Book Review

Instructed second language acquisition research methods

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As one of the fastest-growing subfields of second language acquisition (SLA), instructed second language acquisition (ISLA) is a field of academic inquiry, grounded in theory and empirical research, that aims to explore "how the systematic manipulation of the mechanisms of learning and/or the conditions under which they occur enable or facilitate the development and acquisition of an additional language" (Loewen, 2020, pp. 2-3). With this focus, research findings in ISLA can inform and inspire teachers or practitioners to improve their teaching practices, providing valuable insights for the theory of second language (L2) teaching and learning in the broader field of SLA. Research methods, as a key element in ISLA research, could directly impact the credibility, reliability, and validity of research results, ultimately influencing teaching practices (Loewen & Sato, 2017). Therefore, methodological guidance tailored to ISLA research is necessary and essential for enhancing the quantity and quality of research in this field and promoting effective L2 instruction (Long, 2017). Despite the rapid growth of ISLA research, few books have been published that would have explored the research

methods specific to ISLA. As a methodological guide specially designed for ISLA, *Instructed Second Language Acquisition Research Methods*, edited by Laura Gurzynski-Weiss and YouJin Kim, is a timely contribution to the field.

Organized into five sections, this volume offers guidance on ISLA methodology, including the rationale for ISLA research, its main research methods, detailed methodological guidelines on how to conduct ISLA research in specific areas of the target language (TL), in particular listening, writing, speaking, reading, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatics, as well as suggestions for future research. All the chapters (except Chapters 1, 6, and 15, authored by the editors) in the book follow a "what-why-how structure" to comprehensively and systematically present a particular topic: defining a particular methodological approach or TL subsystem, explaining its importance, elaborating on how to apply it to address typical research questions, illustrating how to utilize a specific research method or how to embark research across linguistic subsystems, as well as elucidating how to address potential issues.

In Section 1, which constitutes the introduction and Chapter 1, Laura Gurzynski-Weiss and YouJin Kim provide an introduction to ISLA research by outlining its goals, considerations, and steps for designing ethical studies, setting the stage for the subsequent chapters that explore different methodological options available to ISLA researchers.

Section 2, *Identifying Your Research Approach* (Chapters 2 to 5), elaborates on four research approaches: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods and replication research. This section not only overviews important theories and key concepts related to these methods but also expounds on the typical research questions that can be addressed by studies representing each of these approaches. In Chapter 2, Shaofeng Li provides a comprehensive exploration of quantitative research methods in ISLA, covering the basic elements, research questions, categories of research, evaluation methods, practical advice for researchers, and ways of addressing methodological issues, concluding with valuable insights. Chapter 3, written by Peter De Costa, Robert Randez, Carlo Cinaglia and Philip Montgomery, delves into qualitative research methods (e.g., case studies, action research, and grounded theory) within the context of selected theoretical accounts of SLA, such as sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2011). It explores their application in classroom-based research, outlines the steps involved in different methods, discusses ethical considerations, and provides examples of data collection procedures. In Chapter 4, Masatoshi Sato probes into how mixed methods research (MMR) can be utilized to address methodological challenges unique to ISLA, such as, the complexity of teaching practices and contextual issues or the dual objective of advancing scientific knowledge and influencing instruction. He zooms in on the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches, different MMR designs, and the importance

of balancing scientific rigor with teacher and student perspectives. Chapter 5 by Kevin McManus introduces replication research, focusing on its purpose of understanding the nature and generalizability of the findings in previous studies, its different types of replication and overall importance. It also highlights specific foci of replication studies in the field of ISLA and provides guidelines for conducting and reporting such studies. Suggestions for future replications and integrating replication into research programs are also included.

Building on the previous two sections, in Section 3, titled *ISLA Research Across Methodological Approaches* (Chapter 6), the editors summarize some common considerations in using the research methods discussed in Chapters 2 through 5. These include the use of intact classes or small participant pools in quantitative research design, using one's own students as participants, learner individual differences, interlocutor or teacher individual differences, and etc. As these issues may affect the internal and external validity of empirical studies, researchers need to take them into account and effectively address the associated challenges. For instance, many researchers face dilemmas regarding whether they should use their own students for ISLA research, which can raise ethical concerns. In such cases, they should be aware of relevant policies, obtain approval from ethics committees, and acquire additional permissions when involving minors. Furthermore, they also should be able to face challenges in reducing observer effects during data collection. On the whole, in this section, the editors elaborate on the various factors to consider in ISLA research and provide guidance on decision-making and trade-off strategies for different situations.

To enhance readers' understanding of the application of ISLA research methods, based on specific TL areas (i.e., listening, writing, speaking, reading, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatics), Section 4, *Designing Instructional Interventions for Specific Skills and Competencies*, (Chapters 7 to 14) brings together contributions from leading experts that offer guidelines in this respect. Each chapter provides a description of research procedures (and example studies where necessary) and offers practical guidance on conducting research in the case of specific subsystems and skills, highlighting the application of data elicitation and interpretation methods across the eight sub-areas of L2 development. In Chapter 7, Naoko Taguchi and Soo Jung Youn outline how L2 pragmatics is examined in instructional settings, with a particular emphasis on assessment and data elicitation methods. They demonstrate the practical application of discourse completion tasks (DCT) and role-play through sample studies, providing valuable insights into the examination of different facets of this TL area. In Chapter 8, Emi Iwaizumi and Stuart Webb elaborate on instructed L2 vocabulary acquisition, highlighting the related study design (pretest-posttest design) as well

as assessment and data interpretation methods of L2 vocabulary. Chapter 9, authored by Paul Toth, describes different approaches for investigating grammar learning in ISLA. He also illustrates how the data elicitation methods of acceptability judgment tasks, picture description tasks, and classroom recordings can be applied to examine TL grammar development. In Chapter 10, Andrew Lee and Ron Thomson focus on L2 pronunciation development, analyzing how reading-aloud tasks and picture description tasks have been used to explore the acquisition of L2 segmentals and suprasementals in various contexts. They also discuss speech perception and production and instructional techniques for L2 pronunciation. In Chapter 11, Ruslan Suvorov summarizes a range of models that can explain the listening process and main options for L2 listening data elicitation and interpretation, such as survey research, verbal report methods, and behavioral and neuroimaging methods. In particular, he demonstrates how eye-tracking can be used as a data elicitation method to explore test-taking strategies in L2 listening research. In Chapter 12, Irina Elgort focuses on L2 reading development, explaining what needs to be taught (such as extensive reading and effective reading strategies), commenting on the role of teachers (not mainly to explicitly teach but to plan suitable reading courses and monitor students' progress) and illustrating how experimental laboratory research methods and in-situ research methods can be used in this domain. Chapter 13, authored by Ronald Leow, Rosa Manchón, and Charlene Polio, summarizes three aspects warranting empirical inquiry of L2 writing: manipulation of different tasks in instructional interventions, processes and outcomes of written corrective feedback, and written L2 development in instructional settings. This chapter illustrates how various research instruments such as think-aloud protocols, stimulated recall, and eye-tracking can be used to explore the three aspects of L2 writing development through sample studies. This section concludes with Chapter 14, written by Folkert Kuiken and Ineke Vedder, which examines the assessment of L2 speaking from four dimensions: complexity, accuracy, fluency, and functional adequacy. The guidelines and procedures for conducting L2 speaking research are analyzed through sample studies.

To promote ISLA research and maximize its impact on L2 pedagogy, in the concluding section (Section 5, Chapter 15), *Sharing Your Research*, YouJin Kim and Laura Gurzynski-Weiss present various sample studies to show how collaboration can be capitalized on to explore different aspects of ISLA. They also propose practical suggestions on how to write different parts of research reports and share research within and beyond academia, hoping that ISLA research can impact larger audiences and better inform pedagogical practices.

On the whole, this volume is reader-friendly, practical, and comprehensive. First, when beginners and novice researchers embark on studies in a particular field of ISLA, they may feel overwhelmed by the extensive literature and the

abundance of abstract and complex terminology. However, this book stands out due to its concise nature and clear, logical structure, making it highly readable and particularly suitable for them. It serves as an excellent method guide for newcomers and junior researchers in the field of ISLA, while experienced researchers who wish to improve the quality of their research can also gain valuable insights from it. Second, this book not only provides readers with insights into methods for ISLA research but also guides them on how to use different data collection and interpretation options to study specific skill areas in the TL such as listening and writing. This is particularly helpful and practical for novices and junior researchers in ISLA, as they might lack experience and guidance on what kind of research to conduct in the field and how to approach it. Additionally, the book also highlights future research directions in specific skill areas. For instance, in Chapter 13, Ronald Leow, Rosa Manchón, and Charlene Polio suggest placing more emphasis on assessing learning outcomes and individual differences concerning emotions (such as anxiety) rather than foregrounding cognitive differences in L2 writing research. Such discussions can stimulate readers' thinking and provide insights into research questions they may explore when preparing their own research. Moreover, if readers are interested in a particular skill area like listening, they can utilize the references at the end of each chapter for further reading to gain more information. By understanding the skill areas, identifying potential research questions, exploring available methodologies to investigate those questions, and grasping data collection and interpretation methods, readers can effectively embark on conducting domain-specific research in ISLA. Third, unlike some books on general research methods in applied linguistics (e.g., Griffee, 2018) that tend to introduce research methods in an isolated way, this book, with the use of specific sample studies, demonstrates how different research designs, data elicitation procedures and methods of analysis can be used in practice. Moreover, these procedures and methods are intertwined with specific skill areas, so researchers can determine which methods are applicable to the skill area they would like to explore and how they can be employed in practice. For instance, when examining how pedagogical interventions can be undertaken for L2 pragmatics development, Naoko Taguchi and Soo Jung Youn (Chapter 7) indicate that the most common data elicitation methods are role play and discourse completion tasks. Not only do they introduce the features of the two task types as well as their advantages and disadvantages, but also show how these two methods are used to explore the effects of task-based pragmatic teaching on L2 pragmatic development through illustrative example studies.

Despite all its merits, the book is not without limitations. Perhaps due to space constraints or the organization of this volume, this book does not provide a systematic introduction to the theory and research on various teaching methods

(e.g., task-based teaching, content-based language teaching, cognitive-interactionist approach), different learning environments, and diverse data elicitation and interpretation methods. While some of these aspects are addressed through example studies, the coverage is not comprehensive or systematic. For instance, several authors mention the use of ethnography and oral interviews as data collection methods in case studies, but they do not provide detailed explanations of the specific procedures, guidelines, and limitations associated with using these methods. As a result, readers lacking knowledge in these areas may encounter difficulties in implementing rigorous research procedures and they may need to refer to other sources for more detailed information on these topics.

Overall, this book is characterized by accessibility, comprehensiveness, and practicality. It is highly recommended for novice and junior researchers interested in conducting ISLA research, as well as graduate students and senior undergraduate students. In addition, experienced researchers can also gain in-depth insights into current trends and valuable research questions in the field.

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