

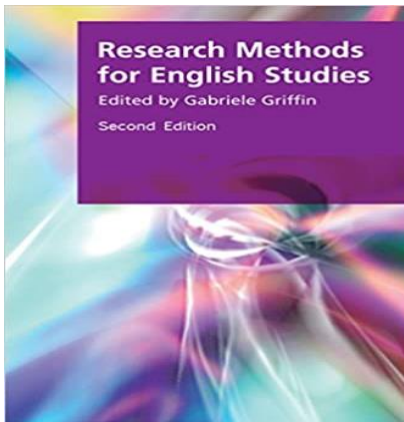


Research Methods for English Studies

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Research Methods for English Studies, edited by Griffin, systematically explores useful research methods for English Studies. Griffin was a professor at the University of York, United Kingdom and was involved in various research projects related to gender studies. This book briefly depicts Griffin's experiences with research, as Griffin outlines a lack of literature surrounding research methods for English Studies. Griffin argues that

"research methods were not widely discussed in English Studies and in many respects this remains the case in 2013" (Griffin, 2013, p. 1). This book, therefore, covers this deficit by introducing and discussing a wide range of research methods to make research more vibrant and systematic in English Studies. The book is divided into twelve chapters, incorporating various research methods and describing ways they may be utilized in English Studies.

In the first chapter, *Research Methods for English Studies: An Introduction*, Griffin discusses Griffin's interpretation of research in English Studies, which Griffin observed as a postgraduate student in the 1980s. Griffin argues that research methods in English Studies were not

systematized, and to enhance research methods in English Studies in the late 1990s, research trainings were developed by librarians and computer technicians. However, these trainings were based on simply improving basic skills on computer and using library instead of involving researchers in academic inquiry. Reflecting on personal experience, Griffin states that all the participants of Griffin's students' group did not enjoy and learn anything from these research trainings, so researchers in English Studies were mostly dependent on learning by following the work of their supervisors. Gradually this trend changed with the publication of various research reports and the improvement in the quality of research training. Nonetheless, research in English Studies was heavily dominated by textual analysis rather than exploring other various fields such as films, music and arts to name the few. From 2008 onward, scholars realized that the research in English Studies could be more than textual analysis. As a result, research in English Studies embraced wider range of new areas.

In chapter two, *Archival Methods*, Steedman introduces the importance of archives as a way to gather information about various disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology so on. Steedman compares receiving information from archiving as communication and providing life to something that was once dead. Steedman describes archival methods as having the features of quest and adventure as one ultimately explores hidden materials. Archival research practices in English Studies can compliment other research methods to enhance results. However, researchers require specific skills and techniques to explore archival resources. In chapter three, *Auto/biography as a Research Method*, Evans argues that among various purposes of research, investigating the life is prominent. With the growth of human life study, auto/biographical research method has increased and transformed from searching information about life to interpretations of particular aspects of human life.

In chapter four, *Oral History as a Research Method*, Summerfield describes oral history as recovering hidden stories from the past that can be employed as a research method in English Studies. This method has grown after the cultural turn of 1960s which embraced the voices of ignored and marginalized people as a source of history. After the publication of Thompson's, *The Voice of the Past* in 1978, this approach reached a new height in exploring the hidden histories of oppressed people (e.g. working class women). Like all methods, oral history research has limitations and challenges that are related to finding

appropriate participants, the memory of participants, and the authenticity of research findings. In chapter five, *Visual Methodologies*, Rose introduces three methods for analyzing visual images. First, compositional interpretation seeks vivid observation of entire visual images and interpretation from various perspectives. Second, the semiotic method is the study of signs and lastly there is the discourse analysis of visual images.

In chapter six, Griffin introduces *Discourse Analysis* as a research method in English Studies and exhibits how this method connects text with the context by focusing on special kinds of language uses. More importantly, discourse analysis research method supposes that the use of language is not neutral but is rather socially and politically motivated. Thus, language requires special analysis to unfold its hidden meanings. Furthermore, the author discusses various kinds of discourse analysis and ultimately emphasizes critical discourse analysis, which seeks to transform society by critiquing social injustices with the support of discourse and computer aided discourse analysis which utilizes various computer software to receive, store, organize and display large quantity of information. Moreover, in chapter seven Alsop in Alsop's research article *The Uses of Ethnographic Methods in English Studies* argues that ethnographic research method can be utilized in English Studies particularly in writing about travel and audience response criticism. Writing about travel captures a wider range of writing incorporating nature, culture, religion, and customs of people. Audience response criticism explores social perception on literary texts by involving in discussion and interaction with public in certain cultural context.

In chapter eight, *Numbers and Words: Quantitative Methods for Scholars of Texts*, Hudson argues that statistical and computational procedures can be employed in the research of English Studies. Statistical procedures can organize quantitative data of literary text such as income, expenditure of characters and exhibit them with the help of graphs, tables, figures, and pie charts and so on. Computational procedures assist analyzing text by investigating repeated patterns of the text such as similar sentence structures, sound patterns, and specific word categories with the support of latest developed computer software. In chapter nine entitled *Textual Analysis as a Research Method*; Belsey introduces textual analysis and depicts how to analysis pictures as a text by illustrating examples from a painting. Belsey claims that textual interpretation requires extra-textual knowledge; consequently, multiple

possibilities of meanings are possible from textual analysis. Moreover, in chapter ten, *Interviewing*, Griffin depicts the importance of interviewing in English Studies, which can be supportive to gather qualitative information from various participants such as authors, readers, publishers, wholesalers, booksellers and so forth. However, Griffin depicts some challenges of interviewing such as finding appropriate participants, textualization of interviews, analyzing interviews and some ethical issues.

In chapter eleven, *Creative Writing as a Research Method*, Cook explains that creative writing can be a useful research method in English Studies since the major purpose of creative writing is to explore new ideas. Thus, creative writing as a research method depends on notion that writing is a technique of discovery. As a research method, writing leads from the known to the unknown information and needs regular practices of writing to achieve new insights through writing. Finally, in chapter twelve, *English Research Methods and the Digital Humanities*, Deegan introduces the latest developed discipline as digital humanities and exhibits how this emerging discipline supports research in English Studies. Deegan claims that natural homes for digital humanities are English departments. Similarly, digital humanities transform the research in English Studies by providing various computational skills and resources which support to make research faster, reliable and effective.

This edited text introduces various research methods related to English Studies that may assist research scholars. The research contents discussed in this book are relevant and can help to enhance the quality of research. More importantly, this book provides various resources at the end of each chapter that will help the reader explore each method. This book offers an honest contribution to research methods in English Studies.

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