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Doing Research in Applied Linguistics

Realities, dilemmas, and solutions

Edited by
Jim McKinley and Heath Rose

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Foreword

Sandra Lee Mckay

Having served for many years as editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*, I am pleased to write this foreword. Published articles in applied linguistics serve a particular function in scholarly work. They report on findings that develop from the implementation of rigorous methods designed to examine real-world problems. In the process of reporting on these findings, it is essential that such accounts include a thorough description of the methods used in a study. However, because of the stringent length requirements of many journal articles, there is little room for a description of all the unforeseen circumstances faced by the researcher in the process of undertaking the study. Yet, as is demonstrated in this book, researchers typically face challenges in implementing their investigations and, in the process, need to make balanced decisions regarding how to handle the obstacles.

In the editorial introduction, Rose and McKinley point out that "in the presentation of published research as the 'ideal,' the reader is often made oblivious to the methodological journey of the project and of the compromises made along the way." The important contribution of this book is that it documents the "methodological journey" made by most researchers as they implement their studies.

There are indeed many parallels between a journey and research. Both have an imagined view of what the final destination will be like. The ideal vacation destination has everything the traveler desires from memorable sights to perfect accommodations and climate. For the researcher, this imagined destination includes definitive results, groundbreaking findings, and original insights. Yet for both the traveler and the researcher, these ideal destinations are rarely attained.

In addition, for both travelers and researchers, there are countless twists and turns as they make their way to their final destinations. For the traveler, it is the airport lines, the delays, the missed connections, the poor accommodations, the strange customs, and so on. For the researcher, the detours entail gaining access to the desired site, getting consent forms from participants, having participants drop out of the study, not being able to collect the desired amount of data, and so on.

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What is critical for both travelers and researchers is to make reasonable moment-by-moment decisions that will enable them to reach their final destinations while maintaining their standards. However, in both cases, compromises need to be made. The strength of this book is that it documents such compromises and, most importantly, shows that these compromises are an unavoidable part of the research process. This is an essential insight for novice researchers, who, based on the research books they read, are likely to believe that research is a clearly defined process that includes developing a research design, selecting a site, gaining access, collecting data, analyzing data, and reporting findings. The chapters in this book demonstrate that this is generally not the case. Instead, the book illustrates that in each of these steps compromises need to be made.

Whereas other research method books do make an occasional reference to the possible compromises researchers need to make, as the editors point out, this is often preventative advice rather than curative steps in which the researchers must deal with what they have, not what they had hoped for. These curative steps involve difficult decisions regarding the most effective way to address the problems while undertaking sound research.

Having undertaken my own research, written and taught about research methods, and served as an editor, I see this book as a critical contribution to research and publishing in applied linguistics in which what is portrayed is rarely what actually happens. The editors and authors are to be thanked for providing us with honest accounts of the struggles they faced as they investigated the real and messy problems of the real world.

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Chapter 1

Realities of doing research in applied linguistics

Heath Rose and Jim McKinley

When novice researchers are taught about research methods, they are usually only ever exposed to 'ideal' research designs, where all avenues of validity, reliability, generalizability, and ethicality have been carefully contemplated and accounted for. When beginning their data collection, however, things may not go according to these perfect plans: they cannot get the representative sample they were hoping for, participants drop out from their longitudinal study, an institution decides not to grant them access to their planned research context, working within a vulnerable community proves more difficult than expected, or they struggle to maintain a positivist, objective stance in an area of research in which they have invested considerable personal and emotional energy. There are innumerable ways in which a research design faces obstacles in the research process, no matter how carefully a project was planned. In these situations, a researcher may be left wondering how to salvage the project from failure.

The idealistic nature of research methods books

When referring to research methods literature, a researcher concerned about his or her project's feasibility finds little comfort in the ideological nature in which many research methods textbooks are written. The wording of many methodology textbooks can be interpreted to suggest that nothing other than the most stringent research design will stand up to the rigor of academic scrutiny. In these books, each research method, data collection instrument, and analytical tool is meticulously presented with a long list of threats to validity and reliability if not carried out to the exact plan. For example, the dangers of a low response rate to questionnaires is a topic often covered in such books, and this is usually presented alongside advice to help improve response rates. Dörnyei (2007, p. 113–114), for example, offers helpful advice for researchers to effectively administer the questionnaire to improve the response rate. However, there is little advice offered for situations when a low response rate occurs in a project, despite best efforts

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in administration. A novice researcher in this case could easily be left feeling that his or her project has failed.

Mackey and Gass (2005) discuss the logistical issues of classroom-based research in terms of obtaining quality audio recordings for data analysis. When taking into account the issues of human interference, classroom movement, and learner interest in the equipment, the authors' solutions include multiple microphones, video-recording equipment, movable recording equipment, and bringing in the equipment weeks before the actual observation. Such suggestions, while useful in preempting obstacles, turn a one-class observation design into a multiple-week-long, audio-visual production. For novice researchers, such intrusion might not be logistically feasible, and compromises have to be made. There is little suggestion for researchers to work around such logistical issues to, for example, deal with poor-quality audio if other unforeseen factors intrude on the observation day.

It is important to note, however, that Dörnyei (2007) does suggest a pragmatic approach to carrying out a research project, albeit in a brief manner. He writes,

> It is my impression that researchers are often ashamed of the compromises that they need to make, not realizing that making compromises is part and parcel of being a researcher.
>
> (p. 309)

We fully concur with Dörnyei's assessment here, particularly in the context of novice researchers who are easily led to believe only the most perfectly planned and executed research project is acceptable in the field. This book aims to expand on this notion in its presentation of research projects, which had to overcome obstacles and make compromises in order to achieve successful results.

Mackey and Gass (2005) also emphasize the nature of classroom-based research as a "particularly complex and multifaceted endeavor that must be planned carefully" (p. 212). They do offer helpful, practical advice in the creation of contingency plans when things go wrong, but our book expands on this *preventative* advice in its offer of *curative* advice for situations when methodological issues do arise and must be dealt with during the research process. We would also argue that Mackey and Gass's depiction of the classroom as complex and multifaceted can be expanded into other contexts where applied linguistics researchers collect data, such as workplace environments and social spheres – indeed any research site that exists in the messy real world.

The idealistic nature of published research

Published research further perpetuates a stereotype that obstacles in research are anomalies, rather than the norm. Journal articles often document their research designs with scientific precision, and a reader may be led to believe

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data were collected and analyzed with few problems in the process. Limitations of a project are always discussed, of course, but they are presented in a way that the reader would believe that the researcher was aware of these limitations from the outset of planning and had accounted for them before data were collected and analyzed. If a researcher had planned on collecting 500 samples, but managed only 250, the original target may not ever need to be disclosed, but instead there might be a throwaway statement in the conclusion of the paper, which stated that because of the small sample size, further research might be needed. If a researcher were denied access to his or her prime research site, the paper might not allude to the fact that the data collection site was the researcher's second choice. More likely, the paper would justify the new site according to slightly altered criteria. Likewise, multiple case studies become single case studies in the write-up process, or the importance of certain research instruments in the research design is emphasized or downplayed according to the perceived value of the data that was yielded. Researchers are not being deceitful, but rather may wash over the minor details of methodological issues in projects for fear that it will detract from the data they were able to collect and report on. In the presentation of published research as the 'ideal,' the reader is often made oblivious to the methodological journey of the project and of the compromises made along the way. All of these alternatives are certainly reasonable solutions to immediate problems, but too often they go unreported.

In Marshall and Rossman's popular *Qualitative Research Methods*, now in its fifth edition (Marshall & Rossman, 2010), journal articles are described as "pristine and logical," in contrast to real research, described as "confusing, messy, intensely frustrating, and fundamentally nonlinear" (p.55). They draw our attention to some insightful advice provided for doctoral students 35 years ago by Bargar and Duncan (1982) in which they describe how, "through such highly standardized reporting practices, scientists inadvertently hide from view the real inner drama of their work, with its intuitive base, its halting time-line, and its extensive recycling of concepts and perspectives" (p.2). This kind of attention to the dramas of research is unsurprisingly something doctoral students are advised to avoid. But certainly, this purposeful imbalance of focus comes at a cost for future researchers.

Furthermore, published research almost always focuses on the implications of the *findings* of the study, and almost never discusses the *methodological* implications of the research process itself. It is our conviction that the methodological implications of any study play an equally important role in shaping our understanding of research in the field of applied linguistics as the content-related findings do. They help to shape our understanding of the project and build upon it when carrying out future research in the area.

This book aims to rectify the imbalance in research methodology literature through exposing the research design and implementation obstacles

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that applied linguists and educational researchers face in many of our research projects. The projects discussed in this book were all carried out by experienced, respected academics in their fields. The projects outlined in these chapters all resulted in published research papers, despite the obstacles encountered along the way in the research process. In this book, the projects are presented with a shift in focus from their original publication on the content of their findings to the methodological implications of the study. By bringing the methodological obstacles to the forefront, we can better build an understanding of best practices in overcoming similar research problems in the future.

A focus on applied linguistics and language education research

The book focuses on applied linguistics and language education research because these fields occupy a shared space in academia and thus encounter similar problems in the research process. Applied linguists and educational researchers often deal with the 'real world' rather than sanitized environments. Many of the methodological issues encountered by applied linguistics researchers very much stem from the fact that applied linguistics is, in itself, a problem-based discipline. We concur with Grabe (2010, p. 35) who argues,

> The notion that applied linguistics is driven first by real-world language problems rather than by theoretical explorations of internalized language knowledge and (L1) language development is largely what set the field apart from both formal linguistics and later from sociolinguistics, with its own emphasis on language description of social variation in language use.

While the exploration of real-world research problems has obvious benefits in its practical implications, the real world is messy, and the potential for something to go wrong increases exponentially with each added uncontrollable variable. A sudden school assembly can ruin a planned classroom observation and result in the object of the research being skipped completely in the curriculum. The end-of-term essay that was going to become usable data for text analysis might suddenly be replaced by a presentation. A company that had agreed to distribute your questionnaire to its employees might suddenly undergo restructuring, and the offer to distribute your questionnaire might easily slip through the cracks. Most research in educational contexts in particular is "pretty messy, or at least complicated" (McArthur, 2012, p. 428), thus when things go wrong, it is to be expected.

Applied linguistics and educational researchers also often deal with people, which can be the messiest part of real-world research. A common cold

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can decimate student numbers on the day of important classroom-based research. An overly controlling and chatty group member can destroy a speech sample intended for discourse analysis. A gatekeeper to an important research site can simply decide to exercise his or her right to not take part in your study, simply because the person cannot be bothered dealing with the paperwork or organizing to meet with you. There are immeasurable ways in which a carefully planned research project can go awry in the real world, and these are all too often glossed over in published papers. They lie in the periphery of research methods books, despite being situated as real obstacles at the forefront of the research process.

Other researchers in the past have focused on the messiness of social research, and the current volume builds on the foundations of such work. Mellor (2001) details a very frank account of his practitioner-based research project in the field of educational psychology, providing an 'honesty trail' of the problems encountered and mistakes made. He argues that the provision of this honest account formed an essential part of his study's strength, even if by conventional definitions highlighting these issues posed a threat to the project's validity. A similar perspective can be found in Cook (2009, p. 290), who argues,

> If an indicator of our successful work as action researchers is the integration of the development of practice with the construction of research knowledge, then we must provide honest accounts of that process and incorporate mess as an integral part of a rigorous approach.

We would concur with Cook's assessment, but argue that honesty in incorporating mess as a part of rigorous practice be extended beyond just action research, as it is an integral part of social science research in general, thus also extending to much applied linguistics research. This book aims to expand on such work and organize it in a central volume. The strength of many voices will, hopefully, showcase the realities of social science research that others have touched on in published research papers.

An overview of the book

This book aims at bringing problems in applied linguistics research to the forefront in its presentation of research projects by experienced, established researchers, and up-and-coming researchers alike. Accordingly, each chapter focuses on one isolated problem, or area of research, and uses a real case study of published research to illustrate how the problem was circumvented.

The obstacles outlined in this book are presented in five main sections. Each part discusses a shared position in the research process, starting with the planning stage then moving into data collection, analysis, and reporting.

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Section one: Research planning

The first section examines obstacles in research planning, which include deciding who to research, dealing with shifts in theory in the field mid-project, positioning oneself as an outside researcher and negotiating complex and collaborative projects.

Ryuko Kubota takes on the challenge of selecting who to study with a particular focus on the ethical issues and politics of researching privileged populations, i.e., "studying up," populations that include the researcher, i.e., "studying across," or underprivileged populations, i.e., "studying down." Drawing on her experience working with disadvantaged migrants, and in consideration of neoliberal ideologies, Kubota found herself faced with "moral discomfort" coming from an elitist position in relation to her potential participants. To overcome this obstacle, Kubota changed her target population and took advantage of establishing rapport with the participants.

Next is Heath Rose's response to dealing with theoretical shifts in research design – reflecting on the nature of applied linguistics research that can change drastically in a short period of time. As a researcher on a project in which changes in research paradigms meant the conceptual framework was suddenly found to be obsolete, he was faced with the option of ignoring the changes altogether, or integrating them into his research design. Rose shows an analysis of the options as an important part of the process in overcoming such an obstacle and sustaining the research project.

In consideration of researcher positionality, Jim McKinley deals with the problem of approaching a research context as an outsider faced with the challenge of choosing between developing a situated qualitative analysis or establishing researcher objectivity, both of which were quickly dismissed as viable options. Instead, McKinley managed to overcome the problem by moving beyond positivism and adopting constructionist theory to allow his position as an outsider to inform the research rather than invalidate it.

The last chapter for this first section of the book, led by Daniel V. Bommarito, explores the issues related to negotiating multiple objectives in collaborative research projects. The chapter, which is based on a project led by Paul Kei Matsuda, is presented along with a group of prior and current doctoral students including Jianing Liu, Juval V. Racelis, Taimin Wu, Jing Xia, and Yuching Jill Yang. The chapter deals with a multilayered research project, with a student-led collaborative study at the core, an observation-based study conducted by Bommarito as a secondary objective, and, finally, a third layer that was Matsuda's objective of an academic professional development opportunity for his students. With this complex research structure, obstacles were expected, but these researchers show that careful planning, flexibility, and open communication allow for different objectives in collaborative projects to be achieved.

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Section two: Data collection

The second section outlines problems that arise in the data collection phase of a research project. Problems in this section include dealing with participant attrition in longitudinal studies and low response rates in qualitative and quantitative studies.

The first chapter in this section looks at adjusting to contextual constraints when there are methodological shifts in a research project. John Hedgcock and Heekyeong Lee take on the problem of when the research design falls short of what it was intended to achieve. They describe their experience of adopting alternative data collection methods and strategies in order to maintain their original research focus and questions. The decision required reformulation of subsequent phases of the research process, and Hedgcock and Lee show how strategies to respond to the need to make changes during data collection, even reconceptualizing the research problem, can lead to achieving the research aims.

Next, on the significant problem of participant attrition in longitudinal ethnographic studies, Corinne Seals manoeuvres her way through various issues such as location access and participant commitment, arriving at some important, harsh realizations about the realities of such studies. Seals draws on her experience of utter devastation at the loss of key participants in her study, pointing to creative and flexible approaches that allowed her to actually find an advantage in what would have otherwise been project-ending challenges.

A major problem in quantitative data collection is a low response rate. Averil Coxhead shares her own experiences dealing with this difficult challenge, overcoming it, and going on to publish numerous articles from the study. She explains that dealing with such challenges was familiar, as in the development of her academic word list, gaining access to particular texts caused delays. While her solutions to the low response rate involved a longer timeline and additional recruitment, Coxhead shows that such strategies can effectively sustain the research project.

Completing this section is an insightful chapter on dealing with multilingualism in quantitative research. As recognition of the value of new perspectives on multilingualism and crosslinguistic influence increases, this chapter by Gessica De Angelis is timely, as she describes the obstacles faced in such complex research paradigms and describes her experiences in overcoming those obstacles. She provides important strategies for conducting research with multilingual individuals while preventing a subject selection bias in the design and avoiding such pitfalls as the inconsistent treatment of data in such quantitative studies.

Section three: Researching vulnerable groups

The third section explores particular issues that arise in applied linguistics and education, focusing on vulnerable groups with whom we often work. While we acknowledge many members of these groups may not

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think of themselves as 'vulnerable,' the fact remains that dealing with certain research populations can bring ethical and logistical challenges to the data collection process. Contexts discussed in this section include working with children, conducting ethnographic research with refugees, exploring learners with disabilities or illnesses, researching within deaf communities, and using one's own students as research participants.

Opening this section is Victoria Murphy and Ernesto Macaro's chapter on researching children. Based on their experience conducting a recent study, they highlight seven obstacles they faced and offer solutions for overcoming them. The obstacles focus on research assistants, sampling frames, research sites, recruitment and informed consent, data collection spaces, participant attrition, and feedback to parents and teachers. Murphy and Macaro explain that this is not an exhaustive list, but their review of challenges shows that careful consideration and implementation of studies with children can and do result in successful research projects.

On conducting fieldwork among adult refugees, Lorna Carson provides a very honest reflection on what it means to work with participants who often face difficult and uncertain circumstances. The refugee learners in her doctoral research saw their English language education very differently, from essential to their survival to simply a way to pass the time. Such uncertainty and inconsistency in the stakes involved presented a number of challenges – particularly informed consent, confidentiality, and disclosure of personal details – that Carson negotiated with appropriate sensitivity in order to bring the research project to successful completion.

When researching a population with illnesses and disabilities, certain struggles are expected, but meeting the expectations of such participants in applied linguistics research can be especially challenging to negotiate. In the next chapter, Hanako Okada draws from her experiences in conducting a narrative inquiry to examine how those with illnesses and disabilities interpret and deal with their experiences. The participants in her study held very different reasons for participating in the study than those of the researcher. Okada explains how such research can lead to significant ethical concerns. She goes on to show that responding to the problems and pressures throughout the research process by taking an approach of moral responsibility can be a solution.

In deaf studies research, challenges such as gaining ethics approval, securing funding, collecting data, and disseminating results to a diverse group of stakeholders are of significant concern. In addition to these, political concerns are particularly significant and are a central focus in the next chapter by deaf studies researchers Lorraine Leeson, Jemina Napier, Robert Skinner, Teresa Lynch, Lucia Venturi, and Haaris Sheikh. In the chapter, five challenges are highlighted in order to target the main obstacles when researching signing communities and sign language interpreting communities. Through an examination of a recent research project, this dynamic research team

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shares how to overcome the obstacles when engaging national and regional police forces as well as judges, social workers, lawyers, and others who play a role in facilitating access to justice for deaf people in what are bilingual, bimodal, and interculturally negotiated interpreted settings.

The final chapter in this section deals with the apprehensions surrounding researching our own students. Nicola Galloway examines a number of concerns for teacher-researchers such as potentially disrupting class atmosphere and influencing the outcome of the study in teacher research, classroom inquiry, or action research. She offers reflections on her own research experience negotiating these challenges, showing that through careful workload management, and an acute awareness of ethical issues as well as threats to reliability and validity, teacher-researchers can succeed in their dual roles.

Section four: Data analysis

The fourth section considers problems that arise in the data analysis phase of a research project. Problems in this section include negotiating the relationship between theory and empirical research, managing researcher dilemmas in narrative interview data and analysis, dealing with designs and data analysis in longitudinal quantitative research, and grappling with originality and grounding in qualitative data analysis.

In longitudinal quantitative research, change is not only inevitable, it is often precisely what we seek to examine. In this section's opening chapter, Aek Phakiti reflects on his research involving the assessment of changes and levels of stability over time in strategic competence. Because longitudinal quantitative research requires the matching of two or more data sets, correlations, analysis of variance, or a loss of data can present serious consequences. Phakiti offers seven significant suggestions for researchers for overcoming the obstacles, from understanding the stages of longitudinal research, to clarifying a defensible rationale, to resisting the desire to make others accept the significance of the research simply by its longitudinal process.

Next, in exploring the dilemmatic issues of interaction, representation, and emotionality in his own narrative interview data, Matthew Prior draws our attention to the importance of perspective on these potential obstacles in such qualitative research. While analysis of narrative interview data may seem to unavoidably present what may be described as 'tedious' layers to a study, Prior found that avoiding them is not the solution. Instead, we understand through his experience that analysis of such data is in fact a creative activity that requires conscientious navigation and practice working through the dilemmas that are not only natural parts of the process but also opportunities for awareness raising and development as a researcher.

The quest for originality in empirical research is spotlighted as a significant obstacle in quantitative data analysis. Jessica Briggs returns to her doctoral

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research, which involved analyzing data generated by a self-developed research tool to provide an example of a daunting experience in such a quest. She notes that the limited grounding data from previous studies means guidance is limited when it comes to overcoming the obstacles in achieving originality. Briggs recommends that when results do not fit neatly into existing theoretical or conceptual frameworks, rather than doubting the methodological approach, look instead for those phenomena in the results that are unique to the study and seek a balance that allows the results to challenge and advance existing models.

Constant Leung and Brian Street complete this section by taking on issues related to the unclear relationship between theory and research practice in the academic literacies approach. In their research involving ethnically, linguistically, and socially diverse student participant populations, Leung and Street highlight a number of key arguments as ways to overcome the obstacles, focusing particularly on the need for shared understanding of the relationship between teachers and learners, as well as a clear sense of the role of subject content in that understanding.

Section five: Reporting research

The final section outlines problems that arise in the report stage of a research project, including dealing with missing data, writing the doctoral dissertation, and overcoming rejection when publishing.

Reporting controversial findings from interviews in studies that explore personal feelings or attitudes can present particularly challenging obstacles. Participants' responses in such studies can be confronting, unpleasant, and downright offensive to the researcher, as well as future readers of related research output. Roslyn Appleby's research deals with responses from participants that can, at times, be perceived as racist, sexist, emotionally charged, or taboo. Appleby offers three insightful recommendations for overcoming these obstacles, including building rapport with participants, avoiding the adoption of common-sense judgments, and remembering that responses reflect the participants' greater communities rather than individual thoughts.

Knowledge of the end state of foreign language instruction is of great value for those involved in language education research, since such research has important implications for multilingual education. David Singleton and Simone Pfenninger reflect on their experience researching early L2 instruction in their chapter, which takes on the challenges of honest reporting on politically sensitive issues, such as negative results in early L2 instruction that reject deeply ingrained assumptions such as "younger equals better."

In the next chapter, Xuesong Gao opens up as he delves into the painful reality of dealing with criticism in the review stages of publishing research in applied linguistics. As both a reviewer and author, Gao points out two

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common problems for qualitative researchers. One is the difficulty of framing a study that is absent of a significant knowledge gap in the relevant disciplinary field. The other is the general vagueness of methodological details where qualitative researchers seem to falter. Through a very honest reflection on his own experience receiving harsh criticisms from reviewers, Gao shows how he turned those criticisms into valuable learning opportunities and provides some strategies to persuade reviewers by dealing with the two common problems.

On finding a way to honestly present oneself in published applied linguistics research, Christine Pearson Casanave uses her trialling experience over a three-year period of writing an article about learning a foreign language that was eventually published in *TESOL Quarterly*. Casanave's exposing and honest reflection on the experience offers valuable insight into what can be a harrowing task as a qualitative researcher. She identifies three key challenges that deal with a writing style that is both academic and personal, she identifies construction that doesn't risk the respect of peers, and she shows confidence in making claims.

For the final chapter, Brian Paltridge takes on the notoriously challenging task of publishing from a dissertation. While a book may seem the more obvious choice, it may be that articles are more advantageous. Either way, it is important to understand that publishing from the dissertation cannot happen without major revisions of the original manuscript, with a strong focus on the shift in audience. Through an examination of his own experience of overcoming the obstacles in getting publications from his doctoral dissertation, Paltridge shows how the obstacles that seem to hinder us can in fact help us to improve the quality of the research outputs from doctoral research.

The volume is rounded out by an important afterword by Andrew D. Cohen, who draws on 45 years of publishing experience in applied linguistics to offer advice to researchers for getting their studies published. The foreword by Sandra Lee McKay and the afterword by Andrew D. Cohen open and close this edited volume with seasoned perspectives from two of the field's most accomplished scholars. We are grateful to both of them for sharing their insight.

Embracing realities and complexities in our research

Through the honest narratives in this volume, and the focus on the truths of conducting research in applied linguistics, we highlight the realities of such research. The strategic organization of these narratives around key stages of the research process is intended to provide a research paradigm in its own right – where the complexities of research methods can be explored as topics of investigation. While we recognize that applied linguistics research can be and is often messy, we too often hide the messiness in favour of a cleaner,

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more sanitized description of our sometimes very complex methods and processes. However, such approaches are, as we see it, depriving researchers of valuable insights from which we can grow and allow novice and experienced researchers alike the chance to learn from our pitfalls, mistakes, and follies. The obstacles we face in applied linguistics research can come at any stage of the research process: in the planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results. The obstacles may be central to the research itself, such as working with vulnerable groups. These obstacles are not the problems that need solving, but rather opportunities to strategize and reconceptualize our approaches to the realities of conducting real-world research.

Unlike the days of the "and here's one we prepared earlier" cooking shows that never reveal to audiences what it is really like to prepare picture-perfect dishes, it is time for us to move forward and recognize that picture perfect is not the goal. Rather, successful research can be achieved via, in spite of, and because of, a myriad of troubles and toils. Working through problems, rather than around them, allows researchers to bring a project to successful completion. Like the picture-perfect cooking shows, which hide the failures and the challenges from their viewers, published research disguises many of the failures and challenges from its readers. By not showcasing these challenges and failures, we deprive the viewers and the readers of opportunities to learn to work through these challenges. Let us look at our messy research methods as building blocks rather than stumbling blocks, and when the finished project finally succeeds, regardless of its originally intended form, we can say proudly, we "nailed it!"

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"This informative and scholarly book presents both challenges and solutions in current applied linguistics research. The twenty-three chapters range broadly and deeply across the diverse terrains of contemporary linguistics. The outcome is a set of highly authoritative accounts of ethically responsive and politically attuned strategies for researchers. Highly recommended!"
Patrick Danaher, *University of Southern Queensland and Central Queensland University, Australia*

"Students of applied linguistics are invariably frustrated by the gaping lacuna between the rosy, trouble-free picture painted by their methodology textbooks and the intractable messiness of real research they find themselves in. This excellent collection of contributions by seasoned applied linguists takes novice researchers behind the scenes and shares rarely heard stories of how thorny and often unexpected problems have been overcome in a creative, productive, and rigorous way."
Hu Guangwei, *National Institute of Education, Singapore*

"This book is an excellent introduction into the imperfect world of applied linguistics research. It offers advice and solutions to many problems that applied linguists face while conducting their research. It will be an essential point of reference for postgraduate research students and will make a worthwhile addition to the libraries of established academics."
Oksana Afitska, *University of Sheffield, UK*

Doing Research in Applied Linguistics: Realities, dilemmas, and solutions provides insight and guidance for those undertaking research, and shows the reader how to deal with the challenges of this research involving real people in real settings. Featuring over twenty chapters by experienced and up-and-coming researchers from around the world, this book:

- outlines the steps involved in solving the problem and completing a successful, and publishable, project;
- provides case studies of obstacles faced at each stage of research, from preliminary planning to report writing;
- addresses issues of validity and reliability during data collection and analysis;
- discusses ethical issues in research dealing with vulnerable groups including children, refugees, and students;
- includes examples from longitudinal studies, and both qualitative and quantitative research.

Doing Research in Applied Linguistics is essential reading for students studying research methods, or for those embarking on their first research project in applied linguistics or language education.

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