

RESEARCH TIMELINE

Research ethics in applied linguistics

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Introduction

For many researchers in the social sciences, including those in applied linguistics, the term *ETHICS* evokes the bureaucratic process of fulfilling the requirements of an ethics review board (e.g., in the US, an Institutional Review Board, or IRB) as a preliminary step in conducting human subjects research. The expansion of ethics review boards into the social sciences in the early 2000s has led applied linguistics as a field to experience what Haggerty (2004) termed *ETHICS CREEP*, a simultaneous expansion and intensification of external regulation of research activities. The aims of these ethical review boards are: (a) to evaluate the types and risk of harm to participants as a result of research activities, (b) ensure that participants can give informed consent to be part of the research activities, and (c) provide oversight on researcher procedures to maintain participant anonymity/confidentiality (Haggerty, 2004).

However, despite the narrow perception of research ethics as a set of concerns primarily associated with issues that fall under the purview of IRBs and the like, we would argue that there are ethical dimensions throughout most—if not all—of what we do. The entire research cycle—from conceptualization to design and data collection, to analysis, writing, and dissemination—is laden with decisions that can be viewed through the lens of research ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). In fact, any and every methodological choice can be layered with an ethical dimension. This realization may not be new, but it has perhaps not yet fully permeated our collective understanding in applied linguistics (see Sterling et al., 2016). One example of a seemingly innocuous or technical decision laden with an ethical dimension might be the choice to remove (or not to remove) one or more outliers, which can have immediate consequences for interpreting whether a statistically significant effect is present, for example. Nevertheless, a rapidly growing body of work on research ethics in the field has sought to bolster our understanding in this area and to improve our practice as empirical researchers and researcher trainers (e.g., De Costa, 2016*; De Costa et al., 2021*; Isbell et al., 2022*).

Our aim in this timeline is to provide readers with a bird's-eye chronology on the evolution of work on research ethics in applied linguistics carried out over the past four decades. In preparing this timeline, we adopted a synthetic approach, gathering and coding an initial set of 236 publications and other items related to ethics in applied linguistics, teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), second language acquisition, language assessment, and linguistic research methods (both quantitative and qualitative). Our compilation process began with the TIRF (2021) reference list for ethics in language teaching and research, followed by Google Scholar and library database searches, and forward and backward citation searches. This process yielded 154 journal articles (from 43 journals, and

*Indicates full reference appears in the subsequent timeline.

including six special issues), 47 book chapters, 25 books, three sets of ethical guidelines, two sets of research guidelines, two sets of testing guidelines, one dissertation, and one research agenda.¹ These items were then coded for bibliographic features (e.g., author, year, source of publication), citation counts, type of document (e.g., primary/secondary research article, review article, position piece), and research paradigm (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, mixed). Among these documents, 18 items focused on quantitative research, 86 on qualitative, and eight on mixed-methods (for items reporting research data). A further 46 items discussed ethics in the context of both quantitative and qualitative research without reporting mixed-method data. The earliest publication identified was from 1980, with dates ranging from 1980 to 2022.

In coding the documents gathered for this timeline, we noted that ethics in applied linguistics research is a topic that has been receiving much more attention in the past 20 years. When reporting the number of entries by decade, we have: 1980–89 = 1, 1990–99 = 5, 2000–2009 = 14, 2010–19 = 15, 2020–2022 = 7. This increase coincides with the introduction of ethics review boards (Haggerty, 2004), but the conversations around ethics extend far beyond how to navigate the IRB. One likely explanation for increased attention to research ethics is the field's growing concern for methodology and its concomitant reflection on the research practices it employs (Gass et al., 2021). The four key themes that we identified through our coding process illustrate ways in which our collective understanding of research ethics has evolved over the past four decades.

One major development in the domain of research ethics was a shift from framing ethics as (a) primarily a procedural issue to be addressed by complying with IRB requirements (e.g., obtaining informed consent from human participants) to (b) an issue requiring awareness of both IRB procedures and the day-to-day researcher decisions that impact the research process and, ultimately, research outcomes. Examples of day-to-day decisions include researchers' choice of role(s) relative to their participants (Sarangi & Candlin, 2003) or methods to handle outliers in their data (Nicklin & Plonsky, 2020; Paltridge, 2016). Kubanyiova (2008)* terms these issues *MACRO-ETHICAL* for the procedural and *MICRO-ETHICAL* for the day-to-day. Thus, our first overarching theme is **MM** (macro/micro), with sub-themes **MM-P** (procedural) and **MM-D** (day-to-day).

A second theme connected to the types of macro-/micro-ethical issues faced in a particular study is the research tradition or paradigm being adopted. It is fitting and appropriate—if not inevitable—that discussions of research and researcher ethics relate to different epistemological stances and assumptions as well as different types of data. Entries in the timeline labeled **RT** indicate that the overarching theme is a particular research tradition, with sub-themes **RT-QT** (quantitative), **RT-QL** (qualitative), and **RT-M** (mixed).

Our third theme is an area of emerging interest in the field: *QUESTIONABLE RESEARCH PRACTICES* (QRPs).² This term refers to ethical grey areas that lie between *SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT* (e.g., fabrication, falsification, plagiarism; see Fanelli, 2009) and *RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH* (RCR; Steneck, 2007). QRPs can occur at any stage in the research process. For instance, cherry-picking findings to support the interests of funding bodies and excluding contributing authors from a publication (or including non-contributing authors) all fall under the umbrella of QRPs, and these are but a few examples (see Isbell et al., 2022*). In the timeline, we have coded entries that address these ethical grey areas with **QRP**.

A fourth theme for this timeline is the scope of the discussion of ethics. More specifically, we indicate for entries below whether an item addresses ethics as a primary variable under investigation (e.g., Sterling & Gass, 2017*), a secondary aspect of a research study (e.g., Lee, 2011), an issue on which the author argues for a position supported by existing literature (e.g., Ortega, 2005*), or a subject for

¹Of note, our focus was on written work because we were building a repository of texts related to ethics in applied linguistics. We therefore did not conduct a thorough search of conference presentations for consideration in this timeline, though we have noted instances where a written item in the timeline stemmed from a conference presentation (e.g., Davies, 1997*).

²In fact, this timeline has been carried out as part of a larger study funded with the explicit purpose of examining QRPs in humanities research. More information is available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/qrp-humanities>

training (e.g., BAAL, 1994*). Entries labeled as “ethics primary” present data about ethics itself, such as implementation of informed consent procedures (Yeager-Woodhouse & Sivell, 2006*) or researcher perception of different ethically-charged scenarios (Sterling & Gass, 2017*). In contrast, “ethics secondary” items tend to share researchers’ reflections on how they navigated ethical issues while conducting otherwise-focused research (e.g., De Costa, 2014*). “Ethics position pieces” (e.g., Wen & Gao, 2007*) focus on presenting a broader ethics-related argument rather than reporting results or researcher reflections for an individual study. Finally, “ethics guidelines and training” are items designed to GUIDE ethical research. Some of these documents were research guidelines produced by professional associations (e.g., American Association of Applied Linguistics [AAAL], British Association of Applied Linguistics [BAAL], TESOL International Association [TESOL]), targeting an audience of novice and/or experienced researchers. Others were books, chapters, and articles meant as training resources. Many of these hail from research methods textbooks and demonstrate the change in how research ethics has been viewed and taught in applied linguistics graduate programs. This dimension has been coded as an overarching theme **S** (scope), with sub-themes **S-P** (ethics primary), **S-S** (ethics secondary), and **S-PP** (ethics position piece), and **S-G&T** (guidelines and training).

By casting a deliberately wide net in our initial study retrieval and coding, we hope to have captured the breadth of work that has been conducted on ethics in applied linguistics. In the process of selecting these entries, however, we acknowledge that valuable work on adjacent issues has been omitted. The (time)line had to be drawn somewhere. A key inclusion criterion for this timeline was that work needed to be directly relevant to research in applied linguistics. Thus, one major adjacent area we determined to be outside the scope of the present paper is the ethics of language teaching (e.g., Blyth, 2011; Hafernik et al., 2002), including language teacher training (Lynch & Shaw, 2005) and test preparation (Hamp-Lyons, 1998). Work in this area was generally focused on ethical classroom practices rather than research practices. For similar reasons, we also decided not to include work on the ethics of English as a colonial language (e.g., Motha, 2014) and racial representation in professional organizations in the field (Bhattacharya et al., 2020), although we certainly acknowledge that the ongoing conversations in this vein provide key contributions to the understanding of ethics in applied linguistics as a whole. In addition, we are not taking an in-depth focus on meta-research (e.g., research syntheses and meta-analyses; see Norris & Ortega, 2000*; Plonsky et al., 2021), a field that developed in tandem with an expanded understanding of ethics. While meta-research and research ethics are linked on several fronts (including especially their shared concern for methodological quality as a means to more accurately inform theory, research, and practice; Gass et al., 2021; Plonsky, 2014), we largely chose to limit the scope to studies that are more explicitly framed as research ethics pieces. Finally, despite the connections between ethics and statistical literacy training (Loewen et al., 2014) and data sharing (Nicklin & Plonsky, 2020; Plonsky et al., 2015), both of these were deemed to be outside the scope of this timeline and were not included.

To summarize, the entries in our timeline have been coded for the following themes:

- **MM**: macro/microethics
 - **MM-P**: macroethics, procedural, IRB
 - **MM-D**: microethics, day-to-day, individual researcher decisions
- **RT**: research tradition
 - **RT-QT**: quantitative
 - **RT-QL**: qualitative
 - **RT-M**: mixed
- **QRP**: questionable research practices, ethically grey areas
- **S**: scope of ethical issue being discussed
 - **S-P**: ethics primary
 - **S-S**: ethics secondary
 - **S-PP**: ethics position piece
 - **S-G&T**: researcher guidelines and training materials

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Luke Plonsky is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Northern Arizona University, where he teaches courses in SLA and research methods. His work in these and other areas has resulted in over 100 articles, book chapters, and books. Luke is Senior Associate Editor of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, Managing Editor of *Foreign Language Annals*, Co-Editor of De Gruyter Mouton's Series on Language Acquisition, and Co-Director of the IRIS Database (iris-database.org). In addition to prior appointments at Georgetown and University College London, Luke has lectured in China, Japan, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, and Puerto Rico.

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
1980	Tarone, E. (1980). TESOL research committee report. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 14(3), 383–388. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586605	In the first example of ethical guidelines in the field of applied linguistics, this report by Tarone , Chair of the TESOL Research Committee, presented procedures designed to safeguard second- and foreign-language learners’ rights when they are involved in language-related research. These guidelines covered six main areas: informed consent, deception, consequences to participants, privacy, confidentiality/anonymity, and applications of research. Sample consent forms for both child and adult participants were included as appendices.	S-G&T
1992	Cameron, D., Frazer, E., Harvey, P., Rampton, M. B. H., & Richardson, K. (1992). <i>Researching language: Issues of power and method</i> . Routledge.	In this book, Cameron et al. examined differing approaches to researcher positionality in relation to their research participants. They problematized the notion of <small>ETHICAL</small> research as an ultimate goal, arguing that abiding by ethical guidelines alone, such as those required by ethics review boards (e.g., IRBs), could lead to an asymmetrical relationship between the researcher and those being researched, and a situation in which research is being done <small>ON</small> the participants. Such research may not cause harm to participants, and therefore be deemed “ethical,” but it also may fall short of being research that <small>ADVOCATES FOR</small> and is conducted <small>WITH</small> the participants. Through the case studies in this book, Cameron et al. demonstrated that language-related research can be more valuable for all parties involved when conducted through a framework of <small>EMPOWERMENT</small> . The conversations started in this book resurfaced in later work focused on ethical considerations with community-engaged research (e.g., <small>NGO ET AL.</small> , 2014*).	MM-D, RT-QL, RT-QT, S-S
1993	Adger, C. T., & Connor-Linton, J. (Eds.). (1993). Ethical issues for applying linguistics [Special issue]. <i>Issues in Applied Linguistics</i> , 4(2). https://escholarship.org/uc/appling_ial/4/2	As the first ethics-oriented special issue in the field, this collection of articles focused on the theme of ethical issues in the use of research, rather than the process of conducting research itself. It was developed in response to Kachru’s (1992) plenary at AAAL, in which he argued for greater public discussion of ethical issues as part of the ongoing process of defining applied linguistics as a field. In their introduction, Adger and Connor-Linton (1993) provided a useful series of questions for considering the ethical implications of applying linguistics to real-world contexts, including business, expert witness testimony, speech-language pathology, assessment, and language awareness programs, each of which is linked to one or more articles that appeared in the special issue.	S-S
1993	Dufon, M. (1993). Ethics in TESOL research. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 27(1), 157–160. https://doi.org/10.2307/3586970	Referring back to <small>TARONE (1980)</small> , Dufon issued a call to action for TESOL researchers to re-engage with the 1980 research guidelines and consider revising and/or expanding them. She pointed out that conversations about TESOL research, including those in research methods textbooks, were missing a much-needed discussion of research ethics. Note that this and <small>CAMERON ET AL. (1992)</small> are the only non-special issue entry for the early 1990s, indicating the rarity of research ethics discussion at the time.	S-PP

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
1994a, 1994b, 2000, 2006, 2021	British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL). (1994a). <i>Recommendations on good practice in applied linguistics</i> . https://www.baal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BAAL-Recommendation-on-good-practice_1994_full.pdf	The BAAL set of guidelines (revised most recently in 2021) provided a comprehensive overview of guiding questions for researchers to use to consider the ethical implications of their decisions. While the authors of the guidelines stated that these are primarily intended for a UK audience, the relevance of most topics extends well beyond national boundaries. They covered topics such as responsibilities to informants, researchers, colleagues, students, the field, and the public, with best-practice case studies. As one of few available documents of its kind, these guidelines also addressed issues that reside in the grey area between misconduct and responsible research practices, that is, the so-called questionable research practices. BAAL also issued an abridged version for students conducting applied linguistics research projects.	S-G&T, QRP
1997	Davies, A. (Ed.) (1997). The limits of ethics in language testing [Special issue]. <i>Language Testing</i> , 14(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/026553229701400301	This special issue emerged from a 1996 AILA symposium on ethics in language testing. In his introduction, Davies established the need for professional ethics for the field of language testing, considering issues of deontological vs. teleological reasoning, individual versus social justice, and limitations of ethics and morality in the field. With a mixture of ethics secondary and ethics position articles, the special issue covered four main themes: (1) language testing as political control, (2) test construct definition and bias detection, (3) language test impacts on stakeholders, and (4) promotion of ethicality in language testing.	S-S, S-PP
2000	Norris, J., & Ortega, L. (2000). Effectiveness of L2 instruction: A research synthesis and quantitative meta-analysis. <i>Language Learning</i> , 50(3), 417–528. https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00136	It is hard to overstate the impact that this article has had on the field. With respect to its substantive contribution, Norris and Ortega provided answers to long-standing debates over the effectiveness of (different types of) instruction. In the methodological realm, this study launched the now-thriving movement toward synthetic/meta-analytic research and synthetic-mindedness more generally in applied linguistics. The centrality of this study is also reflected in the fact that, to date, it has been cited over 3,000 times. Less widely recognized, however, are the ethical concerns the authors introduced such as the notion of publication bias, missing/unreported data, and the role or even duty of authors, reviewers, and editors in insisting on transparency and quality at the primary study level. We can also draw a direct line from the publication of this article to the now-robust body of methodological syntheses, many of which served to assess “questionable research practices” (QRPs) within and across different domains in the field (e.g., Plonsky, 2013; Sudina, 2021).	S-S, RT-QT, QRP

2002	<p>Cumming, A. (2002). Assessing L2 writing: Alternative constructs and ethical dilemmas. <i>Assessing Writing</i>, 8(2), 73–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1075-2935(02)00047-8</p>	<p>Continuing the conversation about ethics and fairness in high-stakes language tests from DAVIES (1997), Cumming reflected on ethical concerns that arose in the development of the writing tasks for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) 2000. He noted that an emphasis on fairness and consistency in writing tests was often at odds with alternative definitions of second language (L2) writing (e.g., a learning mode, an expression of identity, a means of political activism), leading TOEFL developers to seek balance among the many ethical issues in high-stakes assessment. He pointed to the inclusion of multiple writing tasks, some based on academic listening and reading passages within the exam, as a concrete example of how ethical concerns were addressed in the TOEFL 2000.</p>	S-S, RT-QT
2004	<p>Brown, J. D. (2004). Research methods for applied linguistics: Scope, characteristics, and standards. In A. Davies & C. Elder (Eds.), <i>The handbook of applied linguistics</i> (pp. 476–500). Blackwell.</p>	<p>In this handbook chapter, Brown gave an overview of research methods in applied linguistics. He concluded with a section on ethical considerations in which he delineated proactive steps researchers could take to avoid ethical problems related to participants, analysis, and audience. Aimed at readers conducting applied linguistics research anywhere along a quantitative-qualitative continuum, he highlighted two final ethical responsibilities: ongoing researcher professional development and the match between research design and the question under investigation. This is the first in a series of researcher training texts to explicitly address research ethics in applied linguistics (see BROWN, 2011; DE COSTA ET AL., 2020; DÖRNYEI, 2007; ECKERT, 2013; KUBANYIOVA, 2013; MACKEY & GASS, 2005; STERLING & DE COSTA, 2018).</p>	S-G&T, RT-QT, RT-QL, RT-M
2004	<p>Davies, A. (Ed.) (2004). Language testing and the golden rule [Special issue]. <i>Language Assessment Quarterly</i>, 1(2–3). https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2004.9671778</p>	<p>In a second special issue dedicated to the ethics of language assessment (see DAVIES, 1997 for the first), Davies' introduction emphasized professionalism as a positive force for ethics in this domain. He provided the International Language Testing Association's (ILTA) Code of Ethics and forthcoming Code of Practice as examples of the role that professional organizations can take in establishing ethical norms and guiding the social dimension of ethics. Article themes from this special issue include: operationalization of a code of ethics via codes of practice, ethicality of stakeholder involvement in language assessment, unintended consequences in language aptitude and content area testing, and film portrayals of ethical dilemmas in education. This special issue included a mixture of ethics secondary papers and ethics position papers.</p>	S-S, S-PP
2004	<p>Shohamy, E. (2004). Reflections on research guidelines, categories, and responsibility. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i>, 38(4), 728–731. https://doi.org/10.2307/3588291</p>	<p>Shohamy reflected on limitations of the <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> research guidelines (see Chapelle & Duff, 2003), pointing out that an explicit treatment of research ethics was missing. In line with ADGER & CONNOR-LINTON (1993), she argued that TESOL researchers had an ethical responsibility to monitor how their research findings are used (or misused). She concluded with a set of guiding ethical questions for researchers to consider regarding the use of their research: (1) by whom is it used?, (2) for whom is it used?, (3) for what purposes is it used?, and (4) why?</p>	S-PP

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
2005	Ortega, L. (Ed.). (2005). Methodology, epistemology, and ethics in instructed SLA research [Special issue]. <i>Modern Language Journal</i> , 89(3). https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00307.x	As seen throughout this timeline, it is often useful if not necessary to consider research ethics not in isolation but, rather, in the context of the many theoretical, methodological, practical, and epistemological issues that are almost inextricable from the realm of ethics. Many angles on these intersections rise to the fore throughout this special issue of the <i>Modern Language Journal</i> . Ortega both edited the issue and authored bookend pieces that contextualize the others and that seek to engage the field in more critical consideration of our social, ethical, and intellectual responsibilities as scholars. Her contributions also served to agitate certain aspects of the status quo in the field as evident in statements such as: “I reasoned, that a turning point had been reached at which it is no longer viable simply to dismiss the problems raised and go on about business as usual” (p. 318).	MM-D S-PP
2005, 2015, 2021	Mackey, A. & Gass, S. M. (2005). <i>Second language research: Methodology and design</i> (1st ed.). Routledge.	This text, the third edition of which was published in 2021, has formed the foundation for many a graduate student researcher and, as a result, has served as the methodological foundation for much of the field. In addition to a very thorough and practical explication of many of the decisions encountered when conducting L2 research, this text was particularly noteworthy for its emphasis on ethical issues, thus exemplifying the ethics-methods link suggested by DUFON (1993) and reiterated in ORTEGA (2005). Not only did the discussion of ethics make up nearly an entire chapter, but this content also appeared in chapter 1, fronting the importance of ethical concerns and placing them central to allow them to (ideally) return to the mind of the reader throughout the text. Over the three editions, the coverage of ethics has expanded to consider not only macroethical concerns (see KUBANYOVA, 2008), such as ethical approval, but also various dimensions of microethics as well, such as working with children, accessing non-WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) populations, and collecting data online.	S-G&T, MM-P, MM-D
2006	Yeager-Woodhouse, D., & Sivell, J. (2006). Prepackaged tour versus personal journey: The meaning of informed consent in the context of the teacher-study group. <i>Journal of Academic Ethics</i> , 4(2), 189–203. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-006-9027-z	This article presented the first ethics-primary study in applied linguistics. The ethical dilemma discussed in this article was how to obtain informed consent and ensure confidentiality in a qualitative research study with novice English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. The participants were not served prepackaged information but were offered the opportunity to work their way onward through their personal experience. These teachers were part of a Teacher Study Group; such groups are characterized with “mutual trust, collaborative problem-solving, and change-oriented motivation” and aimed at fostering professional development. These teachers taught English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for adults from abroad, mainly Asia, and felt vulnerable in their position at the department; as researchers, Yeager-Woodhouse and Sivell tried to protect them. The researchers concluded that, overall, the literature then available did not reflect real life and that more attention should be paid to reporting on the research process than to just listing the results obtained. This study paved the way for future research on field-specific considerations in the informed consent process (e.g., STERLING, 2015; THOMAS & PETTITT, 2016).	S-P, RT-QL

2007	Dörnyei, Z. (2007). <i>Research methods in applied linguistics</i> . Oxford.	In Chapter 3 of this research methods book, Dörnyei discussed quality criteria for quantitative, qualitative and mixed research. According to the author, ethical issues are “more acute” in qualitative than in quantitative research as they pertain more to the human private sphere. The author (accurately) anticipated that from 2010 to 2021, “more and more countries will take the North American example in setting up a strict framework for research ethics that is more participant- than researcher-friendly” (p. 64). One dilemma that he identified for the field is: how seriously should ethical issues be taken in educational contexts? He provided examples of how sensitive aspects of research, such as the amount of shared information and the researcher–participant relationships, may need to be considered through a different educational research lens than that applied by social science and medical researchers in contexts where psychological or physical harm may result from research activities. Additionally, Dörnyei noted that research integrity was an important but neglected area in most researcher training texts. Further ethical issues that researchers in training should be aware of include: (a) privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and data storage, and (b) researcher deception and informed consent. The author concluded that research ethics should be taken more seriously than many applied linguistics researchers do but not as seriously as many legislators do.	S-G&T, RT-QT, RT-QL, RT-M
2007	Wen, Q., & Gao, Y. (2007). Dual publication and academic inequality. <i>International Journal of Applied Linguistics</i> , 17(2), 221–225. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1473-4192.2007.00147.x	Wen and Gao began a conversation about the issue of self-plagiarism, that is, publishing the same paper in multiple venues, from the perspective of publishing the same research findings in multiple languages. They argued that publishing one research article in two languages is not an ethical violation; rather, it provides equitable access to research knowledge and challenges the dominance of first language (L1)-English-authored research in applied linguistics. Using the Chinese context as an example, they explained that researchers often face a decision between publishing findings in English to reach a wider international audience, which is necessary for careers in academia, versus publishing in the local language to allow the communities who stand to gain most from the findings to access them easily. HAMP-LYONS (2009) responded.	S-PP, QRP
2008	Kubanyiova, M. (2008). Rethinking research ethics in contemporary applied linguistics: The tension between macroethical and microethical perspectives in situated research. <i>Modern Language Journal</i> , 92(4), 503–518. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00784.x	In this paper, Kubanyiova sought to raise the field’s awareness of ethical considerations that arose from a move toward more situated designs in the early 2000s. In doing so, she challenged the assumption made by many researchers that the approval from ethics boards and IRBs somehow guarantees that a given study adheres to ethical norms and principles. Toward that end, she offered a re-framing of researcher considerations and practices as pertaining to either “macroethics” or “microethics”, following Guillemin and Gillam (2004). “The former refers to the procedural ethics of IRB protocols [and other] professional codes of conduct, whereas the latter term refers to everyday ethical dilemmas that arise ... in specific research contexts” (p. 504). The author also linked these distinct levels of ethical conduct to the notion of study quality, addressing the tensions inherent in this and other, often-competing dimensions of quality such as methodological rigor (see Plonsky, 2013). Less situated research in applied linguistics is perhaps just now arriving at a meaningful recognition of the need to engage with microethics.	S-PP, MM-P, MM-D

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
2008	Ortega, L., & Zyzik, E. (2008). Online interactions and L2 learning: Some ethical challenges for L2 researchers. In S. Magnan (Ed.), <i>Mediating discourse online</i> (pp. 331–357). John Benjamins.	Ortega and Zyzik expanded the discussion of ethical issues that arise through the use of technology, specifically when researchers investigate computer-mediated communication (CMC) in language learning. In this overview, the authors brought up and problematized issues pertaining to the use of CMC, lurking of researchers in forums/chat, obtaining informed consent, anonymity, and others. The authors also invited further discussion of the topic (see SPILIOTI & TAGG, 2017).	MM-D S-PP
2009	Hamp-Lyons, L. (2009). Access, equity and ... plagiarism? <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 43(4), 690–693. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2009.tb00192.x	Acknowledging the valid concerns raised by WEN AND GAO (2007), Hamp-Lyons argued that issues of publication equity are more appropriately addressed by authors framing their research findings differently depending on their audience. She posited that two articles based on the same research yet written for two different audiences with varied contextual needs and rhetorical styles would not be considered self-plagiarism as they would, in fact, be different pieces of writing and not merely translations. She concluded by pointing out that originality of research and originality of research articles are not the same and urged researchers trying to disseminate findings to different audiences to maintain originality in the articles themselves.	S-PP
2009	Thomas, M. (2009). Ethical issues in the study of second language acquisition: Resources for researchers. <i>Second Language Research</i> , 25(4), 493–511. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658309349676	This review article from 2009 assessed two then-recent books on ethical issues in social sciences (Baggini & Fosl, 2007; Kimmel, 2007) from the perspective of their usefulness to research on second language acquisition (SLA). Thomas started by surveying existing literature relevant to ethics in SLA research. The author argued that attention paid to ethical issues in research on SLA was sparse while it was relatively high in applied linguistics. This was reflected in the production of professional guidelines or codes of ethics; e.g., BAAL (1994), an “ambitious attempt to define ethical standards” (p. 498) for applied linguistics. As Thomas noted that ethical issues in research on SLA could sometimes be difficult to identify or be aware of, she concluded that the two books could be useful in helping the reader learn to identify ethical issues. This article demonstrated a growing movement in second language studies to adapt ethical best practices from fields with more established work on ethics, much of which can be seen in the following entries in this timeline.	S-PP
2011	Brown, J. D. (2011). Quantitative research in second language studies. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), <i>Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning</i> , (Vol. II, pp. 190–206). Routledge.	In this chapter contributing to the conversation on ethics in quantitative research, Brown looked into quantitative and qualitative research within SLA studies and also described the research done on this research. The author listed 12 characteristics that define the differences between qualitative and quantitative research in a range of continua with the extreme forms of each on its ends. He was also interested in future directions for quantitative research in the field. In his section on ethical considerations in quantitative research, he predicted (p. 198) that “future research in SLS [second language studies] will move into alignment with educational and psychological research and that SLS journals will increasingly require that power, effect size, and confidence intervals be reported along with <i>p</i> values in all studies where they are appropriate.” This was an early example of work focused on rigor in quantitative research reporting standards, which was an area of growing importance in the field in the decade that followed.	S-G&T, RT-QT

2011	Kouritzin, S. (Ed.). (2011). Ethics in cross-cultural, cross-linguistic research [Special issue]. <i>TESL Canada Journal</i> , 28(5). https://doi.org/10.18806/tesl.v28i0.1077	In this special issue, Kouritzin highlighted the stories of ESL researchers as they encountered ethical dilemmas while working with marginalized communities, translating qualitative data out of the L1, maintaining responsible relationships with research stakeholders, and striking a balance on insider/outsider roles. Of particular note was the article by Lee (2011), an ethics-secondary piece reflecting on how she navigated a situation of conflicting researcher responsibilities (i.e., to protect the privacy of an informant and to publish findings to contribute to the field). This article provided a clear example of ethical tensions that researchers in applied linguistics may face when conducting research in sensitive populations.	S-S, RT-QL, MM-D
2012	Ortega, L. (2012). Epistemological diversity and moral ends of research in instructed SLA. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> , 16(2), 206–226. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658311431373	This position piece presented an argument for epistemological diversity, or a plurality of theoretical orientations, as beneficial to instructed second language acquisition (ISLA) because it led to broader knowledge about ISLA phenomena than a single epistemological orientation would have allowed. Yet, Ortega noted that such diversity alone was not enough. Continuing the call from SHOHAMY (2004), she encouraged researchers to question the moral ends of ISLA research, namely issues of social responsibility and educational relevance. She concluded that researchers needed to be aware of their ethical choices and prepared to justify them in light of their moral ends.	S-PP
2013	Kubanyiova, M. (2013). Ethical debates in research on language and interaction. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), <i>The encyclopedia of applied linguistics</i> (pp. 2001–2008). Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0392	In this encyclopedia entry, Kubanyiova provided an overview of the state-of-the-art of ongoing debates on ethics in research on language and interaction. Debates related to both macroethics and microethics were covered. Among other topics, the author highlighted the importance of themes of respect (protecting the well-being of participants), beneficence (ensuring research yields benefits while minimizing harm), and justice (fair distribution of research benefits). Echoing KUBANYIOVA (2008), the author concluded that while it remains important to reflect on macroethics, the micro level, day-to-day decisions we make in our research should be considered a key focus of language and interaction researchers.	S-G&T, MM-P, MM-D
2013	Eckert, P. (2013). Ethics in linguistic research. In R. J. Podesva & D. Sharma (Eds.), <i>Research methods in linguistics</i> (pp. 11–26). Cambridge University Press.	Eckert highlighted the need to take ethical considerations into account in all linguistic studies with human subjects and provided concrete suggestions for how to do so. The chapter covered topics of data ownership, consent, and data management, among others. The author brought up the issue of how much detail about people and places is necessary in reports of findings even if the researcher has obtained informed consent, as de facto anonymity may not be possible to guarantee if enough detail is presented (for examples, see articles in KOURITZIN, 2011). This chapter highlighted the fact that simply following ethics guidelines may not always be enough, as there are often competing forces in play.	S-G&T, MM-P
2014	De Costa, P. I. (2014). Making ethical decisions in an ethnographic study. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 48(2), 413–422. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.163	This research narrative provided a systematic discussion of the ethical decision points that De Costa faced in the process of conducting a critical ethnographic study in Singapore. This was an early and widely-circulated example documenting micro-ethical considerations (see KUBANYIOVA, 2008) that emerged in qualitative TESOL research. De Costa also reflected on how his identity as a researcher interacted with his data analysis.	RT-QL, MM-D, S-S

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
2014	Ngo, B., Bigelow, M., & Lee, S. J. (Eds.). (2014). What does it mean to do ethical and engaged research with immigrant communities? [Special issue]. <i>Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education</i> , 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2013.803469	This special issue highlighted a growing interest in education research involving immigrant communities, and the ethical challenges accompanying such research in its purpose, process, and goals. In their introduction, Ngo et al. distinguished between research ON versus research WITH immigrant communities, arguing that the latter is more ethical (see also CAMERON ET AL., 1992). They further emphasized the need for active community engagement on the part of the researcher rather than viewing immigrant community members as passive research subjects. Themes of the included articles were: researcher adoption of an “I-Thou” relationship with participants; research ethics and politics when studying young newcomer refugees; research IN THEORY versus research IN PRACTICE; and the need for research with immigrant communities to disrupt traditional epistemologies.	S-S, S-PP, MM-D, RT-QL
2015	Sterling, S. (2015). <i>Informed consent forms in ESL research: Form difficulty and comprehension</i> (Publication No. 3689150). [Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/informed-consent-forms-esl-research-form/docview/1675955436/se-2	To our knowledge, this was one of the first dissertations in applied linguistics to directly investigate research ethics within the field. Sterling looked at writing complexity within informed consent forms aimed at ESL learners and found that while researchers were utilizing best-practices by keeping forms short, they tended to write complex texts. When tested, participants tended not to understand the content of the informed consent forms. This demonstrated that existing advice for developing comprehensible consent forms (i.e., keep the text short) seemed not to be based on evidence. This meant that following best practices did not necessarily lead to improved participant outcomes. The study called researchers to directly challenge ethical practices to ensure proper ethical conduct.	MM-P, RT-M, S-P
2016	De Costa, P. I. (Ed.). (2016). <i>Ethics in applied linguistics research: Language researcher narratives</i> . Routledge.	As the first book on ethics in applied linguistics research, De Costa's edited volume sought to problematize research practices and elucidate ethical decision-making processes across a range of subdisciplines (e.g., discourse analysis, heritage and minority education, language planning and policy, SLA, L2 pedagogy, sociolinguistics). With a combination of ethics-primary and ethics-secondary chapters, this book highlighted the challenges of navigating procedural (macro) and day-to-day (micro) ethics as an applied linguistics researcher (see KUBANYIOVA, 2008, 2013).	S-G&T, MM-P, MM-D

2016	Mahboob, A., Paltridge, B., Phakiti, A., Wagner, E., Starfield, S., Burns, A., Jones, R. H., & De Costa, P. I. (2016). <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> research guidelines. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> , 50(1), 42–65. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.288	While designed to “provide research guidelines for authors intending to submit their manuscripts to <i>TESOL Quarterly</i> ” (p. 42) (see Chapelle & Duff, 2003), Mahboob et al.’s contributions to the research ethics discussion extended much further in that the issues raised were applicable to the field at large. The article included specific guidelines for ethical consideration that may arise in a variety of different research areas (e.g., experimental research, ethnographic research, discourse analysis). The authors highlighted challenges and offered guidance on how to handle them with the help of a best-practice sample study for each area.	S-G&T, RT-QT, RT-QL
2016	Thomas, M., & Pettitt, N. (2016). Informed consent in research on second language acquisition. <i>Second Language Research</i> , 33(2), 271–288. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658316670206	In this article, Thomas and Pettitt combined a review of informed consent practices in L2 research and a narrative on the informed consent process in research with preliterate refugee ESOL learners. The review section provided a historical overview of the rise of informed consent as an ethical principle, along with an analysis of how informed consent practices were documented in research methods textbooks, professional organization websites, and empirical research in SLA. Finally, in her reflection, Pettitt illustrated how procedural IRB requirements can clash with the logistical realities present in L2 research, raising issues of translation and modality in obtaining informed consent, thus intersecting with STERLING (2015).	S-P, MM-P, MM-D
2017	American Association for Applied Linguistics (2017). <i>AAAL ethics guidelines</i> . https://www.aaal.org/ethics-guidelines	The AAAL Ethics Guidelines gave a concise overview of ethical considerations related to research, teaching, and service. There were three stated goals. First, the document offered ethical guidance to graduate students, and as such, this document provides valuable support to this audience as they prepare for their future careers. Second, the document served to establish criteria for graduate education, thus representing a starting point for much-needed discussions of the need for ethics training in higher education. Third, it was meant to encourage graduate students “to serve their institutions, their peers, the field of applied linguistics, and the greater intellectual and social community” (p. 3). The focus on a graduate student audience was intended as a complement to the main guidelines from BAAL (1994), which served as a more general set of guiding questions for researchers (though BAAL also released a set of student guidelines specifically focused on conducting research projects). We also note that, in August of 2022, these guidelines were formally endorsed by the Executive Board of AILA.	S-G&T
2017	Sterling, S., & Gass, S. (2017). Exploring the boundaries of research ethics: Perceptions of ethics and ethical behaviors in applied linguistics research. <i>System</i> , 70(November), 50–62. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2017.08.010	The authors investigated the beliefs and practices of applied linguists in terms of research ethics. Participants read and commented on scenarios where fictional researchers were utilizing questionable practices. The study found that a longer amount of time since leaving graduate training correlated positively with a greater acceptance of grey areas as ethical practices (see BROWN, 2004). Also of note was the finding that researchers tended to rely on IRBs to make decisions on what is/is not ethical (see KUBANYIOVA, 2008). Sterling and Gass questioned the training of researchers as previous studies had indicated that much training in the field was done through mentorship with senior faculty. This was the first applied linguistics study to examine researcher response to questionable practices as a primary variable (see ISBELL ET AL., 2022 for further exploration of this issue).	S-P, MM-P, MM-D, RT-QT, QR

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
2017	Spilioti, T., & Tagg, C. (Eds.). (2017). Ethics of online research methods in applied linguistics [Special issue]. <i>Applied Linguistics Review</i> , 8(2–3). https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2016-1033	For this special issue, Spilioti and Tagg aimed to address the dearth of work on ethics in digital-based applied linguistics research, answering the call from ORTEGA & ZYLIK (2008). They highlighted the fact that ethical issues have emerged with the growing impact of digital media on how we communicate and perceive ourselves, as well as with the role of academic researchers in this new digital environment. The articles featured in this issue focused on four key priorities in online research ethics: (1) ethics as a critical decision-making process; (2) a revised view of what is public vs. private based on participants' expectations; (3) researcher self-reflexivity; and (4) researcher orientation to participants.	MM-D, S-S, S-PP
2018	Sterling, S., & De Costa, P. (2018). Ethical applied linguistics research. In A. Phakiti, P. De Costa, L. Plonsky, & S. Starfield (Eds.), <i>The Palgrave handbook of applied linguistics research methodology</i> (pp. 163–182). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59900-1_8	In this position piece chapter, the authors posed five challenging ethics questions ranging from how to define a community to the role that authors have in how their data is used post publications. This chapter provided thoughtful considerations of questions not normally discussed within training material. Similar to DE COSTA ET AL. (2021), this study provided future researchers with possible areas of study, along with expert considerations of how to conceptualize the study of research ethics within applied linguistics.	S-G&T, MM-D, S-PP
2020	De Costa, P. I., Lee, J., Rawal, H., & Li, W. (2020). Ethics in applied linguistics research. In J. McKinley & H. Rose (Eds.), <i>The Routledge handbook of research methods in applied linguistics</i> (pp. 122–130). Routledge.	This handbook chapter on ethics in applied linguistics research demonstrated developments in the field since early ethics-related research methods chapters (e.g., BROWN , 2004). Framing the discussion from a macro- and micro-ethical perspective, De Costa et al. highlighted key ethical concerns in the areas of SLA, assessment, literacy, and sociolinguistics. Looking ahead, they also advocated for more guidance in digital research (SPILIOTI & TAGG , 2017), an expansion in researcher ethics training with accompanying efficacy research (STERLING & GASS , 2017), and ethical protection of junior researchers (AAAL , 2017).	S-G&T, MM-P, MM-D
2020	Barnard, R., & Wang, Y. (Eds.). (2020). <i>Research ethics in second language education: Universal principles, local practices</i> . Routledge.	Barnard and Wang presented a collection of firsthand accounts by novice researchers in L2 education whose qualitative data collection involved international participants. With a case study approach, chapter authors reflected on the day-to-day ethical decision-making that shaped their research before, during, and after data collection (see also DE COSTA , 2014). This book targeted an audience of researchers in training by providing an in-depth illustration of ethically challenging scenarios that graduate students may face in their own research.	S-G&T, MM-D, RT-QL
2021	De Costa, P. I., Sterling, S., Lee, J., Li, W., & Rawal, H. (2021). Research tasks on ethics in applied linguistics. <i>Language Teaching</i> , 54(1), 58–70. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000257	This research agenda focused on seven possible research tasks that future scholars might consider undertaking in research ethics. Within the field of applied linguistics, research ethics often exists as an area of study that lacks a cohesive trajectory with relatively few scholars pursuing research agendas with a primary focus on ethics. As such, this piece provided possible future paths for the field to consider when undertaking research in research ethics. Each task included possible research projects that could be taken on by scholars at any stage of their career.	QRP, S-PP, RT-QL, RT-QT

2021	De Costa, P. I., Randez, R. A., Her, L., & Green-Eneix, C. A. (2021). Navigating ethical challenges in second language narrative inquiry research. <i>System</i> , 102, 102599. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102599	This paper discussed ethical considerations of conducting narrative research. Building on KUBANYIOVA (2008), De Costa et al. discussed the need to consider ethical decisions in both micro and macroethics. They also considered future research using online resources similar to ORTEGA & ZYLIK (2008). While staying within the traditional format and style of a position paper, this study aimed to advance research ethics within applied linguistics by considering the distinction between qualitative research that is ethical and that which is rigorous, arguing that this is not a dichotomy and that narrative researchers should aim for research that is both rigorous and ethical (see BROWN, 2011 for a related discussion on the quantitative side). De Costa et al. also called for greater attention to the ethics of narrative research with young language learners (see PINTER & KUCHAR, 2021).	MM-P, MM-D, RT-QL, S-PP
2021	Pinter, A., & Kuchah, K. (Eds.). (2021). <i>Ethical and methodological issues in researching young language learners in school contexts</i> . Multilingual Matters.	In this edited volume, Pinter and Kuchah examined the intertwining of ethical and methodological issues inherent in language research with young learners. Drawing on experiences from classroom researchers around the world, this book provided nuanced insight into how language researchers handle ethical challenges in school research contexts. In their introduction, Pinter and Kuchah noted that published child-focused language research rarely reported on the real-life “messiness” of ethical decisions in conducting this research. While young learners as research participants had been addressed previously (see TARONE, 1980), this was primarily in the context of informed consent procedures. In line with CAMERON ET AL. (1992), the authors highlighted the need for research WITH child learners, particularly in multilingual contexts (see also HOLMES ET AL., 2022).	RT-QL, RT-QT, S-S, S-PP
2022	Holmes, P., Reynolds, J., & Ganassin, S. (Eds.). (2022). <i>The politics of researching multilingually</i> . Multilingual Matters.	This edited volume approached research from the perspective of researcher language, through the framework of RESEARCHING MULTILINGUALLY. In this framework, researchers consider the roles that their linguistic resources play across all stages of their research and the ways in which these resources interact with their research-focused ethical decision-making. Holmes et al. introduced four themes within this volume: hegemonic structures, power relations, decolonizing methodologies, and decolonizing languages. Throughout their book, there was an emphasis on language research and researchers connected with the Global South. Ethical issues raised in this volume included the choice of publication language for early-career scholars (see also WEN & GAO, 2007), research with children from refugee and/or non-shared linguistic backgrounds (i.e., when the researcher and child participants do not share a language and therefore research is mediated through translation; see also PINTER & KUCHAR, 2021), and language choice as (dis)empowerment in research (see also CAMERON ET AL., 1992; NGO ET AL., 2014).	S-S, RT-QL

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Year	Reference	Annotation	Themes
2022	<p>Isbell, D., Brown, D., Chan, M., Derrick, D., Ghanem, R., Gutiérrez Arvizu, M. N., Schnur, E., Zhang, M., & Plonsky, L. (2022). Misconduct and questionable research practices: The ethics of quantitative data handling and reporting in applied linguistics. <i>Modern Language Journal</i>, 106(1), 172–195. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12760</p>	<p>Intentionally deceptive researcher behaviors, such as data fabrication and falsification, are often referred to as “scientific misconduct” because of their potential to distort scientific knowledge (Fanelli, 2009). There is a wide range of researcher practices, however, that are potentially problematic but that are perhaps less severe or that are even justifiable under some circumstances such as overlooking violated assumptions and removing outlying data points. Such behaviors are known as “questionable research practices” or QRPs (see also STERLING & GASS, 2017). Regardless of their severity, such practices are often obscured in published reports thus making it very difficult to gauge the extent of their presence. Isbell et al. set out to do so using a survey. A similar approach has been taken in numerous studies in other fields, but this was the first time a study had set out to estimate the presence of QRPs in applied linguistics. The results did not bode well for the state of quantitative ethics in the field. For example, 17% of the sample of 351 applied linguists reported engaging in at least one form of misconduct. The less severe QRPs (e.g., reporting p values as inequalities [e.g., $p < .05$] rather than exact values [e.g., $p = .023$]) were much more widespread than those that were more severe (e.g., excluding findings contrary to previous research).</p>	QRP, RT-QT, S-P

*Authors' names are shown in small capitals where the study referred to appears in this timeline.