

ISSN : 2455-4219
(UGC-Care Listed)

आलोचन दृष्टि

Aalochan Drishti

An International Peer Reviewed Refereed Research Journal of Humanities

A Special Issue on Contemporary Thought

Year - 06

Volume - 25

December, 2021

प्रधान-संपादक

डॉ० सुनील कुमार मानस

संपादक

डॉ० योगेश कुमार तिवारी

प्रबंध-संपादक

श्री सुधीर कुमार तिवारी

© प्रकाशक :

संपादकीय/प्रकाशकीय पता :-

सृजनश्री न्यास

आजाद नगर, बिन्दकी, जनपद-फतेहपुर,

उ०प्र०-212635

ई-मेल : aalochan.p@gmail.com

मुद्रण :- जय ग्राफिक्स एण्ड कान्सट्रक्सन,
आई०टी०आई० रोड, फतेहपुर-212601।

सदस्यता शुल्क	एक अंक	वार्षिक	आजीवन
व्यक्तिगत	300	1200	10,000
संस्थागत	400	1500	15,000

Mapping the Art and Landscape of Literary Research

Ms. Noble A. Paliath*

Abstract

Literary Research or Literature Research, an expansive and extensive branch of inquiry in itself, is indicative of the discourses based on existing bits of info and addition of further epistemological units of info for future research in that field. English studies signify the production, interpretation, evaluation and consumption of texts created in English. It encompasses an open range of multi-disciplinary modes of communication. The current research article is a collection of different blocks of info based on the much familiar and less commonly explored wide choice of research methods deployed by many a research scholar in English studies. These research methods include textual analysis, discourse analysis, visual methodologies, auto/biographical methods, archival methods, interviewing, ethnographic methods, oral history, creative writing, quantitative analysis and ICT methods. All the afore-mentioned and suggested research methods may have plus and minus points, but have generally come down all these years as discrete and must-try types contributing productively to the successful accomplishment of the initiated research action. The multi-disciplinary nature of research methods applied by aspiring academicians belonging to the Arts and Humanities stream community stresses the need for professionals of various specializations who are increasingly being sought after in today's employment scenario. It also blurs the boundaries between diverse academic disciplines thereby ensuring profound and multifarious research inquiries.

Key Words: Literary Research, epistemological, English studies, textual analysis, discourse analysis, visual methodologies, archival methods, ethnographic methods, ICT methods, multi-disciplinary, Arts and Humanities, specializations, scenario

The concept of research methods was not widely and broadly deliberated and discussed in English studies in the olden times. What was research methods associated with English studies was a remote concept at least even during the 1980s. The only outlets available to research in English studies were a brief introduction to the vagaries and whimsies of the library. The whole process of conducting research in English studies was unknown owing to a lack of specific guidelines regarding the same. In other words, there was a marked non-visibility and continued absence of writing on research methods in certain humanities subjects including English. Historically, not much attention was paid to the issue of research training methods. Neither have a few disciplines like the Arts and Humanities made it a subject matter of serious and in-depth contemplation. Little sense was given to the knowledge about the process of conducting research in the Arts and Humanities branches and also on how you did might influence the outcome.

The above-mentioned systemic absence of research methods in certain humanities subjects including English fuelled the urgent need for lively, useful and enriching academic discussions and

* Assistant Professor Department of English Sacred Heart College, Chalakudy, Thrissur, Kerala, India

supportive inputs in this regard. This realization triggered off many intensive and productive discussions about integrated research methods in the Humanities and Social Sciences. However, with more and more attention paid to research methods in the Humanities and Social Sciences, research training in these fields of academic disciplines is ever on the move and is undergoing significant changes. During the second half of the 1990s, when the problem of research training was seriously thought of, many converged on the idea that research methods were what you asked other people to deliver to your students mainly in the form of a basic library intro and basic computing skills.

The commonsensical tradition that was much in vogue upheld the idea that research methods and skills were divorced from the academic inquiry into the subject and that it was their--- both librarians' and computer technicians'---job to deliver any relevant training. At the same time, many active researchers associated with the Arts and Humanities wing employ and make use of many a research method to produce their distinct and unique academic contributions to the field of research. Nevertheless, they have remained non-articulate and mute about what is the *modus operandi* implemented by them so as to achieve the desired outcome. A series of responses to and corresponding views advocating research methods in English or be it any subject belonging to Arts and Humanities stream for that matter, are that research methods cannot be taught but are picked up by doing research. Such a view is clearly suggestive and reflective of the research environment that places stress and emphasis on learning by doing. In essence, research methods are something that gradually evolve and take shape in the due course of research. This kind of an observation suggests the marked absence of a significant history in lack of providing and discussing research training methods to be made use of in the Arts and Humanities research areas. However, a point to be noted is that unlike research degrees in the Social Sciences, PhDs in English do not require a methodology section but are carefully and deliberately incorporated for the sake of fulfilling and filling up different subheads that constitute a research proposal. This situation underwent a dramatic and paradigm shift with the turn of the century. Rejuvenation happened in the field of Arts and Humanities research methods with the publication of a timely report on *Postgraduate Training in Research Methods: Current Practice and Future Needs in English* (2003). However, further resurgence of innovations in these fields of study came to be conceived of as part of the initiatives of AHRB (Arts and Humanities Research Board) that acknowledged, identified and necessitated the need to nurture research cultures and encourage best practices in research training. It also foregrounded the immediate and instant need for advocating research methods as part of research training; also as a part of undertaking their research. Such an initiative spearheaded by AHRB conceived of a meta-discourse that is made eligible to communicate knowledgeably in the subject chosen and also explicitly and necessarily answers questions like how we do, what we do and why we do as part of learning about research methods. The board also promotes the view that training in research skills and techniques is an important step taken by research scholars; is the key element in the development of a research student. Thus, the notion much currently in vogue is the requirement to integrate and encapsulate proper research training in Arts and Humanities stream. A further noticeable fact is that humanities research in general and English studies in particular require and demand different kinds of research skills. A common method of instruction in this context, proves false, mismatching and ineffective. There is a limit to what you can teach in a group and combined way. The specific skills that are needed by an individual are so particular. The skills each individual acquire are part of the actual research work. It is impossible to separate skills from actual research work. Both are inseparable entities as a lot of those skills are learnt on the job; while carrying out the actual research work. As such, taking into grave consideration the nature

of research in Arts and Humanities sector, no common ways, methods, techniques and tools of what research training courses should deliver are prescribed. It points to a definitive and particular view of research; a responsive model of research. It identifies and responds to individual needs as they arise from a specific research project. What research methods are relevant to that particular project are the only ones needed to be acquired by the one doing the research concerned. Most of the scholars, for the rest of their life, will utilize only those research methods they acquired to complete their research endeavour. However, research methods training beyond the needs of a particular project, broadens a researcher's research skills and knowledge base and may be kept preserved for future needs. The idea that research students should only be taught those research methods that have direct relevance to their research work is necessarily a bone of contention. Contrastingly, understanding research methods more broadly is all about opening up the possibilities of different kinds of innovative and divergent research. It also gives researchers a wide array of choices regarding what kinds of research are to be done both in the near and far future. A sound knowledge regarding the expansive range of research methods, enables researchers to think in many ways about doing research. The present article focuses on the research methods that may be adopted by those aspiring researchers in the field of English studies. Conventionally, research carried out in the field of English studies was construed in the end as all about reading, about text; it is a case of knowing your texts. This kind of a unified perception sustains the idea that the domain of English studies research is limited to text-based research and textual analysis but later with more and more studies carried out in the field proved that English studies meant much more than textual analysis; it means much more than the interaction between text and readers. The current research article is an exploratory attempt to understand and unveil a diverse range of new and different, tried and met-with-success research methods in English and also ways of conducting research in English studies. The article may also be interpreted as an examination of different research methods that might be implemented in English studies. The research methods thus not only become a tool for research but also help shape both the research and its results.

Research skills, methods and methodologies are interdependent and are helpful and useful in understanding different aspects of the research process and are also equally important and mandatory for the successful completion of a perfectly valid research project. These three together--research skills, methods and methodologies---will alone gauge and determine the focus and outcome of a research project. Research skills are techniques used for handling material. The skill sets include dissertation skills (how to construct, frame and structure sentences in a piece of writing), IT skills (use of advance computer technologies in addition to many other uses), skills in libraries (search for various info), bibliographical skills (sources used as the basis for research), editorial skills (the ability to edit and proofread written pieces of info) and professional skills (how to make effective paper presentations in the venue of academic deliberations). Research methods tell us how to carry out our research work. The choice of methods from out of the existing possible ones depends on the kind of research one wants to conduct. Research methodologies signify the perspectives the researchers may bring in to support their field of inquiry. Many a critical perspective and readings of varied literary texts are possible because different people bring different perspectives to bear on their analyses of a given text. Moreover, deciding on a particular research project to a significant extent, is deciding on the specific research skills, methods and methodologies apposite to conduct that research. However, one should not be oblivious of the fact that to accomplish the research activity successfully, all researchers require more than one research skill or method; they should employ a combo of many a method.

Of the umpteen research skills, methods and methodologies, this present article would like to add a word more about research methods in English studies in particular. Archival methods are effective ways of carrying out research in English studies. They suggest the nature of archives, why archives are established, the incompleteness of archives and the endless search for lost objects within these; also, chances of consulting other archival sources for getting the info complete in itself. Auto/biographical research methods provide a brief historical overview of changes in autobiographical writing and also the idea of the subject as individual, as part of a collective, in different kinds of auto/biographical writing. Oral history is an uncommon, not much explored and not much discussed method in English studies but such historical methods engaging the workings of personal memory, narrative, culture and transmission can make easy our comprehension of events and experiences including those of the social, cultural and literary levels. Discourse analysis may be used as a method for exploring visual signs; shows how images construct specific views of the world. It may also be used as a method for textual interpretations. Discourse analysis may be used as a method for researching both written and oral language as it is actually used, as it references a theory of language. It is concerned with analysing patterns in language use in order to unearth the workings of ideology. Computer-aided discourse analysis with the help of relevant software is also tried out by an increasingly number of researchers within English studies. It signalled a new wave of change under the banner of IT revolution in English studies. Creative writing as a research method is an important element within English departments as it aids the generation, invention, discovery and creation of different insightful ideas. With the proliferation of the field of creative arts and other arenas like music, dance, film, fine arts, video and digital works, the popularity of creative writing as a research method is ever on the increase. Creative writing constitutes an effective research method as it explores the ways in which writing skills may be used as a means of materializing varied subject matters. It is also a kind of research one makes into the nature of literary form and language. In other words, creative writing, may be considered as a metanarrative about the whole research process.

Although visual signs are part and parcel of our cultural world, visual methods are also not much discussed in English studies. These methods, with the genre and format of graphic narratives as typical examples, produce a rich visual world that forms an integral aspect of literature. Semiology and discourse analysis, as approaches, also help researchers in further decoding the complexity of visual signs. These kinds of approaches invite attention to diverse aspects of visual images and thus suggest new avenues of research for English studies. It is to be noted that visual images do not only accompany texts, but texts too accompany visual images as in case of captions to photographs, textual accompaniments to images in books and so on. This interplay between text and image is an area of research that deserve yet another focus of attention in English studies research. Textual analysis method is all about close readings of cultural artefacts. A background research into the context of the cultural artefacts under scrutiny, the context of its production, its thematic concern and its consumption are given due focus and emphasis in this method. The process of meaning-making which is differently understood in different historical eras and by different historians is also a key factor in undertaking textual analyses. Interviewing is also an effective research method in English studies research. However, it requires a series of practical skills, a fair understanding of the different kinds of interview one might conduct, all possible ways of conducting interviews et cetera are also explored by researchers. Interview cannot be labelled as a stand-alone method as it often combines with other research methods and forms a central plank of many a research process. Ethnographic research methods inform a variety of literary outpourings that might be analyzed in the context of English studies. These methods may be

extended to cultural and social practices, especially in the field of travel writing or travelogues wherein participant observations play a key role in producing travel accounts. Also, audience research in the theatre, film and at performing sites such as literature festivals might be conducted using ethnographic methods. Quantitative methods of research in the study of literature, especially in the form of words (subjective) and numbers (objective), form interpretive tools and serve as a means of conveying sets of valuable info. Specifically, statistical methods are highly useful for displaying info about texts, audiences' production and consumption of texts and so on. ICT as a research method in English studies is a recently emergent phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is carried out by specialist researchers associated with the fields of textual analysis and linguistics. With the scientific strides and advancements in the field of technology and advent of more and more computer software and hardware, enhanced opportunities for researchers in literary studies are ensured to work on literary and other texts. This kind of research method discusses various ways in which ICT has been used to store and analyze literary texts. How computers as a medium changed our relations to texts, issues involved in creating digital archives of manuscript sources, literature digitization projects and the possibilities of collaborative research are also possible areas of exploration while pursuing ICT as a research method.

The current article may be considered as an attempt to engage and showcase different research methods in English studies that are relevant to be pursued by research students, researchers and research methods teachers in this era of accentuated and heightened research activities. This kind of analysis, non-conclusive in itself, underscores the fact that in addition to the above mentioned research methods; there are also other possible and viable areas of research practices yet to be explored by the research aspirants. A detailed critical scrutiny of the above enlisted research methods in English studies, may tend one to evolve a critical stance that all these methods aid a kind of scientisation of humanities and are inappropriate to be pursued by the humanities community itself. But instead of thinking of stringent research methods exclusively to be followed by those pursuing humanities disciplines only, let research activities be more and more dialogic and collaborative across disciplines. This kind of an accommodative approach, that blurs the boundaries and distinctions between different fields of study, may encourage researchers to think divergently about the kinds of research across a range of disciplinary backgrounds they might engage in.

References :-

1. Cauvery, R. et al. Research Methodology. S. Chand and Company Pvt. Ltd., 2010.
2. Dhingra, Manish. et al. Research Methodology. Enkay Publishing House, 2012.
3. Griffin, Gabriele. editor. Research Methods for English Studies. Rawat Publications, a.2007.
4. Gupta, Mukul. et al. Research Methodology. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2011.
5. Kothari, C. R., et al. Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques. Second Revised a Edition. New Age International Publishers, 2010.
6. Sadie, William. Postgraduate Training in Research Methods: Current Practice and a Future Needs in English. English Subject Centre, 2003.
7. Sam Daniel, P. et al. Research Methodology. Kalpaz Publications, 2007.
8. Singh, Abhilasha. et al. Research Methodology: Tools, Techniques and Methods. Axis. a. Books (P) Ltd. Production, 2013.
9. Srivastava, Raju. Research Methodology in English Studies. Sublime Publications, 2013.
10. Vijayalakshmi, G. et al. Research Methods: Tips and Techniques. MJP Publishers, 2009.
11. Walliman, Nicholas. Your Research Project: Designing and Planning Your Work. Third a. Edition. Sage, 2011.