achievement was associated with their personal characteristics such as gender, grade, parents' education, affluence, and existence of English fluent speakers at home'. The author used a personal information form and a Likert-like questionnaire for data collection distributed to randomized sample of 400 students from eight primary schools throughout Tadikoy in Turkey.

Having conducted different statistical analyses, the research ended with several findings. The students starting English program at the fourth grade were more successful in achieving English course objectives than their fifth-grade counterparts. This finding confirmed the postulate 'the earlier the better' that learning English at earlier stage provides better results (Ruyun, 2016; Du, 2010; Rachmajanti, 2008). Having conducted separated analysis to every home aspect, it was found that their achievement of course objectives was significantly associated with the existence of English fluent speaker, parents' educational backgrounds, and household prosperity. In general, the researcher successfully addressed all research questions in quantitative mode with sound analysis. Despite that, some weaknesses were still unable to address in this study such as the accuracy of using Likert-like questionnaire in measuring students' attainment to examine their ability to 'set up dialogue and meaningful activities'. Another

distinct shortfall from this design was the nature of its analysis which was still generic and only looking from a macro-level perspective, and thus a lack of in-depth portrayal. For example, in what way their parents' education mattered for students achieving the course objectives whether it was due to their supports, guidance, or something else.

The second article (Rachmajanti, 2008) took another form of quantitative approach with ex post facto design. The study was to measure the impacts of the past English-learning experience at primary schools on students' English achievement at the lower grade of secondary school. The study was also aimed to examine a number of factors such as time of learning, English teachers' characteristics, teaching and learning process, socio-economic context, and students' experience in English learning at previous schools. Conducted in one junior high school, the study involved 172 students as the sample with the claimed population to cover 22 secondary schools throughout Malang, Indonesia. The data were gathered mainly from two sources: questionnaires and a communicative English test.

By using multi-linear regression analysis, the results showed that there were significant relationships of the past English experience in combination with other dominant factors on the students' English achievement. However, the effect of the English-learning experience at previous

primary level on their current English attainment, by its own, was not considered from the author's analysis. Thus, whether early English learning influenced students' achievement in their higher school level remained unanswered. The results were also unlikely generalizable to wider population of 22 schools considering the study was only conducted in only one school-case of 172 students. It can be assumed that the study would be more suitable to apply qualitative instead of quantitative design. A reasonable argument is that the results might only work for the context of investigated school; thus, it is much better to get in-depth explanation regarding the contribution of previous English learning experience to students' achievement in higher level of school. Otherwise, quantitative research has still potential to do by involving randomized and representative sample which can capture general characteristics of targeted population (Ari, et al., 2009).

In contrast to the previous two articles, the third paper (Nguyen et al., 2016) aimed to shed light on primary students' voices and experience regarding the implementation of English language policy at Vietnamese primary schools. The authors conducted the research in one case-study school which was considered better compared to other schools in terms of facilities and English teacher availability. To obtain in-depth depiction of students' experience, they gathered the data from students as the main participants, parents, teacher, and principal through different and rich data collection techniques comprising of classroom observations, interviews, casual conversations with participants, children's drawings and journals. The data was analyzed by blending any pieces of information from those tools in form of narratives instead of coding the data into themes or categories.

By means of the narrative analysis, the authors could depict the complexity of every student's learning experience during English lessons. They were able to capture any individual uniqueness of English learning experience which connected the in-school and off-school lives such household affluences, parents' education, and learning supports. The results also depicted the mismatches between the 'macro level' of EFL policy expectations and 'the micro level' of realities at the school level. For example, the policy mandated the classroom to apply communicative approaches, but in realities the teacher was reliant on textbooks due to lack of experience, expertise as well as lack of material preparation. Although this study only took one school as a case study, the results could be transferrable to other school contexts with similar or lesser qualities from the case-study site. The use of triangulation (Oliver-Hoyo and DeeDee, 2006; Ma and Norwich, 2007) made the results more convincing; the data tools were complementary to each other, and each tool was used to confirm another technique.

Therefore, the findings of this study were relevant and potential to be transferrable for policy improvement in EFL policy.

The last article from Zein (2016) was conducted under a grounded theory design which was aimed to examine the efficacy of existing pre-service education program to provide adequate skills and knowledge for primary English teachers. The authors used semi-structured interviews involving 13 English teachers and different stakeholders in education. The participants represented types and locations of primary schools in seven provinces in Indonesia. The transcribed interviews were analyzed using computer qualitative-analysis packages of CADQAS and NViVo9 in order to identify core categories and codes.

The findings showed that English teachers lacked skills and expertise to teach young children at primary level. This problem stemmed from inappropriate pre-service teacher preparation programs the teachers attended. The majority of teachers expressed their dissatisfaction of the program which was assumed lack of relevance to real practices of teaching English to primary students. In addition, it was found that the existing pre-service program did not provide specific trainings pertaining best practices in teaching English to young children. Generally speaking, the study provided rich findings generated from different educational stakeholders in regard to existing problems in the practices of EFL policy. Although this is

a qualitative in nature, the results have potential for its transferability to other contexts, and therefore, can be a good reference in the policy-making process. The selection of participants involved in the study could capture common characteristics of primary schools in Indonesia.

The analysis of this paper is inadequate because it does not explain the reasons and practices in concrete situations or examples of policy-making process on EFL policy at primary education. As the writer writes that "…transferability to other context…" and "The selection of participants involved in the study could capture…" have not described a comprehensive analysis with the theoretical review. It has not argued the how the selection of participants could capture common characteristics of primary schools in Indonesia.

It has not synthesized those four articles into an extensive analysis as an evidence towards policy-making process in EFL policy.

Dominant research approach on EFL policy at primary

Although the relationships between researchers and policy makers are not always smooth (Oakley, 2007, p102), social research has played a significant role in policy implementations. Social policy including education is intended to provide solutions to any problems existing in society; hence, research evidence can be in the first place for better policy development and

implementation (Clarke, 2001). The research evidence can provide significant influence on policy as social researchers and policy makers commonly have similar interests on social problems that require practical solutions (Clarke, 2001).

Nevertheless, these similar interests on social problems do not always end with similar perceptions in regard to relevant and transferable research evidence to policy-making process. Policy makers seek evidence which can provide rational underpinnings for policy decisions (Clarke, 2001) in order to appropriately provide solutions for the existing problems. For this reason, policy makers tend to place their first preference on the quantitative approach for its large sample involvement (Desch, 2014). However, this is contradictory to the mainstream social researchers who deem the quantitative approach as more appropriate to capture the complexity of human beings and their lived contexts (Somekh, 2011) as the case of educational (EFL) policy.

Having paid attention to the article comparisons, it is assumed that the qualitative research is more dominant in elaborating any aspects of social phenomena in more comprehensive ways. Although the issues being investigated are relatively small and context-specific, the findings are still transferable to other contexts when the research is carefully designed as the case of the third articles. The authors are able to provide robust portrayal of the complexity of students' experience in a classroom setting. In addition, the qualitative approach is likely to capture larger contexts, but still maintaining the deepness and richness of the observed problem. This case is obvious in the fourth article involving wider participants which make the findings likely to reflect a real situation of the pre-service training problems.

In contrast, the quantitative approach often deals with larger sample size which can represent the characteristics of targeted population. However, the larger sample size and sample representativeness do not guarantee the accuracy of generalization. Indeed, the findings from the second article are not generalizable to the targeted population, but only applicable for the context of the investigated school. The first article has a different case. The results are definitely generalizable to wider population, but its elaborations remain superficial (Bryan, 1988). Despite that, its nature of covering large-sample size and straight-forward analysis are irreplaceable strengths from the quantitative approach which can give certain advantages in policy-making process.

Ethical consideration in social research

Research in social sciences deals with human beings and their living contexts (Cohen et al., 2011). Accordingly, ethical considerations become essential in order to ensure 'a balance between the demands for researchers in pursuit of truth and their subjects' rights and values potentially

threatened by the research (Cohen et al., 2011; Roberts and Allen, 2015). Ethics (often associated with morality) are aimed to provide the 'standards of conduct of a given profession or group' (Barbie, 2004). Research ethics are universal; thus, their fundamental principles have been previously established in international declarations such as The Nuremberg Code in 1947 and The Declaration of Helsinki in 1964 (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011; Heaten, 2004).

The term 'ethics' is not absolute; ethicality or unethicality is context-specific and subject to differences depending on the sources of ethics themselves of whether religion, political ideology, or pragmatic observation (Barbie, 2004). However, the ethical and legal frameworks in regard to social research have been defined and disseminated by professional associations, funders of social research, ethics committees, and other groups (secondary data providers) (Heaten, 2004). As a result, general agreements have been shared what is acceptable and unacceptable in the conduct of scientific social research. Of these ethical agreements include issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality (Cohen et.al., 2011; Ragin & Amoroso, 2011; Matthews and Ross, 2010; Heaton, 2004; Punch, 1994, cited in Punch 2005; Homan, 1991). These ethical issues should be saturated in all stages of research process starting from the choice of topics, data collection process, to research finding report (Cohen, et al. 2011; Punch, 2005).

The first issue of research ethics is relating to harm. Research involving human beings should not only be aimed to produce the quality of knowledge, but also to ensure its potential 'wrongness' to people being studied (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014; Bulmer, 2001). The research should not cause any harm by any means to any participating subjects either physically or psychologically. Another principal issue is participants' consent. The principle of informed consent is to ensure the subjects' right to freedom and self-determination (Cohen et al., 2011). The participants should have freedom to decide voluntarily and without any coercion whether to take part or not in the research. In addition, research activity should be based on honesty. The researchers have responsibility to be honest to participants in regard to their methods or purposes. Honesty can also refer to data being gathered; how the data is responsibly treated and reported. Another important issue is privacy. Privacy is defined as the condition where the respondents are protected from unwanted access by others from physical access, personal information, or attention (Bok, 1984, cited from Homan, 1991). The last is relating to confidentiality. The main concern of it is to provide the protection for the respondents from any harm and risks by hiding their identifiable identity from public.

Although these ethical principles are without any exception applicable for both research streams, the qualitative research especially conducted in education settings, indeed, faces more potential challenges (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009; Bulmer, 2001). In this regard, Punch, (2005, p276) suggests that 'the qualitative research deals with the most sensitive, intimate, and innermost matters in people's lives and ethical issues accompany the collection of such information'. The qualitative researchers hold more responsibilities to ethical behavior in order to preserve the security, rights, and dignity of respondents as human beings. As the preceding papers have shown, the authors were intensively merged with different participants including the young ages making them at potential risk especially psychologically such as being embarrassed in front of their classmates.

In quantitative research, on the other hands, although the challenges for the researchers are not as greater as the qualitative research, the protection of respondents should also be safeguarded especially in relation to their privacy and confidentiality of data reporting (Blumer, 2001). The quantitative papers above also involved human beings including young children as the subjects, but the ethical responsibilities for the researchers are not as challenging as the qualitative researchers due to less intimate interaction between the participants and the researchers. The protection of the participants should be considered regardless of the research types.

Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative approaches stem from two contrasting paradigms pertaining how social sciences should be investigated. From educational policy-making perspective, the former might seem more preferable in terms of large data involvement; however, the research only produces superficial data (Bryan, 1988) which lacks meticulous elaboration. On the other hand, the qualitative is distinct for its strength to provide in-depth portrayal of the complexity of human-related issues. Although it mostly deals with small-scale research, the results are also transferable to other contexts when the research is thoroughly designed.

Having considered the strengths and weaknesses from both approaches, it is noted that no single approach can deal with all aspects of social phenomena perfectly. Each approach addresses distinct purposes and emphases where one approach cannot take over the other. Thus, the critical issue of which approach to choose in social research is not on the matter of areas being investigated, but more on the nature of the issues associated with it (Bryman, 1988). Therefore, for the purpose of educational policy studies such as EFL policy, the pragmatist's view is much more preferable than purist's view. These two research

approaches are supposed to be in partnership (pragmatist) rather than in rivalry (purist) as the weaknesses of one approach cannot be corrected by itself but with the contribution of another approach. It is then relevant to take what Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argue that 'there is no point of being restricted to a specific research approach when the richness and depth of the study is at stake'. Indeed, each approach may address a similar educational problem with their own ways, but if they can lead to similar and complementary results, the policy makers will have much confidence to use the evidence in the policy-making process.

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