

**Designing an Ethnographic Study**  
**Module 3 Section 1**  
**Lecture 14**  
**Introduction**

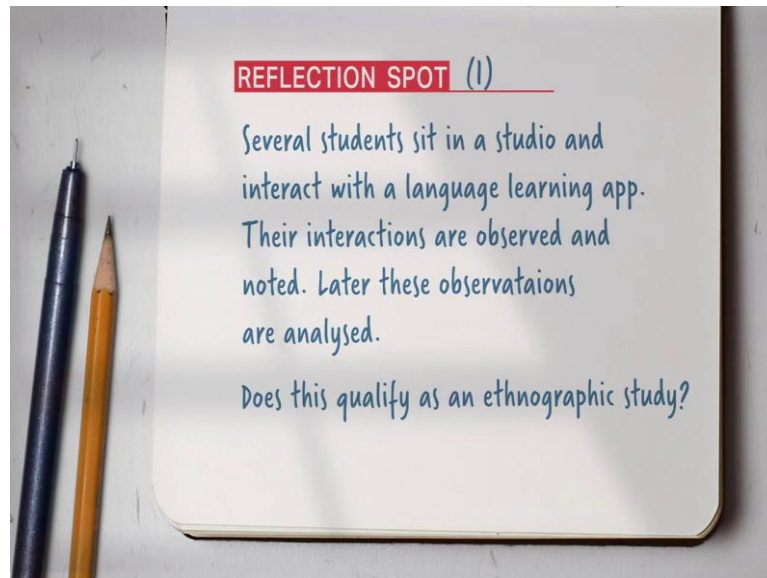
Hello there, welcome back! In our discussions so far, we have talked about different aspects of ethnography. Each discussion has led us to new and interesting directions.

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We have explored its fundamental concepts and understood its overall process. Let us pause here for a moment & do a small activity to test our understanding of these concepts. Say, I have built an app for people, by which they can teach themselves the English language.

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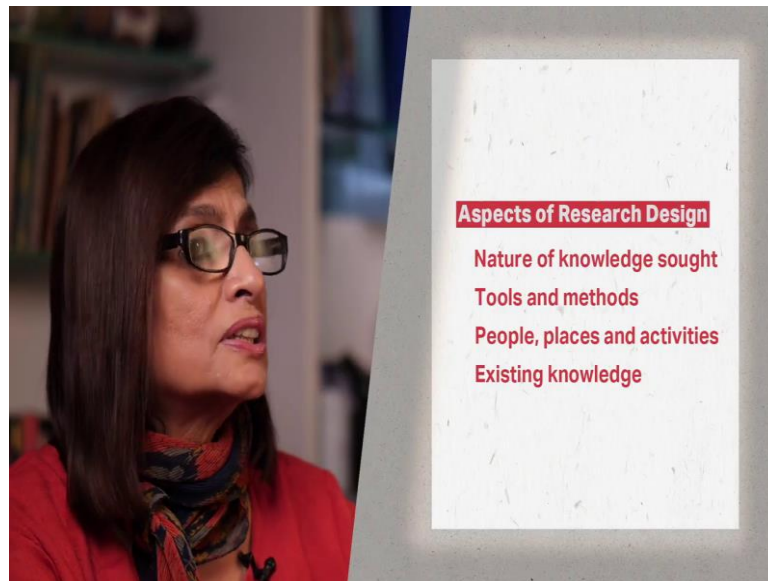
Now, I want to know how learners are using the app. So I invite a group of students to my studio and observe them as they interact with the app. Later, I interpret and analyse my observations. Does this study qualify as ethnographic? Explain the reasoning behind your answer. Some of you may have said, "Yes, this study does qualify as ethnographic".

The researcher is observing the students as they interact with the app. The study is situated in the present, and so it is synchronic. But others may say, "No no, it is not ethnographic study". Why so? Well, because it is being conducted in a controlled setting, not in the environment of the learners. In the environment of the studio, under my watchful gaze, they are likely to use the app very differently from how they would use it otherwise.

Interacting with it in their own time, their own space, they might go offline sometimes. They might take a break and do other things. Or they may browse through material that is not available on the app. They may also interact with other people, asking them for help, or suggestions. None of this may happen in the studio environment. So this study is not a naturalistic one.

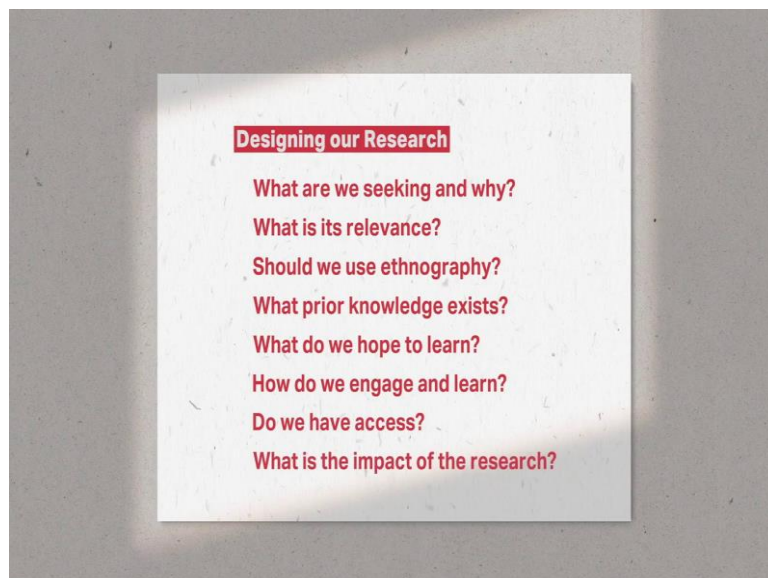
Even though it relies on observation and is synchronic in nature, it does not qualify as an ethnographic study. Shall we move ahead? In this module, we will discuss the practice of ethnography. Like almost all other forms of research, an ethnographic study requires some groundwork. This is needed before we dash off to do our fieldwork. This groundwork is a combination of burying our noses into books or screens, a little bit of introspection and writing, and even some exploratory fieldwork.

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This is the stage where we design our research. We try to articulate the nature of knowledge we are seeking. We decide on the tools and methods we may use to access this knowledge. And we consider the people, places and activities we may learn from. We also examine knowledge that already exists about the subject of our research. And we learn about the context in which our study will be situated. How do we think through these requirements?

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Let us structure the process somewhat. This is a set of questions that address different aspects of the research design. Through the course of this module, we will explore and discuss these questions. In the process, we hope to come to an understanding of what it means to design an ethnographic study.