

Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition

Course description

The course presents a general perspective of the research methods commonly employed in second language acquisition. Students are introduced to the quantitative and qualitative paradigms and are made familiar with the main study types within these two paradigms (quasi-experimental, relational, case study, ethnographic, etc). Students also learn about a range of instruments used in data collection and have a chance to have some practical experience. The course will make it easier for students to better understand the studies that they will need to read in other courses of the programme. More specifically, it will help them develop critical reading skills in order to be able to identify weaknesses and strengths in empirical research.

Syllabus

1. Introduction to research
 - a. The abstract and sections in a research report
 - b. Types of studies (exploratory, review, methodological, empirical, etc)
 - c. Introduction to bibliographic resources
 - d. Introduction to qualitative and quantitative research

2. Quantitative research
 - a. Main components
 - b. Research design
 - c. (Quasi)experimental and non-experimental research
 - d. Internal and external validity
 - e. Overview of statistical tests

3. Qualitative research
 - a. Basic research
 - b. Case study research
 - c. Ethnography
 - d. Conversation analysis
 - e. Standards of quality

4. Instruments
 - a. Validity and reliability
 - b. Surveys and Interviews
 - c. Introspective methods
 - d. Measurement of proficiency
 - e. Psycholinguistic techniques

Methodology

- Short lectures
- Class discussion
- Practice activities

Students are expected to do weekly readings and answer a number of questions.

Evaluation

a) Continuous Assessment:

- Practical exercises and assignments: 50%
- Final exam (25% individual; 25% in pairs and based on evaluation of two empirical studies)

b) One-off Assessment:

- Practical exercises and assignments (to be handed in on the day of the exam): 50%
- Final exam: 50%

The assessment for the second sitting will follow the same criteria as the evaluation of one-off assessment students.

Bibliography

Coursebook:

- Mackey A. and Gass S. 2016. *Second Language Research. Methodology and Design* (2nd ed.) Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Gass S. and Mackey A. 2012. *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition*. Routledge.
- Mackey A. and Gass S. (eds.) 2012. *Research methods in second language acquisition. A practical guide*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Porte, G. 2002. *Appraising Research in Second Language Learning*. Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Seliger, H. and Shohamy E. 1989. *Second Language Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Wei L. and Moyer M. 2008. *The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism*. Blackwell.

A selection of empirical studies published in refereed journals.