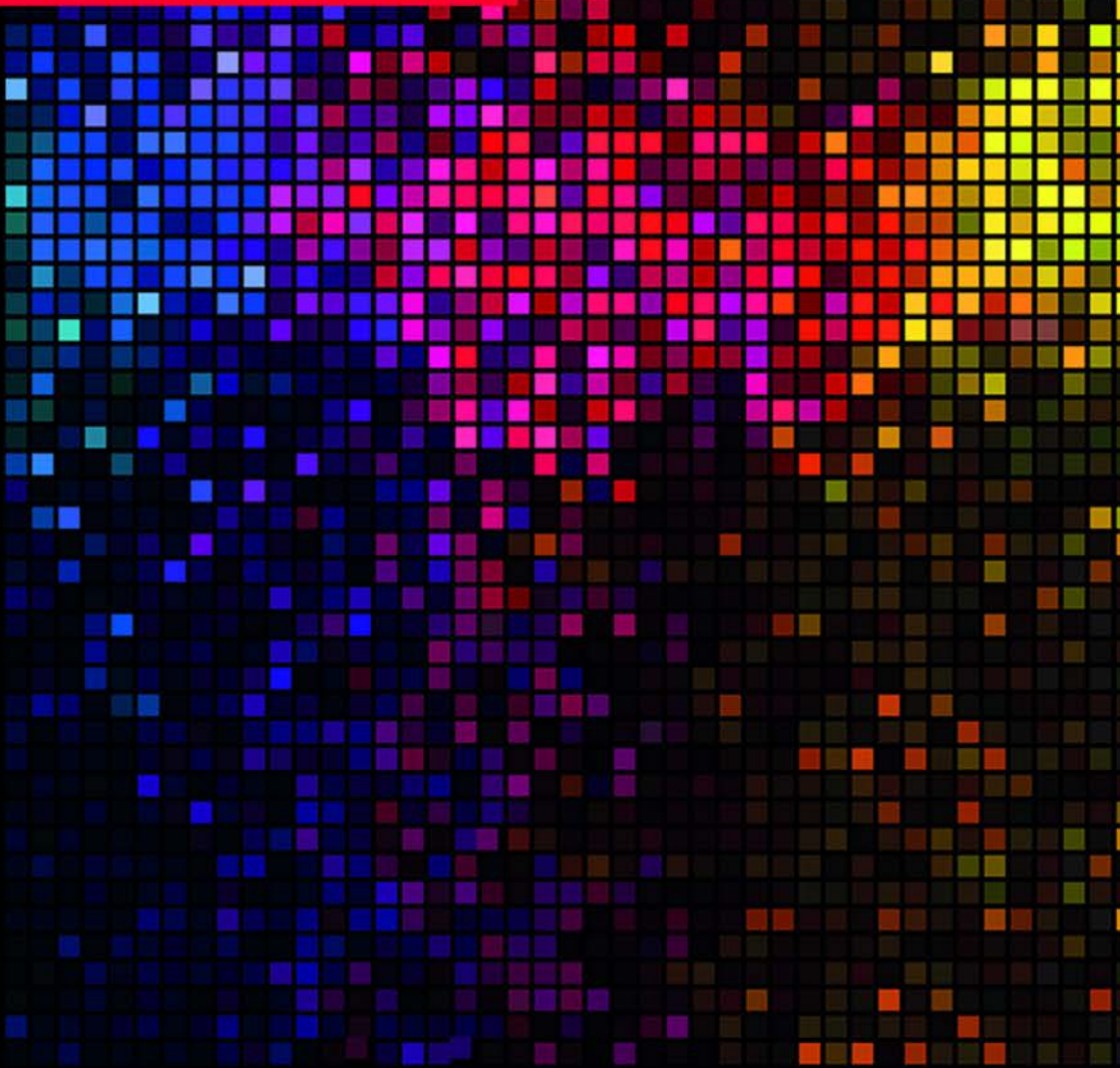


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# The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics

Edited by Jim McKinley and Heath Rose

# The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics

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- key concepts and constructs in research methodology, such as sampling strategies and mixed methods research;
- research designs such as experimental research, case study research, and action research;
- data collection methods, from questionnaires and interviews to think-aloud protocols and data elicitation tasks;
- data analysis methods, such as use of R, inferential statistical analysis, and qualitative content analysis;
- current considerations in applied linguistics research, such as a need for transparency and greater incorporation of multilingualism in research; and
- recent innovations in research methods related to multimodality, eye tracking, and advances in quantitative methods.

*The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* is key reading for both experienced and novice researchers in applied linguistics as well as anyone undertaking study in this area.

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*Edited by Jim McKinley and Heath Rose*

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# Introduction

## Theorizing research methods in the ‘golden age’ of applied linguistics research

*Jim McKinley*

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### **The growth of applied linguistics research**

Research in the emergent, broad, and inherently interdisciplinary field of applied linguistics has grown from its origins, which centred on understanding language development, acquisition, learning, and teaching. The origins of applied linguistics often involved two types of researchers: researcher-practitioners who were interested in exploring teaching and learning within language classrooms, and educational psychologists who were interested in exploring the cognitive and psychological processes of language learning. An expansion of forces, which largely centred on technological advancements and globalization, has since brought language into contact with a range of other disciplines such as business, politics, sociology, anthropology, medicine, and science. This expansion of scope in applied linguistics has resulted in an explosion in quantity and quality of applied linguistics research, and we are now at a time when applied linguistics research is growing at unprecedented rates. While more established fields have secured a firmer sense of their impact on knowledge, applied linguistics is just beginning to consider its current scope and future directions. This is evidenced by the emergence of a number of publications in recent years which aim to provide an overview of the field (e.g. Lei & Liu, 2019), bring greater clarity to what applied linguistics is (e.g. Cook, 2015; Hellermann, 2015), problematize the diminishing role of language teaching in applied linguistics research (e.g. McKinley, 2019; Rose, 2019; Rose & McKinley, 2017), and inform future directions of research within the field (e.g. Larsen-Freeman, 2018; Pfenninger & Navracscics, 2017).

The past 30 years in particular has been a period of substantial maturation in research within applied linguistics, where the range of topics covered within the field has blossomed, and so too have the research methods used to explore them. Much of the growth in research has been propelled by the increasingly mobile and multilingual world, where issues such as migration and globalization have fuelled the number of researchers working within applied linguistics to meet the linguistic demands brought about by language-related educational and social policy change. We are currently in a ‘golden age’ of applied linguistics research, where we are learning to strengthen the field through transparency and data sharing, helping to improve and assure quality of research, and advance knowledge more efficiently. We have simultaneously moved into an era of big data, which is punctuated by large scale surveys and corpus research,



as well as an era of highly nuanced qualitative research, which is characterized by contextualized explorations of language learning and language use. The field has also expanded into complex and dynamic ways to explore established topics, which has necessitated the need for new research designs, data collection techniques, and tools for analysis. As a field, we have moved beyond types of research that, while still of value, offers limited contribution, and towards highly impactful research. Immersed within this golden age, it is now necessary to take stock of what it means to ‘do research’ within applied linguistics, and theorize our available approaches, designs, methods, and data analysis techniques – a central aim of this handbook.

## Theorizing research in applied linguistics

There has been a lack of theorization of research methods in applied linguistics, except perhaps for the developments of tests and measures in the associated field of second language acquisition, as well as in text-based research (such as corpus linguistics). Compared to other social sciences like psychology, applied linguistics does not have much in the way of theorization of field-specific methods on, for example, document methods, focus groups or diary methods. It is time to advance the field theoretically, which requires a clear understanding, and problematizing, of our own theoretical stances.

Doing research in applied linguistics carries with it a fundamental need to establish a clear theoretical stance, that is, the perspective from which the researcher approaches the phenomenon being studied. This is applicable for all research in the field – a breadth covered in this handbook – whether social (see most chapters in this volume), text-based (e.g. Wang), or physical (e.g. Pellicer-Sanchez and Conklin). For one, the field of applied linguistics is from time to time redefined (see Bhatia, 2017; Cook, 2005; Weideman, 2007), which can cause confusion about how to position and frame the research and the researcher; and two, as language holds an inherently social function, the researcher’s relationship with the investigated phenomenon must be negotiated to secure a solid foundation on which the study can be built. This chapter provides clarity on the sometimes evasive concept of *theory* in applied linguistics research, and in so doing, clarifies associated terms. In clarifying these terms, it should be understood that they work together to form a unified concept of the researcher’s intentions in carrying out research, which leads to greater clarity to a study’s contributions to knowledge in the field. Ultimately, whatever the endeavour, from whatever perspective, to move the field forward, applied linguistics research should aim to offer solutions, rather than just identify problems.

## Doing applied linguistics research: clarity of terms

In this section, key terms in doing applied linguistics research are raised to illuminate their use, namely: paradigm, epistemology, ontology, approach, design, method, objective, and aim. While these common terms are used with varying levels of confidence by experienced researchers, when it comes to explaining the terms, there is often significant overlap between them. For a comprehensive overview of these terms, see ‘Approaches and methods in applied linguistics research’ (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015).

### *Research paradigm, epistemology, and ontology*

First, a research *paradigm* is defined as the *philosophy* supporting the knowledge or reality a researcher uses to understand a phenomenon. Common examples or research paradigms in

applied linguistics research are positivism, post-positivism, and interpretivism; further examples are critical inquiry, pragmatism, and participatory paradigm, among others. Briefly, these paradigms are defined as follows:

- Positivism – research will objectively test a hypothesis using scientific method and/or logic to prove it to be true
- Post-positivism – research acknowledges the researcher’s subjectivity, and maintains that it is not possible for everything to be known.
- Interpretivism – research is built on the idea that knowledge is actively constructed, usually through human interpretation of experience.
- Critical inquiry – research can refine and improve real-world knowledge by making reasonable claims about reality that are historical, and subject to chance and change.
- Pragmatism – research is problem-oriented and maintains that a research method be chosen according to its effectiveness in answering the research question.
- Participatory paradigm – research is built on the idea that knowledge is constructed through researcher participation with others involving reflection and action (sometimes referred to as ‘social constructivism’).

Next, *epistemology* and *ontology* are strongly linked to paradigm, as they identify the researcher’s reality. A researcher’s epistemology is essentially their core beliefs. It is often broken down as truth, belief, and justification: what is held as true and real, what is believed about it, and how the belief is reasonably justified. Epistemologies can differ greatly between people from different backgrounds, whether cultural, political, religious, socioeconomic, or otherwise. Such differences are at the heart of classic debates (one person’s ‘right’ is another person’s ‘wrong’). Common-sense boundaries of reasonable beliefs might be stretched, which is where the idea of ‘alternative facts’ comes from: while most will maintain that these are simply falsehoods, others will justify them as truths, despite contrary scientific evidence. Popular examples of this are the continued belief that global warming is a hoax, that vaccinations cause autism, or that the earth is flat. Such ‘an alternative belief’ is an example of an ontology, albeit a poorly constructed one. A researcher’s ontology, therefore, is a set of concepts used to identify the nature of a phenomenon’s existence. In applied linguistics research, an ontology can be understood as the implicit structures that shape and define how language is used.

### ***Research approach, design, and method***

A *research approach* is the generic term given to the manner in which a researcher engages with a study as a whole. It takes a macro-perspective of research methodology and incorporates both the overall methodological design of a study, the methods used for data collection and for data analysis. As a crude example, some researchers may state that they are taking a *quantitative approach* to research, which might then inform their choice of design (e.g. experimental or survey), their choice of data collection method (e.g. tests or questionnaires), and data analysis (e.g. statistical tests or modelling). In reality, an approach to research might be far more complex depending on the needs of the research questions; nevertheless, the chosen approach will aim to capture this complexity.

A *research design*, which many refer to more generally as a research method, refers to the structure of a study. It acts as a blueprint within which to populate the content of a research project. Thus, the general principles underlying this structure are retained across research

projects. For example, there is an expectation that experimental designs must contain certain features, such as the manipulation of a variable in order to explore its effect. Similarly, there are structural expectations surrounding expectations of what good survey research, action research, ethnography, or case studies should entail. Deviations from the expected design must often be justified in terms of assurances to the quality of the research data obtained.

A *method* can mean many things (including research design), but here I define it as the process of collecting data. For consistency, it might be best to use the full expression ‘data collection method’. While a tendency has been observed in research methods books to conflate data collection methods with approaches to research design, I prefer to reserve the word *method* to refer to data collection (see Rose, McKinley, & Briggs Baffoe-Djan, 2020). It is important, for example, not to discuss questionnaires (a data collection method) interchangeably with survey research (a research design), as some questionnaires are used for purposes other than ‘to survey’ (i.e. in qualitative research), and of course survey methods can involve data collection other than just questionnaires. Another example is to avoid listing data elicitation tasks and tests (data collection methods) with other elements of methodology such as experimental studies (a research design). Indeed, certain data collection techniques often accompany certain research designs, but it is important to maintain clear boundaries for these two dimensions of research. This will foster more creativity and freedom in applied linguistics research as of course, more than one data collection research method can be (and is) used within different research designs.

### ***Research objective and aim***

The final two terms to clarify are research *aim* – a statement of intention, and research *objective* – a statement of how desired outcomes will be achieved. With this understanding, it is recommended that researchers maintain consistency with use of these terms so as not to conflate them. First, broad statements of aims should be made that identify what the researcher hopes to achieve. For example, this would be where the purpose of the study is stated (“This study aims to . . .”). Objective statements need to be concrete, clarifying what specific processes that will be taken to achieve the purpose. In other words, the research objective is a summary of the overall research project as designed to produce expected outcomes (“The objective of this research is to provide a context-specific example of the phenomenon as it occurs in a real-world classroom through observations and data elicitation . . .”).

### **Problematizing ‘theoretical stance’**

Theoretical stance is the researcher’s position in relation to the research. In this golden age of applied linguistics research, it is an area ripe for problematizing and introducing innovations in response to advance theory. Theoretical stance is often discussed as epistemological stance, as it is how the researcher proposes their way of thinking about the research. It is also often discussed in relation to a researcher’s paradigm. For example, positivist researchers ensure quality research by establishing their objectivity, or distance from the data, while post-positivist researchers do the same by establishing their subjectivity, or close proximity to the data, possibly through reflexivity (Meyrick, 2006). Reflexivity is the acknowledgement of the researcher’s own subjectivity, maintained throughout the research project (as opposed to reflection, which may be introduced later in a research project). It is a valuable tool when a researcher has personal experience with the topic being researched, inasmuch that the personal experience shapes the focus of the researcher’s findings (Sherrard, 1997).

Researcher stance or position is also discussed as *positionality*, or “how I identify myself in terms of my sense of where and to what I belong or do not belong, and the social relations that are affected by this” (McKinley, 2005, p. 141). Research positions are usually insider (shared cultural background with participants and/or research site) or outsider (no shared cultural experience), but have also been described as in-betweener (partial shared experience), or a *halfie*, which is a researcher “whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (Abu-Lughod, 1991 in Subedi, 2006, p. 573).

As useful as these position identities are for clarifying a researcher’s relationship with the participants and/or research site, a major limitation is that they are stagnant. In qualitative research especially, we could do more conceptually with the idea of positionality if we consider it to be more of a process, rather than a place. This would allow us to consider how time plays a significant role in understanding our researcher identity. We might try an idea such as *dispositionality* – one that considers a researcher’s relation to, and flexibility with, timescapes so that they discover (im)possibilities and (im)mobilities through the research process (Bunn, Bennett, & Burke, 2018). Epistemologically, much qualitative research is a site of contestation over claims to truth and author/authority. If we take a temporal orientation to deep praxis, we can shift our (dis)positionality toward reflexive, iterative cycles of participatory meaning-making across differences, rather than lock ourselves into stagnant researcher positions that can do little with differences.

### ***Positioning ourselves in the field***

Applied linguistics researchers will sometimes position themselves in the field according to their research focus. We call ourselves *applied* linguists, *sociolinguists*, (applied) *cognitive* linguists, *psycholinguists*, *neurolinguists*, and so on. These labels are more than just research areas, however, as they carry with them particular philosophies, ones that are inherently vague. Some applied linguists will clarify their positions. For example, even those with prestigious academic positions still position themselves philosophically:

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*(Book launch flyer for Language and Subjectivity,  
University of Birkbeck, 28 May 2019, emphasis my own)*

Positioning ourselves philosophically may be a response to inherently subversive neoliberal, transformative, and/or subjective perspectives in applied linguistics research that challenge and advance theory. If we can rethink the recalcitrant orthodoxies underpinning research and pedagogical practices, we can facilitate disruptive moments and/or support and open up public and educational spaces. If we can transgress the frameworks we traditionally work within (the histories and current imperatives to produce/meet quota), we may be better positioned to have greater knowledge impact. However, evidence is seductive: we want to find the answers, but the problems may be entangled in deeply entrenched research traditions.

Perhaps it is a matter of how we ‘frame’ things, an act applied linguists may be well-positioned to carry out. Meaning-making processes of words or concepts, or the creation of *frames* (cognitive images or metaphors) used by individuals, has been shown by cognitive

and neuro-linguists to depend on specific language use and individual relationships in that usage (White & Lowenthal, 2011, p. 288): “The development of ‘frames’ – and thus meaning-making – is determined, at least in part, in relation to the power of the different players within a dialogue.” With this understanding, it may be that we regularly position and reposition ourselves in accordance with the positions of others in the ongoing discussions around our research.

### ***Reasoning, approaches, and time in relation to theoretical stance***

In our golden age of applied linguistics research, a discussion of theoretical stance in consideration of reasoning, approaches, and time might prove valuable for problematizing and advancing theory in the field. First, *reasoning* in relation to theoretical stance in applied linguistics research has traditionally been either inductive or deductive, but there is scope to expand this to other types of reasoning used in other fields, such as abductive. These types of reasoning relevant to applied linguistics research are defined as follows (Rose et al., 2020):

- Inductive reasoning – “the use of a premise as the basis for an investigation for which there is no hypothesized conclusion but rather leads to a non-predetermined probable conclusion” (p. 261). Such reasoning is most common in qualitative research.
- Deductive reasoning – “the use of a premise as a hypothesis, testing it to show whether it is true” (p. 259). Such reasoning is most common in quantitative research.
- Abductive reasoning – “the use of an unclear premise based on observations, pursuing theories to try to explain it” (p. 258). Such reasoning is uncommon in applied linguistics, but it could be argued that much of what we call inductive reasoning in applied linguistics research is actually abductive.

Next, *approaches* in relation to theoretical stance in applied linguistics research might include: interactionism, poststructuralism, critical realism, or complexity theory (complex dynamic systems theory), among others. These are briefly defined as follows:

- Interactionism – a perspective that maintains language is learned through interaction between low-proficiency and advanced users of the target language who want to communicate with them. It is based on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and Bruner’s theory of language acquisition.
- Poststructuralism – an approach to understanding the relationship between text and meaning as an integrated process where ethical choices are considered in achieving certainty in the act of meaning-making. It is based on Derrida’s theory of deconstruction.
- Critical realism – a perspective that there is a reality that is independent from human conceptions of reality, separating epistemology as a theory of knowledge from ontology as a theory of being. It is based on Bhaskar’s combination of a general science philosophy with a social science philosophy, and expanded into applied linguistics research by Corson (1997).
- Complexity theory (or complex dynamic systems theory) – a nonlinear system of understanding complex phenomena (such as language acquisition). It is based on the development of tools for modelling complex systems in science, engineering, and management (complexity theory) as well as applied mathematics (dynamic systems theory), and expanded into applied linguistics research by Larsen-Freeman (1997).

Finally, *time* in relation to theoretical stance in applied linguistics research is either synchronic or diachronic. It is defined as follows:

- Synchronic – a bottom-up, microscopic position analyzing language at a specific point in time, usually focused on language use and behaviour.
- Diachronic – a top-down, macroscopic position for analyzing changes in language over time, often focused on language order.

These ideas of reasoning, approaches, and time in relation to theoretical stance in applied linguistics research provide multiple ways of reconceptualising research methods in the field – ways that could contribute to new theorizations and knowledge. This handbook is one way its contributors hope to bring clarity to many of the methodological decisions that underpin applied linguistics theory.

## Handbook overview

This handbook is divided into four parts. Part I, ‘Key concepts and current considerations’, covers a wide range of concepts in ten chapters that provide valuable suggestions and justifications for advancing theory and innovation in applied linguistics research. Part II, ‘Designs and approaches to research’, is made up of 12 chapters that each provide its own clear outline of approaches, both well-established but evolving and newly emerging ways of conducting applied linguistics research. Part III, ‘Data collection methods’, comprises nine chapters containing new perspectives on traditional methods that help pave the way for applied linguistics researchers to collect and elicit data successfully in the range of domains within which we conduct research. Finally, the ten chapters in Part IV, ‘Data analysis’, define and challenge traditional quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures to provide more ways to advance theory in the field.

### *Part I: key concepts and current considerations*

As the amount of applied linguistics research continues to grow exponentially, we understand that it is well positioned to expand its impact. This idea is captured by Emma Marsden in the opening to Chapter 1, ‘Methodological transparency and its consequences for the quality and scope of research’, targeting replication research as fundamental to the field’s emerging impact. In Chapter 2, ‘Multi-perspective research’, Brian Paltridge provides insights into how we can greatly inform and innovate research in the field by varying our perspectives to conducting it. Along similar lines, Mohammad R. Hashemi challenges traditional conceptualizations of mixed-method research in Chapter 3, ‘Expanding the scope of mixed methods research in applied linguistics’, giving us new ideas for bringing together qualitative and quantitative approaches. Next, Masuko Miyahara raises a much-needed discussion about research participants and settings in Chapter 4, ‘Sampling: problematizing the issue’, taking on a number of unanswered questions about this fundamental feature of research.

Applied linguistics research in particular raises concerns about the conveyance of quality and effectiveness of our practices. In Chapter 5, ‘Ensuring translation fidelity in multilingual research’, Gene Thompson and Karen Dooley challenge the standards of translation in commonly applied linguistics practices, emphasizing the importance of accurate processes of translation when developing data collection methods. Similarly, in Chapter 6, ‘Researching multilingually in applied linguistics’, the research team of Jane Andrews, Prue Holmes,

Richard Fay, and Susan Dawson present key concerns particular to applied linguistics research concerning the use of multiple languages in various phases of a research project, offering valuable ways of dealing with multilingual participants in multilingual contexts.

Current considerations in applied linguistics research are found in various recent developments. We understand that widely cited applied linguistics research is often based in ‘the West’, but significant developments and invaluable contributions to knowledge are increasingly found in other parts of the world, as promoted by Cristine G. Severo and Sinfree Makoni in Chapter 7, ‘Solidarity and the politics of ‘us’: how far can individuals go in language policy? Research methods in non-Western contexts’. Regarding current efforts in quantitative research, Shawn Loewen and Aline Godfroid offer creative ideas for contributing to theory and knowledge in the field in Chapter 8, ‘Advancing quantitative research methods’. In Chapter 9, ‘Interdisciplinary research’, Jack Pun brings up-to-date current discussions of the interplay between applied linguistics and other fields. Closing out Part I, in Chapter 10, ‘Ethics in applied linguistics research’, research team Peter I. De Costa, Jongbong Lee, Hima Rawal, and Wendy Li problematize the far too under-theorized but always essential feature of ethical concerns to point toward effective ways of advancing the field.

## ***Part II: designs and approaches to research***

The chapters in Part II provide a wide overview of research approaches and designs, exemplifying how many traditional designs have evolved. Starting with Chapter 11, ‘Experimental and quasi-experimental designs’, John Rogers and Andrea Révész provide an overview of such designs while also weighing up the advantages and limitations of each, emphasizing how careful design and implementation can improve the validity of findings. In Chapter 12, ‘Case study research: making language learning complexities visible’, Patricia A. Duff clarifies how and why this research design has changed in the field of applied linguistics, raising implications and offering suggestions for assessing case study criteria for use in research. This is followed by Li Wei’s Chapter 13, ‘Ethnography: origins, features, accountability and criticality’, in which he discusses developments of the methodology both within and around the field of applied linguistics with examples from school and classroom-based research as well as community-wide society-based studies. Situated alongside this is Sue Starfield’s Chapter 14, ‘Autoethnography and critical ethnography’, which addresses lesser-adopted ways of conducting ethnographies, taking us from their origins to how we can use them to advance theory.

Like ethnographic research, other popular approaches are evolving in important ways. In Chapter 15, ‘Action research in language education’, Dario Luis Banegas and Sal Consoli explain that as an ‘interventionist and subjective’ methodology, action research is best practiced when organically intertwined with language pedagogies. In Chapter 16, ‘Core dimensions of narrative inquiry’, Gary Barkhuizen outlines four core dimensions of narrative inquiry and proposes them as four continua, focusing on the processes of data collection and analysis rather than on theoretical or epistemological underpinnings. Similarly refocusing a widely adopted approach, in Chapter 17, ‘Methodological issues in critical discourse studies’, Christian W. Chun emphasizes the value in the shift from critical discourse *analysis* to critical discourse *studies*, embracing the interdisciplinary nature of applied linguistics research to clarify that a critical approach is not a method of discourse analysis, but a critical application and critical theory.

Approaches that do not necessarily involve human participants are both established and emerging in applied linguistics research. In Chapter 18, ‘Integrating corpus tools into mixed methods research’, Ron Martinez highlights how popular approaches to corpus research such

as content analysis can be expanded by using corpus tools in exploring data qualitatively. In Chapter 19, ‘Systematic reviews in applied linguistics’, Ernesto Macaro defines this underutilized methodology in applied linguistics to delineate it from other types of reviews, and outlines the challenges and benefits for the field. In Chapter 20, ‘Meta-analysis in applied linguistics’, Yo In’nami, Rie Koizumi, and Yasuyo Tomita show how the methodology is effective not only for synthesizing empirical quantitative studies and indicating the overall effects but also for identifying the sources of inconsistent findings across studies. In Chapter 21, ‘Methods and approaches in language policy research’, Qing Shao and Xuesong (Andy) Gao argue that various methods may be used as resources by researchers adopting different approaches to explore context-dependent language policy practices.

Closing out Part II is Chapter 22, ‘Grounded theory method’, in which Gregory Hadley explains that grounded theory in applied linguistics research is often used inappropriately. He highlights that the methodology is significant in its theoretical contribution in the field as it can help researchers to maintain consistency while collecting qualitative data, provide ways for critically analyzing data, and allow for the construction of midrange theories that could contribute significantly to the lives of educators and students, and to scholarly communities outside applied linguistics.

### ***Part III: data collection methods***

Methods for data collection in applied linguistics research are generally well established, but the nine chapters here offer insights and clarity that are valuable for novice and expert researchers alike. The interview, the most common method in qualitative research, is challenged from an ethical perspective by Louise Rolland, Jean-Marc Dewaele, and Beverley Costa in Chapter 23, ‘Planning and conducting ethical interviews: power, language and emotions’. Next, in Chapter 24, ‘Focus groups: capturing the dynamics of group interaction’, Nicola Galloway provides a much-needed overview of using this method specifically in applied linguistics research, highlighting the features that delineate the method from group interviews. In Chapter 25, ‘Think-aloud protocols’, Lawrence Jun Zhang and Donglan Zhang draw on debates about the method as used in psychology and cognitive science to exemplify the advantages and disadvantages of its use in applied linguistics research. In Chapter 26, ‘Stimulated recall’, Hugo Santiago Sanchez and Trevor Grimshaw provide an analysis of empirical studies that use stimulated recall, examining purposes, procedures, and epistemological challenges, resulting in a thorough conceptualization of the method.

Also very popular in applied linguistics research are questionnaires and observations. While commonly designated to quantitative research, these methods are proving effective in qualitative research as well. In Chapter 27, ‘Questionnaires: implications for effective implementation’, Janina Iwaniec points out that superficial familiarity with the method creates a false impression that questionnaires are quick and easy, when in fact the design must be meticulous, and the platform for conducting this method, more often online, has significant influence. In Chapter 28, ‘Observations and field notes: recording lived experiences’, Xiao Lan Curdt-Christiansen provides an up-to-date overview of how these methods are influenced by researcher stance, and how they can be used together with other data collection tools to effectively capture human linguistic experience.

Finally, some significant data collection methods prominent in psychology are on the rise in applied linguistics research. In Chapter 29, ‘Diaries and journals: collecting insider perspectives in second language research’, Heath Rose draws on psychological literature to extend the use of journals and diaries in applied linguistics research. In Chapter 30, ‘Oral language



elicitation tasks in applied linguistics research', Faidra Faitaki and Victoria A. Murphy take on standardized assessments and other measures to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of them in eliciting linguistic utterances, resulting in valuable recommendations to effectively conceive such tasks. Completing Part III is Chapter 31, 'Eye tracking as a data collection method', in which Ana Pellicer-Sánchez and Kathy Conklin show how the 'gold standard' method from psychology research can be a valuable tool in applied linguistics, allowing the investigation of the processing of different types of linguistic and non-linguistic stimuli.

#### ***Part IV: data analysis***

The final ten chapters of this handbook provide new ways of working with data, from challenging traditions of conducting quantitative data analyses, to updated overviews of conducting qualitative and text analyses, and finishing with new and potential directions for data analysis in applied linguistics research.

In working with quantitative data, SPSS analysis software holds precedence, but in Chapter 32, 'Using statistical analysis software (R, SPSS)', Jenifer Larson-Hall and Atsushi Mizumoto argue for the superiority of the software R. In Chapter 33 'Descriptive statistics in data analysis', Jessica Briggs Baffoe-Djan and Sarah Ashley Smith define and scrutinize methods of data analysis to offer options for how to visually present summarized quantitative data, as well as to offer both theoretical and practical guidance for using descriptive statistics. Situated alongside this is Chapter 34, 'Inferential statistics in quantitative data analysis' in which Simone E. Pfenninger and Hannah Neuser offer a discussion of the feasibility of investigating cause-effect relations – the traditional basis of inferential statistics – focusing on what the models are, how they work, and why and when applied linguists should use them. In Chapter 35, 'Factor analysis and statistical modelling in applied linguistics: current issues and possibilities', Yuliya Ardesheva, Kira J. Carbonneau, and Xue Zhang provide an overview of these techniques in instrument development and validation contexts, concluding with valuable recommendations.

Content analysis is significant and somewhat misunderstood in qualitative applied linguistics research, and in Chapter 36, 'Qualitative content analysis', Ali Fuad Selvi addresses this by drawing on the uses of the technique from other disciplines, providing its epistemological orientations, and identifying the procedures and the role of computers and applications in conducting it. In Chapter 37, 'Text analysis', Wei Wang explains how this differentiates from content analysis, providing a range of text analytical methods informed by three different academic traditions. In Chapter 38, 'Analysis of corpora', Averil Coxhead provides an overview of different kinds of methodological decisions, reasons for conducting, important principles, and suggestions for tools for conducting a corpus analysis in vocabulary research.

Data analysis in applied linguistics is yet one more area ripe for theoretical expansion, and the final three chapters all take this on. In Chapter 39, 'A discursive psychological approach to the analysis of talk and text in applied linguistics', Matthew T. Prior and Steven Talmy introduce a powerful cluster of theoretical and methodological affordances to the study of spoken discourse, showing how it contributes to the 'applied' and interventionist aims of the field. In Chapter 40, 'Multimodal (inter)action analysis', Jarret Geenen and Jesse Pirini provide an overview of this data analysis methodology developed to study social interaction based upon the theoretical notion of mediated action. The final contribution to the handbook is chapter 41 'Toward an expansive interactional analysis', in which research team Suresh Canagarajah, Daisuke Kimura, Mohammad Naseh Nasrollahi Shahri, and Michael D. Amory

draw on questions raised by recent theoretical advances in poststructuralist schools to explore how we can develop a disciplined and close analysis of interactional data from such theoretical orientations.

## Conclusion

This handbook has come out at a crucial time for applied linguistics research, when theory that has been problematized in recent decades is taking shape, coinciding with the exponential amount of research output in the field driven by changes in language-related educational and social policy. The theorization (and re-theorization) of applied linguistics research methods is providing myriad ways for researchers in the field to contribute to knowledge and increase the impact of applied linguistics research on disciplines across academia. This ‘golden age’ of applied linguistics is apparent in the contributions to this handbook, where traditional methods have been overviewed, scrutinized, and re-conceptualized, and emerging methods have been linked to new ways of thinking about who we are and what we do as applied linguists.

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## Part I

# Key concepts and current considerations

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# Solidarity and the politics of 'us'

## How far can individuals go in language policy? Research methods in non-Western contexts

*Cristine G. Severo and Sifree B. Makoni*

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### Introduction

In this chapter, we illustrate how applied linguistics research methods are problematic in the ways they approach non-Western contexts, drawing on language policy and planning as examples to intellectually contextualize our discussion. We focus specifically on colonial, colonized, and postcolonized discussions of how applied linguistics research methods have been discursively produced, ignored, or erased from mainstream applied linguistics and language policy agenda. Specifically, we focus the analysis of applied linguistics research into colonial, post-independence, and postcolonial language policy in the Brazilian and African contexts from a critical non-Eurocentric perspective: 'It proposes a *teoria povera*, a rearguard theory based on the experiences of large, marginalized minorities and majorities that struggle against unjustly imposed marginality and inferiority, with the purpose of strengthening their resistance' (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. ix). We recognize that research methods are intertwined with ethical, political, and theoretical perspectives towards what counts as non-Western in applied linguistics. By problematizing the ethical and political dimension of some Western theories and research methods in applied linguistics, we tend to signal to the way they help to reproduce power relations and lack of solidarity and recognition of the Other.

An historical perspective of the field is provided though the classic *Advances in Language Planning* (Fishman, Ferguson, & Dasgupta, 1974), who discuss the relationship between language policy and newly independent African states.<sup>1</sup> Such a discussion appears rarified in the last decade. For example, the *Cambridge Handbook of Language Policy* contains a chapter on the relationship between imperialism and colonialism (Phillipson, 2012), while another chapter concerns the colonial and postcolonial language policy in Africa (Makoni, Acdelhay, & Mashiri, 2012), bringing several contextualized examples of the complicated language policy situation in African countries. *The Oxford Handbook of Language Policy and Planning* (Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018), in contrast, fails to provide an explicit exploration of methods of applied linguistics research into the relationship between colonialism or postcolonialism and language policy; it also does not include an overt discussion of African linguistic contexts. We mention these three compendiums because, taken together, they map

the main agenda of the disciplinary field of language policy and planning, and the implications of such research on methods of enquiry in applied linguistics.

Yet another example of the lack of concern about colonialism and language policy can be seen in Johnson and Ricento's (2013) revision of these areas. The authors do not explore the complexities of colonialism, postcolonialism, power relations, and language policy. They only superficially cover these topics, which are connected mainly to the earliest works of the field. The authors propose a chronology of the field of language policy and planning as divided into four main themes: (a) early language planning scholarship, (b) expanded works in the 1970s and 1980s, (c) critical language policy, and (d) the emergence of the ethnography of language policy in the 21st century. At the end, Johnson and Ricento state, 'The ethnography of language policy has been proposed as a method that combines a focus on structure and agency, the macro and the micro, policy and practice' (p. 16).

Although we recognize the efforts of some researchers to seriously consider colonialism and postcolonialism as central to understanding the complexities of the relationship between language, peoples, identities, and power, we believe that the traditional and Western methodological frameworks are not sufficient to understand what counts as language in colonial and colonized contexts. In this chapter, although we focus on African and Brazilian experiences, we understand that such relationships and experiences are not limited to geographic or demographic contexts. In addition, we believe that colonialism is not a temporal experience that ended with post-independence. We understand colonialism in a broader and more subtle way, which means considering, on the one hand, the effects of colonial relations in terms of how concepts such as 'Black' and 'Africa' helped to shape what can be understood as race (Mbembe, 2014) and language, and on the other hand, the way colonialism works as a 'model of power' that both reinforces and is reinforced by capitalism, continuously producing perverse power relations (Quijano, 2000). We assume that in (former) colonial contexts, the invented concept of language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007) in colonialism plays a major role and that research methods in applied linguistics, which utilize ideas about language invention in contemporary contexts, inadvertently reinforce colonialism or social and political inequalities.

We argue that the most vibrant research and effective research methods in language policy in colonial and postcolonial contexts are omitted due to Western framings of language research, a strand of research that tends to be blind to both non-Western sociopolitical contexts and non-Western framings of language. Non-Western framings of language that are central in order to understand the use of research methods in non-Western contexts are much more expansive than in conventional applied linguistics because 'the understanding of the world far exceeds the western understandings of the world' (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. viii) and more specifically include the analysis of the communicative and cognitive practices of the other species which share the world with us (well captured in Kohn, 2013, *How Forests Think*).

In this chapter, we focus on the role that contemporary Western discussion of language policy has attributed to methods of research into agency in language policy and planning, mainly through what has been called micro-level planning or ethnography of language policy. Although we recognize the important contribution of this perspective to understanding the role played by individuals in reinterpreting or proposing language policies, we aim to reveal the underlying danger that such a 'positive' concept may convey. Thus, in this chapter, we question methods of research into (a) how far individuals can go in language policy and politics; (b) the limits of what counts as local, micro, and ethnographic in applied linguistics research methods in non-Western Contexts particularly in the area of language policy; and (c) how non-Western narratives help to expand the understanding of the relationship between language and politics. By addressing these concerns from the perspective of colonial experience in

non-Western contexts, we problematize the use of concepts and methodologies centered on the ideas of agency and micro/local. By doing so, we tend to value and recognize the role played by the ideas of community, solidarity, and sharing in helping to shape what counts as language and as politics, both of which are relevant to research methods in applied linguistics.

## How far can individuals go in language policy and politics?

Agency is a powerful concept used to recognize and amplify the role played by individuals in social processes (Giddens, 1984) or, in other terms, the dialectical relationship between an individual's actions and the social structure. According to Giddens, the two faces of power represent 'the capability of actors to enact decisions which they favour on the one hand and the mobilization of "bias" that is built on institutions on the other' (p. 15). Ahearn (2000) argues that Giddens was responsible for the popularization of this concept in the 1970s and 1980s.

The agency issue is linked to the problem of will and to the notion of responsibility. When free will is considered as opposite to determined or social constraints, moral responsibility is seen in relationship to having one's own decision under a certain control, as one cannot be held responsible for something done under external obligation. There is a tension in the Western philosophical and academic context between practical freedom and previous determination, which can be summarized by two opposite ideas: hard determinism that considers freedom as an illusion and metaphysical libertarianism that sees people as being free and responsible (Audi, 1999). Although the former considers a certain predestination of acts and circumstances, the latter considers that the idea of freedom faces contingency, which implies assuming autonomy in face of diverse possibilities of action. Further, there is another perspective that tries to blend both concepts: 'Many philosophers take practical freedom and responsibility to be consistent with determinism, thereby endorsing compatibilism' (Audi, 1999, p. 327).

In the field of language policy, the underlying idea of agency is that individuals have the power to act according to their reason and will or that power is attributed to individuals differently, according to the hierarchical or institutional position that they assume in society. One definition of agency in works on language policy is: 'Agency . . . refers to the various levels and forms of power invested in the range of actors involved in policy and planning' (Fenton-Smith & Gurney, 2016, p. 74). In addition, some studies have highlighted the role played by teachers in educational contexts: 'The role of language teacher agency in language policy and planning (LPP) enactment and implementation at the micro-level has received increasing treatment in the literature' (Brown, 2015, p. 171). Johnson and Johnson (2014, p. 222), for example, point to the role played by agency in educational context; they understand 'language policy arbiters as individuals who have a disproportionate amount of impact on language policy and educational programs'.

Another way to frame agency in consideration of research methods in applied linguistics is through association with a local approach: 'At the micro-social level of the classroom, then, teachers and students enjoy some agency to question, negotiate, and resist power' (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 211). Further, the concept of power underlying power is that a certain individual or group can empower – distribute power to – another individual or group of individuals, reinforcing a metaphysical concept of politics, as follows: 'It is perfectly ethical for teachers to empower minority students and their cultural resources for greater self-determination' (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 212). We argue that the idea of empowerment may reinforce power relations and social asymmetries. Some authors (e.g., Brown, 2015; Johnson & Ricento, 2013) have adopted the concept of language policy and planning as a multilayer model, whereby the relationship between macro, meso, and micro, or top-down and bottom-up, is seen in terms of a language policy onion, as explained later in this chapter (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).



According to Johnson and Johnson (2014, p. 224), in contemporary language planning and policy, ‘There is general agreement that an understanding of the multiple levels is necessary to fully understand how policy works’.

Despite the use of the concept of agency to reinforce the power of the individual and his or her capacity to make choices, some authors tend to relativize it, considering that it cannot be taken as equivalent to individualism, free will, or resistance. Brown (2015, p. 178) notes, ‘Examples of studies that use ethnographic methods to highlight agentive learner activity can certainly be found in the literature’. We argue that the philosophical discussion that involves the relationship between agency, autonomy, free will, spontaneity, responsibility, contingency, and determinism appears not to be taken seriously by applied linguists, who, in general, have used the concept of agency without analyzing its political implications for the field of language policy and planning.

In this chapter, we deal mainly with two conceptual and methodological categories that have been broadly used in contemporary language policy and planning: the idea of agency, and the concept that, to comprehend the dynamics of language policy and planning, it is useful to unpeel and chop the onion or, stated differently, to dissect language policy into its various elements, levels, and contexts. Although this perspective tends to consider the complexity of a multilayer phenomenon, it fails to deconstruct a binary perspective of social practices. For example, the idea of power related to institutional (dominance) vs. individual (resistance) is implied in the concepts of macro and micro or ‘policy power and interpretative agency’ (Johnson & Ricento, 2013).

We argue that to consider the complexity of a phenomenon means to avoid metaphors or methodological artefacts that take a priori categories to be applied to reality. This process means that such reality is methodologically invented. In terms of politics, such invention may have serious implications, as the universal use of categories produces very similar narratives on what counts as language in language policies across the world. We question the use of a ‘politics of categories’ that characterizes works on language policy and planning, which may work in favour of, for example, a politics of groupism, which is a ‘tendency to treat ethnic groups, nations and races as substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed’ (Brubaker, 2002, p. 164). We question who the studies on language policy and planning tend to attribute agency to and who is denied such a condition. We argue that colonial studies can help us to elucidate the politics that distribute individuals into a scale of more or less agency, whereby colonized people tended to be labeled as having less agency and, thus, as having a greater tendency toward obedience.

The use of a universal narrative can be seen in the way that several contexts, each with its own history and singularity, may be described and analyzed through the use of similar concepts and methodological categories. By problematizing the universality of certain perspectives, we reveal the way that power relations are inscribed in the politics of language policy and planning.

We also extend the concept of agency to insurgency: ‘Insurgency refers to insurrections and rebellions, to contestatory actions and historical initiatives that confront the structures, politics of power and domination’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 34) Insurgency provides us with analytical tools to describe how scholars and activists in non-Western contexts can handle the impact of research methods in applied linguistics which inadvertently may reinforce capitalism and the global asymmetrical global economic political order.

## **Community and solidarity in the construction of ‘us’ in research methods in applied linguistics**

In classical Western political philosophy, liberalism and communitarianism are two political and ethical frameworks that organize the lives of individuals in society. Whereas the former

focuses on the rights of individuals, including freedom, the latter focuses on collective rights rather than on individualism (Audi, 1999). In a more communitarian perspective, free will is limited by contextual and historical features. In other words, we can say, 'Agents are never able to express the intention embodied in their actions or to characterize their actions in other respects in a wholly egocentric way' (MacIntyre, 1973, p. 324). In addition, the relationship between the individual and community is such that it becomes impossible, for example, to demarcate the limits between the individual and the social. In this case, personal actions and beliefs are socially shared, but this does not mean that there is consensus.

We argue that the basis of politics is sharing the public space through actions and discourse, which does not imply homogeneity but, rather, plurality (Arendt, 1998). In this context, we agree that '[s]ocial life is thus a series of historically idiosyncratic, interrelated narratives in which the attempts at comprehension by every agent is an indispensable feature' (MacIntyre, 1973, p. 325). In this sense, what interests us is how a sense of community and belonging can operate as a framework to define what counts as politics and language. Rather than individual action, agency, protagonism, and free will, we are interested in understanding solidarity and living together as moral principles that help to define a sense of belonging or, in other words, the emergence of 'us' instead of 'I'. This does not mean, of course, that we disregard individuals' actions, beliefs, and efforts. Rather, we aim at turning the political logic around, from an individual perspective to a collective perspective, and reflecting on the implications of this radical inversion for research methods in language policy and planning. We are arguing that the applied linguistics methods which are appropriate in non-Western contexts should seek to capture the complex relationality between individuals, 'forms of struggle, social actors, and grammars of liberation' (de Sousa Santos, 2016, p. ix).

We argue that non-Western contexts can help us to expand our framework of research in language policy and planning by redefining what counts as language from a more communitarian and solidary perspective, helping us to understand how language can emerge as a product of a sense of community and belonging. In these contexts, we consider that '[h]uman beings are communities of beings rather than individuals; in their communities, the ancestors are present, as well as animals and mother earth' (Santos, 2012, p. 50). In keeping with Santos's interpretation, Latin American critical thought is developed from three key concepts (autonomy, communality, and territoriality) and questions universal frameworks (Cusicanqui, Domingues, Escobar, & Leff, 2016). We agree with Grosfoguel (2011, p. 4) that a critical perspective of Western epistemologies means being 'critical of both Eurocentric and Third World fundamentalisms, colonialism and nationalism'.

To be able to apprehend non-Western methodologies and epistemologies in language policy and planning requires that we make an effort to change the way we (Western scholars) have historically framed them (non-Western non-scholars). In this sense, as scholars who share this ambiguous position of both belonging to academic life and witnessing the effects of colonialism (in Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Brazil), we take seriously the idea that '[t]he experience of being colonized therefore signified a great deal to regions and peoples of the world whose experience as dependents, subalterns, and subjects of the West did not end' (Said, 1989, p. 207). In this sense, we believe that non-Western contexts challenge us with ethical issues in regard to the effects of colonialism in the lives of those whose language practices we aim at studying, describing, and analyzing. This means that we should make an effort to avoid reproducing binary categories that frame hierarchical relations between Western and non-Western people and modes of living and framing the world. One example of how such dichotomies can be overcome is the way that Aymara and Bolivian scholar

Silvia Cusicanqui frames her perspective on what could count as the political role of ‘social science’ in (ex-)colonized contexts:

En cuanto a la colonización mental, la ciencia social – junto a varias otras – debería enfocarse en crear las herramientas conceptuales, técnicas y materiales que permitan resistir el saqueo, tanto de recursos materiales como de personas (manos, cerebros) o, por lo menos, ayudarnos a sobrevivir a él.<sup>2</sup>

*(Cusicanqui et al., 2016, p. 3)*

How can we learn from non-Western contexts – or ex-colonies – in a way such that methods of research in applied linguistics and language policy and planning avoid reproducing the historical colonial practice of plundering and exploring people’s modes of living and framing the world and can be used to further decolonial projects? To answer this question, we present two examples for which the idea of community and solidarity can help us to frame what counts as language and politics: (a) the African-Brazilian concept of Quilombo and (b) the African politics of proper names and the philosophy of Ubuntu.

### ***Quilombo, language and ‘us’***

The term ‘Quilombo’ in contemporary Brazil assembles several political, cultural, and juridical meanings. In general terms, it refers to the way that Afro-Brazilians historically organized their struggles and collective experience against colonialism and slavery. Abdias do Nascimento (1914–2011), a Brazilian scholar, politician, and Pan-African activist, wrote a kind of manifesto (1980) in which he presents and defends the concept of Quilombism as a political and cultural project of Black people in Brazil: ‘Quilombismo articulates the diverse levels of collective life whose dialectic interaction proposes complete fulfillment and realization of the creative capacities of the human being’ (Nascimento, 1980, p. 161). We assume that Quilombo and Quilombism contribute to problematizing universal and essentialist concepts of politics and identity by placing communality and sharing at the core of a political experience. In addition, the evolving nature of the concept of Quilombo signals the way that local context is dynamic, responding to local urgencies, which means that, as a political tool, Quilombo – and Quilombism – operates as a form of resistance to power relations that are dynamic, flexible, and moving (Foucault, 1978). In this sense, the expansion of the concept of Quilombo helps to denounce renewed forms of domination and control over Black people in Brazil. One example of such a renewed form is a post-utopian perspective of Quilombo that ‘represents a deconstruction of color and race as a criterion of exclusion, highlighting the Quilombo as a human right’ (Leite, 2015, p. 1227).

We assume that contextualized epistemologies and methodologies concern the way that local people engage in their historical struggles and construction of specific modes of experience and sharing. Quilombo and Quilombism are political and cultural frameworks that gather several social practices for which language plays a role. In this sense, instead of a descriptive and ethnolinguistic perspective that analyzes language as an abstract and shredded system, we argue that language emerges as a product of social practices. In Brazil, several linguistic studies have described the language spoken by ‘Quilombolas’ (people who live in Quilombos) as a rural Afro-Brazilian Portuguese, a language variety that emerged from a process of language contact and irregular language acquisition (Lucchesi, Baxter, & Ribeiro, 2009). We understand that such a way of framing local language practice contributes to the colonial practice of erasing the way that contextualized and historical practices rearranged or invented local ways

of understanding what counts as language. We contest the reduction of African linguistic and discursive experience into categories as verbal and nominal agreement or a pronominal system or into a schooling invention that helps to reinforce the idea of language as having orthography and system. Even though ethnographic methodologies may help us to deal with local experience, we assume that such a framework is not immune to the colonial categories that have helped to frame linguistics and applied linguistics.

We understand that the label of 'rural Afro-Brazilian Portuguese', as applied to designate language practices in Brazilian Quilombos, is problematic, as it reinforces categories that helped to shape the idea of Quilombola as, for example, a *lacking* identity. Rurality, illiteracy, Africanness, and Portuguese are invented categories that politically tend to group differences, segregate similarities, erase and silence local voices, and invent ways of framing the Other. We argue that such politics of framing the Other, adopted or invented by linguistics or applied linguistics, also helped to shape the view of scholars in certain ways. Our effort to contextualize language practice and the way that we frame such practices also implies deconstructing linguistics and applied linguistics as generic and universal fields. This means that not only is the field under question but also the scholar's identity. We wonder how far we can go in creating opportunities to resignify ourselves in front of the other or how far we can go in confronting our history and academic mode of framing the world with non-academic experiences. We believe that non-Western methodologies and theories are more than academic and intellectual exercises of creating new categories in a kind of ongoing academic spiral. They also have to do with ethical and political issues that problematize how we became who we are in the geopolitics of knowledge.

By bringing the example of Quilombos in Brazil, we can present several interesting 'local language practices' that help to expand the way that we, linguists and applied linguists, have framed language, including the role played by songs, narratives, and silence in constructing a sharing life; the relationship between body, nature, and language; the use of 'hybrid' language to assemble different cultural perspectives; the way that community uses language to deal with local conflicts; the way that such people use language to legitimize their history and struggle in dialogue with the dominant; the concept of 'orality' and 'literacy'; and so on. One example is the way that Black people, defined as 'remainders of Quilombos', understand the idea of Quilombo as connected to territorial conflict. In this context, shared narratives of a common collective experience in different regions of Brazil helped to shape a national politics of Quilombo as a constitutional right since 1988. For this, elderly voices played a major role:

The testimonies of leaders over 80 years of age recounted the narratives of their ancestors about innumerable efforts legalize their lands. These oral histories of those conflicts discredited the dossiers, maps and land titles presented by the expropriators of their lands, exposing the frauds utilized by bureaucracy to cheat them of their customary, rights to land.

*(Leite, 2007, p. 4)*

This is an example of how testimony and first-person narrative of elderly people help to shape a sense of community and a collective memory about what counts as justice. In this sense, we ask: how have we, linguists and applied linguists, been able to hear these historical, silenced voices? What is the connection between our concept of language and our capacity to comprehend invisible people's claims for land and dignity?

Rather than mapping and describing language practices, we aim to problematize local research by taking a step back and questioning our interest in the other. In other words, we ask,

‘how willing are we to change our minds about what counts as language and the role that it plays in (un)shaping people’s life, including ours?’

### ***The African politics of proper names and the philosophy of Ubuntu***

In this section, we approximate the politics of naming with language policy in consideration of research methods in applied linguistics. We assume that the epistemology that underlies the process of name attribution reveals a political perspective that may reinforce individualist or collectivist frameworks. The relationship between the name and what is being named can be understood from two broad perspectives: an arbitrary one, in which the relationship between the name and its reference does not follow any previous rule, whereby the choice of a name is product of a personal preference, and a motivated perspective, whereby the naming practice follows an ethical or political rule shared by a community. In Christianized societies, the adoption of a proper name is associated with baptism as a sacrament by which ‘Christ unites us to the Church which is his body’ (Bright, 1956, p. 158). In modern and bureaucratic societies, the use of a proper name is connected to juridical issues, by formally individualizing and identifying someone as belonging to a society. Even though we may consider that the politics of proper names is never completely arbitrary, we highlight the rules that explicitly associate the connection between a name and its reference, following a motivated perspective. For doing so, we consider the Shona tradition’s context in which the choice of a name is ‘based on circumstances surrounding the birth of a child or sentimental expressions of parents (or name-givers)’ (Mushangwe, 2016, p. 64).

In Zimbabwe, the practice of naming has a symbolic role that marks ‘the coming into the world of a new being’ (Simões, 2010, p. 1), whereby behind a name there is a meaning that associates that person’s life to a previous or coming experience or to the social and cultural context of a clan or group. Some names, for example, may refer to socioeconomic status, for example, the name *Mushayabhachi* (someone who cannot afford a jacket), whereby poverty is seen as a misfortune or the product of some kind of calamity; this name also may mean ‘plain skin, a lizard without a single fur’, or ‘someone who is of limited means’ (Simões, 2010). Other examples include the family name *Nyamupangedengu*, ‘one who gives by the basket’; *Karadzandima*, ‘one who lets the field lie unattended’; and the clan praise name *Mazvimba-kupa*, ‘one who yearns to give’ (Simões, 2010). Another example that reveals an interwoven relationship between the Shona and Western naming traditions is the use of English names, following a local traditional rule, as in the proper names of Given (*Chipiwa*), Trymore (*Pam-hai*), Beauty (*Runako*), Clever (*Ngwarai*), Remember (*Rangarirai*), Nomore (*Hakuchina*), and Trust (*Vimbai*), all of which are known as Shonglish names (Mushangwe, 2016).

Another example that helps us to problematize the universal and generic categories used in non-Western research methods to describe what counts as language is the South African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, a system of values and beliefs about people’s experiences and their ability to deal with disputes and conflicts. Such a philosophy, sometimes viewed as utopian, helps to create a sense of collective belonging, with a focus on humanistic values. The collective nature of Ubuntu can be grasped by the Zulu proverb ‘*Umuntu ngumuntu nbabantu*’, meaning that a person is a person through other persons (Makoni & Severo, 2017). The complexity of Ubuntu can be exemplified by the co-occurrence of the following elements in Zulu (Venter, 2004): *unzimba* (body), *umoya* (breath), *umphfumela* (spirit), *amandla* (energy), *inhliziyi* (heart), *umqond* (head), *ulwimi* (language), and *ubuntu* (humanness).

In this perspective, language cannot be understood as isolated from other social and cultural practices, as personhood, language, and being human are strongly connected. In

addition, language cannot be taken apart from an interconnected concept of body and emotion, which deconstructs the rational and abstract idea of language as a logic system. We argue that Ubuntu as a framework carries an ethical perspective that helps us to deconstruct the Western perspective of language and to reframe our research methods. Even though Ubuntu does not explicitly define what language is, we assume that language must be seen through a complex perspective, which means that even the idea that languages exist may be brought into question.

## Conclusion

In non-Western research methods, we are interested in 'relationality', '[t]hat is, in the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings, and contest the totalizing claims and political epistemic violence of modernity' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 1). Relationality, which means cross-geopolitical comparisons, may mean, as we have tried to illustrate in this chapter, comparisons between the nature and impact of colonialism and post-colonialism in different contexts, such as Angola and Brazil (Severo & Makoni, forthcoming). Our understanding of relationality is also consolidated by the notion of *vincularidad*, which is an awareness of the 'integral relationship and interdependence amongst living organisms (in which humans are only a part) with territory or land and the cosmos' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 1).

In non-Western research methods in applied linguistics, we have to go beyond analyzing how language is used between humans to understand how language is used to enter into complex communicative relationships with non-humans, often by using specific linguistic registers and genres. An analysis of these communicative practices between humans and non-humans will broaden the nature of our understanding of the role of language in non-Western contexts and enrich Western applied linguistics' understandings of the nature of language. The challenge that applied linguistics poses in non-Western contexts is how to develop research methods that adequately describe the nature of the communicative relationships between humans and non-humans in diverse contexts without falling into the trap of searching for new abstract, fictitious universals.

Our perspective, outlined in this chapter, does not mean a rejection or negation of Western research methods in applied linguistics, as Western research methods are, indeed, part of the pluriversal research methods, as noted in the opening of this chapter. Our position should not be construed as referring to an uncritical acceptance of Western research methods. Rather, our perspective is different from the conventional Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentric research methods. Our perspective seeks not only to decolonize research methods in applied linguistics but to de-Westernize them as well by seeking to challenge some of the assumptions which form the basis of research methods in applied linguistics, by questioning distinctions between language and non-language, culture and nature (Descola, 2005), human and non-human. The chapter should therefore be read as an ideological critique of research methods in applied linguistics particularly the way language policy and planning is carried out in non-Western contexts. In this sense, '[o]ur proposal is for creating and illuminating pluriversal and intervernal paths that disturb the totality from which the Universal and the global are often perceived' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 2).

Applied linguistics is value loaded; it means different things to different people, in different contexts, it can either enhance or undermine different users. From such a perspective an analysis of the research methods of applied linguistics as part of the investigation of the

political epistemology of applied linguistics is justifiable. It is justifiable not only because it is appropriate to non-Western contexts, but because the applied linguistics research methods which are appropriate to Western contexts can be utilized in Western contexts because of the immigrant and other vulnerable communities in the Western worlds.

## Notes

- 1 Examples include the chapters by Spencer ('Colonial Language Policies and their Legacies in sub-Saharan Africa') and Welmers ('Christian Missions and Language Policies in Africa').
- 2 'As for mental colonization, social science – along with several others – should focus on creating the conceptual, technical and material tools to resist the plunder, both of material resources and of people (hands, brains) or, at least, to help us survive to it'.

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