Research Paradigms in English Education: A Brief Overview

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Abstract

The researcher's worldview for the particular investigation is the research paradigm. So the main objective of this paper is to examine various forms of research paradigms with the library study attempting to link with English education. The description is tried to make clear by linking with examples of selected an issue. For this, the paper starts by introducing a research paradigm as the looking glass to the world. So it is the lens of the researcher through which the study is completed. It was found that positivism is based on objective reality which is most appropriate in natural science and post-positivism is the modification (of positivism) as demands more interaction between the researcher and participants. On the other hand, interpretivism is to understand the issue from an insider's view and constructivism is aimed at social construction. Furthermore, criticalism is to improve the situation of the oppressed, and feminism is purposeful to empower females. Moreover, pragmatism is to generate context-based knowledge and post-modernism is to explore representational knowledge. In a sense, integralism is to integrate different paradigms within one single research. This paper also explores the components of the research where ontology is a study of reality, epistemology is the study of knowledge generation, and methodology is the process of doing the particular research. It implicitly reflects the axiology as the study of value systems. Overviewing the various shifts from traditional to relatively today's research, the specific issues are selected in connection to English education and suggested to link them contextually.

Keywords
Observation, positivism, post-modernism, reality, knowledge, integralism

Introduction

Concept of Research Paradigms

The paradigm is the overall pattern of visioning something. The research paradigm is simply taken as the pattern of investigation: perceiving reality, knowledge, and way of achieving them. A research paradigm is a manner to answer ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions

(Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Paradigms search for what is a reality in that particular issue, how knowledge can be created with the selected issue, what steps are necessary to follow to complete the research task, and what value should be taken into account. The main mechanisms of any research paradigm as mentioned in Killam (2013), are ontology: the study of the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality, the epistemology: examines the relationship between knowledge and researcher during investigation, methodology: the study of discovering knowledge, and axiology: the study of value system.

So, the components of a paradigm are: ontology (study of reality), epistemology (how knowledge can be created), and methodology (why, what, from where, when, and how data is collected and analyzed) and methods are the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyze data (Scotland, 2012). As the research paradigm is the overall looking-glass researcher, it is full of philosophical models to complete the research.

Thus, the research paradigm is the philosophical outline of systematic carrying out research. It can be introduced under the term 'model for searching answers' to the research question. The research paradigm is the view of the whole task which sets the foundation for the whole activities to hold in the process of search. According to Willis, (2007, p.8), "A paradigm is thus a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research and practice in a field." So a research paradigm is the pattern, model, or overall philosophical process of investigation.

Various Research Paradigms in English Education

Different scholars have explained various discussions on paradigms from past to present as found in literature studies. Regarding this, Scotland (2012) illustrated scientific, interpretive, and critical as the major paradigms in educational research. Similarly, Taylor (2014) described post-positivism, interpretivism, criticalism, and post-modernism as commonly used in contemporary social science. To this point, Kumatongo and Muzata, (2021) explained positivism, post-positivism, interpritivism, constructivism, and pragmatism. Using elaborative terminologies Taylor et al. (2012) discussed positivist and post-positivist under 'single paradigm research.' Likewise, interpretive, pragmatism, and post-modernism are within the 'multiple research paradigms' and further they introduce an 'integral perspective in research'. Thus positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, criticalism, feminism, post-modernism, and integralism are the most discussed paradigms in the literature on research issues related to social science specifically in English education.

Although many theoretical explanations are found about the research paradigms, very few practical links are observed in the descriptions and in their implementation. So, theoretical justification in practice is a prerequisite. Then, only application is possible.

Thus, illustrating various research paradigms from different sources and attempting to make a linkage between explanation and execution (to English language education) is the main objective of this paper.

Methodology

This is a descriptive research paper based on the secondary sources of library study. The main objective is to examine various paradigms in social science specifically with examples from English education. After studying the various literatures, the interaction is done with those literatures. To make the concept clear, some examples are given from each of the paradigms with reference to English

education. The philosophical components of each paradigm are also tried to include in this paper. The conclusion is drawn from the discussion of collected secondary sources.

Findings and Discussion

Positivism

Positivism is based on the view of only one reality: objectivity and suitable to test hypotheses or theories. The only reality that can be achieved by the application of reason and experiment. As Scotland (2012) has given the title 'scientific paradigm' with the claim of mostly used in natural science research, and elaborated positivism synonymously within it. Positivism is therefore close to objectivism which argues that reality exists external to the researcher and must be investigated through a rigorous process of scientific inquiry. To explain this concept, Kumatongo and Muzata (2021, p.17) mention, "knowledge is based on experience of senses and can be obtained by observation and experiment." Likewise, Henning, et al. (2004) as cited in Kumatongo and Muzata (2021, p.17), positivism can be the best-used method for science education researchers. To discuss positivism, Taylor et al. (2012) explained the term 'single paradigm research' which has objectivity and only one way of knowing the reality.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be presented that the ontology of this research is (absolute) naïve realism: reality already exists in the world, the epistemology is objectivism: only one reality that should be discovered by observation, and methodology is experimental quantitative (Guba, 1994).

For instance, 'Effectiveness of Guided Writing in Teaching Composition' can be a research issue to examine with positivism.

To investigate this particular issue in English education, I can take the positivism paradigm because I want to experiment with making an assumption that guided writing is effective for developing writing skills. It will be experimented in two groups as mentioned by Taylor and Medina (2013) experimental (or treatment) and control groups which involves quantitative methodology. The test item will be used as the tool to prove the only one objective truth: there is effectiveness of guided writing in teaching composition. In this study, it has no role of researcher to influence the result, the influence is dependent on cause (guided writing) and effect (composition writing).

Post-positivism

It is a modified scientific or positivist method: process, and tools for the social science and follows the same principles but allows more interaction between the researcher and participants (Willis, 2007). The limitations of positivism are tried to be reduced by thinking further to understand causes that influence outcomes (Kumatongo & Muzata 2021).

Post-positivism is a further improved paradigm to overcome the weakness of positivism, to produce objective and generalizable knowledge by quasi-experimental research that utilizes treatment.

Broadly, Taylor and Medina (2011) mentioned both positivism and post-positivism under the common title 'traditional paradigm'.

It can be explained that the ontology of this research is critical realism (Guba, 1994), the epistemology is modified dualist or objective, and the methodology is deductive with modified experimental.

For instance, 'Effectiveness of Brainstorming in Teaching Paragraph Writing' can be a research issue to be investigated with the application of post-positivism.

To study this particular issue in English education, I can take the post-positivism paradigm because I want to find out the effectiveness of brainstorming techniques in teaching paragraph writing. For this, an experimental group is treated with brainstorming techniques to teach paragraph writing. Moreover, test items can be developed and additional survey questions can be used as the tool to collect data. At this point, Creswell, (2008) as cited in Taylor and Medina (2011) mentioned that the post-positivism paradigm uses additional methods such as surveys, qualitative interviewing, and participant observation. The added tools and techniques create more interaction and modification than positivism.

Interpretivism

Making meaning is the result of various factors. People use perception to interpret what their senses tell them (Al-saadi 2014). As Scotland (2012) wrote reality is not objective, it is subjective perception and interpretation. The ontological position of interpretivism is multiple realism and knowledge is subjective which is based on real-world phenomena and experiences perceived by different individuals. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) have discussed within the same heading of interpretivist and constructivist paradigms to generate context-based understanding of people's thoughts, beliefs, and values. The act of interpretation of other's meaning perspective is mentioned by Taylor et al. (2012) and kept under the term multiple research paradigm. Similarly, Taylor and Medina (2013) described under the 'relatively new and humanistic paradigm' which aims to understand other cultures from the inside, by 'standing in their shoes,' 'looking through their eyes' and feeling their pleasure, or pain. Regarding this, Dammak (2015) explains social world should be studied in the natural world through the eyes of the participants, without the intervention of the researcher. It does not follow experimentation, it requires exploration. Interpretivist researchers believe in reality which is based on people's subjective experiment of the external world. There is no single correct route or particular method: knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation (Kumatongo & Muzata). It is to interpret what the subject is thinking (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017).

The theme is that interpretivism believes in subjectivity (Taylor & Medina, 2013). Reality and knowledge can be generated by making a close relationship with the participant because it is influenced by anthropology and methodology. The nature of the investigation as mentioned in Taylor and Medina (2013), inductive with qualitative ethnography, grounded theory approach, narrative inquiry, phenomenology, and case study are the most commonly found.

For instance, ' An Exploration of Bachelor Level Learners' Experiences in Paragraph Writing' can be a research issue to carry out a study with an interpretive paradigm.

To investigate this particular issue in English education, I can take the interpretive paradigm because I want to explore the learners' views about paragraph writing from their perspectives. As Taylor, et al. (2012) discussed this paradigm aims to generate a context-based understanding of people's thoughts, beliefs, values, and associated social norms. I can explore the learners' experiences related to paragraph writing making a very close rapport with them and I can interpret issues from their eyes. Further, I can use a qualitative approach with in-depth interview guidelines (four Bachelor level fourth year English group learners from Surkhet Multiple Campus), and focused group discussion (among six learners) which will be an interpretive paradigm alike the features as mentioned in Tubey et al. (2015).

The reality that guides this research is pluralism which believes that there is no single reality: not only one way of learning paragraph writing, they experience multiple ways. The learners' multiple perspectives on learning paragraph writing can be

explored by working very closely with them. And knowledge can be interpreted from their worldviews. My aim is neither to generalize the experiences nor emancipate the learning but to understand the situation and how they are learning to write paragraphs.

Constructivism

Knowledge cannot be generated in a vacuum, it is a social phenomenon which is socially constructed. Interpretivism and constructivism approaches argue that knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding (not discovering) the social world of the people being studied in a particular context (Al-saadi 2014). So, in a sense, interpretivism is known as understanding the world, and constructivism is focused on changing the world. The belief is, learning occurs only when learners discover knowledge through the spirit of experimentation and action.

It can be illustrated that the ontology of this research is co-constructed: local and specific realism (Guba, 19940), knowledge can be generated from subjective experiences and methodology is inductive, and

Criticalism

The worldview of this paradigm is that knowledge is both socially constructed and influenced by power relativisms from within society, which reflects that historical realism. As mentioned in Scotland (2012), reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, ethnic, and gender values. It is also called the transformative paradigm in Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), which focused on social justice issues and seeks to address the political, social, and economic inequalities in relation to social oppression, conflict, struggle, and power structures. So Criticalism is raising questions about traditions and searching for alternatives to solve existing problems.
This, the primary purpose of criticalism is to identify, contest, and help to resolve 'gross power imbalances in society (Taylor & Medina, 2011). A

As mentioned in various literature, the positivist seeks to generalize, the critical paradigm seeks to emancipate and the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand the situation with inductive methodology (Scotland, 2012). My lens is to understand how the selected learners are learning to develop a paragraph in English.

approaches are as same with interpretivism (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017).

For instance, ' Role of Cooperative Learning in Paragraph Writing' can be a research issue to investigate with the world view of constructivism.

To solve the problem in this particular issue in English education, I can take the constructivism paradigm because I want to explore the role of cooperative learning in paragraph writing. I will be based on the assumption that working in a team will help to develop writing skills. The knowledge will be constructed by working among the team. The interaction between an individual and one's environment makes one's perception of the world one lives in, and thus reality is socially constructed (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021).

researcher's role is to do advocacy, a change agent, who argues for and leads the way towards a more equitable, fair, and sustainable society.

Regarding teaching and learning issues with criticalism, it is to transform the classroom community through critical action research and support transformative professional practices. Taylor (2014) explains the aim of criticalism is social restructuring. It is making a difference as mentioned in Taylor et al. (2012), for bringing change in the predisposed concept of the oppressed in the society.

It can be discussed that the ontology of the critical paradigm is virtual realism (Guba, 1994), shaped by social, political, ethnic, economic, and or gender

values, the epistemology is subjective: value-mediated findings and methodology can be quantitative or qualitative.

For instance, ' An Exploration of *Baadi* (an ethnic group in Nepal) Students Experiences in Classroom Learning' can be a research issue to explore with criticalism.

To study this particular issue in English education, I can take criticalism paradigm because I want to explore the *Baadi* learners' experiences in the classroom, especially in English subject class. An in-depth interview can be used as a tool to collect data as critical researchers have agenda of change and improve the lives and situations of the oppressed (Dammak, 2015). So the aim should be to bring change to the situation and uneasiness faced by *Baadi* students in their learning environment.

Feminism

Feminism is related to women's empowerment. From the study of a number of literature, it can be explained that feminism is based on the spirit of criticalism to empower the oppressed (Dammak, 2015). Feminism focuses on injustices because of gender as they have historically developed and currently exist in our society. This paradigm aims to improve the situation of women, not only by doing research about them but also by involving them in research for further betterment.

It can be illustrated that the ontology of feminism paradigm research is virtual realism (Guba, 1994), shaped by gender values, the epistemology is subjective to seek knowledge about women's experiences, and the methodology is quantitative or qualitative, or both (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011).

For instance, ' An Exploration of Female English

Head Teachers' Experiences in Managing School Administration' can be a research issue to explore with feminism.

To carry out research on this particular issue in English education, I can take the feminism paradigm because I want to explore the female head teachers' experiences in managing school administration. The objective of this study will not be only to find out the existing experiences of female head teachers but to enhance their administrative ability. It can be explored quantitatively as well as qualitatively by using surveys and focused group discussions. The focus of feminist theory places gender at the center of its analysis and improves the situation that they faced in their life (Ropers-Huilman & Winters, 2011). So this paradigm looks at the issues from the gender perspective and gears to emancipate the oppressed ones.

Pragmatism

The term pragmatism refers to particularity or context sensitivity. It is situation-specific and assumes that knowledge is constructed differently in a different context with reference to time, place, and situation. Pragmatists are pluralists in that they are inclined to one system of philosophy like positivists and interpretivists. It is termed as multi-strategy or pragmatic research to generate knowledge from the diverse purpose to solve problems.

Although Rahl (2017) states that pragmatism is not affiliated with any system or philosophy, it can be inferred from this statement and other literature that the ontology of this research is pluralism: nonsingular reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), and the epistemology is problem oriented to find the weaknesses and to strengthen it by using mix method approach. As mentioned by Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) the use of mixed design is flexible in terms of

methods, techniques, and procedures that pragmatism implements.

For instance, ' Use of ICT in Teaching English during Pandemic in Karnali Province' can be a research issue to investigate with the view of pragmatism.

To investigate this particular issue in English education, I can take the pragmatism because I want to find out the situation of using ICT in Karnali Province: a particular place, and during the pandemic time: a particular time. As in Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), pragmatism advocates relational epistemology which is appropriate to a particular study and specific time and place. The assumption is that the situation of ICT use may not be the same in all provinces of Nepal. Moreover, the use of ICT other than pandemic time, might be different.

Post-modernism

No human being can see what is going on in another's mind. The truth is not final but changing. Many factors play roles in reflecting reality, there are multi-layers in the meaning-making process. Factually, there is no such window to see what is going on in someone's mind. But language and gestures can be the window to look through and draw conclusions making inferences from them. The vision of art-based dialogues, narratives, and ways of generating knowledge and reality is reflected through language, art, and dance.

A person what he/she speaks or writes may not be the same in his/her mind. Taylor and Medina (2013) discussed post-modernism under the term 'relatively new paradigm' and explored the concept of 'representation,' the best we can do is represent our thought, and feelings through various means of communication such as language, art, dance, and gestures. Likewise, Taylor (2014) mentioned the 20th century witnessed the unfolding of a post-modern sensibility the linguistic (narrative) turn.

It can be discussed that the ontology of this research is pluralism (Taylor et al., 2012), the epistemology is a transformative strategy to address global issues and the methodology is qualitative.

For instance, ' The Study of Pictures and Symbols Painted on the Trucks' can be a research issue to investigate with the post-modernism paradigm.

To study this particular issue in English education, I can take the postmodernism paradigm because I want to explore the meaning of pictures and symbols which are painted on the trucks. The painted pictures and symbols on the trucks might give different meanings which can vary what it intends to entail. As in Taylor and Medina (2013) a person what he/she speaks or writes may not be the same in his/her mind so the meaning may not be the same as shown by the pictures and symbols on the trucks. Those might have various meanings than those understood in day-to-day life.

Integralism

Integralism is the philosophy of bringing together more than one aspect in a single unit. So, integralism is eclectic in nature and integrates multiple paradigms in one research interdependent pluralism (Taylor et al. 2012). Likewise, it is to think holistically about the prospective contribution of multiple research paradigms from post-positivism to post-modernism (Taylor, 2014). It is synonymously used with the term multi-paradigmatic research (Taylor & Medina, 2011). It utilizes some of the new logic of the post-modern paradigms and its central principle of pluralism: to integrate, to bring together, to join, to think, and to embrace (Taylor et al., 2012).

It can be illustrated that the ontology of this research paradigm is interdependent paradigmatic pluralism (Taylor et al., 2012), unity in diversity, the

epistemology is subjective, and the methodology is mixed.

For instance, ' Knowledge and Practices of Novice Researchers in Writing Assignments Regarding the Use of Invention Techniques' can be a research issue to work with the integralism paradigm. To carry out research on this particular issue in English education, I can take integralism paradigm because I want to explore novice researchers' knowledge and practices about invention techniques in writing assignments. It will be the bringing together of feminism and interpretivism where the use of feminism is purposeful to understand what females know about invention techniques and how they can be enhanced in their writing to develop. It will also integrate an interpretive paradigm to know their feelings about invention techniques and about writing assignments. Taylor and Medina (2013) suggest using a research design that combines two or other paradigms to make multi-paradigmatic research in this 21st century.

Conclusion

To conclude, the research paradigm is the researcher's looking glass to complete the investigation. As mentioned in Kivunja & Kuyini (2017), the research paradigm is the lens through which a researcher looks at the research world i.e. investigation issue. So, the paradigm is the mental picture of the object of the research problem. Thus, it is the road map that leads the research purposefully. Research paradigm is the answer to the paradigm fits in which research model. Moreover, it is also based on the holistic aspects of investigation and tools of that particular research.

In a nutshell, positivism follows the objective reality in natural science. Moreover, post-positivism further modifies positivism with more interaction and tools to solve the problems in social science. Likewise, Interpretivism and constructivism understand the situation and construct the reality respectively. Similarly, Criticalism and feminism empower the marginalized group and women respectively. Pragmatism intends to investigate and solve contextual problems. Furthermore, postmodernism makes the representative meaning of language, art, and other means of communication and integralism integrates different paradigms within one single research with abductive methodology.

In short, the research paradigms are shifting not only with time but also to fulfill the purposes of the particular research issue. Today's researchers are arguing for multiple paradigms as Poni (2014) says the research community has been discussing the dilemmatic issue of mixing research paradigms from positivism to integralism.

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