REVIEW ESSAY


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Benati’s short book of 166 pages divides eight chapters into three organizational sections: key stages in second language research, key methodological frameworks, and mixed frameworks, and psychological methods. Four chapters are particularly interesting for the readership of this journal.

Chapter One details “key components in second language research.” Benati argues that most second language research focuses on learning often the exclusion of pedagogical implications. He argues that while ideas are everywhere, it is very challenging to formulate questions. Professional literature, research plans, and data collection and analyses are key to understanding research. The issues of ethics forms and ethical considerations are also brought forward. Chapter Two discusses key components found in research papers. Benati directs learners to key journals in the second language field and explains how articles are typically structured. The typical sections of journal articles include abstracts, background, participants, procedures, results, discussions, and references. He also includes a section on reliability and validity.

Section Two contains chapters on action research, experimental research, classroom observation, and case study research. As stated previously, the chapter of interest for this journal is the one on action research. It begins with a definition of what action research is, describes data collection and analyses, and explains action research methodology. Benati also shares the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. A short sample paper is included along with a list of key terms, and suggested readings. The remaining methodological chapters contain a similar format. In the book’s final section and final chapter, Benati ties all of the concepts together. It is a “how to” guide to conducting a project.
Although the book is called a manual for conducting a research project, I think the content within is not specific enough to support a researcher. However, this book would be very useful for a newcomer to the field of second language acquisition to use as a guide to read research papers and understand their structure. There is a need for these kinds of books, especially for international students who may have experience teaching second languages, but have never been exposed to reading English academic journals. I also want to point out that the reading lists contain the key players in second language research. This was very refreshing, because sometimes the books listed in the reference lists are only the ones published by the same publishing company.