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Research Methods in Linguistics. by Lia Litosseliti

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Research Methods in Linguistics. BY LIA LITOSSELETTI. LONDON: CONTINUUM, 2010. PP. 240. HARDBACK \$120.00.

Reviewed by Valerie J. Trujillo, *University of Florida*.

Research Methods in Linguistics is an accessible introduction to the discipline and is a suitable guide for beginning-level graduate and undergraduate students. The text is composed of ten chapters authored by leaders in the discipline in the United Kingdom and, although many of the names may be new to beginning level students in the United States, contributors such as Paul Baker, Angela Creese, and Judith Baxter quickly establish themselves as authoritative voices in the fields of corpus linguistics, multilingualism, and discourse analysis, respectively.

Research Methods in Linguistics opens with a concise introduction by Lia Litosseliti in which she contextualizes the book within a framework set forth by comprehensive texts that seek to both inform the novice researcher of the relationship between various research paradigms while allowing more informed readers to reflect on current debates on the use of various methodologies in linguistic research and the possibilities for interaction among these methods. The remainder of the book is organized into three parts: Part I, Issues, guides readers through the process of forming and operationalizing research questions and ends with a discussion on the benefits and challenges to different types of research: quantitative, qualitative, and a mixed-methods approach. Part II, Quantitative and Corpus Research Methods inducts the reader into the world of quantitative linguistics and tackles issues such as the building and applications of corpora and data analysis. Part III, Qualitative Research Methods, is intentionally the largest section of the book according to Litosseliti in order to reflect the prevalence of such methods currently in the field. This section is composed of five chapters that initiate the reader into the fields of discourse analysis, linguistic ethnography, multimodal and narrative analysis. Each chapter of the book opens with a chapter outline that essentially summarizes the key topics of discussion. Chapters are divided into subsections that are aptly titled to direct the reader through what is at times an abundance of information, thus contributing to the accessibility of the text for beginning students. The intent of the book is not to provide a thorough discussion but rather to give a broad overview of the methods presented, therefore each chapter concludes with a short list of suggested readings which provide

detailed coverage of the topic. Each of the self-contained chapters concludes with an independent list of references in addition to the suggested readings.

In Chapter One, *Research Questions in Linguistics*, Jane Sunderland provides descriptive instruction on the formation of research questions, providing illustrative examples from her own field of expertise of sociolinguistics and gender. Sunderland guides the reader between the distinction between various types of research questions, for example primary vs. secondary, methodological vs. theoretical, and empirical vs. speculative questions. In addition, Sunderland provides practical guidance for budding researchers, for example, advising them to document and justify all methodological decisions related to the research design.

In the second chapter, *Quantitative, Qualitative, or Both? Combining Methods in Linguistic Research*, Jo Angouri adopts a pragmatist's stance, which proposes methodologies that represent a collection of techniques, in her discussion of issues relevant to conducting research within a specific paradigm. Angouri discusses at length the nomenclature of methodological triangulation and differentiates between its meaning as a technical term and as a concept of mixed methods designs as a whole, and draws upon her expertise in the field of business discourse to exemplify both the benefits and challenges of mixed-methods research.

The third chapter, *Quantitative Methods: Concepts, Frameworks, and Issues*, introduces readers to the general characteristics of quantitative research and provides a thorough distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods. In this chapter, Sebastian M. Rasinger discusses various research designs most frequently used in quantitative research, including cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental designs. In what is one of the most explanatory chapters of the book, Rasinger provides practical definitions of key terms as well as illuminating examples of the various research methods for the novice researcher. He concludes with a discussion on the design, use, and quantification of questionnaires in such studies.

Erez Levon continues the discussion on data analysis in Chapter Four, *Organizing and Processing Your Data: The Nuts and Bolts of Quantitative Analyses*. Levon opens with a thorough explanation of basic concepts such as the null hypothesis, dependent vs. independent variables, and categorical vs. continuous variables. This chapter is particularly informative for students unfamiliar with quantitative research design and statistical analyses because Levon provides clear and concise descriptions of two widely used statistical tests: t-tests and chi-square tests, and guides the reader step-by-step in determining the appropriate test to use for a given study. However, Levon stops short of explaining some of the most common statistical analyses in linguistics: ANOVAs, MANOVAs, and linear regression analyses, referring the reader instead to his list of suggested supplemental materials. This can be a disappointment for those hoping to learn more

about multi-variable studies from the particularly instructive and effective Levon. He concludes with a section on interpreting results and a pragmatic definition of statistical significance, as well as a call for the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in linguistics.

The fifth chapter, *Corpus Methods in Linguistics*, discusses the benefits and potential limitations of corpus analysis, beginning with an explanation of the theoretical justifications for this approach. Paul Baker highlights the need for large bodies of naturalistic data in order to adequately identify and quantify linguistic patterns as evidenced by frequent phenomena. In a discussion on building and annotating corpora, Baker stresses the importance of sampling, balance, and representativeness and informs the reader of the process of annotating or tagging corpora in order to perform complex calculations. A discussion of various types of corpora, for example specialized, spoken, written, and multilingual corpora, is followed by an explanatory section on corpus software and analysis. Baker calls upon examples from corpora of British English to efficiently demonstrate various techniques of analysis such as keyword and collocate analysis.

In Chapter Six, *Discourse-Analytic Approaches to Text and Talk*, Judith Baxter presents a brief history on the use of discourse analysis within the greater realm linguistic research that serves to provide insight into the present-day interest in the field. Baxter provides a thorough discussion on four approaches of particular interest for current research: Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Feminist Post-structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) and discusses the relationship of these four approaches by schematizing them in terms of the micro and macro analytical properties they manifest in their approach to examining sociolinguistic interactions. Baxter presents FPDA as an interplay between the micro and macro levels of analysis and takes the discussion of the micro-macro dichotomy further by questioning the value of approaches that subscribe exclusively to either approach, proposing instead the multiperspectival approach of FPDA.

Chapter Seven, *Linguistic Ethnography*, begins with a thorough definition of the topic and focuses on the role of linguistic ethnography in interactional studies and literacy research. Angela Creese introduces the reader to key issues such as the current debate on the potential of linguistic ethnography as an essential tool in interdisciplinary research. She explores the benefits of integrating linguistic ethnography with other methods such as conversation analysis to reveal the subtle shifts and sequences in the organization of interactional features of conversation that are difficult to obtain in a single-mode approach. Creese describes different methods of data collection, such as fieldnotes, interactional transcripts, and discusses criticisms of the ethnography as narrow realist texts that present single-authored, non contradictory accounts. She closes by advocating for team ethnography as a means

of circumventing these shortcomings by allowing different views, observations, and social positions into the production of ethnographic accounts.

The eighth chapter, *Contemplating Interviews and Focus Groups*, provides the reader a brief explanation of these methods in linguistic research. Nigel Edley and Lia Litosseliti choose not to provide information on how to conduct interviews and focus groups and analyze resulting data; instead they refer readers to their list of suggested readings at the end of the chapter for practical guidance. In its place, they explore the current debate on the merits of the usage of interviews and focus groups in linguistic research. Edley and Litosseliti adopt a constructivist stance towards implementing interviews and focus groups in linguistic research, arguing that these tools maintain effectiveness when utilized and understood as interactional events in which the interviewer plays a participatory role. Although they clearly advocate for the usage of interviews and focus groups in linguistic study, Edley and Litosseliti provide an extensive critical review of their strengths and weaknesses.

In Chapter Nine, *Multimodal Analysis: Key Issues*, Jeff Bezemer and Carey Jewitt explore various approaches to the implementation of multimodality in linguistic research. They establish key definitions for the reader and highlight different modes that are used to make meaning beyond language, such as speech, gesture, gaze, and image, and discuss how these modes can be viewed analytically. Bezemer and Jewitt provide a helpful step-by-step descriptive account of the social semiotic approach to multimodal research. They exemplify these steps with recent case studies featuring the modes of speech and text within social semiotic studies of classroom interaction and textbooks, respectively. Bezemer and Jewitt close with an acknowledgement of the potential benefits and limitations to multimodal research.

The tenth chapter, *Narrative Analysis in Linguistic Research*, opens with a thorough overview by Julio C. Gimenez, providing an explanatory account of narratives, narrative networks, and narrative research. He provides insight into how narratives have traditionally been analyzed within the field of linguistics, and argues that a sociolinguistic analysis should not only examine the formal elements of narratives but also the sociolinguistic elements that surround them, in order to fully understand the social phenomena reflected in the narrative itself. This highly descriptive chapter not only discusses the theoretical principles of narrative networks but also guides the reader through the process of their design an analysis. Gimenez concludes with a call to action for researchers to expand the network of narrative texts locally and globally. Gimenez advocates the adoption to the analysis of narratives that focuses not only the text itself but on external mechanisms involved in their production.

Although chapters do make explicit reference to one another, either by introducing a subsequent chapter or briefly summarizing a key fact from the preceding

chapter, at times the sequencing of the chapters fails to achieve coherence. For example in Chapter Two, Quantitative, Qualitative, or Both? Combining Methods in Linguistic Research, Jo Angouri assumes a sophisticated reader with a thorough understanding of the intricacies of the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research. The novice researcher will have to wait until Chapter Three, Quantitative Methods: Concepts, Frameworks and Issues to obtain a thorough, accurate, and accessible explanation of the two methodological frameworks by Sebastian M. Rasinger. This slight issue highlights the question of the book's target readership. Although Litosseliti maintains that this book will appeal to both the novice and the expert researcher, newcomers may feel overwhelmed by the extensive discussion and critical engagement of the debate between quantitative and qualitative research, or between micro and macro analysis. However the experienced researcher may find the extensive key definitions and illustrative examples redundant at best. Although Chapters Two, Seven, and Eight are clearly intended for an experienced audience, by and large, *Research Methods in Linguistics* is better suited for the beginning-level linguistics student, supplemented by materials suggested by Litosseliti herself such as Wray and Bloomer (2006) and Dörnyei (2007). Much of this book provides up-to-date examples and practical guidance that is sure to engage the reader and entice a genesis of linguistic research.

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