

Book Review

The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism

By Li Wei and Melissa G. Moyer (Eds.)

Malden: Blackwell Publishing (2008) 403 pages

The editors of this volume quite rightly describe their guidebook as a “know-how” rather than a “know-what” addition to the literature on bilingualism and multilingualism (xvi). This guide provides specific instruction on the planning, practice, and dissemination of bilingualism/multilingualism research. The book is broadly targeted at advanced undergraduates, postgraduates, and early career researchers, and should be of particular interest to those working in the fields of linguistics, psychology, speech and language pathology, sociology, anthropology, and education (ibid).

Part I of the volume, titled ‘Researching Bilingualism and Multilingualism’, consists of one introductory chapter from each of the editors. First, in what amounts to an impressive yet concise literature review, Li Wei provides an overview of three research perspectives on bilingualism and multilingualism: linguistic; psycholinguistic; and sociolinguistic. He convincingly underscores the growing importance for bilingual and multilingual researchers to adopt ‘transdisciplinary’ approaches that will equip them to best address the sociopolitical issues of bilingualism “head on” (p. 17). Then, Melissa Moyer’s introductory chapter entitled *Research as Practice: Linking Theory, Method, and Data* offers essential reading for anyone in the initial stages of research design. This chapter will be of particular use to researchers who are trying to marry appropriate theoretical and methodological frameworks with their own research question(s).

Part II of the volume is the largest and most significant section in the book. Entitled *Procedure, Methods, and Tools*, this part consists of seventeen chapters dealing with specific methodological approaches to conducting research into bilingualism and/or multilingualism. Each of these chapters has been penned by a respected scholar renowned for a particular area of expertise, including, among others, Elizabeth Lanza, Monica Heller, Adrian Blackledge, and Anita Pavlenko. These chapters cover a diverse range of practical issues such as: the selection of participants, groups and sites; study design; interviews and questionnaires; transcription; the use of statistical data; audio and video recording; and even imaging technologies. Furthermore, various approaches to data analysis are also discussed, with separate chapters allocated to social network analysis, conversation and interactional analysis, critical discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and

media analysis.

Part III, *Project Ideas, Dissemination, and Resources*, consists of three chapters. The first of these, *Project Ideas*, shows readers how to consider their own research questions in relation to broader themes and topics. The ability to situate one's work within wider interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary frameworks is an essential skill worth developing, because such an approach holds the potential to uncover ways of looking at research problems in creative and previously unexplored ways. Furthermore, as Li Wei and Moyer suggest (p. 347), such a skill also enhances one's chance of success when writing research proposals and grant applications, and it inevitably renders one's work more publishable. This chapter fuses four distinct disciplinary perspectives – linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and education – to four contemporary themes in studies of bilingualism – change, migration, conflict, and children – to illustrate how research questions can be crafted to make it possible for researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds to collaborate on a common theme or topic (p. 345). Following this is a chapter offering practical advice about how to give a successful conference presentation and publish in an academic journal. The last chapter in the volume is a valuable list of resources available to researchers of bilingualism and multilingualism. These resources are divided into the following categories: journals; book series; conferences; research tools; websites; and electronic mailing lists and other resources.

The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism makes a significant and timely contribution to the existing literature for several reasons. This volume is perhaps the first to offer comprehensive advice on researching specifically in the field of bilingualism/multilingualism. In this sense, its first strength lies in the fact that it will meet the needs of many students and researchers of languages in contact. Second, the guide remains steadfastly practical in both orientation and tone. It is, in every sense, a *useful* guidebook, that shows the reader how to *do* various things. The third strength of the book is its multidisciplinary appeal. A range of theoretical and methodological approaches are presented from various disciplinary traditions, and for this reason, *The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism* is an excellent entry point for familiarizing oneself with new and different approaches. Fourth, this volume is the result of collective input from a team of experts from around the world. Finally, despite being the product of collaboration between twenty-five leading scholars, this guidebook remains a unified and very reader-friendly text.

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