

A Review of Brian Paltridge and Aek Phakiti’s Textbook Entitled “Research Methods in Applied Linguistics” Published by Bloomsbury Publishing

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Book Summary

As mentioned clearly in the book, the intended audience is third-year (or above) undergraduate and postgraduate students (e.g. masters and doctoral students) in Applied Linguistics, TESOL and Second Language Studies. The book is correspondingly appropriate for experienced researchers wishing to develop their knowledge in research areas they are less familiar with. It is furthermore intended as a resource for research supervisors and educators to recommend to their students for information and advice on possible research designs and potential investigation subjects.

Generally, the main objective of *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* is to provide an essential resource for students and teachers in the field of applied linguistics. It includes 31 chapters that are divided into two parts: (1) approaches and methods (Chapter 1 to 15) and (2) research areas (Chapters 16 to 31). The main issues being discussed are the followings:

- * qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods
- * research techniques and approaches
- * ethical considerations
- * case studies
- * a glossary of key terms

As mentioned earlier, the first part of the book is related to Research Approaches and Methods with fifteen chapters. Each chapter includes a sample study that exemplifies the points they are making. The topics of each chapter address the assumptions that instigate the specific method or approach, issues of validity or trustworthiness, and research techniques and instruments appropriate to the goal and method of research. The resources for further reading on the particular method or issue are also provided. In the following part, the summary of each chapter is provided concisely.

Content Evaluation

In Chapter 1 (Approaches and Methods in Applied Linguistics), Phakiti and Paltridge presented issues and interests in applied linguistics studies. They discussed the nature of academic research, including various dimensions of research. The chapter begins with defining applied linguistics, which aims to show how language is used and learnt in a social context. The ideas of different scholars and the topics being studied in the most related journals are presented and followed by various types of research and research paradigm in this field.

In Chapter 2 (Quantitative Research and Analysis), Phakiti introduced quantitative research methods in language learning and use and presents the underlying assumptions and methodology and the steps involved in quantitative data analysis. Two types of statistical analyses (descriptive and inferential statistics) are presented. Types of quantitative research including experiments, surveys, correlational studies, individual differences research and language testing research are explained in this chapter. The concepts of reliability and validity needed for quantitative research are clarified. The techniques and instruments to gather data and the stages to analyze the data using statistical software are also presented. Some common statistical tests are introduced here including correlations, factor analysis, regression analysis, Chi-square test, t-test, and Analysis of variance. The chapter ends with a sample study based on quantitative method.

In Chapter 3 (Qualitative Research and Analysis), the basic premises and underlying assumptions of qualitative research as a mainstream research approach in applied linguistics studies, particularly in the area of language education has been described. The chapter begins with describing types of data and Validity and trustworthiness of the data by explaining three principles of transparency, submission, and making appropriate claims. The process of analyzing qualitative data that is not always separate from collecting data are discussed briefly. The sample qualitative study related to the investigation into the politics of established descriptions of national cultures is provided at the end of the chapter.

In provision of evidence-based teaching, educationalists around the world are progressively turning to mixed methods research (MMR) to seek answers to multifaceted research questions. In Chapter 4 (Mixed Methods Research and Analysis), the nature of mixed methods research and the philosophical assumptions and methodological characteristics underlying this research approach was explained. They also presented three major MMR designs and their graphic representations, followed by how to implement these designs in research studies. Here, the authors outlined a set of logical steps for researchers in applied linguistics to follow when designing and conducting an MMR study. Moreover, three basic types of MMR designs that can be used to address the purposes and needs of researchers in applied linguistics are mentioned as follows:

- Concurrent Quan + Qual MMR design
- Sequential Quan → Qual MMR design
- Sequential Qual → Quan MMR design

Finally, along with the sample study the authors argued that the researchers should systematically apply the phases essential for designing and conducting an MMR study. They should likewise learn how to assess MMR study quality and any ethical matters that may be new to them.

In Chapter 5 (Survey Research), the methodology and underlying assumptions of survey research in applied linguistics has been elaborated. Key stages for doing survey research (e.g. planning the project, designing the survey) are outlined. He stated that Survey research is a very powerful tool that is used extensively by governments, businesses, educational institutions and by individual researchers and it has long had an important role in the field of applied linguistics. The steps required to conduct survey are presented:

- Planning the project
- Designing the survey
- Administering the survey

- Analyzing the data

Similar to other chapters, the present chapter is ended by a sample survey study.

In Chapter 6 (Experimental Research), the underlying assumptions of experimental research and important considerations in working with this approach such as the importance of clarifying research questions and research hypotheses and the issue of random assignment was highlighted. Here, the experimental research is a way of determining the effect of something on something else. In other words, a researcher begins with an idea of why something happens and manipulates at least one variable, controls others, to determine the effect on some other variable. The essential terms in experimental research such as research questions, hypotheses, variables, and statistical analysis are clearly argued. The main types of reliability and validity are also explained in this chapter.

In Chapter 7 (Case Studies), the characteristics and assumptions of case studies, followed by several types of case studies have been discussed. Procedures for conducting a case study and analyzing the data are delineated. The purpose of most case studies is to augment our understanding of a phenomenon, process, person or group, not to experiment and generalize to other populations in the tradition of larger-scale survey research. Conceivably the principal feature of case studies that differentiates them from other types of research is that they use multiple data bases (interviews, documents, observations) to explore (describe, analyze) specific bounded phenomena. The stages of writing report by the researcher and their responsibilities, validation process, and the weaknesses and the strength of case studies are outlined in this chapter.

In Chapter 8 (Ethnographic Research), how ethnography as a qualitative methodology allows researchers to examine issues in everyday contexts, using multiple sources such as observation and participation by the researcher was described. It was stated that ethnography honors the direct observation of human behavior within certain 'cultures' and settings and pursues to cognize a social reality from the viewpoints of those involved in the observed interactions. It was also introduced critical ethnography that examines the impacts of inequality in social and educational settings with a view to promoting social change. Like other types of research, the validation process, instruments, and data collection process are outlined.

In Chapter 9 (Critical Research in Applied Linguistics), a methodological overview of critical applied linguistics research which explores the role of language in producing, sustaining, challenging and transforming power asymmetries, discrimination, inequality, social injustice and hegemony was opened. Following the main assumptions, the author presented some methodological opportunities open to critical applied linguistics researchers, with certain prominence on critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis. The research methods most repeatedly employed in critical research in applied linguistics are qualitative, ranging from diary and/or interview studies, to critical pedagogical classroom research, some form of critical discourse analysis, and critical ethnography. The chapter generally focused on critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis. The author argued that using critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis complementarily could provide important benefits for the critical researcher.

In Chapter 10 (Narrative Inquiry), the underlying assumptions associated with narrative inquiry which is a way of doing research that focuses on the stories we tell about our lives and experiences has been elaborated. He described a range of techniques for collecting and analyzing

narrative data. However, as this research is directly connected to the life story of people the importance of ethical issues is more delicate and prominence than other research methods. The sample study is also provided explaining its data collection and data analysis procedures.

In Chapter 11 (Action Research), the philosophical and paradigmatic orientations and methods of action research were described. Action research (AR) is gaining acceptance in applied linguistics studies as an empirical approach adjustable to a higher degree than other research studies, along with the engagement of practitioners in their personal professional growth via reflective practice and local practical inquiry. It elaborates on the issues of reliability and validity in action research along with tools and ethical issues. Additionally, it was clarified that in contrast to research approaches that follow more predictable, well-established processes, AR is characterized by dynamic movement, flexibility, interchangeability and reiteration. Despite the large number of (contested) models in educational AR, typical representations display spirals or cycles of (i) planning, (ii) action, (iii) observation and (iv) reflection.

In Chapter 12 (Discourse Analysis), the authors outlined major approaches to the analysis of spoken and written texts such as speech act theory, cross-cultural pragmatics, conversation analysis, genre analysis, critical discourse analysis, corpus approaches to discourse analysis, classroom discourse analysis and multimodal discourse analysis. They claimed that Discourse analysis looks at social and cultural settings of language use to help us understand how it is that people come to make particular choices in their use of language. It also gives us the tools to look at larger units of texts such as conversational and textual organizational patterns that are typical of particular uses of language or *genres*.

In Chapter 13 (Research Synthesis), the book presented the principles and methodology of research synthesis which takes an empirical approach to conducting secondary reviews of the research literature. Research synthesis refers to a continuum of techniques and research procedures that have been developed by social scientists with the aim of reviewing past literature systematically. Meta-analysis as a probably the best-known technique for systematically synthesizing quantitative research is explained with its limitations. It highlighted the importance of validity and trustworthiness in research syntheses (e.g. sampling relevance, publication bias and primary research quality) along with the required steps. The ethical issues and the sample study are presented at the end of the chapter.

In Chapter 14 (Ethics and Applied Linguistics Research), the book focused on ethical considerations in applied linguistics research. He examined the distinction between macroethics (i.e. the protocols and principles articulated in professional codes of conduct) and microethics (i.e. everyday dilemmas that arise in specific research contexts) which need to be considered in all research designs. It was declared that generally, all researchers are committed to ethical considerations, still, how applied linguists go about recognizing these principles usually vary, and they are regularly influenced by the methodological paradigm they subscribe to, their training, the area of research in which they work, their individual personality and the macro and micro factors that shape their research process.

Finally, in Chapter 15 (Developing a Research Project), Paltridge and Phakiti discussed research processes and provided guidelines for how a research proposal might be developed and evaluated. The present chapter provided the practical phases of doing a research project in a simple

way. Furthermore, the typical structure of a research proposal is accessible along with the criteria for judging a thesis.

The first part of the book with 15 chapters is followed by the second section that discusses Areas of Research within 16 chapters, which are summarized as follows:

In Chapter 16 (Researching Speaking), Hughes presented an overview of major approaches to research into spoken language and a brief summary of typical research methods used in this area of study. Speaking is a capacity that human beings draw on almost as easily and unconsciously as we breathe, and yet it is one that is richly complex to research. Research into speaking is commonly carried out via two main means: capturing and examining authentic speech data, and capturing and examining elicited or non-authentic speech data.

Chapter 17 (Researching Listening) provided a summary of recent research on listening in applied linguistics and discussed a range of research methods for examining and measuring the listening skill. Furthermore, the factors affecting listening comprehension such as cognitive factors, affective factors, background knowledge of the topic of the text, proficiency level in the target language, age, metacognitive knowledge about listening, strategy use, native language listening ability, working memory capacity and auditory discrimination ability are outlined.

Chapter 18 (Researching Reading), examined key research areas in second language reading research (e.g. lexical, fluency, discourse, strategic, affective, intermodal and sociocultural) and explained research techniques (Process-oriented techniques, Product-oriented techniques) frequently used in this area of study.

Chapter 19 (Researching Writing), explored the complex and multifaceted nature of writing and introduced the methods and techniques that reflect researchers' views of what writing is and how it should be studied. It was added that Writing is necessary to modern societies and is of all-embracing significance in all our lives. Its complex, multifaceted nature, however, is difficult to pin down and as a result, many research approaches have emerged to help clarify both how writing works and the purposes it is employed to achieve.

Chapter 20 (Researching Grammar), focused on two distinct areas related to this topic: (a) what constitutes knowledge of grammar and how we assess that knowledge, and (b) grammar instruction in second language classes. Knowledge of grammar is said to consist of two types: explicit and implicit knowledge. The chapter also discusses the concept of corrective feedback in oral and written productions.

Chapter 21 (Researching Vocabulary), presented the main lines of enquiry in vocabulary research, categories of words, research stages and related test instruments (Investigating depth of vocabulary knowledge, investigating vocabulary demands for specific uses, Investigating vocabulary size, Investigating vocabulary growth, Investigating strategies in vocabulary learning and vocabulary use, Analysis of lexical bundles) and a discussion of key challenges facing vocabulary researchers.

Pragmatics research in applied linguistics is mostly concerned with the relationship between language use on the one hand and the social and interpersonal context of interaction on the other. Research approaches in pragmatics range from the recording of authentic, unelicited discourse, via elicitation of extended discourse or individual utterances to elicitation of

metapragmatic knowledge. Chapter 22 (Researching Pragmatics), examined the areas of pragmatics studies that focus on the use of language in social contexts, specifically how speakers adjust their language use to different kinds of interlocutors and situations. It discussed common research instruments in pragmatics research including discourse completion tasks, role plays and metapragmatic judgment questionnaires.

In Chapter 23 (Researching Motivation), a historical overview of second language motivation research and presented the major steps in structural equation modeling was highlighted. Early research focused on the work of Robert Gardner and colleagues that was located within a *social-psychological paradigm*, which conquered research into language learning motivation until the 1990s. The main models discussed in this chapter are Gardner's socio-educational model of language learning, self-determination theory, and a process model of motivation. It then focused on the instruments and technique of confirmatory factor analysis that can be used to examine motivation.

In Chapter 24 (Researching Language Learning Strategies), some key issues in conducting language learning strategy research, such as choosing appropriate research contexts and selecting the most appropriate research instruments to accurately examine strategy use was presented. The chapter begins with focusing on individual differences of the learners and the strategies they apply in their learning. It was declared that *Language Learner Strategies* are processes and actions that are consciously deployed by language learners to help them to learn or use a language more effectively. The main problems in studying learning strategies are also outlined.

In Chapter 25 (Researching Young Learners), It was discussed that what is distinctive about children as second and foreign language learners as compared to adults in conjunction with giving an account of the role of age factor. Here, Critical Period Hypothesis was referred in order to explain age factor. It explored children's roles and status in research on the continuum of 'object-subject-active coresearcher' and illuminated the benefits of doing research with children that helps them in rising their levels of self-esteem and taking ownership of the project.

Chapter 26 (Researching Language Classrooms), presented recent trends in second language classroom research. In particular, they described action research, classroom observation and narrative inquiry as some of the ways in which the language of the classroom might be researched. It was believed that well-planned and well-designed language classroom research can help us examine our theoretical assumptions as well as what happens in actual practice. The chapter also discusses the issues of reliability and validity in classroom-based research. Finally, the related problems are debated and the chapter is finalized by a sample study.

Chapter 27 (Researching Language Testing and Assessment), started with a historical background of testing in applied linguistic and outlined key concepts and research procedures in research on language testing and assessment. Test validity and typical stages in language testing research including initial planning, design, operationalization, trialling, and assessment use were discussed. Additionally, research strategies and techniques are explained in terms of statistical methods and qualitative methods. Finally, the sample study is provided.

In Chapter 28 (Researching Teachers' Beliefs), an outline of the development of research zones and methods on teachers' beliefs in education largely and considered some of the stimulating definitional subjects related to this research, such as the distinction between beliefs and knowledge

was elaborated. It was said that beliefs are habitually studied under the wider heading of *teacher cognition*, which likewise contains linked constructs for example attitudes and knowledge. Related research and methods in this field are presented in the chapter including oral accounts, self-report instruments, observation, written accounts, and visual methods.

Chapter 29 (Researching Language and Gender) began with the description on how the issue of gender is entered into applied linguistics and presented six frequently adopted theoretical and methodological approaches to gender and language study (i.e. sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, conversation analysis, discursive psychology, critical discourse analysis and feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis) and discussed the question of combining two or more of these for a given research project. Research strategies used in this field are also presented along with the sample study.

Chapter 30 (Researching Language and Identity), It was asserted that in recent years, identity has become a key construct in the social sciences in general, and applied linguistics in particular. It was clarified typical stages and explored individuals' identities from two separate but often interlinked perspectives and methods. This chapter focused in detail on narrative research, identifying issues and related problems that arise in this approach to research.

Chapter 31 (Researching Language Teacher Education), presented the foremost issues in the study of language teacher education that encompasses all those activities teachers, at any stage of their careers, engage in for the purposes of professional learning, with precise reference to the professional learning of practicing (as opposed to pre-service) teachers. Training-transmission models and Development-constructivist models are enlightened. It was also highlighted the diverse areas of language teacher education that research can attend.

In the previous sections, each chapter in *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* is summarized and the key points are mentioned. This book theorizes and problematizes applied linguistics research, integrating frequent complicated methodological contemplations. The chief characteristic of the book is its clear and logical categorization that helps the reader to follow the content, effortlessly. The essential theoretical issues are clarified along with a sample study. Moreover, assessing and studying language skills and subskills are explained separately in each chapter in a very decipherable manner beginning with the easiest arguments supported by the practical dimensions in the form of sample studies presented at the end of each chapter. This book's structural organization embraces thoughtful ideas and informative examples to enhance reader interactions.

The main implication of the book is its advantageous application in the field of applied linguistics. It not only provides the reader with the preliminary theoretical background but it also presents functional dimension of research that can be used by students, teachers and researchers with different degree of knowledge and experience. That is to say, this book is useful for both novice and experienced researchers as it affords valuable resources of research. Especially, introducing the name of journal and resources for further reading add to the wealth of the content. This book makes itself distinguishing from other books written in the field of research methodology due to its explicit focus on data collection tools and methods for different language skills and subskills, exclusive classification of research types, and operational components encouraging reader interactions. In general, this book can be used as an appropriate teaching

material to be used in research courses and it can be used for self-study purposes by the students and researchers. It correspondingly inspires researchers to integrate various data collection methods within a research design, adaptably and resourcefully.

References

Paltridge, B., & Phakiti, A. (2015). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Bloomsbury: Bloomsbury Publishing