

---

## | BOOK REVIEW

### Research Cultures in Applied Linguistics and TESOL: Book Review

Mohannad Al-Motery<sup>1</sup> ✉ and Dr. Abeer Alharbi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Department of English, College of Education, Majmaah University, Al-Majmaah, 11952, Saudi Arabia

**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Abeer Alharbi, **E-mail:** [as.alharbi@mu.edu.sa](mailto:as.alharbi@mu.edu.sa)

---

## | ABSTRACT

The book provides an essential analysis of research culture development in applied linguistics and TESOL across various institutional and geopolitical settings. It demonstrates how research culture emerges through neoliberal policies, institutional choices and academic traditions within specific local contexts, while also showing that ethical and collaborative research environments remain possible despite these pressures. The book organized into three sections that collectively examine research culture in applied linguistics and TESOL across multiple higher education systems globally. The third section explores open-science initiatives and proposes practical methods to create equitable research settings. The volume is particularly relevant to my own academic context, as it addresses my current academic challenges related to research performance assessment, teaching responsibilities and supervision methods, issues also documented in studies on Saudi EFL teacher education and postgraduate research supervision (AbuSa'aleek & Alharbi, 2025; Alharbi, 2020, 2022).

## | KEYWORDS

Research culture, Applied linguistics, TESOL, Higher education, Academic evaluation, Saudi context.

## | ARTICLE INFORMATION

**ACCEPTED:** 01 January 2026

**PUBLISHED:** 12 January 2026

**DOI:** 10.32996/jhsss.2026.8.1.3

---

**McCallum, L., Tafazoli, D., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (Eds.). (2025). Research Cultures in Applied Linguistics and TESOL. Applied Linguistics Press. ISBN: 979-8-9916790-1-5 (e-book), pp. 224.**

*McCallum, L., Tafazoli, D., & Al-Hoorie, A. H.*

*Research Cultures in Applied Linguistics and TESOL*

By McCallum, L., Tafazoli, D., & Al-Hoorie, A. H.

Applied Linguistics Press. ISBN: 979-8-9916790-1-5 (e-book), pp. 224.

The book provides an essential analysis of research culture development in applied linguistics and TESOL across various institutional and geopolitical settings. It demonstrates how research culture emerges through neoliberal policies, institutional choices and academic traditions within specific local contexts, while also showing that ethical and collaborative research environments remain possible despite these pressures. The book organized into three sections that collectively examine research culture in applied linguistics and TESOL across multiple higher education systems globally. The third section explores open-science initiatives and proposes practical methods to create equitable research settings. The volume is particularly relevant to my own academic context, as it addresses my current academic challenges related to research performance assessment, teaching

responsibilities and supervision methods, issues also documented in studies on Saudi EFL teacher education and postgraduate research supervision (AbuSa'aleek & Alharbi, 2025; Alharbi, 2020, 2022).

The opening part of the book conceptualizes research culture through its connection to academic governance structures and evaluation systems. McCallum Tafazoli and Al-Hoorie define research culture as an organizational system that integrates institutional values, disciplinary customs, and worldwide standards to produce a constellation of interrelated subcultures in applied linguistics and TESOL.

The authors show how national research assessment systems including the UK Research Excellence Framework and Australia's Excellence in Research for Australia create conditions which reward researchers for producing many marketable outputs at the expense of social impact or intellectual exploration. The following sections present compelling empirical evidence which shows how these research pressures operate. The authors Fount and Kohnke demonstrate, through an analysis of open-data practices in top applied linguistics journals that data-sharing policies enhance transparency but also introduce technical obstacles and ethical dilemmas, particularly within qualitative and classroom-based research. The chapter by Ahmed highlights how linguistics operates between different academic fields positioning that creates both innovative possibilities and obstacles for gaining institutional entry. The authors Habibie and Fazel use duo-ethnographic research to study new academic staff development through academic development programs in controlled academic environments. Their findings reveal how research environments face both neoliberal limitations and transformative changes because researchers actively resist and negotiate against these developments.

The second section examines teaching-focused institutions located in underprivileged areas and demonstrates how their research activities differ significantly from those of research-intensive universities. Hibbs uses Boyer's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) framework to investigate how a U.S. liberal-arts college supports research activities that remain connected to teaching while working with limited financial resources. This section also presents research from New Zealand polytechnics which encounter financial problems and policy challenges regarding research scope and from Turkish universities, where publish-or-perish requirements combined with teachers handle excessive teaching responsibilities generate stress and reduce research output. The research by Asaie and Nushi reveals how new academics struggle to build their academic reputation through institutional promotion systems which focus on publishing research. The book presents multiple institutional and geographical viewpoints that question established concepts of research culture in applied linguistics.

The final section of the book brings together all previous research findings to propose informed future directions for TESOL and applied linguistics environments. The editors build on this section to offer constructive solutions derived from their critique of neoliberal academic structures. The editors present four specific examples that demonstrate their efforts to establish research practices based on openness and accessibility and ethical conduct.

The programs show how collaborative work with open information exchange and wide dissemination can mitigate the adverse effects of commercial publishing and performance-based assessment systems. The final section adopts an optimistic stance, suggesting that meaningful reform is possible when researchers work collectively, share values, and participate in supportive professional networks.

The volume achieves its highest point through the perfect match between its theoretical framework and its research-based sections. The editors present research culture as a complex system demonstrated through the examples they provide. The research by Habibie and Fazel on early-career academics who handle cross-disciplinary identities supports the findings from Saudi teacher education programs about reflective practice and teacher identity development (Alharbi, 2022). The book moves beyond metric-driven evaluation to highlight how emotional labour and identity-oriented inquiry can contribute to transformative academic environments. The open-data practices examined in Fount and Kohnke's chapter align with Alharbi's (2020) research about wikis in language learning that similarly promotes transparency, collaborative knowledge construction, and shared responsibility in digital EFL settings.

The research includes Global South and teaching-oriented contexts through intentional selection, providing a counter-balance to Anglo-American research-dominant narratives in applied linguistics literature. The research data from Turkey and Iran and teaching-focused universities in New Zealand and the United States show academic success goes beyond publishing numbers and journal impact ratings. The research design aligns with current SLA calls to analyse linguistic systems across multiple geographical areas (Bylund, 2024) and offer vital information for Saudi and Arab TESOL scholars to create research based on their native teaching settings.

The book effectively engages with present-day Saudi higher education discussions about creating research environments that promote innovative work and teamwork and responsible leadership as highlighted in Abu Sa'aleek & Alharbi (2025). At the same time, the book has several limitations that are worth highlighting. One recurrent issue is that some chapters remain primarily descriptive and do not fully develop deeper theoretical engagement with the concept of research culture. The research on New Zealand polytechnics and Turkish universities shows funding constraints and publish-or-perish systems, yet some findings rely heavily on institutional reports rather than systematic empirical inquiry. The connection between these specific cases and broader higher education discussions about power and resistance is not always made explicit, which may challenge readers' interpretation. The book successfully demonstrates structural issues affecting early-career researchers through uneven evaluation systems and insufficient support yet its proposed solutions remain largely conceptual. The book presents open-science infrastructure as an exciting concept yet it offers limited concrete illustrations of how departments and programs can implement these initiatives in everyday academic practice.

The research study contains a significant limitation in its focus on TESOL institutions at universities while excluding other language education environments. The research presented in this book concentrate on university and college environments with little attention to the research practices of language institutes and private training centers and K–12 schools. The book presents research conducted in university settings but practitioners who work in different environments may perceive the discussion as less applicable, because they face comparable challenges with time management and resource distribution and ideological challenges. The book would benefit from additional chapters which demonstrate how academic research environments relate to practical educational research conducted in schools and language institutes. EFL teachers who work outside research universities in Saudi educational settings continue to use research-based reflective teaching methods because studies show that CLT implementation and learner-centered education work effectively (Alharbi, 2021).

Overall, the book offers valuable insight into how institutional forces and political elements and epistemic factors influence TESOL and applied linguistics research. The research culture emerges from this study as a dynamic system negotiated by individuals and institutions between market requirements and responsible social research methods. The book enables researchers to assess their research constraints through self-assessment while creating enduring research environments which promote diverse practices. It also provides Saudi graduate students and early-career researchers with important analytical tools and motivational guidance to understand their work environment. The book resonates with my personal experience of navigating research expectations, supervisory practices and institutional performance indicators, while reinforcing insights Saudi-based research on teacher development, supervision and feedback practices (Abu Sa'aleek & Alharbi, 2025; 2022). The book *Research Cultures in Applied Linguistics and TESOL* therefore provides essential knowledge to students, educators and policymakers seeking to understand research culture and to contribute to more equitable, context-sensitive research environments.

## References

- AbuSa'aleek, A. O., & Alharbi, A. S. (2025).** Investigating factors impacting timely feedback provision in postgraduate thesis supervision: An exploration of supervisory practices. *International Journal of Instruction*, 18(2), 203–226.  
<https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2025.18212a>
- Alharbi, A. S. (2021).** Barriers in implementing Communicative Language Teaching approach: EFL learners' perspective. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 12(9), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.7176/JEP/12-9-01>
- Alharbi, A. S. (2022).** *The reflective journey of Saudi EFL pre-service teachers: An analysis of three reflective modes* (Doctoral thesis, University of Southampton). University of Southampton Research Repository.
- Bylund, E., Khafif, Z., & Berghoff, R. (2024).** Linguistic and geographic diversity in research on second language acquisition and multilingualism: An analysis of selected journals. *Applied Linguistics*, 45(2), 308–331.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amad022>
- McCallum, L., Tafazoli, D., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (Eds.). (2025).** *Research cultures in applied linguistics and TESOL*. Applied Linguistics Press.