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Review of *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*



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The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics edited by Jim McKinley and Heath Rose, Routledge, 2020, xxi+529pp., €190.00 (Hardcover) €39.99 (eBook). ISBN 9781138501140.

Applied linguistics is a broad interdisciplinary area that studies language and language related phenomena in social contexts (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015; Kaplan, 2010). With advances in technology and multilingual worlds, there is a significant shift in applied linguistics research. Access to the internet and large-scale data such as corpus could be the most fundamental reason for changes in applied linguistics research. Consequently, this area requires new research methods to deal with these situations.

Jim McKinley and Heath Rose have contributed with well-known scholars such as Brian Paltridge, Ron Martinez, John Rogers, and Jenifer Larson-Hall to develop a new recourse to cover these changes in applied linguistics research. This contribution leads to the edit of *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* in 2020 and published by Routledge. Also, both McKinley and Rose have published many articles and edited books in language teaching and research methods, such as *Data Collection Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* (2020).

The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics has focused on new trends and changes in linguistic and related research methods. These changes have been so substantial and called the “golden age” of applied linguistics study by McKinley as editor of the book. The book presents a range of unique perspectives on research approaches, methods, and data analyses. The target audience includes novice and expert researchers, graduated and postgraduate students, educational institutions, and universities.

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The handbook is composed of four parts plus an individual introduction. Each part includes approximately ten chapters. Part One focuses on key concepts and terms in the research method. Chapters two to four are closely linked to the research process; therefore, these chapters cover research design, data collections, and data analysis.

In the introduction, McKinley focuses on the growth and changes in applied linguistics in the last thirty years. The editor notes that there is a lack of theorisation of research methods in this field. Therefore, the rationale behind this book is to cover the deficiency and provide theoretical stances. Then, the writer described the general concepts in the research method and finalised the aims of each part and conclusion section.

Part One, “Key concepts and current considerations,” is comprised of ten chapters and gives a comprehensive overview on commonly used traditional terms in research such as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, as well as providing a new perspective on these concepts. In Chapter 1, Emma Marsden provides details on how to provide transparency for all sections of the research process as a prerequisite for good research practice, followed by Brian Paltridge who discusses the importance of exploring multiple perspectives (e.g., triangulation) in Chapter 2. In the next chapter, Mohammad Reza Hashemi explains the different dimensions of MMR and the needs for expanding this method. Of note in this part are Chapters 6 and 7, where the former focuses on research methods with multilingual participants and contexts and the latter on conducting research in non-Western contexts. These two chapters provide supportive evidence to illustrate the growth of applied linguistics and need for new perspectives. In the closing chapter of this part, “Ethics in applied linguistics research,” Peter I. De Costa, Jongbong Lee, Hima Rawal, and Wendy Li emphasise ethical research practices before and after data collection to respect the participants and reduce any harm during research.

There are twelve chapters in Part Two on “Designs and approaches to research.” In each chapter, the authors focus on a specific research approach or research design, providing an overview of such designs, and comparing their benefits and drawbacks. For example, in the first chapter of Part Two, John Rogers and Andrea Révész outline the key features of experimental and quasi-experimental designs. The section gives a very strong overview of the approaches to research, so I will provide just a small number of examples here. Chapter 12 by Patricia A. Duff provides a detailed overview of case studies, which have started to see a resurgence in interest in applied linguistics research in recent years due to their ability to provide insights into an individual’s “language related and social engagements” (p. 144), which many researchers can relate to directly. Related to this are chapters 13 and 14, which highlight ethnographic research methods that explore people’s experience in real-life situations. Chapter 18 is significant also as it explores the authenticity of the language used in corpora and discusses themes that are emerging in research associated with them.

In keeping with the book’s main theme, Part Three consists of nine chapters and discusses a variety of research methods and data collection procedures utilised in applied linguistics. This section is essential reading for all students and researchers in that it can serve to assist those new to the field as well as allowing more experienced researchers to consider the complexities of how their data may be collected. Research methods covered are interviews, interaction, think aloud protocols, recall, questionnaires, and observation methods. Methods that have gained a wider acceptance in applied linguistics in recent years are also explained, such as focus groups by Nicola Gallaway (Chapter 24), which is described as a means of understanding a group’s feelings or thoughts about a specific topic or situation. Language elicitation tasks—activities that require a learner to produce some form of language—are described by Faidra Faitaki and Victoria A. Murphy in Chapter 30 as a key method to explore learners’ language development. More recently used methods are also included in this

section such as eye tracking in Chapter 31 by Ana Pellicer-Sánchez and Kathy Conklin, who demonstrate how this type of data collection has gained popularity in applied linguistics research as a means of investigating “the mind of the subject” (p. 370).

Part Four of the Handbook includes the final ten chapters, providing a comprehensive description of data analysis. Given the fundamental distinction between qualitative and quantitative data, it is not surprising to see the chapters largely divided into these themes. Chapters 32 to 35 focus on how to analyse quantitative data, with descriptions of how to use SPSS, summarise descriptive data, find cause and effect relations, and conduct factor analysis and statistical modeling to analyse quantitative data. Chapter 36 introduces some new perspectives on how to analyse qualitative data by focusing on content analysis and the increasingly significant role of computer programs, while Chapter 37 gives an outline of methods for written text analysis (as opposed to discourse analysis, which is covered in Chapter 39). Chapter 38 explores corpus analysis to develop corpus and word lists for single and multi-word units. The final two chapters focus on theoretical expansion in applied linguistics. In chapter 40, Jarret Geenen and Jesse Pirini introduce a theoretical view and framework on the qualitative analysis of real-time social interaction with multimodal interaction analysis, and the final chapter by Suresh Canagarajah, Daisuke Kimura, Mohammad Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri, and Michael D. Amory summarises theoretical developments by poststructuralist orientations for interactional analysis in applied linguistics research.

There is very little to be said critically about this Handbook, although I felt that it could have contained more on language testing and on replication. There is brief mention of language testing in Chapter 30, but a broader perspective to include details of test reliability and validity may have been a useful addition. The importance of replication in applied linguistics research is gaining recognition to confirm study results, investigate generalizability issues, and gain a deeper understanding of phenomena of interest. Replication research is explained elsewhere, such as *The Palgrave Handbook of Applied Linguistics Research Methodology* by Phakiti, Costa, Plonsky, and Starfield (2018) and *Replication Research in Applied Linguistics* by Graeme Porte (2012). Although there is some reference to replication in Chapter 2 and Chapter 8, a more systematic explanation would have been welcome.

Overall, this book provides an excellent overview of various research approaches that are relevant to the field of applied linguistics, built solidly on a foundation from decades of research plus insights into contemporary perspectives. The range of topics covered is impressive, and it is a must-have for applied linguists of all levels of experience.

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