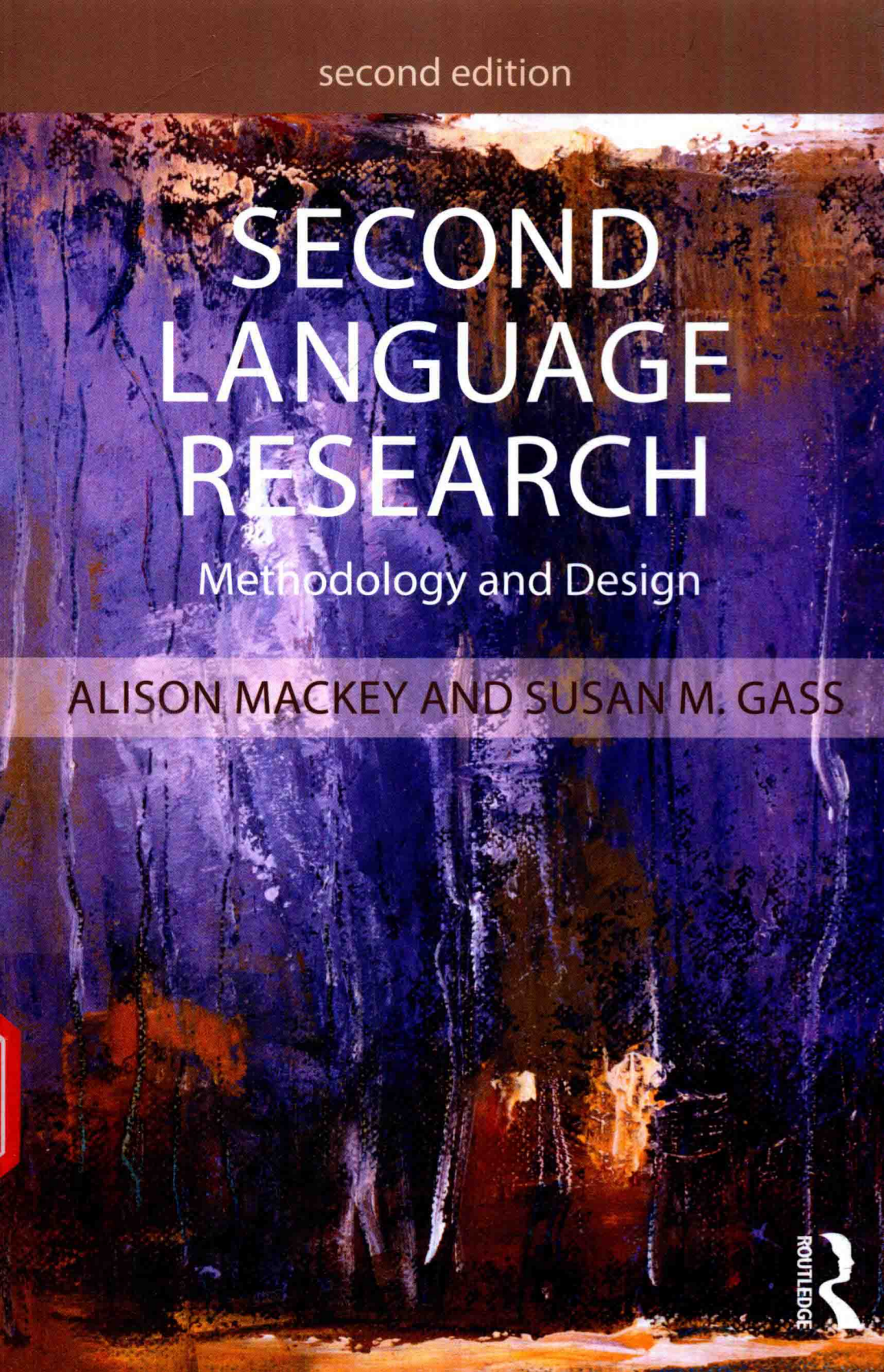
second edition

SECOND LANGUAGE RESEARCH

Methodology and Design

ALISON MACKEY AND SUSAN M. GASS



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Methodology and Design

Second Edition

Alison Mackey and Susan M. Gass

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Second Language Research

In this second edition of the best-selling *Second Language Research*, Alison Mackey and Susan M. Gass continue to guide students step by step through conducting the second language research process with a clear and comprehensive overview of the core issues in second language research. Supported by a wealth of data examples from published studies, the book examines questions of what is meant by research and what defines good research questions, covering such topics as basic research principles and data collection methods, designing a quantitative research study, and concluding and reporting research findings. Supplementary materials, including an extensive glossary and appendices with helpful materials that students can use in conducting their own studies, serve as useful reference tools, with suggestions on how to get research published re-emphasizing the book's practical how-to approach. The second edition of *Second Language Research* is the ideal resource for understanding the second language research process for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and professionals in Second Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics.

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Preface

This book is designed to be used as a text for introductory courses on research methodology and design, as well as for other courses in second language studies, where there is an emphasis on research. It can also be used as a general resource book by people carrying out second language research.

The first edition was published a decade ago. This new edition provides updates to reflect changes and developments in the field, together with some internal reorganization, and a new chapter on mixed-methods research, reflecting the current state of the art in the field. We have also included some new features to improve its pedagogically friendly nature, including boxed "time to think" and "time to do" suggestions throughout each chapter, to supplement the exercises at the end of each chapter. Throughout the revisions, we retained our primary goal of providing an introductory text for novice researchers. We explain key concepts and provide concrete examples wherever possible for those with little or no research experience. Exercises are provided throughout the text to allow students to think about the concepts introduced and to get hands-on practice at doing the various activities involved in research. We assume that our readers will have some background in the general topic of second language learning. The discussion and data-based questions throughout each chapter and the activities at the end of each chapter are aimed to promote better understanding of the concepts as readers work through the book. We also include a detailed and updated glossary to aid researchers who prefer to use the book more as a resource than a text.

We take a broad and inclusive view of "second language" research. For this reason, our examples reflect concepts from a variety of perspectives in the second language field. The book is designed to address issues important for research in both second and foreign language settings, for child as well as adult

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second language learning, for research on bilingual and multilingual language learning, as well as the acquisition of third and subsequent languages. We have attempted to cast a similarly wide net in our coverage of topics; for example, we include research design issues that range from the use of highly experimental data elicitation tools, to qualitative concerns, as well as teacher-initiated research in classrooms. We also include topics of recent interest in the field, such as dealing with university, institutional, and school review boards that grant permission for data gathering from human subjects, including recent concerns about the replication of research. Although our goal is to acquaint readers with the basic issues, problems, and solutions involved in conducting second language research, we believe that some of the content of the book is also relevant to a wider applied linguistics context. In other words, some issues of design are common to many areas of applied linguistics research, even though the examples may not always be. We also recognize that some chapters might not be relevant to all courses on second language research. The book is designed so that chapters or parts of chapters can be skipped. The most obvious example is Chapter 2, which deals with obtaining consent and obtaining permission from institutional review boards. Not all countries or research contexts require stringent procedures, and sections of this chapter, while important for research in some parts of the world, are less relevant for research in other countries.

Although the book focuses specifically on issues of research design and methodology, we have included one chapter that focuses on introductory statistics. Because the field of statistics is so broad and has its own specialized texts and courses, we provide only a simple overview of some of the basic concepts in this area. For those who intend to conduct detailed statistical analyses, we recommend coursework, expert consultations, and other comparable means of learning about advanced statistics, including statistics textbooks. We do not include specific recommendations about particular statistics texts because the selection of the text depends on the focus of the research problem. Second language research can focus on educational or pedagogical practice or on theory building; it can address issues from a variety of perspectives, including psychology, sociology, linguistics, and bilingualism. We suggest that users of this book consult one of the many appropriate statistics books available.

It is always difficult to decide on the order in which to present information. One researcher's ordering of material and chapters might not coincide with the preferences of another researcher or reader. We have placed information on data gathering at the beginning of the book due to the fact that our experience in teaching research methods courses over the years has led us to believe that researchers need to think about where data come from at the outset of a project, and to think about how data are gathered before becoming immersed in some

of the more technical issues of design. In this book, then, issues of data gathering serve as an anchor for later chapters. Of course, when using the book as a text, we imagine that instructors will adapt the book and reorder chapters to match their particular syllabus and preference for presentation. For this reason, we have made sure, where possible, that each chapter can work as a stand-alone introduction to the area it covers.

We are grateful to many individuals for their support in this project that ended up, like most projects of this sort, having a longer history than we had originally anticipated. For both editions, we first thank the many students we have had in different classes over the years who have not hesitated to provide feedback on our various syllabi and our sequencing of materials, as well as the designs of our own research. The following individuals provided various kinds of invaluable assistance and feedback on the first edition, and we recognize them here: Rebekha Abbuhl, Rebecca Adams, Zoltán Dörnyei, Rod Ellis, Seon Jeon, Kendall King, Patsy Lightbown, Kimberly McDonough, Kara Morgan-Short, Jenefer Philp, Charlene Polio, Rebecca Sachs, Ildikó Svetics, Ian Thornton, and Harriet Wood. In this second edition, we were fortunate, once again, to have the invaluable input and help of our research assistants: Lara Bryfonski and Alex Marsters at Georgetown University, and Lorena Valmori at Michigan State University. Ina Choi of Michigan State University helped with NVivo examples. Luke Plonsky also helped with many parts of this revised edition. His input was essential in helping us to see how to present material better and even to help us better understand particular concepts. After many years of using this book in our own courses and hearing from students (and faculty) around the world, we have made adjustments to this edition based on their comments. Four external reviews of the first edition were commissioned, with extensive comments on the book, some dealing with ways to update the manuscript, some with ways to make things clearer, and some with ordering of material. You know who you are (we do not), and we thank you sincerely for your input. You will undoubtedly see your many helpful suggestions reflected in this edition.

Finally, Leah Babb-Rosenfeld and Elysse Preposi of Routledge have been unwavering in their support of this book and enormously patient awaiting this revised edition. We are grateful for the general support and encouragement we consistently receive from everyone at Routledge.

Alison Mackey
Georgetown, Washington, DC
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