

○ **B. PALTRIDGE AND A. PHAKITI (EDS.),
*CONTINUUM COMPANION TO RESEARCH
METHODS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS***

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This important volume, the work of a diverse group of experienced researchers, introduces beginning researchers to the available resources on research approaches to language teaching and learning and outlines some possible areas of research in this field. A succinct introduction included in Chapter 1 outlines the book's aims and contents, and the two following sections discuss research methods and research content areas in language teaching and learning.

The nine chapters in first section of the book, Research Methods and Approaches, cover a wide range of both qualitative and quantitative methods useful for studying language and issues related to language learning and teaching. The second chapter opens the volume with an important introduction to epistemological issues of inductive and deductive research methodology and ethical issues associated with social research. In it, Susan Gass defines experimental research and explores fundamental concepts such as research questions, research hypotheses, variables, randomization, interpretation of results and concepts associated with data analysis, including different types of validity and reliability. Although these techniques and instruments are not dealt with in detail, the author refers the reader to recent sources for more information. An interesting example of research that focuses on students' perceptions of interactional feedback, undertaken by Gass and McDonough, illustrates the issues described in the chapter.

In the third chapter, Elvis Wagner explains the processes and stages involved in survey research, an approach which has been particularly valuable in examining learner beliefs, learning strategies and learner motivation. He discusses planning the project, designing and administering the survey, and analysing the data. The chapter concludes with an example addressing the theoretical concepts and information on resources and websites for hosting on-line surveys.

In Chapter 4, Aek Phakiti introduces the basic statistical concepts and steps necessary to undertake quantitative data analysis. The chapter is particularly useful for researchers commencing work with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The author also provides an example of quantitative data analysis, and includes a list of materials for further reading and references to on-line resources.

In Chapter 5, Sue Starfield initiates a discussion on ethnographic research in the context of postmodernism and discusses critical ethnography, validity or trustworthiness and ethnographic interviews. The author also considers essential ethical issues of anonymity, invasiveness and consent. A year-long ethnographic study of students' writing development undertaken by the author illustrates the theoretical concepts dealt with in the chapter.

Case studies are introduced by Christine Pearson Casanave in Chapter 6, in which the author introduces the procedures used, addresses the difficult issue of validation and illustrates some of the concepts associated with case studies using a sample study of one Chinese doctoral student attempting to fulfill his publication requirements.

In Chapter 7, Anne Burns deals with issues involved in action research such as validity, techniques and ethical considerations. She also addresses issues of compatibility in terms of educational aims, democratic values and teaching demands. A New Zealand study by Denny illustrates the action research approach and examines adult immigrant English learners' experiences of conversational English and the cultural norms of the local English variety.

In Chapter 8, Adrian Holliday reviews the concepts necessary for analysing qualitative data including validity, trustworthiness, techniques and instruments. He further specifies the necessary steps to follow in qualitative data analysis. An interesting sample study by the author is presented in detail and describes on-going research into the politics of established descriptions of national cultures.

In Chapter 9, Lourdes Ortega describes concepts associated with research synthesis, known in other fields as systematic reviews, an approach introduced to applied linguistics only recently. Ortega introduces an extensive list of examples of this approach undertaken in the last two decades.

The first part of the volume concludes with Chapter 10; Steven Talmy's account of issues associated with infrequently described critical research in applied linguistics. Apart from describing research methods, techniques and instruments of critical research, and some transcription conventions, the chapter focuses on issues of rigour and care needed in critical discourse analysis and critical ethnography. A sample study introduces the author's critical ethnographic study conducted in an ESL high school program.

While Part I describes different research approaches and provides illustrations of these, Part II, Areas of Research, outlines possible content areas of research and suggests effective research methods that can be used to carry out research in these areas. Accordingly, in the first part of the book, the discussion addresses the question of how to do research, whereas in the second part, the discussion addresses the question of what to research. Part II identifies thirteen areas for research analysis including fields related to language, language use and language learning. The first four chapters in this section describe the four language skills (speaking: Rebecca Hughes;

listening: Larry Vandergrift; reading: Marie Stevenson and writing: Ken Hyland). Other aspects of language learning and teaching, including grammar (Neomy Storch) and vocabulary (David Hirsh) are discussed in Chapters 15 and 16. Researching pragmatics (Carsten Roever), language classrooms (Lesley Harbon and Huishong Shen) and discourse (Brian Paltridge and Wei Wang) are described in Chapters 17, 18 and 19. Further, John Read analyses language testing and assessment and Lindy Woodrow examines motivation in Chapters 20 and 21. Part II concludes with two chapters examining sociolinguistic relationships between language and gender (Jane Sunderland) and language and identity (David Block). The final part of the volume contains a glossary of key research terms.

The book fully deserves its title, as it is an excellent companion to anyone interested in doing research in Applied Linguistics. The book is relevant to students as well as experienced researchers as, apart from succinctly describing principal concepts in research methodology, it also provides references useful for further investigation. This extensive cross-referencing places the Companion clearly within the broader context of other volumes within the field. The Companion is also an invaluable resource for supervisors. I personally look forward to being able to refer students who ‘would like to research speaking...or listening...’ to a relevant chapter in Part II of the book which can then be followed by ‘how to do it’ in Part I.

The key issues and sociolinguistic areas relevant to research methods are clearly addressed in the Companion, making it an invaluable resource for language teaching and learning. The strength of the Companion is in the clear and cohesive structure of both parts of the volume, the clarity of style consistent throughout, and practical illustrations make the book a very valuable and motivating read. Accordingly, the first part of the book provides a comprehensive overview of how to conduct research in language teaching and learning. Part II, Areas of Research, outlines thirteen research areas, which are frequently studied by research students. Again, specific research tools and actual example studies make the chapters interesting and easy to follow.

The editors and the authors have given the profession a volume of work, which will undoubtedly become a textbook for many TESOL programs and a valuable resource for beginning researchers. It is important to reiterate that the book focuses on language teaching and learning; therefore, many aspects associated with broader concepts of Applied Linguistics are not addressed. Some areas of research, such as recently prominent intercultural language learning and teaching, are also not sufficiently covered. Understandably, however, it simply is not possible to cover everything in one volume. I can only hope for another volume from the editors and authors on ‘Further Areas of Applied Linguistics Research’.