Research Methods in Applied Linguistics

Chapter 2
Principles of Research
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The Characteristics of Research

Systematic
Logical
Reductive
Replicable
Generative
Research is systematic: It is based on pre-established rules and regulations; following the principles of:

a) Constancy: Some phenomena do not change their basic characteristics in a given period of time.
b) Uniformity: There are commonalities between the members of one class.

Research is Logical: Logic is employed at every step of research especially regarding the premises and the language and its interpretation and in making conclusions and generalizations.
- **Research is Reductive**
  a) Conceptual: Making generalizations; not checking all the instances
  b) Practical: The findings of researchers are transferred to other researchers avoiding repetition

- **Research is replicable**: repeating the same study with another group in a different situation for further confirmation

Possibilities:
- a) If agreement, that’s O.K
- b) If partial agreement, seek justification
- c) If contradiction, do more and more replication
Research is Generative: Unexpected situations arise leading to new questions when answering the original one. Part of research report is suggestion for further studies. Generativity of research implies that there is no end to research.
Goals of Research

Description
Prediction
Improvement
Explanation
- **Description**: e.g. Language acquisition; functions of language

- **Prediction**: e.g. L1 development; language learners’ future achievement

- **Improvement**: e.g. In language instruction or method

- **Explanation**: e.g. Language achievement or failure; making more holistic generalization
Kinds of Research

exploratory and confirmatory research

a) Confirmatory: partial or complete replication of previous research; more common in language studies

b) Exploratory: for studying an unknown phenomenon; more common before, more difficult, sometimes based on trial and error
Methods of Research

a) **Pure**: research for the sake of research
   e.g. nuclear power, Chomsky’s studies

b) **Applied**: uses the findings of pure research
   e.g. sociolinguistics, language teaching
Basic vs. Applied Research

**Basic**
- Pure, fundamental research
- Discovery of new knowledge; theoretical in nature
- Takes many years for the results of basic research to find some practical utility

**Applied**
- Central purpose to solve an immediate problem
- Improved products or processes
- Infers beyond the group or situation studied
- Interpretation of results relies upon Basic Research
Quantitative vs. Qualitative

**Qualitative**
- Phenomenological
- Exploratory
- Descriptive, inductive, discovery-oriented
- Process-oriented
- Naturalistic and controlled observation

**Quantitative**
- Logical Positivism
- Confirmatory
- Inferential, deductive, verification-oriented
- Outcome-oriented
- Obtrusive and controlled measurement
(cntd.)

- **Qualitative**
  - Subjective
  - Valid, real, rich, deep data
  - The ‘insider’ perspective
  - Ungeneralizable

- **Quantitative**
  - Objective
  - Reliable, hard, replicable data
  - The ‘outsider’ perspective
  - Generalizable
Figure 19.5  Primary research characteristics continua