



Content list available at <http://ijltr.urmia.ac.ir>

*Iranian Journal
of
Language Teaching Research
(Book Review)*



Ethics in Applied Linguistics Research: Language Researcher Narratives (ed.), Peter I. De Costa. New York, NY: Routledge (2016). 248 pp., ISBN: 978-0-415-73906-1.

Karim Sadeghi ^{a,*}, Maryam Soleimani ^a

^a *Urmia University, Iran*

Ethics can be regarded as an overarching criterion against which the soundness of research studies may be judged. Attention to ethical considerations in conducting and reporting research is increasing worldwide but despite sporadic mentions of its significance in research methods books on applied linguistics, there is no single volume devoted to the topic to the best of our knowledge. This much needed and timely edited volume, *Ethics in Applied Linguistics Research: Language Researcher Narratives (ed.)*, is a collection of chapters edited by Peter I. De Costa with contributions by well-known experts in the field of applied linguistics research. The volume records the research practices of prominent applied linguists from a wide variety of subdisciplines and aims at preparing the next generation of applied linguists with the knowledge necessary to conduct ethical research.

In addition to the list of illustrations, acknowledgements, foreword by Lourdes Ortega, list of contributors, and introductory chapter by the editor, the book is organized into four parts, with each part divided into subsections (i.e., part one into two subsections, part two into three, part three into four, and part four into three) orienting on ethical issues in research. The parts encompass twelve self-contained chapters, each authored by a prominent researcher or a team of scholars. *Afterword* and an index make an appropriate closing to the book.

In the introductory chapter, *Ethics in Applied Linguistics Research*, the editor presents a brief history of ethics in applied linguistics offering an interdisciplinary and reflexive approach to ethics; moreover, researching ethics along two continua and language researcher narratives are introduced.

* Corresponding author: Urmia University, Iran
Email address: k.sadeghi@urmia.ac.ir

© Urmia University Press

Part I, *Laying the Groundwork*, is subdivided into two chapters; namely, *Training in Research Ethics among Applied Linguistics and SLA Researchers* and *Data Selection as an Ethical Issue: Dealing with Outliers in Telling a Research Story*. The first chapter, written by Scott Sterling, Paula Winke, and Susan Gass, aims at enhancing the readers' understanding of the ethical issues researchers are faced with within their fields. Moreover, the writers recommend that researchers should ensure not only the ethical practices, but also the reliability, replicability, validity and generalizability of their research and they should continue to grow in terms of ethical training to better serve the field. In addition, their findings indicate that more instruction is needed for the development of 'professional responsibility' including authorship, peer review, etc. In the second chapter, Brian Paltridge reports on two different examples of inclusion and exclusion of outliers in the study. The writer emphasizes the inclusion of what is called "outlier" data for the purpose of generalizing research findings. In line with the author of the book, Mackey and Gass (2016) state that there should be "a principled reason for not including them beyond that fact that they 'don't fit right'" (p. 300). Readers with little knowledge of ethics will find these highly practical chapters to be a rich source of ideas and inspiration for their future research.

Part II, *Applying Ethics to Different Linguistic Communities*, consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, *Quotidian Ethics in the Neoliberal University: Research and Practice Collide*, Sue Starfield discusses the concept of 'Neoliberalism' and its impact in the globalization of higher education in general and IELTS score in particular. Chapter 4, *Narrative of Ethical Dilemmas in Research with Immigrants with Limited Formal Schooling*, by Martha Bigelow, and Nicole Pettitt, explores some of the ethical issues related to students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) in Minnesota. Although there are many studies on immigrant learners (e.g., De Costa, 2010; Wood, 2011), there is not a deep tradition of SLIFE-focused research in general. This study raises researchers' awareness regarding the importance of the relationship between ethical issues and methodological/theoretical issues and welcomes researchers in various paradigms into research related with SLIFE. In chapter 5, *Ethical Dilemmas and Language Policy (LP) Advising*, Joseph Lo Bianco, aims to propose problem-solving language policies to relevant authorities for implementation in three conflict-affected zones in southern Asia including Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand. The chapter touches only briefly on the general nature of LP; moreover, it attempts to bring together three groups of stakeholders: public officials, citizens or civil society organizations, and various kinds of experts.

The intended aim of four chapters in Part III, *Ethics, Voice, and Multilingualism*, is to explore the notion of reflexivity in research contexts that span several countries. Chapter 6, entitled *Research, Relationships, and Reflexivity*, written by Sam Kirkham and Alison Mackey, examines how researchers influence the relationship between themselves and their participants, focusing on the subsequent coproduction of data. Furthermore, it explores some of the issues surrounding researcher-participant dynamics, introduces two case studies on language variation and identity, and finally touches on the broader implications of our analyses for research in applied linguistics. In chapter 7, *Negotiating Ethical Research Engagement in Multilingual Ethnographic Studies in Education: A Narrative from the Field*, the researchers, Patricia A. Duff and Klara Abdi, present a 2-year ethnographic multiple-case study of transnational children moving between Canada and China and illustrate the hurdles researchers have to overcome in designing a study on internationally mobile children participants. Chapter 8, *Ethical Issues in Indigenous Language Research and Interventions*,

by Steven, L. Thorne, Sabine Siekmann, and Walkie Charles, discusses the complex ethical considerations and dynamics in three grant-funded Indigenous language revitalization projects in Alaska, focusing primarily on intervention efforts aimed at Yup'ik-medium education and the professional and academic advancement of native Alaskans through participation in graduate degree programs. Chapter 9, *Ethical Issues in Linguistics Ethnography*, has considered the microethical and macroethical ethics in linguistics ethnography which is, according to Hymes (1980), "a disciplined way of looking, asking, recording, reflecting, comparing, and reporting" (p. 105). Through two examples, the researchers, Fiona Copland and Angela Creese, indicate how researchers view local decisions as embedded in wider discourse and ideologies and how decontextualized macroethical procedures are inadequate when dealing with ethical dilemmas in the field.

Part IV, *Ethics and the Media*, highlights the importance of rethinking and refining ethical research and teaching practices in order to keep up with technological developments. This part is further subdivided into three chapters. Chapter 10, *Ethical Challenges in Conducting Text-based Online Applied Linguistics Research*, written by Xuesong Gao and Jian Tao, draws on methodological and ethical discussions in other fields including psychology, communication, and health; in addition, it recounts the first author's (Gao's) experiences of dealing with ethical issues when using text-based online data for applied linguistics research. In chapter 11, *Prying into Safe Houses*, the researcher, Suresh Canagarajah, articulates the educational significance of his research on safe houses and discusses how safe houses relate to his vision of macroethical objectives for minority and multilingual students. Moreover, the researcher narrates his research experience to demonstrate how he negotiated his ethical dilemmas. The aim of the researcher in the last chapter, *Ethics in Activist Scholarship*, by Sandra Silberstein, is to urge readers toward an ethical imperative to public scholarship. To this end, the researcher describes the study and its findings and reviews frameworks for ethical assessment. This chapter ends up with a series of questions that resist easy responses and demonstrate the criticality of the term "praxis of questioning".

To conclude, this book shows a wide range of insightful ideas and narratives of the researchers who have experienced ethical dilemmas, identified them, and determined how to resolve them prior to, during, and even after their research. The editor of this book has eloquently articulated the compelling need to produce linguists who attempt to minimize harm to their participants and also benefit them as a consequence of their research collaboration. Thus, those who are new to the realm of ethics in applied linguistics and research should take this gold mine of tips into consideration. The reviewers found the book very well written and well-organized with an outstanding framework that employs an uncomplicated structure and highlights its excellent coverage of the key issues. The writing style is clear and straightforward, making it easy for both practitioners as well as students to follow. The editor could have achieved his goal much better, however, if he had opted to include more papers on how to conduct ethics in applied linguistics practically. All in all, this volume could be a valuable ethical resource for prospective and current practitioners in the field of applied linguistics.

References

- De Costa, P. I. (2010). From refugee to transformer: A Bourdieusian take on a Hmong learner's trajectory. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44(3), 517–541.
- Hymes, D. (1980). *Language in education: Forward to fundamentals. Language in education: Ethnolinguistic essays*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2016). *Second language research: Methodology and design (second ed.)*. New York: NY: Routledge.
- Wood, K. (2011). Writing together: Building community through learner stories in adult ESL. *TESOL Journal*, 2(2), 239-248.