

Genre Analysis:
Methods Section of Qualitative Research Articles in Applied Linguistics
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Rationale

Qualitative methods are a major paradigm in applied linguistics, but their methodological diversity and limited guidance on writing the Methods section often discourage novice research writers from reading and adopting qualitative studies. Genre analysis on the Methods sections of qualitative research articles helps novice writers understand how these studies structure methodological descriptions to establish credibility and validity.

Research Questions

1. What rhetorical moves are used in the Methods section of qualitative research articles in applied linguistics?
2. What linguistic patterns characterize the Methods section?
3. What types of non-textual resources are used in the Methods section?

Methods

- (1) **Corpus: 80 empirical qualitative research articles**
- Topic: L2 learning and teaching
 - Published in 2022-2024
 - From four leading journals in applied linguistics

Journal	N
Applied Linguistics (AL)	10
Journal of Second Lanaguage Writing (JSLW)	20
Modern Language Journal (MLJ)	20
TESOL Quarterly (TQ)	30

(2) **Data Analysis**

Rhetorical moves

- Randomly selected 20 research articles to develop an initial model of rhetorical moves
- Applied the initial model to the remaining 60 articles to review and revise the move categories
- Manually coded the presence of each move in the Methods section for each article

Linguistic features

- Extracted only the Methods section and converted it into plain text files
- POS-tagged all text files using CoreNLP
- Used AntConc to identify nouns, 4-word lexical bundles, and past tense used in the corpus

Non-textual resources

- Manually coded which types of non-textual resources are used in the Methods section

Linguistic Features

Most frequent 4-word lexical bundles	Frequency (range)	Most Frequent Nouns (frequency/range)
#1 at the end of “Stimulated recalls were conducted at the end of the project to explore the mental activities during critical moments of the composing.”	22 (17)	Left collocates multilingual/minority/focal Words #1 Students (714/66) Right collocates were/who/participated/engaged
#2 at the time of “The instructor for the experimental group was a NS of Japanese with more than six years of teaching college-level Japanese at the time of data collection.”	21 (16)	Left collocates the/interview/qualitative/video Words #2 Data (601/75) Right collocates collection/analysis/sources/set
#3 the end of the “The required data were collected toward the end of the semester when students had sufficient experience with coursework writing tasks.”	17 (14)	Left collocates English/metaphorical/foreign Words #3 Language (575/70) Right collocates learning/teachers/education
#4 in the united states “She had worked hard in Sierra Leone to send her daughter, Patimata, to college in the United States. ”	15 (8)	Left collocates the/all/focal/recruit Words #4 Participants (512/61) Right collocates were/had/who/submitted
#5 as well as the “Secondly, the screen recording as well as the coproduced text was analyzed to examine the possible association between conflicts and the writing outcome.”	14 (11)	Left collocates this/the/case/present Words #5 Study (468/76) Right collocates was/abroad/is/were/design
		Left collocates language/EFL/the/preservice Words #6 Teachers (436/45) Right collocates who/were/emotion/described
		Left collocates in/monolingual/into/teaching Words #7 English (353/66) Right collocates language/proficiency/speaking
		Left collocates thematic/data/discourse/content Words #8 Analysis (321/71) Right collocates was/of/involved/we
Use of Past Tense		
Past tense – 5130 occurrences		
• Report what was done in the study (e.g., procedures, researcher actions) • Describe the circumstances under which the study was conducted		
Three main structures		
Past	Past + Passive	Past + Perfect
“The researchers <u>used</u> thematic analysis” ”We iteratively <u>read</u> and <u>coded</u> the data into predetermined categories”	“Participants <u>were asked</u> to record ...” “Each interview <u>was conducted</u> in Mandarin Chinese ...”	“At the time of this study, Carol <u>had been</u> in Australia ...” “The researcher <u>had already established</u> a good relationship with the EAP teachers ...”

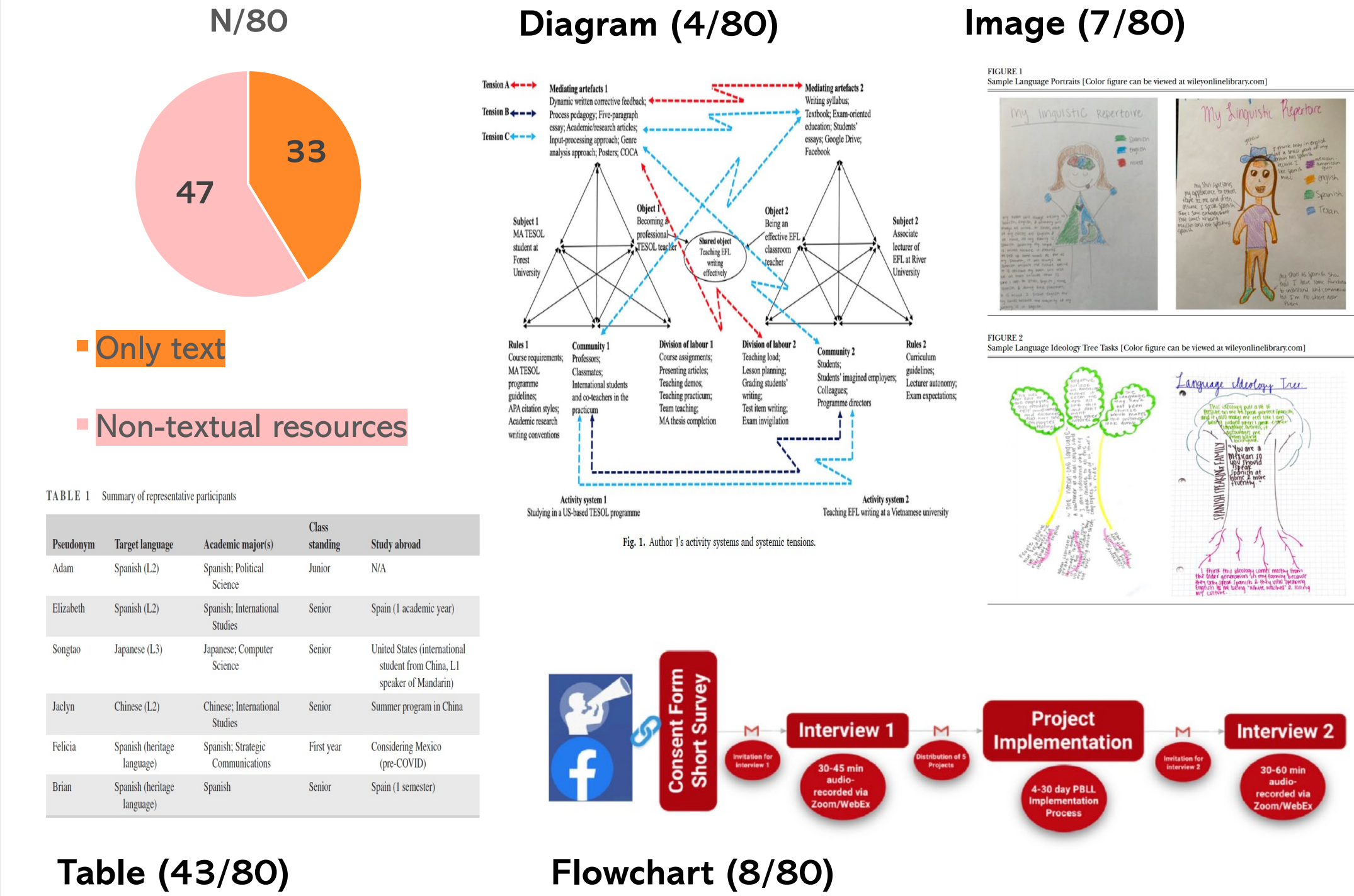
Headings

N/80
Methodology (22)
Method (16)
Methods (15)
The study (8)
Others (19)

Other examples of headings

- Data and method
- Study design
- Research methodology
- Research design
- The present study

Non-textual Resources



Rhetorical Moves

Examples

Specify research questions and/or purposes

“The aim of this study is to examine the well-being of early-career language teachers ... this study seeks to answer the following rsearch questions: ...” (Sullis et al., 2022; *MLJ*)

Specify methodological approach

“I employed a case study approach (Duff, 2008) to investigated bounded cases through in-depth study in the social context ...” (Bankier, 2022; *JSWL*)

Describe research context

“The site of the present study was a large public university, federally designated as a HSI, in the southwest region of the United States. This study developed from a larger research project exploring the implementation of linguistically responsive pedagogy...” (Fallas-Escobar et al., 2022; *MLJ*)

Show compliance with ethical standards

“... ethical approval was received from the research ethics committee in the university, and consent forms were signed by the participants.” (Bozbiyik & Morrtton, 2023; *AL*)

Describe subject(s)

“In this paper, we focus upon Roberto who was one of the approximately a dozen men in the Ecuadoran cohort ...” (Cappaert & Wickens, 2023; *TQ*)

Delineate data collection procedures

“This study had two phases of data collection. The first phase occurred prior to students composing their PS drafts ... The second phase occurred after students had completed their PS first draft ...” (Kessler & Tuckely, 2023; *JSWL*)

Delineate data analysis procedures

“We employed thematic analysis to examine the data, using a multiple cycle inductive process (Saldana, 2021) as shown in Fig. 3. We begin with a preliminary of individual open-coding of the data ...” (Ou et al., 2024; *JSLW*)

Describe researcher positionality

“as a racially minoritized scholar who is interested in how accent intersects with racism, I am retelling the participants’ experiences from a crtical perspective (Ramjattan, 2023; *TQ*)

Indicate the following sections

”The findings of the study are presented and discussed in light of three categories” (Narazi & Molana, 2023; *TQ*)

Frequency (N/80) and Obligatory Status of Moves

