

Editorial

Quality Issues in Applied Linguistics Qualitative Research

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Over the past several decades, qualitative research has become firmly established as a vital strand of inquiry in applied linguistics. No longer confined to the margins, qualitative approaches—ranging from narrative and ethnography to duoethnography, autoethnography, discourse analysis, and case study—have been mobilized to interrogate questions of identity, pedagogy, multilingualism, policy, and professional practice. This expansion, however, has also brought to the fore longstanding concerns about how to define, assess, and ensure *quality*. While quantitative paradigms traditionally emphasized reliability, validity, and generalizability, qualitative researchers have sought to articulate parallel but distinctive notions, often framed under the rubric of *trustworthiness*.

The concept of trustworthiness, as articulated by Lincoln and Guba in the 1980s, foregrounded credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as qualitative counterparts to positivist benchmarks. Yet, in contemporary applied linguistics, these criteria are not sufficient on their own. As the field diversifies methodologically and epistemologically, scholars increasingly grapple with ethical accountability, reflexivity, inclusivity, transparency, resonance, and methodological creativity. In short, quality in qualitative research is now seen not as a static checklist of procedures but as a dialogic, evolving, and context-sensitive practice.

This special issue of the *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies* emerges precisely from this recognition. By curating a collection of articles that engage with the theme of *trustworthiness and quality in qualitative research in applied linguistics*, we aim to bring together multiple voices, methodological traditions, and perspectives to enrich and complicate our understanding of what it means to produce rigorous and trustworthy qualitative scholarship. The issue foregrounds questions that are not only methodological but also epistemological and ethical: What does rigor mean when knowledge is partial and situated? How do researchers maintain quality when working with vulnerable or marginalized communities? Can creativity,

play, or even cross-paradigmatic hybridity be understood as enhancing rather than undermining trustworthiness?

Contributions of the Special Issue

The eight articles included in this issue approach these questions from different vantage points.

- **Kim** interrogates the notion of *replication in qualitative research*, pushing readers to reconsider the transferability of replication logics from quantitative traditions and highlighting both risks and possibilities for applied linguistics.
- **Cheng and Mecham** employ *duoethnography* to demonstrate how novice researchers negotiate *micro-ethics and positionality*, underscoring the relational and reflexive nature of trustworthiness.
- **Ghanbar and Asghari** offer a *narrative inquiry into effective English teaching for Deaf university students in Iran*, exemplifying how resonance, ethical sensitivity, and inclusivity expand the very notion of qualitative rigor.
- **Karimzadeh, Saedi, and Amini Farsani** critically reflect on *interview methodology*, showing how decisions about timing, sequencing, and researcher–participant dynamics can fundamentally shape credibility and validity.
- **Kamali** tackles the criticisms often leveled at *autoethnography* and proposes practical strategies—such as transparency, dialogic engagement, and reflexivity—to strengthen its trustworthiness in applied linguistics.
- **Leach and Tracy** revisit the *big-tent model of qualitative quality* and introduce the concept of *play* as an essential dimension of methodological innovation, arguing that quality is enriched, not diminished, by creativity.
- **Perkins** bridges paradigmatic divides by advocating for *quantitative validation within qualitative studies of English language teaching*, suggesting pragmatic strategies such as triangulation that preserve richness while bolstering credibility.
- **Riazi** synthesizes decades of scholarship to provide a *comprehensive roadmap for trustworthiness in applied linguistics*, weaving together conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical insights for both established and emerging researchers.

Looking Ahead

Collectively, these contributions illuminate the multidimensional nature of trustworthiness in qualitative research. They show that quality is not reducible to universal procedures but must be continuously negotiated in

relation to context, participants, and researcher positionalities. The articles highlight recurring themes—such as reflexivity, ethics, methodological transparency, and inclusivity—while also demonstrating innovation by integrating replication debates, autoethnographic strategies, and even playful experimentation with frameworks of quality.

What emerges is a vision of *trustworthiness* as a living concept. It is dialogic, grounded in relationships and accountability; it is flexible, responsive to the shifting landscapes of knowledge-making in applied linguistics; and it is creative, open to new metaphors, models, and methodological hybrids. In this sense, trustworthiness is not simply about meeting established criteria but about cultivating integrity, resonance, and coherence across the research process.

As guest editors, we hope that this issue will encourage qualitative researchers in applied linguistics to see quality not as an external imposition but as an internal, generative commitment—one that enables us to speak meaningfully to scholarly, pedagogical, and societal audiences. Ensuring trustworthiness is thus both a methodological imperative and an ethical responsibility, shaping not only the reception of our work but also its capacity to engage, transform, and contribute.

Acknowledgements

Bringing this special issue to publication has been a collaborative endeavor, and it would not have been possible without the dedication of many individuals. We are deeply grateful to the authors, who entrusted us with their innovative and thought-provoking contributions and whose work demonstrates the vibrancy of qualitative research in applied linguistics. We extend our sincere appreciation to the reviewers, whose thoughtful and rigorous feedback strengthened the quality of every manuscript and exemplified the spirit of scholarly generosity. We also wish to thank the editorial team of the *Journal of Modern Research in English Language Studies* for their steadfast support, professionalism, and commitment to advancing methodological conversations in our field.

Finally, we hope that readers will find in this collection not only models of trustworthy research but also provocations to rethink, experiment, and innovate. In an era when applied linguistics must grapple with unprecedented global challenges—migration, multilingualism, digitalization, equity, and inclusion—qualitative research offers tools not only to understand but also to reimagine the human dimensions of language. May this special issue inspire researchers to pursue rigor with imagination, ethics with care, and trustworthiness with creativity.