

Communication and Language Issues: Methodological and Ethical Considerations in Cross-Cultural Research

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Abstract:

In this paper, I discuss the importance of language and communication in cross-cultural research. Often, researchers and the participants are from different linguistic backgrounds. But language “represents data in qualitative research and communication”. It is “the process through which data are generated between a researcher and study participant”. Often, in carrying out cross-cultural research, the researchers are linguistically and culturally distant from their research participants. Differences in language spoken and the meanings that are conveyed can create problems and this has implications for the findings of their research. It is also an ethical issue, as misunderstanding may occur and this may result in the misinterpretation of the research findings.

In this presentation, I first discuss issues pertaining to language. I then look at bi-cultural researchers and the need to provide training and support for bi-cultural researchers in cross-cultural research. Working with interpreters and/or translators in cross-cultural research is an essential part if it is not possible to work with bi-cultural researchers. I shall point to some limitations in working with short term interpreters/translators as well as suggest some strategies which involve them more in a research project. Last, I provide discussions on the transcription in its original language and a translation method which cross-cultural researchers may adopt in their qualitative research.

Biography:

Professor Pranee Liamputtong holds a Personal Chair in Public Health at the School of Public Health, La Trobe University. Pranee is a qualitative researcher and has her interests in research methodology

including qualitative research methods in the health and social sciences, online research, cross-cultural research and innovative research methods including arts-based methods. She has published several books on research methods and the application of sensitive research methods to marginalised and vulnerable people. In her own research, Pranee has a particular interest in issues relating to cultural and social influences on childbearing, childrearing and women's reproductive and sexual health. She has published a large number of papers and several books in these areas.