

A Review of Zoltán Dörnyei Textbook Entitled “Research Methods in Applied linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies” Published by Oxford University Press

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Book Summary

“Research Methods in Applied linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies” presents a comprehensive overview of research methodologies in applied linguistics. In this book, Dörnyei aims “to educate the new generation of good enough researchers” as it equips the readers with both knowledge and skills required to planning and conducting quality research studies as well as for becoming knowledgeable consumers of research. Beyond paradigmatic compartmentalization, the book outlines the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches along with the major issues and challenges a language researcher may encounter. In terms of structure, the book is divided into 14 chapters that are organized into five parts. Supported by the expertise of Dörnyei in the field of applied linguistics research, the book aims to be practical and realistic in its approach. When it comes to readership, this concise and accessible overview of research methodologies is a must-read for researchers, specialists in the field of linguistics, and graduate students interested in conducting research. It is a treasure for the researchers in the field of applied linguistics as it provides valuable information for novices and reassures less novice researchers.

Content Evaluation

The key issues in research methodology are discussed in Part One. On the introductory chapter a description of what makes a good researcher is provided. After a brief overview on Dörnyei’s approach to research methodology, a list of selected research resources for social sciences, linguistics and especially applied linguistics are included. In Chapter 2 the distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches is explained in a nutshell from three perspectives of “ideological differences,” “categorization differences,” and “differences in the perception of individual diversity” (P.25). In addition, three positions regarding the qualitative and quantitative differences are highlighted. There is also a historical overview, a description of the main characteristics, as well as virtues and drawbacks of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research. Chapter 3 tackles the quality criteria in quantitative, qualitative and mixed method research along with the ethical issues involved in educational research. The author also explains the starting point of a research by adding topics related to research purpose and research question as well as other essentials for launching a study. A discussion of longitudinal and cross-sectional research concludes part one. The definition and purpose of longitudinal study together with longitudinal designs are presented in Chapter 4.

Part two is devoted to the data collection issues. Chapter 5 deals with quantitative data collection starting with sampling in quantitative research. Questionnaire surveys as one of the commonest ways of quantitative data collection is discussed in length followed by an overview on Experimental and Quasi-experimental designs and their strengths and weaknesses. Although Dorneyi focuses on the ways of quantitative data collection in this chapter far from being overwhelming, the readers might find the chapter abridged. Other types of quantitative research design are expected to be presented due to the coverage of Experimental and Quasi experimental research designs. The qualitative data collection is subsumed under Chapter 6. An outright explanation of sampling in qualitative research together with various methodologies including Ethnography, Interviews, Focus group interviews, Introspective methods, Case studies, Diaries and Research journals. In the following succinct chapter, mixed methods research and its purposes and main types in addition to the challenges related to the compatibility of different research paradigms are summarized. Although in such an exemplary research book, a thorough discussion of the ins and outs of mixed method research classifications and designs are expected, the author does not dwell on the issue a lot. Since “the foreign/ second language classroom is a primary research site in applied linguistic investigation” (P.176), the final chapter is dedicated to classroom research. After a summary of the origins and varieties of classroom research, the author provides a discussion on classroom observation, Mixed method classroom research and action research.

Having collected data through a variety of ways, the next step is to analyze it. Part 3 focuses on data analysis. It begins with quantitative data analysis which includes issues related to statistics. the chapter introduces Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and it includes manuals for conducting some tests by the software. The chapter also guides researchers, especially novices, on how to prepare the data for analysis through coding, inputting, data screening and cleaning and data manipulation. There is a rather comprehensive discussion on key statistical concepts and many different parametric and non-parametric tests along with advanced statistical procedures in this chapter in a reader friendly language which goes well for an introductory research book. Chapter 10, qualitative data analysis, recaps four main principles of qualitative data analysis which are central to the understanding of the data analysis process. Apart from “grounded theory” which is discussed more thoroughly and in depth, the chapter presents the phases of qualitative content analysis including transcription, pre-coding, coding, growing ideas, interpreting the data and drawing conclusions. The final part of the chapter lists the most frequently used softwares for qualitative data analysis focusing on CAQDAS, its methodological merits and possible dangers. The final chapter of this part is dedicated to data analysis in mixed method research. This mini chapter deals with “specific mixed methods analytical strategies that attempts to get more out of the data than would be possible by using QUAL and QUAN techniques separately” (P. 268).

Since the importance of interpreting and communicating of data cannot be understated, Part 4 is dedicated to reporting research results. Chapter 12 addresses two functions of academic writing along with the common components of a quantitative report, drawing on the APA style manual principals. The author also underscores the user friendly methods of data presentation in this chapter. A brief discussion on the similarities between quantitative, qualitative and mixed method report is used as a starting point of chapter 13 which is followed by the main differences between these research report. The structure of qualitative report is offered in this chapter. Moreover, key principals of writing mixed method research along with its challenges and

advantages are provided. This invaluable part is likely to appeal to researchers particularly novices that are the major audience. However, additional improvements might be made by including more illustrations and snapshots of exemplar research reports in order to make the guide more practical.

Part 5 which is entitled as summing up, recaps the research issues with an attempt to answer one of the crucial questions in research that is “How to choose the appropriate research method?”. As the only chapter in part 4, chapter 14 concludes the book with several recommendations and considerations that might affect the procedures of conducting a research.

Overall, notwithstanding minor shortcomings, this pre-eminent book serves as an enlightening and invaluable resource for both graduate students and novice researchers. On the whole, as a practical and accessible guidebook for scholars in the fields of linguistic research, it is apparent that the book has surely achieved its purpose. Having read this book, writing a research report, thesis, or article will become much easier.

References

Dörnyei., Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.