A Review of Alison Mackey and Susan Gass's Textbook Entitled "Second Language Research: Methodology and Design" Published by Routledge

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Book Summary

Second Language Research: Methodology and Design (Third Edition) is a comprehensive resource for students and researchers conducting studies on second language learning. It deals with the basics of the field as well as the broader issues in applied linguistics.

Content Evaluation

Reorganizations and updates of the present volume are due to the modifications and developments in the field of second language research. As one of the changes in the third edition, the removal of a chapter about statistical analysis is a result of the views and recommendations of the readers of the previous edition of the book.

"Time-to-think' and "time-to-do" activities throughout the book, along with the exercises at the end of each chapter, challenge the minds of novice researchers and pave the way for a better understanding of the concepts related to methodology and design in second and foreign language research.

As the authors claim, the book's outlook on the realm of second language research is inclusive: All the issues related to research on the subjects such as second and foreign language research, child and adult language learning, bilingual and multilingual language learning, as well as the acquisition of third and subsequent languages are addressed in the book. The authors have designed the information in the book so that the instructors and researchers can, according to the aims of the course, skip some chapters or parts of the chapters.

The comprehensive and renovated glossary, which provides the students with more than 400 entries, helps them use the volume as a rich resource book. The book is designed into 10 chapters:

In the first chapter, research is introduced as a systematic approach to finding answers to questions. This chapter introduces the fundamentals of second-language research and distinguishes different types of research; that is quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. While reading the chapter, the researcher will be acquainted with the rights of participants in research which is a part of the ethical issues of research. Given that most studies in second language research have humans as their subjects, the researcher needs to be aware of the ethical issues such as getting informed consents, IRBs, and protocols. As the core issue in the first chapter, according to Mackey and Gass, ethical practices have a primary role in second language research. Whereas most researchers do not pay much attention to these issues, the writers of the book did the right thing to draw attention to them.

The second chapter of the third edition has been extensively updated in comparison to the second edition of the book. Considering the feedback on the previous editions, the writers have decided to write a separate chapter on research reporting, research questions, and replication in the last edition. After studying the second chapter, the reader will acquire a general view of the basic structure of a research paper and its typical format. Since one of the most important and most difficult parts of any research is identifying pertinent research questions, this chapter guides novice researchers through finding and developing appropriate research questions. This chapter ends with a section about replication which has an essential role in second-language research.

Chapter three begins with a discussion on the significance of data collection measures. The writers mention that this chapter only includes some of the elicitation measures as a comprehensive list would be impossible to make. The data collection measures are classified into three groups, related to psycholinguistics-based research, interaction-based research, and strategy-based research. Pilot testing has been introduced as a tool for assessing the feasibility and usefulness of the data collection methods in the last section of chapter three.

Chapter four reviews coding in second language research. Careful coding is presented as one of the critical components of good research, and different procedures involved in data coding are discussed in this chapter. Considering both quantitative and qualitative research concerns, Chapter four presents examples of some standard models and custom-made coding systems. Using coding software is recommended if the coordination between the requirements of the researcher and the software is provided. The chapter comes to an end, answering the questions of how much to code and when to make coding decisions.

In Chapter five, the writers discuss the significance of recognizing, processing, and controlling variables, as well as different types of variables. Internal and external validity are introduced as the most common areas of concern. In contrast, other types of validity, including content validity, face validity, construct validity, criterion-related validity, and predictive validity, are dealt with in turn. Another central issue of second language research presented in chapter five is reliability, which refers to the consistency of the results. Also, three types of reliability testing which are test-retest, the equivalence of forms of a test, and internal consistency, are described.

Chapter six deals with quantitative research and its most typical design types, including correlational and experimental designs (repeated measures, factorial, and time-series). Another way of verifying findings, which is through research syntheses and meta-analyses, is the closing subject of this chapter. The merits and weaknesses of qualitative and interpretive research and the differences between such research and other approaches are the opening discussions of the seventh chapter. Case studies, Ethnographies, Interviews, Observational techniques, Verbal protocols, Diaries, and Journals as the most common data-gathering techniques, and the need to triangulate findings at different levels are explained. Mackey and Gass conclude that the qualitative approach can supplement positivistic approaches and that all types of inquiry are practical means to uncover data.

Chapter eight begins with a general discussion of the features of classroom research. In this chapter, second language learning theory and practice are entangled, and the writers' center of attentions are on the features of classroom research, especially observation schemes for educator and learner collaboration, and the logistics of data collection. Studying this chapter, the reader will get information about obtrusive observers, the Hawthorne Effect, obtaining

permission, debriefing the instructor, and detailed explanation of coding schemes, each with examples, and sample tables. Under the conclusion topic, Mackey and Gass mention researchers and language educators' teamwork to shed light on the hidden features of second language learning.

Chapter nine investigates the reasons for the popularity of conjoining quantitative and qualitative research in recent years. Following the social science research, in this edition, the writers prefer the term mixed methods to refer to this innovative area of research, instead of the term multiple or split methods used in previous editions. Five different designs of mixed method research are presented elaborately under two categories of concurrent and sequential designs. Much of the last chapter focuses on the prescriptive necessities of finalizing and reporting quantitative research, as well as preparing qualitative reports. It is a comprehensive guide for novice researchers, who would like to publish articles, to become familiar with the elements of reporting research. The extensive report checklist provided in the chapter can help evaluate reporting before submitting it for publication. The helpful guides provided in this chapter increase the quality and chance of articles to be published.

This book is a valuable and exciting volume for students and researchers, especially novice ones. In the third edition of Second Language Research, Mackey and Gass provide the readers with a clear and step-by-step guide for conducting the research procedure, and students can use practical examples in the "time to think" and "time to do" boxes in the book and appendices of forms and documents available to do their research.

This book provides a sufficient amount and level of discussions on L2 research methodologies and is one of the best resources for learning the second language research process for graduate students and novice researchers in Second Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics. Well-designed and well-organized chapters, intra and inter-chapter consistency, logical sequence of subjects, understandable explanations, suggesting alternative resources, sufficient real examples, and extra activities provided with possible responses, as well as a concise list of significant points at the end of each chapter, are some of the outstanding features of the book. It can be assumed that writing a research paper or thesis will be much easier after reading this book. However, as the writers advise readers in the preface, it is better to supplement this book with one of the appropriate statistics books available.

References

Mackey A., & Gass, S. (2021). *Second language research: methodology and design* (3rd Ed.). New York: Routledge.