

SUMMARY

- ★ Qualitative data are narrative, appearing primarily as words.
 - Qualitative data are usually collected through observations, interviews, or journals or by obtaining existing documents or records.
 - Observations involve carefully and systematically watching and recording what you see and hear in a given setting.
 - Classroom observations may be structured, semistructured, or unstructured.

- Unstructured or semistructured observations allow for the flexibility to attend to other events occurring in the classroom.
 - Classroom observations are usually recorded in the form of field notes, which may include observer's comments.
 - Interviews are typically formal conversations between individuals.
 - Interviews typically follow an interview guide, which may be structured, semistructured, or open-ended.
 - Interviews can also be conducted with groups of individuals in an interview known as a focus group.
 - Interviews may also be conducted informally or via e-mail.
 - Journals may also be kept by both teachers and students in order to provide valuable insights into the workings of a classroom.
 - Existing documents and records, originally gathered for reasons other than action research, are abundantly available in schools and may be used as additional sources of information. These include classroom artifacts, such as student work.
 - It is important for teacher-researchers to establish the trustworthiness of their data. This includes the accuracy, credibility, and dependability of one's qualitative data.
- ★ Quantitative data are numerical and include just about anything that can be counted, tallied, or rated.
- Surveys are lists of statements or questions to which participants respond.
 - Questionnaires are one specific type of survey involving the administration of questions or statements in written form.
 - Items on surveys can consist of open-ended questions or closed-response rating scales.
 - A closed-response question or statement provides the respondent with a number of choices from which to select. Analysis of the resulting data involves counting the number of responses for each option.
 - Open-ended items allow for a seemingly limitless number of possible responses. Analysis of these data involves categorizing responses into similar groups and then counting them.
 - Surveys and rating scales are effective at gathering data simultaneously from numerous individuals, but they can sometimes be time-consuming to analyze.
 - Checklists are a simple form of rating scale where only a dichotomy of response options (e.g., present or not present) exists.

- Tests and other formal instruments can be used as quantitative data, provided they are supplemented with other forms of data.
- Validity of quantitative data has to do with the extent to which the data are what they are believed to be.
- Reliability refers to the consistency of quantitative data and is determined statistically.
- Remember the following: A valid test is always reliable, but a reliable test is not necessarily valid.