

## Book Review

*Jason Litzenberg, Georgia State University*

*Wei, L., & Moyer, M. G. (Eds.). (2008). The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism (1st ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.*

As the title suggests, *Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism* is a broad guide to research issues concerning bilingualism and multilingualism. The volume contains 22 chapters divided into three sections, with contributions from almost 30 prominent researchers who have experience in the field. Beginning M.A. or PhD. students as well as instructors for such courses will benefit from the range of contributors, clear organization, with-in chapter section summaries, tables and figures, and comprehensive bibliography and index offered in this book.

The first and shortest section of the book offers a single chapter from each of the volume editors. In Chapter 1, Li Wei describes the three prominent approaches to bilingual and multilingual research -- linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic -- while Chapter 2 considers more critical theoretical, methodological, and analytical concerns. The delineations presented in these opening chapters subsequently serve as a quasi organizational outline for the contributions in second section of the book.

Section two encompasses the primary portion of the book, beginning with a set of chapters on the various types of and possibilities for bilingual data, followed by several chapters on each of the following: study design, data collection, analysis, and theory. The chapters in this section, however, are not further subdivided according to the focus of their content, and novices to the field may not notice the progression of topics. Moreover, the reader may find some contributions already slightly outdated regarding content (e.g., Chapter 10: Recording Audio and Video) or too brief in scope (Chapter 12: Quantification and Statistics), yet the practical overview offered should be nonetheless useful to beginning researchers. For individuals wishing to delve deeper into topics, the conclusion of each chapter in this section suggests further reading and/or additional resources. The largest portion of the second section pertains to theoretical approaches: ethnographic methodologies, social network analysis, conversation analysis and interactionist approaches, critical discourse analysis,

---

Author's email: [esljalx@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:esljalx@langate.gsu.edu)

ISSN: 1457-9863

Publisher: Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Jyväskylä

© 2010: The author

<http://apples.jyu.fi>

narrative analysis, and media analysis each receive a single chapter. Three chapters make up the third and final section of the book, which enthusiastic novice researchers may find the most useful. Chapter 20, for instance, presents an abundance of project ideas, conveniently broken down into themes such as conflict, migration, change, and children, with each heading further sub-divided into the research areas of linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, education, and interdisciplinary. Chapter 21 advises on research dissemination, namely: conference presentations and journal submissions. Chapter 22 offers “non-exhaustive” (361) lists of resources such as popular journals, conferences, and research tools used by researchers in the field of bi- and multilingualism.

As with any edited volume, the quality and readability of individual contributions varies, but with each chapter offering the insights from experts of that particular area, the book is undoubtedly authoritatively represented. Terms which may be unfamiliar to novices in the field such as quantitative/qualitative, psycholinguistics, and code-switching are generally defined in some detail and are frequently supported with examples, figures, and tables. The summaries at the end of each sub-section within the chapters of part two ease the task of skimming and scanning when searching for specific information and provide a detailed overview of the content. Moreover, each chapter concludes with recommendations for further reading or suggested additional resources. Combined, these elements create a user-friendly book well-suited for an upper-level course in bilingualism and multilingualism as well as a supplement to an introductory research methods course, linguistic theory course, or any applied linguistics course.

It should be noted, however, that astute readers may notice how the book confounds the terms bilingual and multilingual, which are applied in an essentially interchangeable manner throughout. Indeed, even if one is to view multilingualism as a more general descriptor of bilingualism (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004), acknowledgement of this approach is relevant to the book’s theme. Although Li Wei defines multilingual in the opening chapter, specific definitions of bilingual are postponed until later chapters. For that matter, the types of bilinguals are seldom addressed, with any such references limited to cursory comments such as “each type of bilingualism poses different research questions” (79) or brief acknowledgement of the “confusing” and “contradictory” (275) terms and approaches. The variables to be considered when defining bi-and multilingualism (Wei 2007) are never directly addressed. Nevertheless, just as the majority of topics presented in this book would be practical for individuals interested in issues related to more general applied linguistics outside the area of bilingualism (e.g., the chapters on linking theory and practice, study design, transcription, interviews and questionnaires, quantitative statistics, and corpora, among others), the approaches described are suitable for both bilingual and multilingual research. Similarly, one could conceivably position the book’s lack of distinction between written and spoken data as a forgivable oversight.

For instructors of applied linguistics, *The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism* is an invaluable resource. Although the centralized reference list located at the end of the book perhaps best suits the volume for use in its entirety rather than individual chapters, it nonetheless offers a comprehensive overview of the central issues in bilingual/multilingual studies in an accessible, easy-to-read manner from respected representatives of the field.

## **References**

- Bhatia, T. K. and Ritchie, W. C. 2004. Introduction. *The Handbook of Bilingualism*. T. K. Bhatia and W. C. Ritchie. Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing LTD.: 1-2.
- Wei, L. 2007. Dimensions of Bilingualism. *The Bilingualism Reader*. L. Wei. New York, NY, Routledge: 3-24.