BOOK REVIEW

Teodora Popescu. *Research in Applied Linguistics and Language Education: Design, Methods, and Analysis*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2025. Pp. 1-356. ISBN 978-606-37-2788-7

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Teodora Popescu's *Research in Applied Linguistics and Language Education: Design, Methods, and Analysis* offers a comprehensive account of research design and methodology in applied linguistics and language education, addressing the needs of postgraduate students, early-career researchers, and practitioner-researchers. It covers the research process from conceptualisation and research-question formulation to data collection, analysis, ethical practice, and dissemination. Across its chapters, the volume consistently emphasises the importance of coherence between research purposes, methodological choices, and the claims that can be supported by empirical evidence.

The volume opens by situating research in applied linguistics and language education within a broad conceptual and disciplinary framework.

Chapter 1, *Fundamentals of Research in Applied Linguistics and Language Education*, establishes the conceptual foundations of the volume. It defines language education as an interdisciplinary field concerned with language teaching, learning, assessment, teacher education, and policy, situated within broader social and institutional contexts. Language is treated both as a system and as a practice enacted in educational settings.

The chapter clarifies the relationship between applied linguistics and language education by distinguishing their primary emphases while emphasising their interdependence. Applied linguistics is presented as linking linguistic theory and empirical evidence to real-world language problems, while language education research focuses more directly on pedagogical practice and educational systems. Language education research is positioned at the intersection of these domains.

A comparative section differentiates applied linguistics research, educational research, and language education research in terms of typical questions, settings, and methods, providing a reference point for later chapters. The chapter also introduces major philosophical paradigms relevant to research in the field, outlining how epistemological orientation shapes research questions, methods, and claims. It concludes by sketching the research process from problem identification to dissemination.

Chapter 2, *Formulating Research Questions and Methodological Foundations*, focuses on the transition from initial research interests to coherent study design. The chapter presents research questions as the central organising element of empirical inquiry and emphasises that methodological choices depend on how questions are formulated.

Different research purposes, including fundamental, applied, and experimental research, are distinguished and linked to descriptive, comparative, and explanatory research questions. The chapter outlines strategies for refining broad interests into researchable questions by specifying population, context, variables, and scope. Hypotheses and research objectives are introduced as tools for operationalising questions and clarifying analytic intent.

The role of the literature review is discussed as integral to methodological planning. Rather than serving as a summary of prior work, the literature review is presented as a means of identifying gaps, positioning a study theoretically, and justifying design decisions. The chapter concludes by outlining a stepwise framework that links research questions to sampling, instruments, and analysis, treating validity, reliability, and trustworthiness as principles that should inform design from the outset.

Chapter 3, *Ethics, Consent, Privacy, and Research Protocols*, addresses ethical practice as an integral and ongoing component of research in applied linguistics and language education. Ethics is framed not as a one-time approval requirement but as extending across all stages of the research process.

A central focus is informed consent, which is treated as a continuing process shaped by participant autonomy and transparency. Particular attention is given to educational research contexts, where hierarchical relationships may complicate voluntary participation. The chapter discusses strategies for addressing power and access, especially in classroom-based and practitioner research.

The chapter distinguishes among confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy, highlighting their implications for data handling and reporting, particularly in small-scale or context-specific studies. Ethical challenges associated with digital research are also addressed, including online data collection and data protection. The chapter concludes by linking ethical research conduct to responsible publishing practices and academic integrity, and by providing procedural guidance to support ethical planning and documentation.

Chapter 4, *Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, surveys research methods commonly used in applied linguistics and language education, organised by data type and mode of collection. The chapter emphasises the alignment between research questions, contexts, and methodological choice.

Quantitative approaches are introduced through surveys, questionnaires, and language tests, with attention to basic principles of instrument design and the relationship between assessment purpose and validity. Experimental and naturalistic research designs are contrasted in terms of researcher control, research setting, and the kinds of claims they support.

The chapter then turns to qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and classroom observation. These are discussed in relation to research purpose and researcher stance rather than procedural detail. Qualitative analysis traditions such as thematic, discourse-analytic, and content-analytic approaches are briefly outlined in terms of their analytic focus.

The chapter concludes by reiterating that method selection should be guided by research questions and contextual constraints, rather than by methodological preference, reinforcing the book's emphasis on coherence across design and analysis.

The fifth chapter, titled *Mixed Methods and Digital Methodologies*, introduces approaches that combine different data types and make use of digital resources. The chapter focuses on the logic of mixed-methods research, corpus-based approaches, software support, and online research contexts.

Mixed-methods designs are presented as appropriate when a single methodological approach is insufficient to address a research question. Sequential, convergent, and embedded designs are outlined in terms of how qualitative and quantitative components are integrated across stages of a study, with emphasis on purposeful coordination rather than methodological breadth.

The chapter then introduces corpus linguistics as a resource for language education research, outlining basic principles of corpus compilation and analysis and distinguishing between large reference corpora and smaller, purpose-built datasets. Common software tools for qualitative, quantitative, and corpus analysis are briefly surveyed as supports for data management and analysis rather than as methods in themselves.

The final section addresses online and technology-enhanced research, highlighting methodological and ethical considerations associated with digital data sources, remote data collection, and learning analytics.

Chapter 6, *Analysing Data and Ensuring Rigour*, addresses the analysis, interpretation, and reporting of research findings in applied linguistics and language education. Analysis is presented as closely connected to research design and research questions, with analytic choices determining the scope and strength of empirical claims.

The chapter outlines core quantitative approaches, including descriptive statistics and basic inferential procedures, and situates them in relation to comparative and experimental designs. Emphasis is placed on appropriate interpretation and reporting rather than on technical detail. Qualitative analysis is discussed through the processes of coding and interpretation, highlighting the development of analytic categories in relation to research questions and data.

Issues of rigour are addressed across both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Concepts such as validity, reliability, and trustworthiness are framed as analytic responsibilities supported through transparency, documentation, and reflexive practice. The chapter also considers the presentation of findings, including the use of tables and figures and the integration of quantitative results with qualitative evidence.

Chapter 7, *Writing and Publishing Research*, addresses the communication of research as an integral part of the research process. Writing is presented as closely linked to research design, methodological transparency, and ethical responsibility rather than as a final technical stage.

The chapter outlines common structural conventions for theses and research articles, noting variation across genres and publication venues. Attention is given to coherence across sections so that claims are clearly grounded in design and data. Academic writing is discussed in terms of clarity, cohesion, and audience awareness, particularly in interdisciplinary contexts.

Ethical aspects of writing are addressed through discussion of citation, attribution, plagiarism, and transparent reporting. The chapter also considers publication practices, including journal selection, submission, peer review, and revision. It concludes by extending dissemination beyond academic journals to include communication with practitioners and wider audiences, reflecting the applied orientation of the field.

Chapter 8, *Practical Applications and Case Studies*, illustrates how the methodological principles developed earlier in the volume are applied in concrete research contexts. The chapter presents a set of short case studies drawn from classroom-based research, practitioner inquiry, and student-led projects across different educational settings.

Each case follows a common progression from research question through design, analysis, and interpretation, highlighting how methodological decisions are shaped by contextual and practical constraints. The cases vary in scale and methodological orientation, reflecting the diversity of research practices in applied linguistics and language education. Rather than serving as models to be replicated, the case studies foreground research decision-making and transferable practices within real-world research conditions.

Chapter 9, *Language Education in Transition: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities Ahead*, situates research in applied linguistics and language education within broader social, technological, and educational change. The chapter identifies developments reshaping research contexts, including technology-mediated learning, blended and hybrid provision, and the expansion of digital data sources.

It also addresses issues of linguistic diversity, identity, and equity in contexts shaped by multilingualism, migration, and globalisation. Emerging interdisciplinary directions are briefly considered, particularly collaborations across linguistic, educational, and technological domains. Rather than proposing new agendas, the chapter emphasises the need to adapt established methodological principles to evolving research environments, bringing the volume to a close by reaffirming the relevance of context-sensitive research design.

Taken as a whole, the volume offers a comprehensive and systematically organised account of research practice in applied linguistics and language education. Its principal contribution lies in the consistent emphasis on coherence between research questions, methodological choices, analytic procedures, and the claims that can be supported by empirical evidence. This focus provides the book with a clear

internal logic that connects conceptual discussion, methodological guidance, ethical considerations, and practical application.

The book is particularly well suited to postgraduate contexts. It offers a structured framework for MA students and early-stage PhD researchers who are developing research proposals, designing empirical studies, or learning to justify methodological decisions. The progression from foundational concepts through research design, ethics, methods, analysis, and dissemination makes the volume appropriate for use as a core text in research methods courses in applied linguistics and language education. The inclusion of applied examples and case studies also supports its use in supervision and professionally oriented programmes.

For more experienced researchers, the book functions primarily as a reference that supports reflective research practice rather than as a source of advanced methodological training. It does not aim to provide detailed instruction in specialised statistical modelling or highly technical analytic procedures, and readers seeking depth in these areas will need to consult more specialised literature. Its value instead lies in clarifying how different methodological options relate to research purposes, contexts, and constraints.

The volume also distinguishes itself from method-specific textbooks by avoiding prescriptive or partisan positioning. Quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, and digital approaches are presented in relation to their uses and limitations rather than as competing paradigms. Ethical practice and research dissemination are treated as integral components of the research process rather than as peripheral concerns.

The volume does not aim to function as a comprehensive statistics or psychometrics manual. Readers seeking coverage of power analysis, generalised linear mixed models, structural equation modelling, or measurement invariance will need to consult specialised sources. Nor does the book devote extended treatment to decolonial, feminist, or indigenous methodologies, although issues of equity, translanguaging, and language policy are integrated throughout rather than treated as add-ons. These limitations are largely defensible, as they allow the volume to remain focused on research design across diverse programmes.

Overall, the book represents a substantial and carefully constructed contribution to the literature on research methods in applied linguistics and language education. It can be recommended for postgraduate teaching, research training, and supervision, particularly in contexts where the aim is to foster methodologically informed, transparent, and context-sensitive empirical research.

References

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