

EXPLORING SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM RESEARCH

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

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*For my research students, who helped me refine my thinking
by trying out these ideas and activities.*

David Nunan

*For Rob McMillan,
Sarah Springer,
Will Radecki,
Marie-Lise Bouscaren,
Analisa Bouscaren Radecki,
Noel Isaiah Cortez Radecki Bouscaren,
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Kathi Bailey

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PREFACE

We wrote this book with the intention of providing an introduction to research in second and foreign language classrooms. It grew out of courses and workshops on classroom research that we have developed and taught for teachers' conferences and graduate programs in applied linguistics. We aim to provide an introduction to language classroom research that is accessible to readers who do not necessarily have specialist training in research methods.

The book has two overriding objectives. The first is to provide an overview of and introduction to language classroom research. To this end, we look at both substantive issues (that is, the topics and questions that have been investigated by classroom researchers) and methodological issues (the techniques and methods that researchers have employed for collecting data, interpreting the data, and presenting the results). The second objective is to help readers develop practical skills for carrying out original empirical investigations. Although the context of the book is the second language classroom, our intention has been to cover concepts and techniques that will be broadly applicable to a wide range of applied linguistics contexts.

Our intended readership includes language teachers, researchers, teachers-in-training, and language teacher educators. When we wrote the book, we had in mind a worldwide audience of language teaching professionals, including language teachers, teacher trainees, teacher educators, and those who run courses on classroom observation and research. We believe that it will be particularly well suited for candidates in teaching credential, master's degree, and Ph.D. programs for language teachers. To this end, the examples and studies reviewed were designed to appeal to teachers of many languages—not just English.

The structure of the book is transparent and will support people learning about the research process. There are four major thematically organized sections to the book. The first of these provides an overview of second language classroom research. The second deals with research design issues, looking at approaches to planning and implementing classroom research. In the third section, we examine a range of procedures for collecting data. In the final section, we focus on data analysis and interpretation issues, providing tools and perspectives for making sense of the data that have been collected.

Each section is preceded by an introduction that maps out the territory and sets goals for the readers. At the end of each chapter, you will find questions and tasks to help you solidify your understanding of the concepts covered. Throughout the book we have critiqued our own studies, to show that language classroom research seldom proceeds as smoothly as published accounts may make it seem.

After reading the book, you should be well positioned to carry out your own classroom-based investigations, regardless of the research tradition in which you choose to work. You will also be familiar with the findings of several key studies and be well prepared as critical consumers of others' publications in language classroom research. We hope that reading this book will be positive and productive for you.

David Nunan and Kathi Bailey