

***Second Language Research: Methodology and Design***

**Alison Mackey and Susan M. Gass**  
**Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.**  
**Publishers**

**New Jersey 2005**

**Pages: 405**

**ISBN 0-8058-4249-7**

**Cost: \$ 45**

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*Second Language Research: Methodology and Design* is an introduction to research types and corresponding concepts which makes methodologies and designs tangible to readers. It is a book to help novice and experienced researchers as well as to serve as a course book for MA students of TEFL and a reference book for PhD students. The book enjoys many advantages changing it to an innovation

Simple language and a step by step procedure make the book a practical guide to researchers. Also providing true examples and follow up questions and activities make it a textbook for students. The authors had considered novice researchers in mind and explained key concepts, and provided concrete examples, follow-up questions, discussions and practicable activities.

Including a detailed glossary helps researchers refer to the book as a quick reference, and providing summaries and checklists encourage readers to self-evaluate during all steps of a research project. Consistency among chapters and the logical matching lead the chapters from preliminary issues such as research types, data gathering, common data collection measures, research variables, designing a qualitative and quantitative research, coding, and analyzing data, to the ending stage in reporting research.

Each chapter appears with an introduction, explanations with examples, tables and figures, footnotes, summary, conclusion, follow up questions and activities.

The book is designed in 10 chapters:

The first chapter introduces preliminary concepts of research, different parts in a research paper, and research questions and hypotheses illuminating the nature of research in second language teaching. The authors distinguish between qualitative and quantitative

research methods as two ends of the continuum. Mackey and Gass continue encouraging researchers to write research reports following the APA manual.

Chapter 2 covers the issues related to data gathering. Confidentiality of data and consideration of ethical issues in second language research is a matter of focus in this chapter. The authors strongly suggest that researchers provide participants with consent forms. They present some sample forms and a checklist for obtaining informed consents in the appendices.

Chapter 3 focuses on “pilot Study” and familiarizing the researchers with a variety of research areas and data collection techniques each with examples. In continuing the chapter, the authors compare different techniques and discuss on their similarities and differences. Furthermore, some Websites and related software are introduced to encourage researchers to enjoy technology.

Chapter 4 addresses some essential factors while conducting a research project such as variable types, validity, and reliability.

“How to design a qualitative or quantitative research” might be a problem of many novice researchers. Chapters 5 and 6 specifically introduce research materials, research designs, finalizing the project in quantitative and/or qualitative research types to the researchers. Each design is followed by a concrete example, related tables and figures. Similarly, this chapter ends with a summary of discussed materials. Chapter 6 addresses some issues in qualitative research including the nature of the qualitative research, detailed definitions and its differences with quantitative approach. Mackey and Gass represent a table (pages 165& 166) from Chaudron, C. (2000) on the distinctions between these two research methods. The authors believe: “The growing practice in utilizing qualitative and quantitative data illustrates the fact that these two research approaches should not be viewed as opposing poles in a dichotomy, but rather as complementary means of investigating complex phenomena in second language acquisition”(Page 164). The chapter continues with surveying the most commonly used qualitative data collection methods such as: Ethnographies, interviews, Diaries, Case studies, and Observational techniques each with its advantages, caveats, and data analysis procedures. Finally, the authors also describe the role of quantification in qualitative research.

Chapter 7 encourages teachers to investigate on how languages may best be taught. In addition, it covers some types of classroom observation schemes with examples for each technique. The book takes all detailed points into consideration as; obtrusive observers, the Hawthorne Effect, obtaining permission, debriefing the instructor, or detailed explanation of coding schemes each with an example, sample tables, advantages and caveats in order to take the attention of researchers to the importance of the issue. However Mackey and Gass on page 212 point out that they are not intended to discourage novice or experienced researchers by providing detailed explanations and various techniques, but to invite them to be flexible and patient toward unexpected problems when doing classroom research.

Chapter 8 is devoted to coding the data, the modification of appropriate coding, and implementing coding. A variety of sample transcription conventions, and sample nominal coding appear on pages 224 – 237, and a classroom interaction coding scheme on page 239. Similarly, the chapter invites the reader to use technology in transcribing oral data. However, all considerations are made to obtain permissions from all individuals participated in the research. Among coding systems and categories the authors recommend the most common systems including T-Unit, SOC, and CHAT. Finally, Mackey and Gass emphasize on the importance of a pilot study to avoid potential problems in the data of the study.

Chapter 9 deals with Analyzing Quantitative data using descriptive and inferential statistics. Each issue is accompanied with sample tables and figures. The authors recommend researchers study statistics or consult statistical experts as a prerequisite for this chapter. This chapter comprises many tables such as: Sample Mean and Standard Deviation, Sample of expression of probability levels, Examples for Type I and Type II errors, Sample of an ANOVA result, sample of a post-Hoc table, Summary of different types of second language data together with possible statistical techniques, a partial display of the distribution of t, and Chi Square along with some figures for correlational representations. Although the readers would enjoy if a perfect presentation of table for critical values, were presented in appendices.

The last chapter deals with the final stages of a research project. The data analysis would be meaningless without reporting to an audience. The authors seriously emphasize on reporting the findings of research in this chapter. They effectively lead researchers toward reporting their data focusing on qualitative, quantitative, or combined method designs. There are some examples extracted from a variety of researches for each step as Discussions, Limitations, Further research and Conclusion sections. Also a table is presented to help researchers to distinguish the organization of final sections in language research journal articles.

The book comes to the final sections effectively as previous chapters. A checklist is also introduced to researchers to carefully evaluate the issue before submitting the paper for publication. Mackey and Gass suggest that researchers choose suitable journal for publishing their paper, because different journals require different styles in writing.

The book presents a valuable and practical source of reference to all researchers including novice and experienced or those who are interested to know about research methodology and design. To sum up, it can be said that the book is an excellent piece of source because of its:

- Practical nature,
- Easy language,
- Easy to follow chapters,
- Many examples, Summaries, Tables, and Figures,

- Appendices including: different samples for Consent forms, Institutional Review Board Application form, Transcription Conventions, and a table of commonly-used formula in statistics,
- Employing technology: introducing many types of Software and Websites,
- Thick descriptions by providing a glossary at the end,
- Distinguishing qualitative research from quantitative or a combined method,
- Employing other sources to clarify each section,
- Employing consistency inter chapters and intra chapters and creating a logical match among them,
- Comparing and contrasting similar designs of methodologies, or similar items.

The quality of the *Second Language Research* benefits from Mackey and Gass's long experience of doing research in second language research, which helped them to create such an innovation.

To conclude, novice and experienced researchers will find the book an easy to access and a rich guide in designing, conducting, reporting, and submitting their research project as well as MA students in TEFL who will find it as one of their textbooks. Therefore "Second Language Research" is recommended to all those interested academics in research methodology and design in second languages although the title of the book itself selects its readers.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mackey and Gass for such a great job.

<p>Fariba Haghighi is an MA graduate in TEFL and teaches at Azad and Elmi-Karbordi Universities. She has taught Translation courses as well as General English courses. Also she has conducted and presented some research in Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education. Her research interest include: second language acquisition, ESL teacher education, and applied linguistics.</p>
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