


An Introduction to Second Language Research Methods: Design and Data

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An Introduction to Second Language Research Methods: Design and Data		
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An Introduction to Second Language Research Methods: Design and Data is a useful textbook for both teachers and novice researchers in second language education. Based on my personal experience using the book in a course on research methods by the author, Dale T. Griffiee, the book will serve well both masters' and doctoral students as an introduction to key issues in second language research. The author provides ample practical advice as well as basic concepts, assumptions, and terms that are essential for those who seek for guidance in conducting research. Also, the text itself is easy to follow and enjoyable with a number of examples that clarify some difficult concepts. Therefore, many instructors teaching an introductory course on second language education as well as students who are beginning in the field will find this book helpful.

Designed to be used in classroom settings, the book is largely divided by three parts: introduction to research (Part I: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2), research designs (Part II: Introduction, Chapters 3-6), and data collection instruments (Part III: Introduction, Chapters 7-10). Part I holistically looks at a research process from the very beginning (how to get research ideas) to the end (how to report data). Parts II and III introduce and discuss research designs and data collection instruments that are most frequently used in second language studies. In Part II, Griffiee effectively describes four research

designs—Survey, Experimental, Case Study, and Action Research Designs, delving into different assumptions and goals of each research design. Part III focuses on data collection instruments, namely, Questionnaires, Interviews, Observations, Diaries and Journals. Griffie starts off with Part III rightly pointing out a misconception that most of novice researcher have—mistaking research designs for data collection instruments and equating the two. More specifically, the author explains that since many students are familiar with data collection, they often overlook a research design in which the data will become meaningful. Similarly, the book highlights reliability and validity of data in one's research, nicely summarizing a number of ways to ensure and measure reliability and validity.

One of many useful features of the book is its preview and discussion questions. Each chapter includes preview and discussion questions at the beginning and toward the end. The follow-up questions can help student readers approach to the topic more easily. Also, these questions provide an authentic context where students put themselves in researchers' shoes and actively engage in research settings and think critically of any ramification that they might encounter during their research.

In addition to its design well fit for the classroom setting, the book is comprehensive and yet simple for beginning scholars to understand. Griffie draws on a wide range of studies about key terms to show various views from classic and current literature in the field. This helps readers to comprehend developments of terms and concepts in both a diachronic and a synchronic manner. Glossaries of key terms following at the end of each chapter also provide immediate and additional help for those who are not familiar with technical terms needed to understand the text. The short annotated bibliographies that Griffie provides at the end of each chapter are another excellent element of the book.

Another useful feature of the book is the author's tips on working in certain research design, data collection instruments, analyzing the data, and reporting the data. While discussing various aspects of research, Griffie constantly provides a number of authentic examples from his own experience as a researcher and teacher and shares a lot of practical advice. The tips given in the textbook on preparing and choosing a particular research design, collecting data, and analyzing them are invaluable in that the advice can be only earned from extensive experience that many of beginning graduate students would lack.

Despite many positive points mentioned above, the book might not be satisfactory for those who seek for more thorough information on data analysis, particularly analysis on quantitative data. While Griffie discusses basic descriptive statistics on a conceptual level as a tool to analyze quantitative data such as data from a questionnaire, the book does not go in-depth exploring various statistic measurements that could be helpful such as ANOVA or MANOVA. As Griffie prepared for additional materials to discuss significance testing in addition to this textbook, instructors who would like to use this textbook might need to find another source on tutorials for basic psychometric measurements to further discuss quantitative data analysis. In this sense, another chapter on hypothesis testing will be a great addition of the book.

Considering the overall organization of the book, one also might wonder whether it would serve readers better if chapter 2. (Structure of a Research Paper) were moved to the end of the textbook. This chapter is certainly informative as writing a paper is how most of researchers report results of their research and data. However, the readers might expect chapters that come up later sooner since the focus of the book is “design and data.” Starting Part II earlier in the book than the current organization might help engage the readers more in the book. Simple language, practical tips on researchers’ concerns on how to selectively utilize different research methods, and authentic examples with different research designs and data collection methods used make Griffie’s book a great research guide for beginning researchers and an excellent reading material that instructors can rely on.

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