Book review

James Dean Brown: Mixed Methods Research for TESOL. (2014). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Erzsébet Balogh

University of Szeged, Hungary

Brown (2014) is a volume of a series of textbooks (Edinburgh Textbooks in TESOL) providing guidance for students, teachers and instructors in major areas within Teaching English as a Second Language. The book aims to familiarize the reader with the theoretical and practical concepts of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research (MMR) by investigating how and to what extent these methods can be employed in research related to English language teaching.

Each main section of the book, *Getting Research Started*, *Analyzing Research Data*, and *Presenting Research Studies*, is divided into three subsections whose structure is unified. That is, in each subsection, the author first briefly introduces the key points that are later described and elaborated on in detail. Several tasks, i.e. questions that make the reader think about what they have read or assignments to be completed with the data at hand, are included throughout the individual subsections to help to understand the theoretical explanation or background information presented by the author. Also, these tasks provide the reader with the opportunity to process and deepen the acquired knowledge in different ways. Furthermore, with the exception of the very first one, each subsection consists of a *Guided Reading* part, in which the author offers a detailed presentation, quasi in the form of an annotated bibliography, of two research articles that are related to the given topic. Each subsection also includes a *Conclusion* part in which the author summarizes the main points of the subsection in a table where each main point is supplemented with associated questions that the reader needs to ask when dealing with the issue in question. Finally, each subsection ends with the author's recommendation for further reading.

The first section, entitled *Getting Research Started*, consists of three subsections which are the following: a) *Introduction to Research*, b) *Starting Research Projects*, and c) *Gathering, Compiling, and Coding Data.* The main focus of the first subsection is the types of research methodology that exist today in TESOL research. Beside the quantitative−qualitative dichotomy, MMR that is best applied when one wants to investigate issues from multiple viewpoints is introduced. This subsection helps the reader to understand what methodology ought to be used with different types of research. The aim of the second subsection is to describe the process of how to start a

research project. The first important task is to design an outline of the project, then to choose the suitable methodology for it, and to formulate good research questions. This subsection guides the reader through handling these issues before starting to do research. The question of triangulation appears in this subsection, too, whereby the author presents the misconceptions, as well as the criticism connected to this concept. The third subsection, as its title suggests, deals with data gathering, data compiling, and data coding. The author separates quantitative, qualitative, and MMR data, describing the potential advantages and disadvantages of each type of data. The subsection also explains what variables and constructs are and how to operationalize them by measuring them with scores.

The second section, *Analyzing Research Data*, is a practical chapter leading the reader through the process of data analysis concerning quantitative data (first subsection, entitled *Analyzing Quantitative Data*), qualitative data (second subsection, entitled *Analyzing Qualitative Data*) as well as MMR data (third subsection, entitled *Analyzing MMR Data*). Concerning quantitative data, the author explains how to calculate and interpret descriptive and correlational statistics in Excel using spreadsheets with real data. As far as qualitative data are concerned, six types of matrixes as tools for qualitative data analysis are presented. Also, the steps one needs to follow when analyzing qualitative data are outlined and described in detail. As for MMR data, the most important point the subsection makes is drawing attention to the fact that MMR does not simply combine quantitative and qualitative data and analyze them accordingly, but it offers strategic techniques or guidelines that guarantee that data collected with mixed methods provides more extensive and far-reaching results than either quantitative, or qualitative research, or the two combined.

In the third section, *Presenting Research Studies*, the author collects a great deal of useful information about what to do when one has finished data collection and analysis. In the first subsection, *Presenting Research Results*, how to present the results of a study in tables and figures is described step by step. After the thorough description, the reader is also advised what to do and what not to do when they want to organize data presentation. In the second subsection, *Writing Research Reports*, the various types of papers, for example, research reports, articles, theses, and dissertations, are outlined from which the reader can choose the most suitable to publish their results. In addition, the author reports on his own experience and strategies that have helped him to overcome difficulties in writing or even writer's block. The third subsection, *Disseminating Research*, talks about the importance of doing and then publishing research. Beside the three subsections, this section contains the Conclusion part which is the closing and summarizing chapter of the whole book. Several important issues are mentioned here by the author, including a section on how the field of TESOL research has expanded in the past years, the different topics one could investigate in the field, research ethics one needs to consider when conducting research, the difficulties that

arise from the different (native vs. non-native) research cultures, the issue of plagiarism as well as the future of TESOL research and its methodology.

The textbook is suitable for students, teachers and instructors whose aim is to gain a general picture of how to conduct research in the field of TESOL, starting from formulating their research questions, through choosing the most appropriate data collection and data analysis methods, to the writing up and disseminating their results. The book fulfills this purpose by presenting the issues logically and perspicuously, with a structure and a language that are both easy to follow. It introduces the topic starting from the foundations; therefore, reading the book requires no previous knowledge or expertise in the field. An additional asset of the book is that whenever a new term is introduced, the author immediately provides not only a definition of the term, but also references for further reading. However, despite the author's attempt to provide a thorough description of research methodological issues as well as ample examples and tasks that enable the reader to see the application possibilities of the methodologies, the level of the book remains rather elementary. For example, even though several excellent and more sophisticated statistical programs exist, such as SPSS or Statistica, some versions of which are even available free of charge, the author explains the calculation of t-tests with actual mathematical equations on paper, or, in another case, shows some statistical data analysis only with the help of Excel tables. Moreover, as a lot of tasks are inserted between the main bodies of the texts and usually marked with the same headings as the actual heading of the different parts, the whole reading process is often interrupted and the reader tends to become rather distracted by these intermissions. Finally, as the textbook has originally been designed for coursework, it is not really suitable for self-study.

I recommend this volume for those who would like to gain an insight into valuable current research methodological practices within the field of TESOL. I believe students in a course on research methodology or in-practice teachers who would like to conduct research in the classroom can all benefit from reading it as the book leads the reader through the difficulties of investigations from the beginning to the very end. Also, I recommend the textbook for those who are interested in learning more about mixed methods research and who would like to understand why and how MMR is (or should be) different from or more than the multiple research methods studies which are generally employed in TESOL. Therefore, the textbook provides invaluable assistance in understanding MMR and its practical application in TESOL research.