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BOOK REVIEW



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Data Collection Research Methods in Applied Linguistics, Heath Rose, Jim McKinley, Jessica Briggs Baffoe-Djan. Bloomsbury, London (2020). X+296 pages. ISBN: (eBook) 978-1-3500-2585-1

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Written in a lucid and user-friendly language, this twelve-chapter volume is the right choice for any researcher interested in doing research in applied linguistics. The penning of the book shows that applied linguistics has established itself as a separate field, weaning itself off from general education or psychology. The lynchpin of the book is that it is embellished with case studies that illustrate how the concepts have actually been put into practice.

In the first and introductory chapter, the authors dwell on different types of designs. Expectedly, the QUAN-QUAL pendulum is swung in this book. The authors talk at length about the paradigmatic differences between qualitative and quantitative research. Further in the chapter, the authors enumerate some wrong reasons why researchers choose one design over the other. My own personal observation is that novice researchers go for QUAN, reflecting the first "wrong reason" mentioned in the book. In other words, novice researchers believe that they are on more solid grounds if they go for a quantitative design.

As for chapter two, the writers talk about discourse completion tasks, among other language production tasks. Luminaries in this realm of research are referred to except for Jianda (2007) who we think is a seminal source. Furthermore, the authors talk about experimental elicitation tasks of which lexical decision is an example. In so doing, they refer to Jiang (2012) which is a must-read book in SLA research. In explaining experimental elicitation tasks, stimuli, and fillers are mentioned but practice items and distractors are missing. It might be the case that the authors reserve the term "filler" for distractors. But the two are different. Further on in the chapter, they deal with grammaticality judgment tests. However, reaction time measures could have been discussed which are preceded by grammaticality judgments in some types of research like ambiguity resolution.

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Chapter three deals with introspection and retrospection in applied linguistics. We know for a fact that the field of language testing is brimful of examples of this type of research, especially for validation purposes. What is interesting is that the authors do not seem to deem introspection and retrospection as validation strategies. As we will discuss in the next paragraph, retrospection and introspection are legitimate validation strategies.

As for chapter four, the authors go to great lengths to enumerate some advantages for validated tests. However, it is best to know that reliability and validity are the functions of the populations who take the tests. In discussing the difference between "adopt" and "adapt", the authors favor adaptation of measures on the grounds that researchers can "combat participant fatigue" by curtailing test length. What could be added to the book, we believe, is norming the instruments which is removing culturally problematic items. Measures adapted in the East might need to be normed because of the existing differences between the two cultures of the East and the West. It is a good thing that the authors dwell on construct validity. Namely, they talk about approaches to construct validation. However, test taking strategies could have been mentioned as another approach to construct validation. Language testing literature is replete with studies using this approach. The authors do a good job of mentioning group differences analyses as another approach to validation. Finally, they mention inter-rater consistency but not intra-rater consistency.

When it comes to chapter five, the authors allocate some space to demarcate the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning. They capitalize on "Hawthorne Effect" to underscore the importance of observations. In so doing, they end up linking the concept to validity and reliability. It would have been best if the authors had elucidated whether "Hawthorne Effect" affects validity and/or reliability. In most research books, the concept of "The Hawthorne Effect" is said to affect specifically internal validity, not validity per se. The authors rightly mention "ethical issues" with the implementation of observations. We personally believe that at a time when research books are replete with the necessity of gaining "informed consent", using observations may not be a desired option for collecting data. Finally, "observer's paradox" could have been particularly discussed here.

Further on in chapter six, the authors dwell on different types of interviews, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. While there is a lot of value in looking at interviews from different perspectives, what is missing in this chapter is the theory-generating role of interviews and the fact that interviews are inextricably bound with qualitative-quantitative paradigm. To be clear, unstructured interviews can shed light on theories underlying constructs. For example, in a study, we aimed at developing a translation assessment rubric. With some certified and professional translators, we explored the construct of translation assessment in the form of unstructured interviews. Informed by these interviews, we conducted semi-structured interviews with some others, albeit not as professional translators. The two types of interviews made it possible to conduct structured interviews with some other and this time more translators. The three sequential interviews culminated in a rubric.

Concerning chapter 7, the authors should be commended for making a distinction between journal, blog, and diaries. To the best of our knowledge, no other source has made that demarcation. In chapter eight, it can be inferred that the writers take a dim view of questionnaires as a data collection method. Questionnaires are inextricably bound with confirmatory factor analysis in testing different models (e.g., Salehi & Jafari, 2014). The authors deal with CFA or EFA, but peripherally so towards the end. Furthermore, the authors rightly mention the problem with responses on the part of respondents. The authors could have referred to a special validity type which is response validity. The strength of chapter nine is that it deals with an important concept which is "focus groups". A very rich discussion is centered on the notion of sampling.

While the authors are clear about how validity is affected by a moderator, they are not clear about how reliability is improved by having multiple focus groups.

Chapter ten deals with document data collection the like of which cannot be discerned in other books. We concur with the authors that reliability and validity are not appropriate terms to be used with document data collection and that credibility is the right term. However, we are not on the same page with the authors and think dependability can be used for reliability. Chapter eleven is pertinent to constructing and using corpora. This chapter gives useful information about different types of corpora, the software needed for building and analyzing corpora, and also examples of corpora which are available.

The last chapter tackles very important concepts in research like replication, triangulation, and transparency. The authors accentuate that triangulation can refer to separate lines of enquiry. Although a section is designated in the entire book to "case studies in applied linguistics research", we wish the authors had given concrete examples of how triangulation works. For example, to consolidate the inferences drawn, a study can use protocol analysis, factor analysis, and multimethod multi-trait analysis in a single study.

To sum up and on the plus side, the book addresses pressing concepts in applied linguistics and is a shift away from traditional research methodology books which are often bereft of developments in the field like discourse completion tests. Each chapter is embroidered with case studies that manifest how theory and practice can be intertwined. The language used in the book is not bombastic: at some points the authors have taken the liberty of being informal.

However, the reader needs to be cognizant of how reliability and validity are separately affected. Additionally, we wish the hypothetical example the writers brought at the beginning to illustrate the points under discussion had worked throughout the book. One can see it is conspicuously absent in later chapters of the book. However, the book, admittedly, fills a void in the field of applied linguistics which can be used by students independently as the book is quite reader friendly. The book can be used as a coursebook in MA programs in Applied Linguistics.

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