

Ruth Page, David Barton, Carmen Lee, Johann Wolfgang Unger, and Michele Zappavigna, *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide* (2nd edn), London: Routledge, 2022; ix + 209 pp., £32.99 (ebk).

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The study of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and language use on the internet has evolved from being a novel area in linguistics to a mainstream field of study across various linguistic frameworks, and the internet now serves as a regular source of data for linguistic research. Compared to previous introductions and guides to CMC research and internet linguistics (e.g. Crystal 2001, 2011; Barton & Lee 2013), the second edition of *Researching Language and Social Media: A Student Guide* is a very entry-level introduction with a specific focus on social media.

In addition to the basics of internet linguistics, the nine chapters of the book cover introductory concepts related to linguistic research, such as the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research and between different approaches to linguistic study. Several methodological frameworks are also introduced in the book. As a result, the book appears to be targeted primarily towards undergraduate students and others who have conducted few research projects, despite the authors' suggestion that it is suitable for "more advanced researchers" as well (p. 1).

The first two chapters explore the two core concepts that underpin the text – *social media* and *language*. Rather than providing clear-cut definitions for these terms, the authors instead problematize them and demonstrate how even seemingly basic concepts can become unexpectedly complex when subjected to close analysis. Nevertheless, the authors also highlight key features of both concepts that can assist students in planning research projects. In addition, Chapters 1 and 2 offer an overview of the history of computer-mediated communication research and provide insight into the linguistic characteristics specific to the internet and social media.

Chapters 3 and 4 cover fundamental aspects of linguistic research and ethical considerations related to social media research. Chapter 3 provides a clear and concise explanation of fundamental research principles as well as the differing norms between academic disciplines and the advantages of utilizing mixed-methods research. Chapter 4 is

the highlight of the book, as the authors provide a thorough discussion of ethical considerations related to the collection and analysis of social media data, taking into account multiple perspectives and relevant legal issues. This chapter is valuable for any researcher who is new to using social media data, as the field is constantly evolving and ethical norms are continually developing, making these issues challenging even for experienced researchers.

The remainder of the book is dedicated to introducing various methodological approaches. Chapters 5 and 6 delve into qualitative research methods, with a particular emphasis on discourse analysis and ethnography. In Chapter 7, the authors provide guidance on utilizing autoethnography and techno-linguistic biographies as a research method. The final two chapters of the book center on quantitative methods. Chapter 8 provides an overview of the topic, including the fundamentals of data collection for a quantitative study. The last chapter offers practical guidance on the quantitative analysis of social media data, with a strong focus on corpus methods. While the book covers a limited range of methods, the authors have taken a thorough approach to introducing each framework rather than superficially exploring a multitude of approaches.

The authors' experience in teaching is evident throughout the book. They prioritize the practicality of different methods and approaches, particularly in the later chapters, and address important issues such as determining the appropriate amount of data for different research projects, identifying commonly used software for gathering and analyzing social media data, and developing the necessary skills for using these tools. The book also directs readers to various additional resources, including detailed guides for the research methods introduced. Moreover, the book's writing style is highly accessible. However, the authors avoid underestimating their readers and instead highlight that researchers have the autonomy and responsibility to make decisions about their research projects.

Another merit of the book is the large number of examples of different studies to demonstrate the range of possibilities of linguistic research on social media. Each chapter features detailed case studies contributed by linguists who have conducted social media research using various methods. One particularly fascinating example is Ashraf Abdullah's illustrative description of his study on Second Life, which combines participant observation and corpus methods (p.53). The authors also draw upon their own experiences in the field. The examples and case studies cover a wide range of research, including studies on multiple

languages and utilizing various data collection and analysis methods. This breadth and diversity of examples serve to illustrate the potential of linguistic social media research comprehensively and make research work more transparent for students.

While the chapters on methodological frameworks are well-written, their focus on topics that are not directly related to social media research can make these sections feel disconnected from the overall theme of the book. It may have improved the coherence of the book if these chapters were more closely tied to the topic of social media. Additionally, readers may question whether the authors could have included a more extensive introduction to internet linguistics if the book had placed less emphasis on these fundamental topics, which are already covered in many existing guides.

Overall, this book is a valuable contribution to research guides for linguistic studies of social media. It is particularly useful for students who are interested in using social media as a research topic, especially those who are interested in discourse studies, ethnography, and corpus linguistics. While advanced researchers may find most of the content too introductory, Chapter 4 provides valuable insights for anyone considering using social media data in their research.

## References

Barton D and Lee C (2013) *Language Online: Investigating Digital Texts and Practices*. London: Routledge.

Crystal D (2001) *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crystal D (2011) *Internet Linguistics: A Student Guide*. London: Routledge.