

Clare Cunningham and Christopher J. Hall (eds), *Vulnerabilities, challenges and risks in applied linguistics*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2021; 264 pp, £20.00 GBP (ebk), £29.95 (pbk), £99.95 (hbk).

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The concepts of risks, vulnerabilities, and challenges are becoming increasingly important in applied linguistics, especially the notion that *researcher(s)* themselves may be vulnerable as well as the participants. Risk has been a major theme of multiple annual meetings of the British Association of Applied Linguistics and its special interest groups. Therefore, Clare Cunningham and Christopher J. Hall's recent edited collection *Vulnerabilities, Challenges and Risks in Applied Linguistics* could not be more timely. Comprising fifteen chapters, the majority of which were originally presentations at the 2018 annual meeting of BAAL entitled 'Taking Risks in Applied Linguistics', the collection raises important questions regarding the role of the applied linguist in contemporary society and how to address the various risks and challenges that we face in a time of entrenched inequalities, discrimination, and the marketisation of academia. Rather than focus on presenting analyses of linguistic data, the chapters provide critical reflections of previous and ongoing research projects and offer advice for researchers investigating similar topics.

The volume comprises four sections of three chapters each, aside from the first section which features four. The first section 'Communities' considers the risks and challenges facing applied linguists working with vulnerable groups, specifically Indigenous (Severo and Makoni, chapter 2; Murillo, chapter 3), Deaf (Conama, chapter 4), and LGBTQ+ communities (Sauntson, chapter 5). The chapters review a range of mental and physical risks, from exposing hearing privilege and dominant hegemonic beliefs about sign languages (Conama), to discouragement from pursuing language and sexuality research due to its taboo nature (Sauntson) and even paramilitary attacks on local Indigenous communities (Murillo). In addition, the authors propose optimistic ways of conceptualising risks – Sauntson advocates "befriending" risks while Murillo encourages researchers to approach their work with

“radical hope” for the future. Severo and Makoni also offer new ways of thinking about applied linguistics itself, recommending that linguists draw on southern epistemologies and Indigenous ontologies (for instance, mangrove metaphors for conceptualising language) in order to overcome the risks of perpetuating Western ethnocentrism.

The second section ‘Policy’ covers research relating to the official recognition of signed (Snoddon and Wilkinson, chapter 8) and spoken languages (Ennsner-Kananen and Saarinen, chapter 6) as well as national strategies for language learning (Lanvers, chapter 7). The three chapters discuss the risks and limitations of contemporary language policies, such as lack of long-term funding and initiatives targeting underrepresented groups (Lanvers) and how conceptualising sign language recognition solely as a type of disability accommodation can leave deaf Indigenous signers vulnerable (Snoddon and Wilkinson). Meanwhile, Ennsner-Kananen and Saarinen consider how the concept of risk is deployed by policymakers and propose the novel methodology of ‘counter-factual histories’ to explore and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about language policy.

The highlight of the volume was section three ‘Research’ which considers the risks and challenges relating to specific research methodologies and the multiple identities taken up by research participants. Barber (chapter 9) documents the risks and ethical challenges relating to her self-positioning as a female, liberal researcher investigating the far-right and the difficulties of taking an emic perspective given the often extremist source material, while Consoli (chapter 10) recalls the difficulties in transitioning from a teacher identity to a researcher identity during a longitudinal study when his participants continued to view him as a teacher and even a friend. Norlund Shaswar (chapter 11) charts the risks of using an interpreter in a multilingual, cross-cultural interview when the interviewee is from a vulnerable background. She raises important questions as to whether an interpreter should be considered a neutral mediator of information or an active participant and co-constructor of knowledge. What was particularly interesting in this section were the accounts of ethical dilemmas and which methodological decisions had to be avoided in order to maintain ethical integrity, sacrificing “superb data” for “good enough” data as Consoli describes it.

The final section 'Education' addresses challenges facing applied linguistics in educational contexts, particularly in TESOL. The authors highlight the risks of subpar language education and the importance of critical pedagogies. The entanglement of language education with neoliberal capitalism emerged as a core theme in this section – Konstantinidou and Stadler (chapter 11) reflect on the process of developing a novel 'Language in Integration' curriculum and the difficulties in balancing the needs of potential students and future employers, highlighting the importance of transdisciplinarity and practical work experience. Hepworth (chapter 12) argues that teachers should take the risk of introducing controversial topics, such as religion and politics, in the TESOL classroom to enable students to critique systems of domination and manipulation and Haidar (chapter 13) examines the differences in English language education between elite and general schools in Pakistan, where the former enables students to develop their critical expression but the latter focusses on rote learning from a textbook, and how this unequal distribution of linguistic resources reinforces class-based inequalities.

Overall, the volume provides an necessary contribution to the field of applied linguistics, providing reflexive and thoughtful accounts of fascinating research projects, including areas that are often neglected in applied linguistics such as Indigenous languages and sign languages. The strongest chapters went beyond merely identifying the various risks, vulnerabilities, and challenges facing applied linguists and offered new ways of conceptualising and overcoming them. The volume was well-structured and many similar critical themes recurred throughout the disparate chapters, though it was not clear why Conama's chapter regarding the official recognition of Irish Sign Language was placed within 'Communities' despite having an entire section dedicated to language policy. Furthermore, there was surprisingly little consideration of the risks, vulnerabilities, or challenges associated with digital research methods, with the exception of Barber's excellent chapter. Given the increasing importance of social media within applied linguistics and indeed in broader society, this absence was particularly striking. Nevertheless, the book is urgently needed and would particularly benefit applied linguists researching vulnerable communities or controversial topics.