Qualitative Research in Communication Disorders: An Introduction for Students and Clinicians
Edited by R. Lyons and L. McAllister (2019)

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Professor James Law writes in the foreword of this book that research in speech language sciences was traditionally based within the quantitative paradigm. However, over the years there has been a growing understanding that qualitative research can contribute to broadening the evidence, for example, by investigating the ‘voice’ of people with communication disorders and answering questions such as how interventions work, why they work, and for whom. Although qualitative research in communication disorders is not new, there is still a way to go before this paradigm gets the respect and space it deserves. This book provides a comprehensive overview of a number of established and newer qualitative methodologies and methods and other relevant and related topics not only for students and clinicians, as the title indicates, but also for the more experienced researcher. Thirty-nine authors including the editors have contributed to the 22 chapters of this book.

Editors Lyons and McAllister begin the book with a well-written introduction to and overview of qualitative research. The chapter has some illustrative tables and figures providing useful information about the qualitative research paradigm, and the similarities and differences between qualitative and quantitative research. The main body of the book comprises chapters on specific methodologies (conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, narrative inquiry, participatory approaches, phenomenology, and qualitative case studies) and methods (in-depth semi-structured interviews, observational and ethnographic techniques, and the voice-centered relational approach). These chapters are comprehensive enough to give the future researcher a good idea of what the methodology/method can be
used for, in order to seek more information to carry out the research. The remaining chapters in the book cover a variety of topics general to any qualitative methodology and method, such as rigor, ethics, cultural integrity, and qualitative evidence synthesis. Throughout the book, a solid connection is provided as to how the particular approach or topic can be used or considered in relation to qualitative research in communication disorders by real research cases from the authors’ own work, exemplifying the topic of the chapter. Each chapter ends with top tips for the researcher.

Two chapters in the book point toward the future of qualitative research. The chapter on innovative methods highlights newer perspectives in qualitative research that we can expect to see much more in the future, and focuses on the need for flexibility in future innovative qualitative research. The main focus of the chapter is on how the perspectives of children, youth, and their families can be heard through novel ways of data collection. Finally, the concluding chapter by the editors describes some of the challenges and directions they see in the future. As first touched on by Professor James Law in the foreword, the chapter authors discuss the areas of tension between quantitative and qualitative research, and the fact that quantitative research remains the leading paradigm; for example, major health journals do not publish qualitative research. However, advances are still seen in qualitative research, which are increasingly developing in terms of new and refined approaches, and which therefore call for critical and rigorous use. Some of the advances seen in qualitative research are technological solutions to support data collection and analysis, together with frameworks and checklists to ensure transparency and rigor.

The book is a well-written addition to existing textbooks on qualitative research in communication disorders. The book is well structured and scholarly in its approach, and hence I have found it useful for teaching future speech and language therapist research skills.