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Book review: Habibie, P., & Sawyer, R. D. (Eds.). (2025). *Reflexive and reflective research approaches in applied linguistics*. John Benjamins

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In applied linguistics, *reflection* and *reflexivity* often appear as familiar methodological keywords after abstracts in journal articles. They are also used in positionality sections or paragraphs in articles or theses. In some cases, they are referred to in passing usually in the limitations sections or ethics statements. However, they are less often treated as fully fledged epistemic commitments that reshape what counts as data, analysis, warrant, and knowledge contribution. The epistemic focus aligns with a broader move toward methodological diversification in applied linguistics, including recent efforts to document and legitimize less frequently used approaches such as narrative inquiry and phenomenology (Riazi, 2024).

The present edited volume places reflexive and reflective inquiry at the center of research design and representation, not at its margins. The overall book's accomplishment is that it has made reflexive methodologies clear to understand. That is, it does not merely advocate reflexivity as a qualitative aspect, but it clarifies what reflexive research does, what it requires, and how it can be pursued with rigor and ethical accountability across a range of applied-linguistic domains. To achieve its goal, the book is organized into three parts plus an introductory chapter and a coda. It moves from conceptual and methodological foundations in the first part to discipline-specific uptake and critique, and finally to illustrative studies that demonstrate how reflexive and reflective methodologies are used in research studies. This progression makes the volume potentially useful for graduate students and for early-career scholars seeking a principled entry point into approaches that foreground lived experience, positionality, and the ethics of knowledge production.

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From methodological family to methodological practice

In the introduction chapter, the editors frame the volume around four reflexive methodologies, namely, autoethnography, duoethnography, narrative inquiry, and currere. They position these methodologies within the interpretive qualitative traditions that address "subjective yet socially situated questions" (p. 1) through sustained reflection and reflexivity. This framing is important because reflexive research is frequently misunderstood as a merely personal endeavor, or as an acknowledgement for some weaknesses that substitutes experience for analysis. Instead, the book repeatedly demands that reflexive methodologies treat the self not as an end point, but as an analytic site through which cultural, institutional, ideological, and historical forces become visible.

Part I of the book includes Chapters 2–5. The autoethnography chapter explicitly acknowledges the method's growing popularity and its controversies, then clarifies how autoethnography draws on autobiographical writing, ethnography, and narrative inquiry to critique personal, social, and cultural phenomena. The chapter crucially foregrounds methodological resources, such as self-reflexivity, emotionality, subjectivity/intersubjectivity, and storytelling that enable researchers to connect inner experience to socio-cultural worlds, and it notes debates over analytic, critical, interpretive, evocative, and artistic orientations. Pedagogically, this is a strong move because it helps readers avoid treating *autoethnography* as a single genre with a single quality standard, and instead understand it as a methodological family with different aims and warrants.

The duoethnography chapter complements the above discussion by shifting attention from solitary self-study to dialogic, relational inquiry. Duoethnography is presented as a collaborative, *living* methodology that intertwines storytelling and story-listening, engaging transtemporal and trans-conceptual movements across past, present, and future, and emphasizing how positionality discursively frames inquiry. The narrative inquiry chapter, similarly, treats narrative not as an intuitive act of telling stories but as a research methodology with ethical and epistemological stakes, including challenges such as interpretive multiplicity (the *Rashomon effect*) and the complexities of *backyard research*.

Currere, perhaps less widely known in applied linguistics than narrative inquiry (see, e.g., Ghanbar et al., 2024) or autoethnography, is introduced as both a concept in curriculum studies and a research method rooted in *running the course* of lived curriculum experience while attending to social, political, and cultural enactment. Its recursive movements between self and world are structured through four steps, namely, regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis, providing a procedural grammar for inward-turning work that remains socially situated.

Taken as a whole, Part I functions as a methodological primer with a distinctive contribution that equips readers with a vocabulary for methodological accountability. That is, how reflexive work can justify its claims, define its analytic movement, and articulate its ethical commitments.

Reflexivity in applied linguistics: Uptake, critique, and guidance

Part II (Chapters 6–9) is where the book's contribution becomes most explicitly disciplinary. Rather than assuming that reflexive methodologies travel seamlessly into applied linguistics, the chapters examine what changes applied linguistics researchers need to consider when they address topics, such as language ideologies, identity, pedagogy, power, and the ethics of representing others. For example, the chapter on autoethnography in applied linguistics (with attention to ELT/TESOL and academic literacies) highlights both affordances and limitations, and directly addresses ethical dilemmas during research and writing. The timeliness of this contribution is underscored by the recent appearance of methodological syntheses charting how autoethnography has been taken up in TESOL teacher education (see Ghanbar & Kamali, 2026).

The duoethnography chapter offers one of the volume's more theoretically ambitious moves. It places duoethnography within critical pedagogy and ELT research and engages with meta-theories, such as Marxism, critical realism, and early Frankfurt School critical theory, to propose duoethnography as an engine for ideology critique and praxis rather than simply a dialogic narrative form. Even readers who do not share the chapter's theoretical commitments may appreciate its methodological provocation that reflexive methods can be vehicles for theory-building and consciousness-raising, not merely descriptive accounts of experience.

The chapter on currere demonstrates how it can be used to develop critical pedagogy by systematically revisiting past experiences, envisioning future commitments, and reworking present practice. Using currere as a methodological framework, the authors structure a collaborative inquiry around four common movements in currere, namely, regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical. These moves are used to examine how past, present, and future orientations shape teaching and to position currere as a transformative alternative to conventional language-teaching models. The authors argue that currere's transtemporal and trans-conceptual work enables educators and researchers in applied linguistics and language education to deepen critical reflection, advance socially just pedagogy, and generate practice-informed research.

Finally, the chapter narrative inquiry reports a study with Grade 3 children identified as struggling readers in a First Nations in-community school. Working with the principal and classroom teacher, the researchers co-designed a structured literacy intervention and used narrative inquiry to generate rich, experience-near accounts of learning to read and participating in remediation. Guided by the narrative commonplaces of temporality, sociality, and place, the study was designed, enacted, analyzed, and reported in ways that also supported ongoing attention to ethical challenges. The chapter includes an overall narrative as well as participant and researcher stories, supplemented by artwork and artifacts that capture meanings not easily conveyed in words. Data collection took place two mornings per week over five months; although the study was intended to follow students from Grade 3 into Grade 4 across two years, the project was curtailed by the pandemic and resulting restrictions on school access.

Taken together, the chapters in Part II, convey the message that reflexive methodologies can enrich applied linguistics research. This is because applied linguistics is a field in which language, identity, power, and institutional life are deeply entangled. Notwithstanding, reflexive methods require explicit design choices and discipline-specific sensitivity, especially when the boundaries between researcher, participant, and practitioner are as clear as in other methodologies.

Demonstrations: What reflexive research can illuminate

Part III of the book that includes Chapters 10–13, demonstrates studies that show how reflexive and reflective methods can be used to generate knowledge claims with practical and ethical significance. A critical autoethnography of migration in Australia, with attention to English linguistic imperialism and interactional pressures, examines how power structures and dominant language ideologies shape everyday language choices. The contribution of the study is not merely an empathy for the participants, rather it is an analytic illumination of how macro-level views (about English, legitimacy, belonging) materialize in micro-level interaction, with implications for inclusion in multilingual societies.

The duoethnographic study of translingualism and language teacher identity explores the lived constraints of monolingualism and native-speakerism across two contrasting contexts (United Kingdom and Japan). It shows how these ideologies affect willingness to claim bilingual identity and shape professional identity negotiation, while also documenting small acts of resistance. The chapter demonstrates a key strength of duoethnography in applied linguistics, which is the capacity to make contradiction analytically productive by revealing how identities are both enabled and constrained by local ideologies, and how agency can be partial, strategic, and context-dependent.

A currere-based chapter demonstrates how currere can be used to develop critical pedagogy for language educators by deconstructing past experiences, co-constructing the present, and reconstructing future teaching orientations. A discussion that positions currere as a counter-narrative to traditional language teaching methods through a transformative lens. The chapter is significant for readers interested in praxis since it illustrates how reflective inquiry can be organized as a disciplined, staged process that feeds directly into pedagogical redesign.

The narrative inquiry chapter embedded in an intervention study on children labeled *struggling readers* offers a compelling example of methodological hybridity. That is, narrative inquiry is not treated as incompatible with intervention, but as a framework for designing, living out, analyzing, and ethically managing an intervention, attending to temporality, sociality, and place. The chapter also records pandemic disruption and reminds readers that reflexive methodologies are often well suited to capturing the contingency and instability of educational research contexts.

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Part III thus puts forward the argument that reflexive methodologies are especially valuable when the object of inquiry involves identity work, ideological constraint, educational transformation, and ethical entanglement. These are domains where *objective distance*, as a trend in other methodologies, can obscure how knowledge and power are co-produced.

The coda and the volume's field-level significance

Matthew T. Prior's closing commentary usefully places the collection in the wider landscape of contemporary applied linguistics. The author briefly traces key developments in the field and revisits how *reflection* and *reflexivity* have been understood and mobilized in qualitative research. Rather than simply recapping what came before, the coda works as a connective piece, linking the volume's methodological focus to ongoing debates in applied linguistics and pointing to promising directions for future work. The coda is a good ending for a methods-oriented book because it helps readers see reflexive methodologies not as a specialist aspect of the field, but as part of a broader shift in how applied linguists conceptualize research problems, evidence, and scholarly contribution.

Evaluation and constructive tensions

The volume's key strength is its coherence. Many edited collections read as thematically related but uneven in cumulative impact. Here, the three-part structure supports a deliberate learning trajectory from conceptual foundations to applied-linguistics relevance to demonstrations. The book also succeeds in treating reflexive approaches as rigorous methodologies rather than stylistic alternatives to conventional research writing.

At the same time, the volume raises productive tensions that can be framed as invitations for further work in the field. These tensions are outlined below.

From *reflexivity* as principle to *reflexivity* as evidence. The book repeatedly insists on methodological seriousness, but readers, especially doctoral or graduate students, may still want more explicit cross-chapter guidance on how reflexivity becomes visible and assessable in research reporting. What textual and analytic markers signal reflexive movement beyond narrative presentation? How can researchers demonstrate that reflexivity has transformed interpretation, not merely accompanied it?

Quality criteria and evaluation heuristics. Several chapters discuss affordances, limitations, and ethical dilemmas, yet a consolidated set of evaluative heuristics (even in the form of a brief synthesis) would further strengthen the volume's usefulness as a teaching text. Such heuristics could address, for example, analytic warrant in autoethnography, relational ethics in duoethnography, and how currere's steps map onto claims and contributions.

Interface with broader methodological ecologies in applied linguistics. The volume is appropriately centered on interpretive qualitative approaches. Still, applied linguistics is methodologically diverse and plural, and many researchers work across paradigms.

A more explicit discussion of how reflexive commitments interface with mixed-methods designs, corpus-assisted qualitative inquiry, design-based research, or intervention studies (beyond the single narrative-intervention example) would broaden the volume's uptake. This may indeed be more a direction for future volumes in this Research Methods in Applied Linguistics (RMAL) series than a limitation of the present book.

These points do not detract from the volume's contribution; rather, they reflect the book's success in making reflexive methodologies salient enough that readers will want to operationalize them more systematically.

Conclusion

Overall, *Reflexive and reflective research approaches in applied linguistics* is a timely and well-constructed addition to the applied linguistics methods literature. It explains the core reflexive approaches with clarity, shows how they speak to recurring disciplinary concerns, and illustrates what rigorous reflexive work looks like through carefully chosen studies. The volume's main contribution is to treat reflexive inquiry as a fully legitimate way of producing knowledge, one that can bring into sharper focus how language, identity, ideology, and pedagogy are experienced, negotiated, and reshaped in practice. For graduate students, qualitative researchers, and those teaching research methods, the book offers both a reliable conceptual orientation and a set of workable models to draw on.

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