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SUNUŞ

Düşünceyi ifade etme, insanlar arasında bildirişim sağlama aracı olarak dil, milleti oluşturan fertleri birbirine bağlayan bir güç, bir anlaşma dizgesidir. Dilin bağlamsal kullanımına karşılık gelen söylem, eylemle karşılık bulan sosyal bir uygulama olması yönüyle, bir güç ve kontrol aracıdır. Sosyal yapı ve kurumlar söylemlerle şekillenirken, aralarındaki diyalojik ilişki gereği, söylemler de sosyal yapı ve kurumlarca şekillenmektedir. İnsan hayatına yön veren bu olgunun, gerçek hayatın kurgusal yansımalarına dayanan yazınsal söylemlerde ortaya çıkışı söylemle gerçekleştirilmek istenen eylemin varlığını bildirir. Yazınsal söylemler de sosyal yapı ve kurumları şekillendiren, belli amaçlarla üretilmiş güç ve denetim araçlarıdır. Bir ulusun kültür kodlarının, tarihinin o ulusun dilinde saklı olduğu gerçeğinden hareketle, yazınsal söylemler, diğer söylem türleri gibi, çözümleme gerektiren belgeler niteliğindedir. Yazınsal söylemin dilsel kodlarının çözümlenmesi o ulusun tarihinin, sosyo-kültürel değerlerinin; söylemle gerçekleştirilmek istenen eylem ya da eylemlerin daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlayacaktır.

Anıldığı üzere, toplumların tarihine, kültürüne ayna tutan; gelecek kuşakların eğitimine yön veren; dille kayıt altına alınmış söylemlerin çözümlenmesine ve çeşitli dil çalışmalarına dayalı bu kitapta yer alan her bölümün alana katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu çalışmayla, farklı üniversitelerden akademisyenlerin Türkçe, İngilizce, Almanca, Farsça, Rusça alanlarında söylem ve dil üzerine gerçekleştirdikleri araştırmalar bir araya getirilerek bir kaynak kitap oluşturma hedeflenmiştir.

Editör Kurulu

ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC RESEARCH BASED STUDIES ON TURKISH SIGN LANGUAGE: TRENDS IN THEMES AND METHODOLOGIES BETWEEN 2012-2022*

Cansu Gür[**]
Merve Geçikli[***]

1. INTRODUCTION

Sign languages, like spoken languages, are natural human languages. These languages also have their own grammatical rules and vocabulary. All the basic linguistic structures such as phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax are also present in these languages. Even though sign languages perform visual-gestural processing, they have phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic arrangements similar to those of spoken languages that perform auditory-verbal processing. Along with the similarity of these structural levels, most significantly, they fulfil the same communicative functions despite the modality difference between these two natural languages. Thus, sign language studies as well as spoken language studies provide new insights into natural human languages to understand the systems of human communication.

There are an estimated 129 sign languages belonging to deaf communities around the world (Eberhard et al., 2022). One of these national sign languages is Turkish Sign Language (Türk İşaret Dili [TİD]). Academic interest in TİD has been growing for over two decades; thus, there is a substantial body of research

* The preliminary findings of this study were presented orally in *International Conference on English Literature, Applied Linguistics and Translation Studies*, May 10-11, 2022, Karabük/Turkey.

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on TİD. In the present study, the aim is to depict the major themes frequently covered, and the research paradigms, designs/methods, and data collection techniques/tools, in the studies on TİD published between 2012 – 2022.

In the following sections of the present chapter, first of all, the historical and educational background of TİD will be briefly introduced. After giving the general methodology of the present research, the results will be presented and discussed.

1.1. Historical and Educational Background of TİD

There exists limited research on the historical background of TİD. Although the beginning of the history of TİD is not known exactly, the use of a sign language in the Ottoman Palace between the 15th and 17th centuries has been documented. However, there is no obvious evidence that TİD is the continuation of this sign language. Miles (2000) stated that the deaf communities of hundreds of people existed in the courts of Ottoman. They were charged with several duties such as guards and executioners. They also served to teach sign language to the rest of the court since speaking in front of the sultan was considered improper (see Figure 1 for representations of 'mute' in Ottoman Palace*). Additionally, their deafness was regarded as a guarantee of confidentiality (see Dikici, 2006 and Kemaloğlu & Kemaloğlu, 2012 for a complete review of the use of sign language in the Ottoman Palace).



Figure 1. Representations of 'mute' in Ottoman Palace

* Wikipedia contributors. (2021, October 16). Ottoman Sign Language. In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 07:45, May 25, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ottoman_Sign_Language&oldid=1050184674

To mention briefly the educational background of TİD, the first school for the deaf was founded in 1889 under the reign of Abdulhamid II (See Figure 2 for the first students of Deaf School in the Ottoman period, taken from Günay & Görür, 2013). In the early part of 20th century, there were a couple of private schools for the deaf in large cities in Turkey (Sümer, 2015). Today, there are much more schools for the deaf people in Turkey because of the growth in the deaf community and the changes in educational system. Since 1953, oral teaching methods have been preferred in these schools. In fact, a law which enables education in TİD was passed in 2007 although it has not been put into practice so far mostly because of the lack of qualified teachers who can use TİD in their classes (Sümer, 2015). Last but not least, an institute providing college education for deaf people is situated in Eskişehir.



Figure 2. The First Students of Deaf School

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Purpose and Questions

Regarding TİD research, there is a considerable potential about what dimensions researchers may address and through what research paradigms and methodologies they may handle their research. Therefore, it is of interest to learn the trends in the research of TİD through a diachronic content analysis study. Thus, the main aim of the current study is to depict the major themes frequently covered, and the research paradigms, designs/methods, data collection techniques/tools, and data analysis techniques in the linguistic based studies on TİD. Accordingly, the research questions of the study are as follows:

- What are the major themes frequently covered in the linguistic based studies on TİD published between 2012-2022?
- What are the major methodological aspects frequently applied in the linguistic based studies on TİD published between 2012-2022?
    - What is the genre type (Research Paper [RP], Master's Thesis [MA], and Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation [PhD]) distribution of the studies published between 2012-2022?
    - Which research paradigms and research designs/methods were frequently followed in the studies?
    - Which data collection tools were frequently used in the studies between 2012-2022?
    - Which data analysis techniques were frequently used in the studies between 2012-2022?

In recent works for this type of retrospective study in TİD field, a similar study by Arık (2013) include chapters regarding counts of topics in TİD research from various data sources such as theses, articles, reviews, news, proposals and not only linguistic based studies but also other studies on TİD are covered. Still, as mentioned, the above chapter is based on giving the details of the most frequent themes and sub-topics under these themes through further explanations and there is no specific part devoted to the methodological aspects commonly used in TİD research.

2.2. Research Design

Following qualitative research paradigm, we used a descriptive content analysis as a systematic review to identify the general trends in methodological and thematic aspects in a particular research discipline (Çalık& Sözbilir, 2014). Content analysis is used to develop objective inferences about a subject of interest in any type of communication (Kondracki et al., 2002); accordingly, studies published in a certain period of time are reviewed to identify the most frequent research problems addressed and the sort of research paradigms and designs and relevant methodological points used. From this aspect, this content analysis study is believed; 1) to offer many valuable insights for TİD researchers about the thematical and methodological aspects of linguistic based TİD Research frequently pursued, and 2) to shed light on for future studies to be carried out related to specific points ignored in the previous literature.

2.3. Data Source

Data source of this study (corpus) was compiled on the basis of purposeful sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) based on certain criteria related to prominent

linguistic based research studies in TİD in all free-access databases that include linguistic-oriented TİD research. Among research articles, of the peer-reviewed journals we included in this study, 96 % of them specifically focus on linguistic studies: *Dilbilim Araştırmaları Dergisi* , published by Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, *Linguistic Society of America* published by JSTOR, *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* by Adam Mickiewicz University, *Linguistic Discovery* published by Dartmouth College Library Publication; while 1% exclusively are based on sign languages: *Sign Language Studies* published by JSTOR and *Sign Language and Linguistics* by John Benjamins Publishing Company. As for MA theses and PhD dissertations, 98 % of the theses were compiled from YÖK Ulusal Tez Merkezi and the rest 2% were taken from ProQuest and university databases.

2.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis

This study is based on the qualitative textual analysis of studies accessed from the free Access databases to determine topics and methodological aspects in the studies. The RPs, MA theses, and PhD dissertations published during the time period 2012-2022 were studied (see Table 1). We analyzed the text of the studies to (a) those ones based on empirical research evidenced through research aims/purposes and methodology sections and (b) determine linguistic based related to TİD. We excluded theoretical RPs, proposals, book reviews, critical issues, and announcements. In decision of whether a study involved linguistics-based TİD, we included those focused on linguistic analysis of TİD and also those that had a more limited focus such as linguistic samples observed as a result of intervention (e.g., using test scores as outcome data). Thus, the data source of the study (corpus) was compiled by moving on three phases:

- Firstly, the review criteria and the keywords for the search were fixed,
- Secondly, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were compiled during database search,
- Finally, the corpus of studies to be analyzed was fixed on the basis of research questions

Accordingly, initially, 35 RPs, 14 MA theses, and 11 PhD dissertations were detected for review. After excluding duplicates, 30 RPs, 13 MA theses, and 7 PhD dissertations were attained. Applying the eligibility criteria, 2 RPs were excluded as their focus of study were other than TİD. Finally, 28 RPs, 13 MA theses, and 7 PhD dissertations were found eligible for the review. Then, the corpus was coded on the basis of the modified version of Paper Classification Form (PCF) developed by Sözbilir and Canpolat (2006), and Sözbilir and Kutu (2008). This form is formed of 6 parts, three parts of which are not the focus of current study because Part C and B are related to topics frequently focused in chemistry, biol-

ogy, physics, science and technology and which discipline the studies belong to. As for the other part excluded from the study, Part F is about the sampling in the studies. Among parts used in the analysis of the current research, Part A is based on bibliographic information of each study while, in the part D, the research paradigm followed in each study and research designs/methods is coded on the basis of three categories, quantitative, qualitative or mixed in nature and the classification of designs/methods put by McMillan & Schumacher (2006). To the last two categories, the part E includes eight sub-categories under the category of the data collection tools, and the last part, G, covers sub-dimensions of data analysis techniques. For the current study, the category related to topics was modified to the themes in the linguistic based research of TİD studies.

In linguistic focused research in TİD field, in coding research designs/methods, we had to re-check the definitions of the terms used in the studies because in majority of studies, research methods/designs were not clearly given in methodology parts. In this process, before final decisions, we followed an iterative process based on interpretive judgments and negotiation. For example, in some of qualitative studies, quantification, that is, descriptive statistics were used and through the iterative analysis process and further review of the literature, we decided that descriptive statistics can be used as part of qualitative research, as well, and when any descriptive statistics included in a study, where qualitative research design/method is followed, the research paradigm should still be categorized as qualitative.

In this iterative process of data collection, some of the studies were coded on the basis of the information provided in their abstract sections because in these parts the authors explicitly mentioned the research paradigm, research design/method, data collection tools, and data analysis techniques of the study. However, in order to ensure the codification, these studies were re-coded once again by each researcher and we made final decisions as a result of the consensus on paradigm, design, and data collection tools.

In data analysis, we used IBM SPSS Statistics 23 programme for descriptive statistics for the analysis of prevalence, and moving on each research question, for providing frequencies, sums, and percentages by category and year through.

2.5. Trustworthiness

On the basis of certain strategies during data collection and analysis procedures, we established trustworthiness of the study. Thus, in order to ensure internal validity of the study, for the points regarding linguistic based study of TİD that may cause misconceptions, common operational definitions were fixed to consistently code a study. Furthermore, the data pool of the study complied are

in consistent with the purpose of the study related to the quality of the empirical studies selected and the analysis of each of them within the time period.

Reliability of coding established through training period based on consensus built around interpretation and applying categories. This training period consisted of phases where sample TİD studies were studied on the basis of PCF by the researchers in terms of codification. After training, coding process started, during which uncertainties were discussed by the researchers by reconsidering operational definitions, searching some further details about the categories in the form, and coming to consensus about the category. In this phase, approximately 30 % of the studies caused some discrepancies between the two researchers especially about themes and research designs/methods. The studies, where there is no clear mention about research paradigm, design, data collection tool, and data analysis technique, negotiated with two authors to re-read each study for additional coding on the basis of methodology literature.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will give the results of the study in tables, charts and graphs. For each research question, results are presented respectively. Majority of the TİD studies (89,5 %) published in English and the rest of them were in Turkish. In this regard, there may be linguistic based studies published in other languages about TİD, yet, as the authors of this study do not have competence in those languages, these studies were not included in content analysis. Regarding the nationality of the authors, approximately 90 % of the studies were by Turkish researchers, while the left was by the researchers from other background.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the papers subjected to content analysis (N=48)

Language of the studies (RP, MA, PhD)	f	%
Turkish	5	10,5
English	43	89,5
Total	48	100
Nationality of the authors		
Turkish	43	89,5
Mixed	5	10,5
Total	48	100

3.1. What are the major themes frequently covered in the linguistic based studies on TİD published between 2012-2022?

Concerning the first research question, frequently covered themes in linguistic based studies on TİD, Table 2 and Figure 3 show that there are two main areas that dominate the 53% of all studies, which are morphology (38%) and syntax (27%). As for the rest 47% of the studies, phonology (9%), spatial language (8%), and modality effects (6%) are the major topics TİD researchers have focused on.

Table 2. Frequently covered themes in linguistic based research on TİD

	f	%
Morphology	18	38
Syntax	13	27
Phonology	4	9
Spatial language	4	8
Modality effects	3	6
Age of acquisition	2	4
Historical linguistics	2	4
Semantics	1	2
Sociolinguistics	1	2
Total	48	100

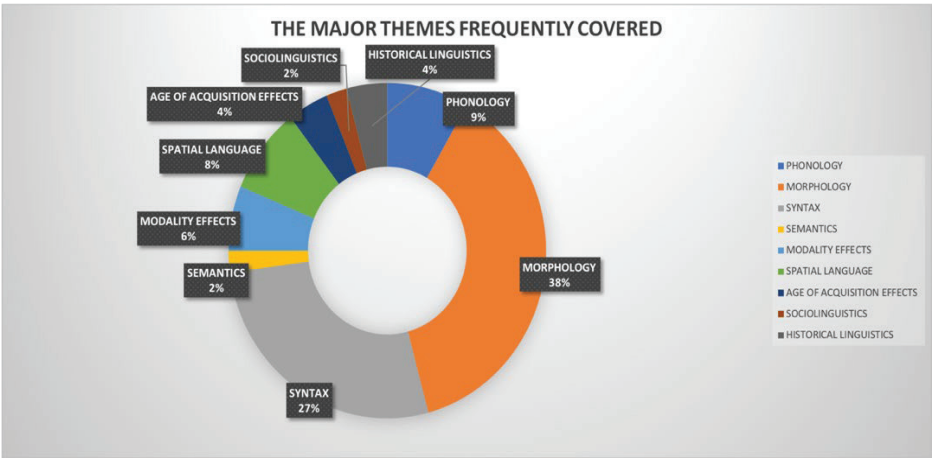

Figure 3. Percentages of frequently covered themes in linguistic based research on TİD

When these morphology-based and syntax-based studies are examined in detail, it is determined that almost two third of those studies are based on the effect or observation of a particular experiment or some other factors on participants' attitudes and conceptions or choices regarding morphological and syntactical dimensions of TİD.

3.2. What are the major methodological aspects frequently applied in the linguistic based studies on TİD published between 2012-2022?

3.2.1. What is the genre type (RP, MA thesis, and PhD dissertation) distribution of the studies published between 2012-2022?

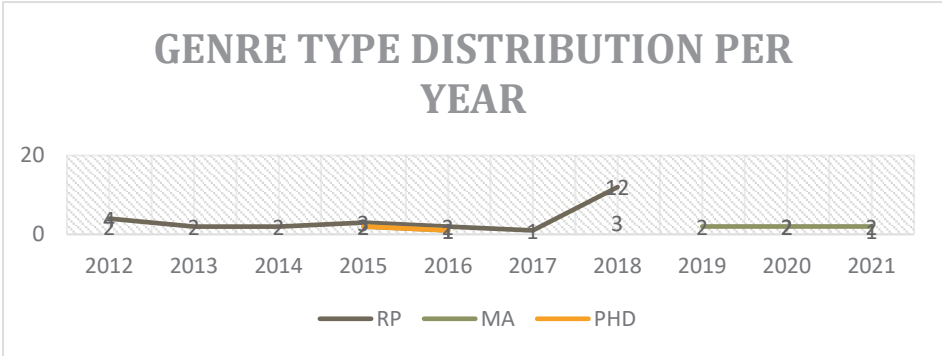

Figure 4. Genre type distribution per year

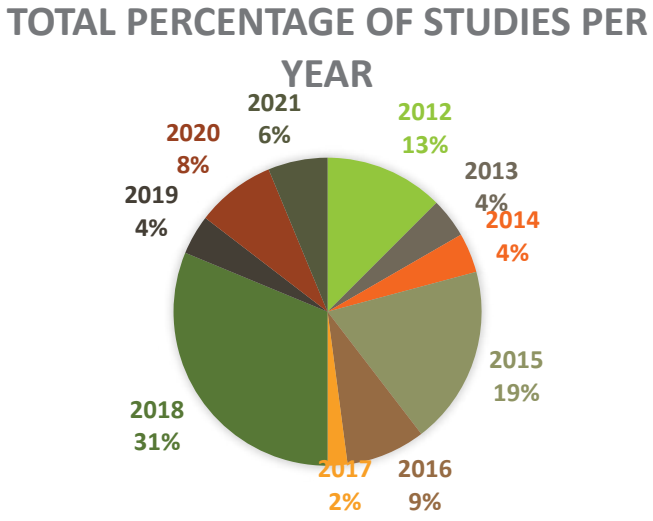

Figure 5. Percentages of studies per year

As seen from Figure 4 and 5 above, the number of RPs (f=28) on TİD outnumber the MA theses (f=13) and PhD dissertations (f= 7) across the years. Still, despite the highest frequency compared MA theses and PhD dissertations, after 2018, a dramatic decline in the number of RPs published on TİD is clearly observed; in 2018 the number of RPs published was 12, while between 2018 and 2021 there were only 2 RPs published each year. Interestingly, between 2012-2015 there was no PhD dissertation published on TİD. In 2018, the number of studies conducted on TİD is the highest in percentage and frequency (31%, f=15) compared to the other years, while the lowest number of studies is observed in 2017 (2%, f=1).

3.2.2. Which research paradigms and research designs/ methods were frequently followed in the studies?

The research paradigms frequently followed in linguistic based research on TİD published are summarized in Figure 6 below. This graphic displays that more than two thirds of the studies (69%) employed qualitative and another 24% quantitative research traditions. Only small number of papers (7%) followed mixed method research design.

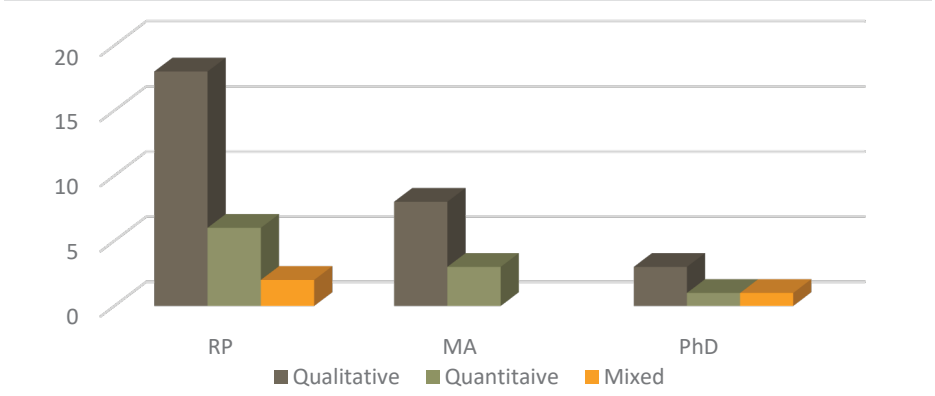

Figure 6. Frequently followed research paradigms in TİD research between 2012-2022

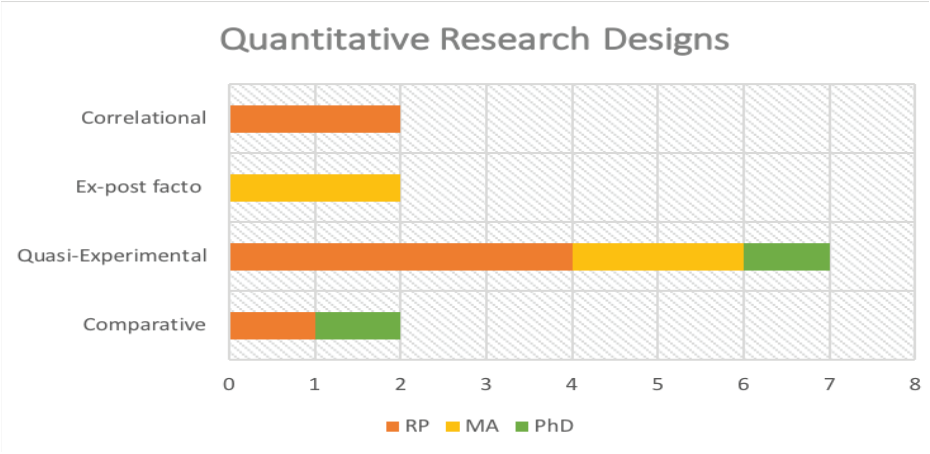

Figure 7. Frequently followed quantitative research designs in TİD research between 2012-2022

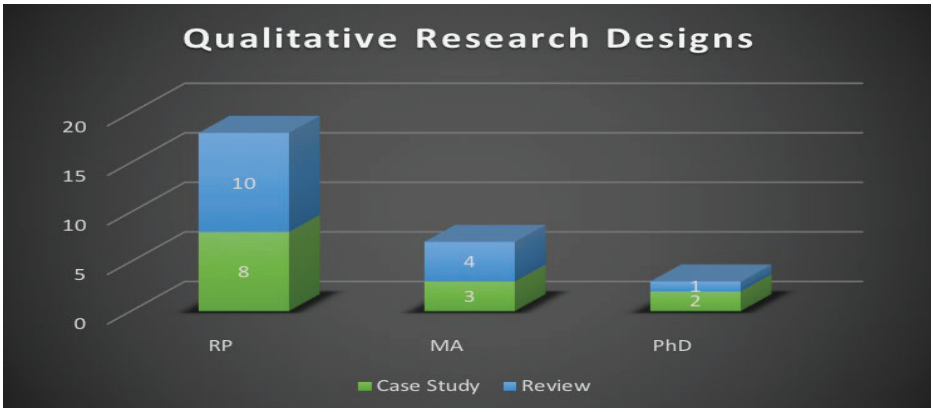

Figure 8. Frequently followed qualitative research designs in TİD research between 2012-2022

Regarding research designs preferred in TİD studies, the Figure 7 and 8 indicate that qualitative studies are done through both non-interactive designs (Review) and interactive research (Case Study) designs. The most commonly used qualitative research designs are review (34 %), and case studies (30%). Other qualitative research designs such as ethnography, phenomenography, grounded theory etc. are never used. This result indicates a gap in qualitative research knowledge and use in TİD research. As for quantitative research designs, non-experimental design with about 9 % is dominant and it is followed by experimental researches (7%) among all designs. The non-experimental designs preferred are comparative (15%), ex-post facto (15%), and correlational (%16) among quantitative designs. The most common type of experimental research method is quasi-experimental (54%) among quantitative designs. There is no pre-experimental research, true-experimental, and single subject research done, an expected result

as random attainment of subjects into control and experiment groups is possible and necessary in other fields

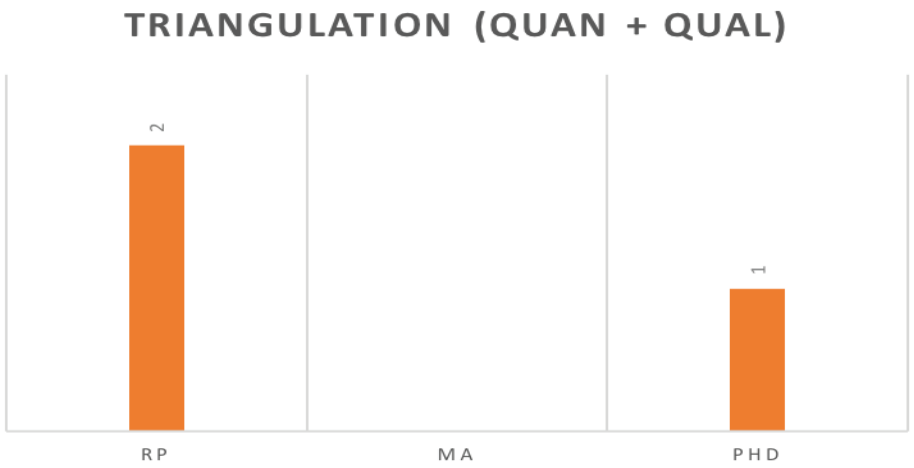

Figure 9. Frequently followed mixed method designs in TİD research between 2012-2022

Finally, as to the mixed method research designs, the type preferred by TİD researchers in their linguistic focused studies is triangulation research design, in which quantitative and qualitative designs are followed for data triangulation in ensuring credibility (see Figure 9). Still, the number of studies following mixed-method design is quiet low, which indicates a probable gap in mixed method research knowledge and skills among TİD researchers.

3.2.3. Which data collection tools were frequently used in the studies between 2012-2022?

Data collection tools frequently used in linguistic based TİD studies are given in Figure 10 below. Total numbers of data collection tools are not calculated as more than one data collection tools could be used in a single study. The percentages calculated according to the total number of papers (N=46) subjected to content analysis.

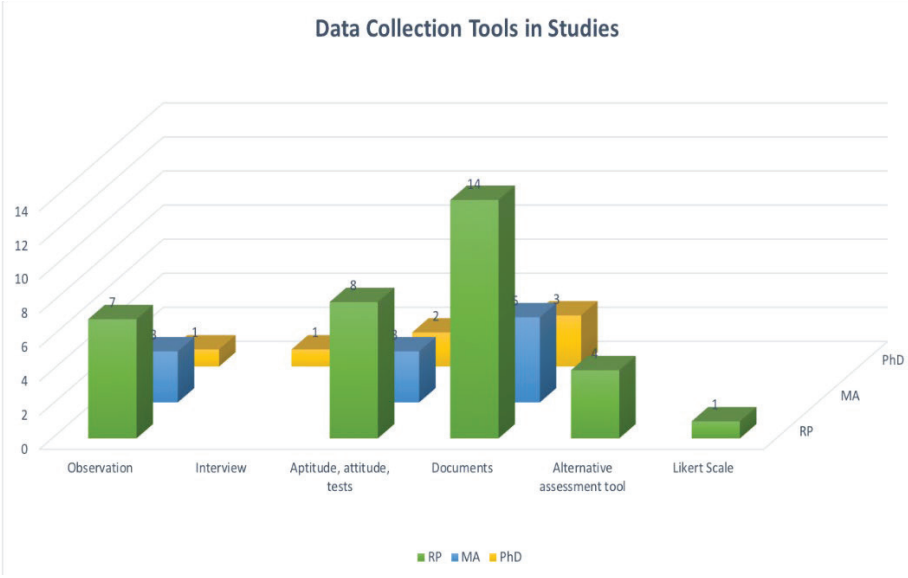

Figure 10. Frequently used data collection tools in TİD research between 2012-2022

The least used data collection tool is observation (5,1%). The most common data collection tool used among quantitative data collection tools are aptitude, attitude, perceptions, personality etc. tests and the overall percentage of use among all data collection tools (13%). Documents (22%) are among the most commonly used qualitative data collection tools together with observations (11%). On the basis of these findings, it appears that the type of data collection tools, which are easy to access or to prepare, administer, and mark, are widely used. Besides, as documents and alternative assessment tools such as two/three diagnostic tests, concept maps, POE (Predict-observe-explain) require less experience, their uses are seemingly pretty common. The main reasons behind the common use of aptitude, attitude, perceptions, personality etc. test might be that they are widely used throughout the world in experimental and case study-based research, and that the nature of the research problems addressed in TİD.

3.2.4. Which data analysis techniques were frequently used in the studies between 2012-2022?

In Table 3, the data analysis techniques used in linguistic based TİD research are summarized. In parallel with research designs followed, qualitative analysis techniques are quiet frequently used in the studies. As to which qualitative analysis technique is much more common, it is seen that content analysis technique (42%) is the most commonly preferred technique. Among descriptive statistics, f/% tables and charts are frequently employed and, in the current study, it was

observed that the researchers, who followed qualitative research designs, chose these statistics. Regarding inferential statistics, researchers generally used regression analysis (23%) firstly, and, ANOVA/ANCOVA secondly, which is again in line with the research designs followed among quantitative research designs in TİD research.

Table 3. Frequently used data analysis techniques in linguistic based research on TİD

		f	%
Descriptive Statistics	f/% tables	4	8
	Central tendency measures	1	2
	Charts	3	6
	Others	0	0
Inferential Statistics	t-test	0	0
	correlation	2	4
	ANOVA/ANCOVA	7	15
	Factor Analysis	0	0
	Regression	11	23
	Non-parametric	0	0
	Others	0	0
Qualitative Analysis	Content analysis	20	42
	Descriptive analysis	0	0
	Others	0	0
Total		**48**	**100**

In this regard, these findings suggest that simple data analysis techniques are frequently preferred by the researchers in TİD. In fact, this is seemingly the result of the research designs and data collection tools the TİD researchers applied in their research. Still, in recent years in the world there has been an increase in the number of studies with elaborated methodological aspects including advanced statistics techniques in different sign languages studies, which requires to follow this trend in TİD studies, as well, for well-developed research in the field.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, in order to determine the status of research in TİD research, studies concerning TİD published in national and international databases were subjected to a content analysis in terms of the major themes frequently covered, and the research paradigms, designs/methods, data collection and analysis techniques/tools. This content analysis showed that there is a trend in qualitative research designs, especially review and case study, compared to other research designs, the proportion of which are quite low (less than one in third). Therefore, it could be suggested that there still exists a need to improve research method courses at graduate level to help new researchers to learn other research designs and also improve their knowledge and skills in these designs. In supporting these implications, most of the TİD studies were based on the data collected through documents, and also majority of the studies are based on data collected through only one or at best two different data collection tools. These results suggest possible methodological weaknesses and lack of knowledge and skills in combining and using different research methods and integrating different data collection tools in order to strengthen the validity and reliability of the studies.

The areas of interest to TİD educators and practitioners seemingly affect the sort of themes addressed in studies. Indeed, morphological and syntactical aspects of TİD are composed of two thirds of the total studies done by TİD researchers. However, shortage of the number of studies focusing on other aspects of TİD indicates that there are problems with following the current trends in sign language studies in the world. Besides, the contextual factors may also cause the fewer number of studies on these aspects such as studying with all participants, getting officially permissions for the studies, financial problems for technical equipment, etc.

It is hoped that this content analysis will provide some guidance for TİD researchers, particularly new researchers, in making appropriate decisions and broadening their scopes when conducting research and writing academic publications in the future. It is also recommended that a similar study be repeated in future years; TİD researchers, practitioners, educators, and policy makers can then monitor and review the research trends, and possibly find more national and international contribution to the field and some shifts of research trend. More reviews are needed in not only linguistic based research but also all other studies on TİD conducted in order to raise awareness of both new researchers to see what has been achieved and what needs to be done.

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