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## Qualitative Research

Philosophical Foundations and  
Methodologies

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## Qualitative Research: Philosophical Foundations and Methodologies

**Abstract:** Understanding the philosophical foundations of research methodologies is essential when conducting QR study, since “philosophical ideas influence everything in the research process from the first formulation of a research theme to the final reporting of the results” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. vii). In this paper, discussed will be the major philosophical paradigms underpinning QR methodologies: positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, critical theory and poststructuralism. The latter part of the section covers examples of using data in the phenomenological methodology.

質的（定性的）研究方法は、データ収集及び分析方法に厳格さが欠ける傾向があり、定量的研究方法より、信頼性が低いとされる傾向があった。しかし、近年は、現象のある瞬間の断面図を示す定量的研究に対し、より深く問題の本質を掘り起こし、総合的な理解を可能にするとして、質的方法を支持する研究者も増えている。質的研究方法には、まず哲学的基盤を理解することが重要で、「哲学的アイデアが研究テーマの最初の定式化から結果の最終報告までの研究プロセスの全てに影響を与える」ため、質的研究を行う際に不可欠である（Brinkmann、2018、p. vii）。本論文では、質的研究（QR）方法論を支える主要な哲学的パラダイムである、実証主義、ポスト実証主義、構成主義、批判的理論、ポスト構造主義について考察し、後半部分では、現象論的方法論によるデータ分析方法について実際の研究データの例を使って検証する。

**Keywords:** Qualitative Research Methodology, Qualitative Data Analysis, Philosophical Foundations of Research Methodologies, Research Approaches

キーワード: 質的研究方法論、質的データ分析、研究方法の哲学的基盤、研究方法アプローチ

### 1. Qualitative Methodology

The purpose of the paper is to explore the qualitative research (QR) approaches because I believed that “thick descriptive” data (Geertz, 1973) gained through QR would make in-depth analysis and understanding of the phenomena possible.

QR methodologies have been traditionally perceived as inferior , or “second best” (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004, p. 6) to quantitative counterparts, and trivialized due to seeming lack of rigor due to "softness" of QR data (Patton, 2002). Therefore, Marschan-Piekkari and Welch (2004) stated that “QR researchers tend to be on the defensive, and find themselves having to argue the case for the relative merits of QR (p. 5).” However, since then, QR has gain legitimacy in academic fields, as growing numbers of researchers has been adopting QR methodologies. It is no longer “the stepchild that it was in the last millennium (Lichtman, 2014),” and is establishing its position being recognized as an integral part of social and human science (c.f., Birkinshaw, Brannen, & Tung, 2011; Brinkmann, Jacobsen, & Kristiansen, 2014).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) defines QR as follows:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural

settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

I believe that the QR approach is the best suited for explorative studies.

## 2. Philosophical Foundations

It is essential to understand the philosophical foundations, i.e., paradigms, that underpin the research methodologies. That is, it is of the utmost importance to be conscious of seemingly taken-for-granted views, frameworks and value-systems that we may, otherwise, unconsciously base when formulating the problem and research questions to study, seeking information to answer the questions (Brinkmann, 2018; Creswell, 2013). The importance of understanding the philosophical foundations of QR is as Brinkmann (2018) states in the preface;

...philosophical ideas influence everything in the research process from the first formulation of a research theme to the final reporting of the results. Therefore, it is preferable to highlight how this happens. Philosophy should thus not be thought of as a purely abstract discipline, disconnected from the practicalities of research, but rather as a concrete and pervasive aspect of all qualitative research practices.  
(p. vii)

There are variety of approaches and methodologies in QR, with no one agreed-upon approach. Each of the methodologies is based on underlying philosophical assumptions. The philosophical underpinnings of QR is discussed by many researchers, but there is no consistency in the terminologies used by them such as “theoretical traditions and orientations” (Patton, 2002), “theoretical paradigms and perspective” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018), “paradigms” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Hatch, 2002), “philosophical foundations” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), “philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks” (Creswell, 2013), “epistemology and theoretical perspectives” (Crotty, 1998). The terminology used here is “philosophical paradigm” following the Kuhnian tradition (e.g. Kuhn, 1962, 1970; Kuhn, 1996). It is “a set of basic beliefs” that represents a “worldview” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107).

The following section in this chapter discusses the philosophical paradigms that underpin the methodologies of QR. The methodologies of empirical research are originated from the natural scientific research, that can be traced back to the seventeenth century, the age of Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton (c.f., Bernard, 2006; Brinkmann, 2018; Brinkmann et al., 2014; Kuhn, 1996; Patton, 2002). The philosophers in the nineteenth century, such as Auguste Comte, John Stuart Mill, and likes, proposed the application of the empirical scientific method to the study of humanity.

Hatch (2002) mentions five research philosophical paradigms: positivism, postpositivism, constructivist, critical/feminism, and poststructuralism. Guba and Lincoln (2005); Patton (2002) identify five paradigms: positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism, and participatory. Creswell (2014) refers to the following four: postpositivism, constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) categorizes research perspectives into four groups of paradigms; positivism/postpositivism, interpretive/constructivism, critical, and postmodern/poststructuralism. Brinkmann (2018) discusses the philosophical paradigms in historical perspectives and in the contexts of British (positivism and postpositivism), German (phenomenology and hermeneutics), American (pragmatism) and French (structuralism and poststructuralism) philosophical traditions, as well as newly emerged approaches such as feminism, and non-Western philosophical thoughts.

In understanding the philosophical thoughts, it is important to clarify the paradigms in terms of ontology (i.e., the nature of reality) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge) and methodology

(i.e., the process of research). Ontology is “the study of being and concerned with ‘what is’, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such (Crotty, 1998, p. 10).” Epistemology refers to “What can be known, and what is the relationship of the knower to what is to be known? (Hatch, 2002, p. 11).” It is “concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate (Maynard, 1994, p. 10).”

Understanding the philosophical foundations of research methodologies is essential when conducting QR study, since “philosophical ideas influence everything in the research process from the first formulation of a research theme to the final reporting of the results” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. vii). Next, discussed will be the major philosophical paradigms underpinning QR methodologies: positivism, postpositivism, constructivism, critical theory and poststructuralism.

## **Positivism**

The most salient characteristic of positivism is its strict belief in cause and effect.

Positivism assumes that reality exists and is observable, driven by universal, natural laws. (c.f., Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) ”Knowledge gained through the study of this reality has been labeled ‘scientific,’ and it included the establishment of ‘laws’. Experimental research assumed a positivist stance (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 8) .”

## **Postpositivism**

Postpositivists, like positivists, believe that reality exists, but assumes that truth can only be approximated (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002). For them, knowledge is relative, and reality cannot be fully known (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), “but postpositivists do assert that it is possible, using empirical evidence, to distinguish between more and less plausible claims (Patton, 2002, p. 93).” They do not believe in strict cause and effect but think that empirical evidence gained through rigorous research methods can improve validity and reliability in apprehending reality. Although positivists claim that there is the only single reality, postpositivists accept multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

## **Constructivism**

In the view of constructivism, “a world in which universal, absolute realities are unknowable, and the objects of inquiry are individual perspectives or constructions of reality (Hatch, 2002, p. 15).” Constructionists asserts that meanings are constructed by human beings in the process of interpreting the world surrounding them. Therefore, constructivism is often used synonymously with interpretivism (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Constructivism assumes that reality is unknowable, and it is only socially constructed. That is, “there is no single, observable reality. Rather, there are multiple realities, or interpretations, of a single event(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 9) .” For constructivism, (multiple) realities exist as they are “constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points (Hatch, 2002, p. 15).” According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), constructivism is ontologically relativistic, epistemologically subjective, and methodologically hermeneutic and dialectic (p. 110).

Constructionists view “that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998, p. 42) .”

## **Poststructuralism/Postmodernism**

Poststructuralism and postmodernism are often used interchangeably and there is considerable variation among the views (Schwandt, 2007). Structuralism, that preceded

poststructuralism, started by Saussure, the Swiss linguist, as a linguistic theory. Poststructuralism is “the general name for a critique of structuralism that arose largely in France in the early 1970s (Schwandt, 2007, p. 238),” although there are distinctive similarities such as their opposition to metaphysics and humanism, and emphasis on the role of language in constituting subjectivity and social reality. Further, unlike previously mentioned philosophical paradigms, postmodernism and poststructuralism consider subjectivity important for researchers to deal with their own potential influences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). Hatch (2002) considers poststructuralism as “an antiparadigm because its tenets can be used to deconstruct all of the paradigms above (p. 17)”

### **Critical theory**

Critical theorist assumes the need to reconsider the existing concepts and understandings of the social world. Its perspectives are “concerned with empowering human beings focusing on race, class, and gender (Creswell, 2013, p. 30).” Its focus is generally on social class: “critical race theory highlights race; feminist frames tend to focus on gender; queer theory on sexual orientation; postcolonial studies analyze colonial relations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 24).” Critical theory, as well as feminist theory, focuses on social and economic inequalities and intend to challenge the existing social system. The objective is to reveal “the kinds and extent of oppression that are being experienced by those studied” and “call for awareness, resistance, solidarity, and revolutionary transformation (Hatch, 2002, p. 17).”

### **3. Approaches and Methodologies**

QR is in vibrant debates with many contradictions and different views (Brinkmann et al., 2014; Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002; Roulston, 2010). As Hatch (2002) states “there are as many kinds of QR as there are quantitative researchers”( p.20).

The methodologies considered for the present study were the following five: Ethnography, Phenomenological research, Grounded Theory, Narrative Inquiry, and Qualitative Case Studies, and Narrative Inquiry. A researcher selects a methodology or methodologies, thinking that is the best way to gain knowledge about reality. However, that depends on the perception of the researcher. That is to some extent an ontological issue in so far as it is concerned with the question of being.

### **Ethnography**

Ethnography is the most commonly used qualitative methodology due to its long -established history. It can be traced back to early anthropologists who spent extended periods of time doing fieldwork within cultural groups. According to Spradley, “ethnography is the work of describing a culture (Spradley, 1979, p. 3).” Ethnographic research focuses on human society and culture, systematically exploring “the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language (Roulston, 2010, p. 19).” Although participant observation is traditionally considered the most essential part of an ethnographic study, interviews, narrative analysis, documentary analysis, film and photography are included for analysis to understand a culture (Hatch, 2002). When conducting a participant observation study or a field work, ethnographers try to develop rapport and empathy with the participants of the study, to generate descriptive data from the point of view of the participants (Schwandt, 2007).

Bernard (2006) summarizes ethnography as follows:

Ethnography brings to light the features of a culture, but you need systematically collected data (surveys that produce either words or numbers) in order to test hypotheses about how those features work. Researchers who are comfortable with both will routinely move back and forth, without giving it a moment’s thought. Ethnography tells you that patrilineal cross-cousin marriage is preferred, but it takes a survey to find out how often the rule is ignored.

And then it takes more ethnography to find out how people rationalize ignoring the cultural preference (p. 298).

Anthropologists of the nineteenth century, who pioneered in the ethnographic research, are known for the studies of exotic tribes in remote places. However, many of the ethnographic research of the present day tend to study subcultures and communities in urban areas. The purpose is the same: they try "to account for the behavior of people by describing what it is that they know that enables them to behave appropriately given the dictates of common sense in their community" (McDermott, 1976, p. 159 cited in Hatch, 2002, p. 21)."

### **Phenomenological research**

Phenomenology is based on a philosophical thought founded by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the 20th century and further developed into existential philosophy by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenologists design research to see "how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25), interpreting and reduce them to "a description of the universal essence" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory, based on the postpositivist paradigm, focuses on theory generation and verification: it intend to construct theory using rigorous inductive methods. Glaser and Strauss developed the research methodology and introduced in their 1967 book "The Discovery of Grounded Theory," one of the most influential publications in qualitative research in the social sciences. Grounded theory research mainly uses data collected through interviews and observations. Also, it uses types of data such as videos, journals, diaries, drawings, internal documents and memos, memoirs, internet postings, and historical records. (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 7) It uses multiple stages of data collection, and Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously: the process is termed the theoretical sampling, "whereby the researcher jointly collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them. Grounded theory research tries to derive concepts by analyzing data, and the concepts lead to subsequent data collection. The researcher repeats data collections until no new concepts emerge, thereby constructing the researcher constructs "a well-integrated, dense and clear theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 144).

Coding procedure in a grounded theory approach starts with open coding, followed by axial coding and selective coding. Open coding is a procedure for identifying categories of information and concepts. Axial coding interconnects the categories and the concepts emerged through open coding. Selective coding is the final step and integrate concepts around a core category, derived in the processes, to produce theoretical propositions.(Strauss & Corbin, 1998) The original grounded theory approach is influenced by a positivist epistemology and assumes that categories and theories simply emerge from data. Hence, researchers' role is to uncover what is already there, based on objectivism, the epistemological view that "things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience (Crotty, 1998, p. 5)". While the original grounded theory considers the researcher as a mere instrument of data collection, the constructivists grounded theorist such as Charmaz emphasizes researchers' role for constructing theories, criticizing the objective epistemological view, and arguing that no data nor theories are discovered, but are constructed by the researchers. (Charmaz, 2006)

### **Narrative research**

Narrative inquiry, as a research method, begins with stories told by an individual or individuals. (Riessman, 2008) Plots are considered crucial components in narrative inquiry. According to Riessman (2008), a plot is "the ordering of the incidents," and "constitutes the

lifeblood of a narrative.” She argues a plot “awakens emotions, such as fear and dread, when ‘things happen unexpectedly.’”(p. 4)

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) defines Narrative inquiry as follows:

People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.” (p. 479)

Narrative analysis focuses on the stories told through interviews. “If no stories are told spontaneously, a coherent narratives are constructed from the many episodes spread throughout an interview”(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 254). Narrative studies collect data in the forms of oral history, annals and chronicles, family stories, photographs, research interviews, journals, autobiographical writing, letters, conversations, and field notes. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) Variations in the data analysis procedures exist in narrative inquiry, but narrative researchers typically employ coding techniques to organize and analyze the data. Riessman (2008) categorizes narrative analysis to thematic, structural, dialogic/performance, and visual analysis. Narrative inquiry emphasizes more active roles of researchers than grounded theory as well as co-constructive and collaborative relationships between the researcher and the participant(s).

## Qualitative Case Studies

Case studies have been one of the most commonly used research methods in social science. A case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37). Yin defines it as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Although many researchers considers it as a research method. Stake (1994, 2005) argues that it is not a methodology, but a choice of a case, that is object and what to be studied, bounded in space and time. A case study focuses a case as the object of study and different types of studies can be combined with the case study, and often uses ethnographic, or grounded theory methodologies, or presenting story of an individual or individuals based on the method of narrative inquiry within the single case study. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 39)

The philosophical underpinning of the case study method is postpositivist paradigm (e.g., Yin, 2003), viewing the case study as a ‘bridge’ to generalizations, and preferring collective rather than single case studies. (Piekkari & Welch, 2018) Constructivist researchers criticize the inclination and defend the depth of the single case study design, valuing the earlier case study’s traditional emphasis on “rich contextual insight and the subjective experiences and ‘emic’ meanings of the research (Piekkari & Welch, 2018, p. 350).” Stake (1994), a constructivist, places greater importance on a holistic understanding of the case with rich descriptions than theory building, arguing that in-depth study through rich descriptions allows a researcher to gain insights and understanding with universal significance. Piekkari and Welch (2018) argues that there have been innovations or evolutions in the field of case study methods, stating “the case study has enjoyed something of a renaissance (p. 346)”: “We believe that it is very exciting to be a qualitative case researcher today, given how the case study is currently being revived and rediscovered (p. 356).”

#### 4. Phenomenological Methodology

QR method that I selected is the phenomenological methodology. The reason for selecting the phenomenological methodology is that it is one of the methods frequently used in social science in studies focusing “on generating data to examine participants’ lived experiences” (Roulston 2010). Using the methodology, researchers can obtain detailed and in-depth descriptions of human experiences, questioning the participants to provide detailed information concerning these experiences. Since researchers want to understand the participants’ feelings, perceptions and understandings, open questions are particularly useful in providing a format for interviewees to answer in their own words. (c.f. Hatch, 2002; Roulston, 2010; Creswell, 2014) Phenomenological research design is to inquire descriptive information of the “lived experiences” about a phenomenon as described by participants, which “culminates in the essence of the experiences for several individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon”(Creswell, 2014, p. 14)

The aim of the Phenomenology research is to “reveal the essence of human experience by asking, "What is the nature of this phenomenon?" (Hatch, 2002, p. 30)

A typical Phenomenological interview begins with open-ended questions as follows:

Think of a time when you experienced\_\_\_\_\_and describe that in as much detail as possible. Possible follow up questions include: You mentioned\_\_\_\_\_tell me what that was like for you. You mentioned\_\_\_\_\_describe that in more detail for me. To use phenomenological interviews effectively, it is essential that the interviewer has identified participants who have both experienced, and are able to talk about the particular lived experience under examination (Roulston 2010, p. 16-17).

##### 4.1. Procedure

I used the phenomenological methodology to investigate the ways in which English is used in corporations in Japan. The following is an example of the procedure. Part 1 of the study is intended to explore the English language penetration in business in Japan: How much is English used, by whom and in what situations? What are the symbolic values attached to using English? Part 2 investigates the impacts and implications of the implementing English as the corporate official language. It focuses on a company which introduced the policy and see what happened to the corporation and how the employees of the corporations responded and reacted to the new policy.

The nature of the study is exploratory qualitative research, which explored the participants’ reactions, perceptions, and behavior. Therefore, I chose the phenomenological interviewing as the method for the study. However, quantitative researchers tend to regard the interpretive research methods such phenomenological research as “unreliable, impressionistic, and not objective.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12) However, QR methods can elicit in-depth insights into a phenomenon, exploring and interpreting behavior, perceptions, feelings of human beings, allowing deeper, more profound understandings, whereas quantitative research methods only focus on measurable snapshots of the phenomenon.

I considered other qualitative methods than the phenomenological method such as the ethnography and narrative inquiry. Ethnographic study focuses on the culture of a group or society. (Spradley, 1979) Narrative inquiry intends to study the lives of individuals by asking stories an individual or several individuals. (Riessman, 2008) Also, the ethnographic methods involved participant observations and recording of the company meetings. I did not consider using the methods from the outset because of confidentiality issues and lengthy negotiations expected to be required. Grounded theory is another methods widely used in social science, which is based on the postpositivist tradition, an inductive approach effective for theory formulation. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) I did not select the grounded theory approach, because the purpose of

the present study is to investigate the impacts and implication of a corporate language policy in order to explore effective language learning opportunities and environment, not intending to build a theory or theories.

Phenomenological research focuses on participants' lived experiences of a particular phenomenon, interpreting the events through the perceptions of the participants. (Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989; Van Manen, 1990) The goal of the procedure is to “develop a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole” from individual descriptions of their experiences. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) In phenomenological research, based on the constructive and interpretive research paradigm, researchers' “intuition, imagination, and universal structures” are crucial for “obtaining a picture of the dynamics that underlay the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21).

The study explores meanings of the phenomenon through the perceptions of the participants. The data were gained by interviewing them as descriptions of their experiences in their workplaces: the ways in which English is used in business in the part 1 research, and the transition after the implementation of the language policy in the part 1 research. Thus, the phenomenological approach is, I reckon, the best approach for the study.

### **Part 1**

The first part of the present study is based on interviews with 12 Japanese bilingual professionals who use English for their daily business. The data was collected through interviews, using open-ended interview questions, asking the participants about their unique experiences, and their opinion and feeling about using English as common or official language. (See Appendix 1)

I selected participants who are bilingual business professionals with experiences of working in the business environments where English is used for communication, using my own business network to search the participants. E-mails were sent to the prospective participants asking whether they would be interested in participating in the study. The E-mail exchange included the explanation of the purpose and nature of the research. Each participant was contacted, and a convenient location and time were determined for the interview. The participants chose the language for the interview; English or Japanese whichever they felt comfortable expressing their feelings or opinions. Each interview was conducted in an environment where a participant can feel relaxed: some participants were interviewed outside the office after work, while the majority preferred the meeting rooms of their offices. Each interview took approximately one hour on average. The participants work in various working environments: a global consulting firm, a subsidiary of a large U.S. company initially founded as a joint venture with a Japanese company, a major Japanese pharmaceutical company, a Japanese mid-sized law firm, the venture capital arm of a Japanese technology company, a Japanese real estate investment fund, a national medical research institute, a subsidiary of a Spanish re-insurance firm, and a Japanese e-commerce company. The levels and degrees of English use vary among the organizations.

Since the majority of employees in the corporations in Japan do not use English for daily business, I selected participants who are bilingual business professionals with experiences of working in the business environments where English is used for communication.

### **Part 2**

The part 2 study investigated a company that had implemented the policy of English only corporate language. The participants were searched using the Snowball method, a kind of chain referral methods relying on the information gained from the first participants (c.f., Bernard, 2006) through my own personal and business network. Over the period of four years from 2014 to 2018, I interviewed 10 participants, who were selected for their unique experience of working in the corporation using English as the official language: 7 Japanese (6 male participants and one

female), and three non-Japanese participated. Some participant were interviewed multiple times (See Table 1)

Table 1: Part 1 Participants

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Languages used in the interviews	English	Japanese	Japanese/English
Age	46	49	55
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Nationality	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Profession	Human Resource	Strategic Planning/ (Previous position) Marketing	Compliance
Years Living Abroad	6	4	11
Countries	France 3 yrs. (Elementary School) USA 1 yr. (High School in Michigan) USA 2 yrs. (Graduate B-school in Illinois)	USA (4yrs) as a student	USA (11yrs) as a student and worked at a subsidiary of a Japanese bank in Chicago
Industry	Consulting	Pharmaceutical	Pharmaceutical
Type of Company	Global	Joint Venture	Japanese Multinational Corp.
Size of Company	Large	Large	Large
Degree of English use in the company	High	Medium	Very Low

	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Languages used in the interviews	English/Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Age	42	48	43
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Nationality	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Profession	Attorney	Investment Specialist	CFO (Finance)
Years Living Abroad	9	2	3
Countries	USA	USA	Hong Kong
Industry	Legal	Venture Capital	Real Estate Investment Funds
Type of Company	Law Office	VC arm of Tech Firm	
Size of Company	Medium	Medium	Small
Degree of English use in the company	Low	Low	Low

	Participant 7	Participant 8	Participant 9
Languages used in the interviews	English	Japanese	Japanese
Age	53	51	43
Gender	Male	Female	Male
Nationality	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Profession	Operation Consultant		HR Manager
Years Living Abroad	20	13	None
Countries	UK, US, Philippines, Korea, Thailand	UK	n/a
Industry	National Research Institute	Insurance (Re-insurance)	E-commerce
Type of Company	Public	Spanish Re-insurance company	Japanese E-commerce Firm
Size of Company	Large	Large (small operation in Japan)	Large
Degree of English use in the company	Low	Medium	High

	Participant 10	Participant 11	Participant 12
Languages used in the interviews	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Age	43	Nid 50's	43
Gender	Female	Male	Male
Nationality	Japanese	Japanese	Japanese
Profession	Consultant	Regional (Asia) Director	Regional Director
Years Living Abroad	2	20	3
Countries	US	US and Asian courtiers	US
Industry	Management Consulting	Pharmaceutical	Investment Management
Type of Company	Global	Japanese multinational corp.	US Investment Management firm
Size of Company	Large	Large	Medium
Degree of English use in the company	High	Medium	High

Table 2: Part 2 Participants

	Gender	Nationality/L1/L2	Employment Status	No of Intrv.	Location of interview
A	Male	Japanese/Japanese/English	Current	3	Coffeeshop/Office/Coffeeshop
B	Male	Japanese/Japanese/English	Current	3	Office
C	Male	Japanese/Japanese/English	Former	1	Coffeeshop
D	Female	Japanese/Japanese/English	Current	1	Coffeeshop
E	Male	non-Japanese/ Cantonese/English	Former	1	Skype
F	Male	non-Japanese/ undisclosed Asian language/Japanese & Eng.	Current	1	Restaurant
G	Male	non-Japanese/ English/Japanese	Former	1	Coffeeshop
H	Male	Japanese/Japanese/English	Former	1	Skype
I	Male	Japanese/Japanese/English	Current	1	Restaurant
J	Male	Japanese/Japanese/English	Current	1	Office

Most of the interviews were conducted at convenient locations and times determined by the participant, but some preferred online interviews via Skype communication. The languages used for the interviews were the interviewees' native languages in order to gain more accurate information and capture the nuances in their expressions. Interviews were conducted over four years from 2014 to 2018: All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The semi-structured open-ended interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Roulston, 2010) include the following questions: What is your experience with the company's English-as-official-corporate language policy? How did you feel about the language policy? What happened after the language policy was implemented? What do you think about the language policy? However, I used these questions as guides to invite the participants to describe their specific experiences and perceptions, so as to generate more responses and data than expected.

#### 4.2. Validity, Reliability and Ethics

Epoche or bracketing is the most critical concept in phenomenological research. That is, to "set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). I who conducted the research had never worked in a Japanese company where English-only policy was enacted and therefore was considered having been free from preconceived ideas or biases with regard to the language policy.

Researchers of qualitative research methodologies argue that prolonged and repeated engagements build trust with the participants and avoid misinformation or misunderstanding. (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010) The study spans four years from 2014 to 2018 and some participants are interviewed multiple times. For a phenomenological research, solid and rich description, "thick description", of the phenomenon in question is thought warrant reliability and validity of the study (Patton, 2002; Van Manen, 1990), therefore I strived to obtain in-depth descriptions of the experiences from the participants through multiples interviews for several years. In addition, I used the triangulation technique to validate the data using of multiple and

different sources; carefully following media coverages and publications, as well as information obtained in my personal and professional networks relevant to the subject and the company. (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 2002)

Some participants were sensitive to disclosing the details of their identities because they seemed feared to express their feeling and opinion about the company language policy and the disclosure would result in a loss of their credibility and reputation in the company. Prior to the interview, I explained to each participants the purpose and objective of the study, and the possible contributions the study could make. Each participant were asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix 3).

#### 4.2.1. Data Analysis

I listened to the recorded interviews several times to gain an overall feeling for them, identified and sifted through critical descriptions directly related to the experience of the corporate language policy. Then she transcribed and coded the selected statements and expressions to formulate meanings from them. Next, she sorted them by themes that had emerged in the processes and finally integrated them into in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon. I used CAQDA software, MAXQDA, to manage and analyze the data. I referred to the coding method formulated by Saldaña (2016).

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