

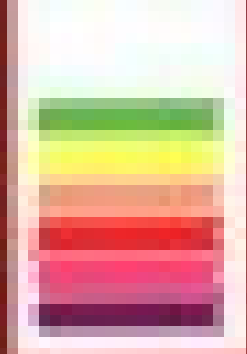


# Second Language Research Methods

# 第二语言研究方法

Herbert W. Seliger  
Elana Shohamy

上海外语教育出版社 



Second Language  
Research Methods  
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牛津应用语言学丛书

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*Herbert W. Seliger* 著  
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## 出版前言

本书是一部指导第二语言习得和双语研究的学术专著,作者 H·W·塞利格是纽约昆斯学院和纽约市立大学研究生中心的语言学教授,E·肖哈密是特拉维夫大学教育学院的高级讲师。H·G·威多森教授担任应用语言学顾问。该书出版于 1989 年,至 1997 年已重印 3 次。

第二语言习得的研究是一项多学科的研究,涉及语言学、心理语言学、社会语言学、社会学、心理学和教育学等各个研究领域。由于学科侧重点的不同,学者们对第二语言现象提出了不同的观点,采用了多种研究方法。因限于篇幅,作者只选择应用最广泛的第二语言研究步骤来加以讨论,重点放在具有示范性的类型和原则上。本书旨在向读者介绍进行第二语言习得和双语研究的步骤,试图使读者通过书中介绍的范例,掌握在特定而多样化的环境中进行第二语言研究的原则,而后举一反三,针对某一特定课题选择最佳方案实施操作。

本书对如何着手进行第二语言研究提供简单明了、详实全面和具有权威性的指导,既为第二语言研究构建了理论框架,也是如何着手进行具体研究的“工作手册”。

本书的特点在于其实用性,着重培养动手能力。与偏重理论研究的传统语言学或教育学专著相比,书中向读者介绍的第二语言研究方法易于掌握,可操作性强,在一定意义上可谓提供了“手把手”的教学。作者的构思独具匠心。读者可通过书中介绍的示范性研究方法得到感性认识,从而学会如何在不同的环境中、不同年龄的对象中着手进行针对性的研究。作者在每一章的结尾都根据本章的中心思想精心设计了练习题,而且附上简明扼要的小结和参考书目,使读者进一步明确本章的要点,巩固所学的知识。

关于第二语言研究的框架,作者介绍了别具一格的四参量法,或者说四问题法。这四种参量或问题是:(一)使用综合法还是分析法;(二)以描述为目的还是以证明假设为目的;(三)研究范围的控制和调整;(四)数据和数据收集。这些参数在两个层次——概念层次和操作层次上描述了第二语言调研的不同方面。对第一、第二个问题的回答确定了研究的方法和目的;对第三、第四个问题的回答确定了如何根据研究的方法和目的进行研究的策划、数据的收集与分析。四参量法为第二语言研究的描述、分析和评估提供了有效的选择范围,也有助于从客观和全面的角度来看待研究的策划与方法。作者以四参量为依据对研究课题的确定和假想的提出、自然的与实验性的研究、数据收集以及研究手段的有效性等进行了讨论,认为这四种参量概括了第二语言研究的独有的特征。

本书的读者对象为从事第二语言研究的初学者,可供研究生或本科生在学习研究方法和设计课程、特别是在设计第二语言习得、双语和应用语言学课程时使用。

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We wish to thank our respective families for suffering through the birth pangs of this book. We hope they will regard the result as worth the effort.

We would also like to thank our students, who have responded to much of this material and who have taught us much about the problems encountered in the first stages of carrying out research. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the contribution of our fellow second language researchers. May we all continue to learn from each other.



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# Introduction

## What this book is about

It is evident to anyone reading research in second language acquisition, that the field is *inter-disciplinary*. The study of second language acquisition can be linguistic, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, sociological, psychological, and educational. That is, it draws on a wide number of perspectives about the phenomena of second language as well as the research methodology associated with these different disciplines.

We have tried to give equal focus to a variety of approaches to research in this book but realize that we could not hope to describe all the possible methods or all of the possible types of research. We have, therefore, tried to describe what could be considered paradigmatic types and principles of second language research. The possible designs of research in second language are only limited by the ingenuity of the researcher and the conditions under which the research is being conducted.

The purpose of this book is to introduce the process of carrying out research in second language acquisition and bilingualism. The book is aimed at those who are new to second language research, or who may have done some research without guidance. It is intended for graduate and undergraduate students in courses in research methods and design, specifically in second language acquisition, bilingualism, and applied linguistics.

As the reader of this text gains experience in the process of conducting second language research, he or she will discover that such research is conducted in a wide variety of environments, natural and formal, with subjects of different ages and with a wide variety of goals and underlying theories.

The text discusses second language research from the conception of research questions through the development of research designs, data-gathering procedures and data analysis. However, we have not provided recipes for carrying out research but have taken the approach that if the reader understands the *principles* involved in the unique and varied conditions of second language research, he or

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she will be able to analyze a research problem and develop an appropriate methodology and design.

As will be evident from a review of the table of contents, this book does not deal with statistics except in a very limited way in Chapter 9. Statistical procedures should not be confused with the thought that must go into research method and design. We felt at the outset that what is not needed is another book on statistics. Several good texts on statistics are already in existence and we have given a reference list of some of them in the Appendix. Chapter 9 gives an overview of some of the more common data-analysis procedures which are used in second language acquisition but we strongly recommend that anyone intending to pursue second language research acquire a more in-depth knowledge of statistical procedures for research.

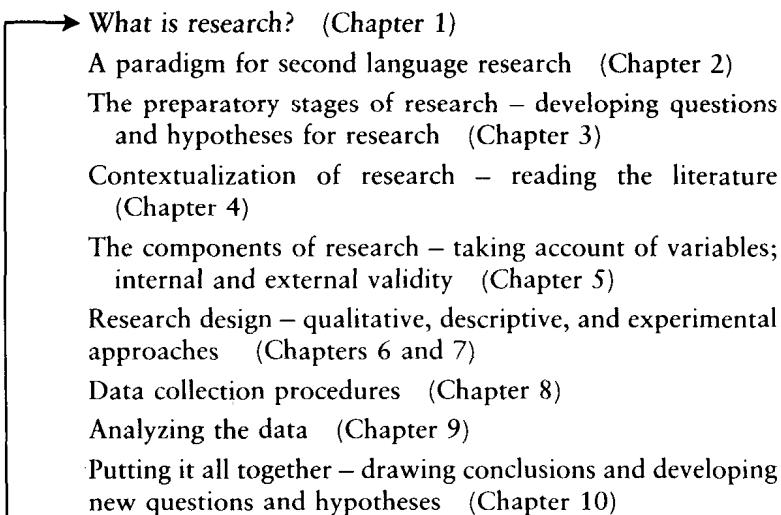
The table of contents reveals that we have focused on the preparatory stages of conducting research, since we feel that it is only with careful and fastidious preparation that good research can be carried out. It has been our experience both as active researchers in second language and as members of thesis and dissertation committees, that the first stages of exploring the ideas for research and developing the structure of the actual study are, without doubt, the most important. To paraphrase the Buddha's teachings: if the builder of a house finishes his work with the finest roof but the house rests on a poorly constructed foundation, the roof and all that is under it will collapse.

### **The research cycle**

A common thread which unifies this text is the idea that research is *cyclical*. It is an ongoing activity which is never totally completed because each piece of research raises additional questions for more research. Either the results lead the investigator on to related questions or the original question or hypothesis with which the research began cannot be answered or confirmed and the investigation must begin again but with a gain in knowledge and experience.

We have tried to give expression to the essentially cyclical nature of research in the way we have structured this book. It has been organized so as to reflect the cyclical nature of the research process itself.

## The research cycle and the organization of the book



## The parameters of second language research

The conceptual foundation of this book is found in Chapter 2, where we describe a research framework consisting of four parameters that encompass the unique features of research in second language. These parameters describe different aspects of second language investigation and constitute a useful taxonomy for categorizing, describing, and evaluating second language research. Throughout the text, we refer back to these four parameters because they enable us to view research design and method from a more unifying and coherent perspective.

## How to use the book

Each chapter contains a set of *activities* based on the content of the chapter and intended to concretize some of the main ideas of that chapter. Carrying out second language research requires thinking *and* doing. In this sense, the chapters, with their accompanying activities, are meant to complement each other so that the text becomes both a discussion of second language research and a 'field

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manual' for research-like activities. Some of these activities require the reader or student-researcher to consult other texts and journals. Still others require a 'hands on' approach to constructing designs, developing instruments, and so on. These activities are intended to supplement the content of the chapters in which they occur, and to help the reader to think and experience rather than simply read and go on to the next chapter.

# 1 What is research?

Race made a slight grimace. 'I'm used to that. It often seems to me that's all detective work is, wiping out your false starts and beginning again.' 'Yes, it is very true that. And it is just what some people will not do. They conceive a certain theory, and everything has to fit into that theory. If one little fact will not fit it, they throw it aside. But it is always the facts that will not fit in that are significant. . .'

(Agatha Christie: *Death on the Nile* 1938)

## Introduction

One might say that knowing how to look at research problems and how to carry out research is related to the state of mind of the researcher. The state of mind of the researcher reflects, to some extent, the world in which he or she lives. What researchers believe, what they accept as forms of knowledge, is often a reflection of their social and cultural context. While we would like to think that research is objective and always seeks to show the 'truth' or the 'facts' about some phenomenon which is being investigated, we are not always conscious of the influences around us.

We are living in what we think is a period of scientific objectivity. However, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Galileo, Copernicus, and Einstein all felt this way about their own times and accepted as scientific facts things which later generations would disprove or criticize.

This chapter will be concerned with establishing some ways of thinking about research in general and about second language research in particular, by discussing the following questions:

- How is research similar to and different from naturally occurring cognitive processes involved in learning?
- What are the differences between conclusions reached on the basis of 'common sense' and intuition on the one hand, and scientific procedures on the other?
- And, finally, when we have reached our conclusions, how do we know if they are reliable? That is, how do we know when we really know something?



## Research as a natural process

### Research and reality

Many of us have images of the researcher dressed in a white smock, spending hours in a laboratory or facing a blackboard filled with arcane mathematical notation, suddenly crying out with great emotion, 'Eureka!' and making a discovery that will forever make his or her name remembered down through the generations. What is closer to the truth is that, as part of natural human activity, we all carry out activities that have the basic characteristics and elements of research.

Not all research is carried out in laboratories or involves complicated statistics. In fact, 'research' is so common that it surrounds us on a daily basis. Every day, we carry out activities that have the same basic components as academic research. We carry out these activities because we seek answers to questions about phenomena that occur in our daily lives.

Let us imagine the following scene: An infant is in a playpen, fenced in from the surrounding world, not yet in control of the language that will enable him to communicate with those around him. The child's parents are sitting in the same room and the child sees an object on the other side of the room. The child wants the object but cannot get out of the playpen. Nor is he able to say, 'Mom, please hand me the ball.' The child views the object and attempts to voice a sound he has come to associate with it. 'Baa,' he calls. No response. 'Baa,' he calls again. This time one of the parents notices the child. 'What is he saying?' asks the parent. The mother suggests to the father that the child is hungry. 'No, I don't think so,' answers the father, 'he has just eaten.' 'Maybe he needs to be changed,' offers the mother. 'Didn't you just change him after he ate?' asks the father.

After many guesses (or *hypotheses*) about what the child is trying to express and the rejection of these possibilities for various reasons, the parents guess that the child wants something. The child's word 'baa' resembles something in the room, a brightly colored ball. The mother develops a new hypothesis. Perhaps the child wants the ball. She crosses the room, picks up the ball, holds it out to the child and says with rising intonation, 'Ball?' The child indicates that this is what he has been trying to say by responding with a smile and a squeal of excitement.