


Chapter 16


Enhancing Interventional Studies Through Mixed-Methods Research in Language Education

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ABSTRACT

Interventional studies in second language acquisition (SLA) have advanced our understanding of various teaching strategies' impacts. These studies, distinguishing between instructed second language acquisition (ISLA) and applied second language acquisition (ASLA), offer unique insights. To ensure high ecological validity and produce transferable findings, researchers advocate for methodologies that capture the multifaceted nature of language learning. This chapter explores the potential of mixed methods research (MMR) in enhancing interventional studies within language education. MMR, by integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, addresses limitations inherent in each method alone. Combining robust quantitative data with rich qualitative insights provides a deeper and broader understanding of complex phenomena in SLA. This chapter argues that MMR designs are essential for blending generalizable data with contextual insights, contributing to a more nuanced and

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, interventional studies in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have been very productive in exploring the impact of different language teaching strategies on students' language acquisition, their application to different classroom settings, and understanding how languages are learned along with the effectiveness of various teaching methods. In this context, SLA research has often differentiated between research into Instructed Second Language Acquisition (ISLA), which is mostly geared towards hypothesis testing under controlled conditions, and Applied Second Language Acquisition (ASLA), which considers the role of context-specific circumstances in situated (real-life) teaching and learning practice (Han, 2016). However, researchers have increasingly stressed the importance of conducting interventional studies with high ecological validity that generate transferable research findings (Sato & Loewen 2022). To achieve this, employing a range of approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies of second language learning is often a necessity. The rationale for adopting integrated methodologies in classroom research is grounded in the complex and dynamic nature of language learning processes (Hiver et al., 2022). Recognizing the multifaceted causes and pathways of language development, Larsen-Freeman (2019) and Moss and Hartel (2016) have highlighted the limitations of relying on a single methodological approach to capture the entirety of this complexity. Mixed Methods Research (MMR), an approach that combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, has proven to be very well suited to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding complex phenomena. This integration not only enhances the depth and breadth of research findings but also helps to mitigate the limitations inherent in each method when used in isolation. Quantitative research can sometimes overlook the context and the depth of human experiences, reducing complex issues to mere numbers. Qualitative research, while rich in detail, often lacks generalizability and can be subject to researcher bias.

The present paper discusses how MMR designs can contribute to blending the robust, generalizable quantitative data from interventional studies with the deep, contextual insights of qualitative research when addressing complex research questions.

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