



Book review: Nassaji, H., *Applied Linguistics Research: A Comprehensive Guide to Methodology, Design, Analysis, and Evaluation*, Cambridge University Press, 2025, 824 pages, ISBN: 9781108672146 <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108672146>

Elham Farahani*

**Assistant Professor of TEFL, Department of English Language and Literature,
Faculty of Letters and Languages, Arak University, Arak, Iran
ORCID: 0009-0001-9068-755X; Email: e-farahani@araku.ac.ir*

Teaching research methodology in applied linguistics presents a familiar pedagogical challenge: the search for a resource that effectively bridges the theoretical foundations of inquiry with the practical demands of novice researchers. Too often, the subject is perceived as a challenging topic, with dense, voluminous texts overwhelming graduate students. It was from this dual standpoint, as an instructor seeking a user-friendly textbook and as a researcher desiring a clear reference, that I approached Hossein Nassaji's book on applied linguistics research. The text positions itself as that essential bridge, claiming to serve both experienced researchers and newcomers eager to begin their research journey. A thorough analysis of this book reveals that it largely fulfills this promise, offering a process-based approach that is particularly valuable for classroom instruction, albeit with certain areas ripe for refinement.

The book's twenty-five chapters are systematically organized into seven thematic parts, constructing a roadmap for the research process. Part I: Introduction to Applied Linguistics Research establishes a necessary foundation, addressing the nature of research, the scope of the field, and ethical principles. As in most books in this area, the first chapter focuses on the definition of research; compared with other available texts, however, this beginning delves into the world of research in a more engaging way. Chapter two introduces the nature, significance, and scope of applied linguistics. Chapter three discusses ethics in applied linguistics research. This thorough chapter is very informative; however, it would be better if the ethical issues of each part of the research process were introduced in the related chapter, rather than gathering all the points in a single chapter. For example, the ethics related to data collection could have been discussed in the chapter devoted to this stage of research, or plagiarism could be mentioned in the final chapter of the book that is related to writing the research report. More importantly, this chapter does not refer to the problems related to the use of AI.

Part II: The Research Process and Designing is where the text's pedagogical planning becomes distinctive. Chapter four introduces a valuable ten-step model of research, providing a clear, iterative scaffold. The model consists of four major parts: identification, preparation, implementation, and communication.

Chapter five presents a multidimensional framework for classifying research, with different types across six dimensions: paradigm, methodology, design, aim, applicability, and time frame. One issue with this chapter is that the design dimension is not clear; this category remains ambiguous, and all the examples of designs are from a quantitative approach. It would have been better if the author had provided examples of the term "design" from qualitative and mixed-methods approaches to avoid any misunderstanding. Based on my experience teaching this topic in research classes, most students struggle to distinguish between terms like approach, design, methodology, and methods due to varying definitions and uses across sources. Chapter six covers the difference between constitutive definitions and operational definitions, along with variables and scales in research. Chapter seven addresses the literature review and how to develop research questions. It defines the concept of the literature review and explains its aim and importance in the research process, outlines the steps involved in conducting an effective literature review, and distinguishes between various types of literature review, identifying their characteristics and purposes. Here, it distinguishes four main types of reviews: a traditional or narrative review, a systematic review, a meta-analysis, and a meta-synthesis. It also identifies the key features that define a high-quality literature review, discusses preliminary versus more comprehensive literature reviews, explores the literature review in qualitative and quantitative studies, examines different sources of research questions, explains how to develop clear, concise, and effective research questions, recognizes the differences between research questions for qualitative and quantitative research, and outlines the criteria for assessing good research questions. This chapter stands out because the issues related to conducting a literature review are presented cohesively and more effectively than in other sources. For most beginner researchers, conducting a literature review is very difficult.

Building on the foundational elements introduced in Part II, the book transitions into the specifics of quantitative research designs and data collection in Part III, focusing on the core aspects of conducting quantitative studies in applied linguistics through five chapters that guide readers through participant selection, research design, data collection, and ensuring research quality via reliability and validity assessments, all with an emphasis on practical techniques tailored to quantitative paradigms. Specifically, Chapter 8 explores various sampling strategies for selecting participants, ensuring representativeness and appropriateness for quantitative studies, while Chapter 9 discusses different types of quantitative research designs, including experimental, correlational, and survey-based approaches, along with techniques for implementing them effectively. Chapter 10 covers tools such as questionnaires, tests, and observational instruments, as well as techniques for gathering numerical data reliably. Meanwhile, Chapter 11 explains the concept of reliability, including types like test-retest and internal consistency, and methods for assessing and improving it, and Chapter 12 focuses on validity concepts, such as content, construct, and criterion validity, with strategies for evaluation to ensure research measures what it intends.

This structured approach is effectively mirrored in Part IV: Qualitative Research Designs, Data Collection, and Analysis, which parallels the previous quantitative focus but shifts to qualitative methods, offering in-depth treatments of analogous topics while incorporating data analysis, across five chapters that emphasize interpretive methods, strategies for data handling, and establishing rigor in qualitative research. In particular, Chapter 13 details purposeful and theoretical sampling techniques suited for in-depth qualitative inquiries, differing from quantitative random sampling, and Chapter 14 outlines qualitative design types like case studies, ethnography, and grounded theory, along with techniques for structuring flexible, exploratory research. Chapter 15 describes methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis, with strategies for ethical and effective data gathering, while Chapter 16 provides guidance on qualitative analysis techniques, including thematic analysis, content analysis, and coding strategies to interpret non-numerical data. Finally, Chapter 17 addresses concepts of trustworthiness in qualitative contexts, such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, with methods to establish them, such as triangulation and member checking.

A particular strength emerges in Part V: Quantitative Research: Data Analysis and Interpretation. This six-chapter sequence functions as an exceptionally practical workshop manual, demystifying statistics from descriptive basics through to generalized linear models and effect size interpretation with uncommon clarity. It covers analyzing quantitative data with descriptive statistics, exploring key concepts in inferential statistics, commonly used inferential statistics tests in applied linguistics research (both parametric and nonparametric), advanced statistical models including GLMs, mixed models, and multivariate analysis, and effect sizes with types, calculations, and interpretation. This part of the book distinguishes it most from other research books in applied linguistics, since it provides readers with concrete examples and serves like a workshop teaching data analysis and SPSS in quantitative research.

The final sections provide essential closure: Part VI thoughtfully integrates paradigms in mixed methods research, and Part VII adeptly guides the dissemination of findings. This comprehensive, linear progression is a principal strength, rendering a complex process both manageable and learnable.

The book's standout achievement is its accessible, teacher-informed prose. It avoids becoming an abstract treatise, instead operating as a practical handbook. The text's pedagogical features such as succinct summaries, tables, and diagrams, are carefully crafted to encourage engagement with complex ideas. Several features offer immediate utility: abstracts and concrete examples for each design help students visualize end products; discussions of contemporary tools (e.g., transcription software) address real-time needs; and the quantitative analysis section is arguably the most instructively clear in any comparable textbook.

Nevertheless, a close reading from an instructor's perspective suggests avenues for enhancement in future editions. First, the early conceptual chapters would benefit from more balanced illustrative examples across paradigms to avoid

unintentionally marginalizing qualitative approaches at a critical juncture. Second, the end-of-chapter “Discussion and Activity Questions” could be more strategically structured and applied. Placing discussion questions at the outset to prime reflection, followed by hands-on activities such as analyzing mini-datasets or evaluating sample literature excerpts, would strengthen pedagogical impact. Third, while a dedicated ethics chapter is valuable, weaving specific ethical considerations (e.g., digital data stewardship, AI use) into relevant process chapters might reinforce their practical import more effectively.

Furthermore, for a 2025 publication, the inclusion of more recent exemplars would better reflect evolving scholarly trends. More critically, the reference list does not adhere to the latest APA style edition, a notable oversight for a methods textbook destined to serve as a writing model. A simple yet powerful addition would be a curated list of exemplary published studies at the end of each design chapter, allowing students to immediately connect principles to practice.

Despite these critiques, Nassaji’s contribution is significant and timely. It succeeds in demystifying methodological complexity, translating it into a coherent and teachable sequence.

I highly recommend *Applied Linguistics Research* as a core textbook for graduate methodology courses in applied linguistics and second language studies. It stands as one of the most accessible and comprehensive practical guides currently available and will also serve as a reliable desk reference for teacher-researchers. I intend to adopt it for my own courses and look forward to subsequent editions that, by incorporating more balanced examples and refined pedagogical tools, may well solidify its status as a definitive practical guide in our field.

Author’s Biography



Elham Farahani received her BA in English Language and Literature from the University of Qom, and her MA and PhD degrees in TEFL from Arak University. She has served as a faculty member from 2018 to 2022 in the Department of English Language at Mofid University. In 2023, she joined Arak University, where she is currently an Assistant Professor. Her areas of interest include Corpus Linguistics, English for Academic Purposes, English for Research Publication Purposes, and (Critical) Discourse Analysis.
