



Rationale for Employing Grounded Theory in Applied Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues for the expanded use of Grounded Theory (GT) in Applied Linguistics (AL), a field increasingly characterised by complex, context-sensitive inquiries into language use. Despite its strong alignment with qualitative and interpretive paradigms, GT remains underutilised in AL research. Through illustrative examples, we highlight GT's capacity to generate mid-range theories from real-world settings. The discussion includes the use of memoing, constant comparison, and theoretical sampling to explore the lived experiences of language learners and educators. The paper also offers practical guidance for novice researchers and suggests future GT-based directions, including research on digital discourse, translanguaging, and decolonial language policy. Ultimately, the paper positions GT as a rigorous and adaptable tool for theory-building in Applied Linguistics' evolving methodological landscape.

Keywords: Grounded Theory (GT), applied linguistics, memos, qualitative research design, research method

INTRODUCTION

Applied Linguistics (AL) is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field dedicated to investigating language-related challenges in real-world contexts. Its scope spans areas such as second language acquisition (SLA), language teaching, multilingual education, discourse analysis, language assessment, and corpus linguistics, among others (Goundar, 2023a). The field seeks to apply linguistic theory and research to address practical issues in education, communication, policy, and broader social interaction (Cook, 2012; Kaplan, 2010). As global migration, digitalisation, and decolonial perspectives continue to reshape how language is used and understood, AL increasingly engages with complex, context-sensitive phenomena. These developments underscore the need for methodological innovation and theory-building that can account for the dynamic, situated nature of language in use (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007; McKinley & Rose, 2016).

Despite methodological advancements, researchers in Applied Linguistics face persistent challenges in addressing language use in real-world contexts. Traditional paradigms—especially those rooted in positivist or

post-positivist traditions—have been criticized for their limitations in capturing the lived experiences of language learners, teachers, and users (Duff, 2018). Quantitative methods, while valuable for identifying patterns and generalizations, may fall short in exploring the underlying social processes, identity constructions, and contextual factors that shape linguistic behaviour. Qualitative approaches have helped bridge this gap, but there remains a need for methodological frameworks that are both flexible and systematic, and that allow for the development of theory grounded in empirical data.

In light of these challenges, this paper argues for the methodological and theoretical suitability of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 2017) in Applied Linguistics research. Grounded Theory (GT) offers a systematic, iterative approach to data collection and analysis that enables researchers to construct theory from the data, rather than testing preconceived hypotheses. Its focus on emergent insights and its alignment with interpretivist and constructivist paradigms make it particularly well-suited to exploring the complex social realities that characterize language learning, teaching, and use (Goundar, 2023a, 2023b). By embracing Grounded Theory, researchers in Applied Linguistics can better navigate the intersection of language, identity, culture, and power in diverse contexts (Hadley, 2017).

The paper is structured as follows: first, it provides a theoretical overview of Grounded Theory, tracing its development from classic to constructivist versions and examining how these variations align with epistemological assumptions in Applied Linguistics. Second, it presents a critical review of existing research in Applied Linguistics that has successfully employed GT, highlighting its contributions to fields such as TESOL, academic discourse, and identity studies. Third, the paper outlines the key procedures and principles of Grounded Theory such as theoretical sampling, coding, memo-writing, and constant comparison—and discusses how these can be applied effectively in linguistic research. Finally, the paper offers practical guidance and ethical considerations for researchers seeking to adopt GT in their own studies. Through this analysis, the paper aims to demonstrate how Grounded Theory can serve as an adaptable framework for generating theory that is empirically grounded, context-sensitive, and responsive to the complexities of language in use.

OVERVIEW OF GROUNDED THEORY

GT was developed in the 1960s by California-based researchers Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (now regarded as the first generation). The method of coding the data produced by the research, then categorising the codes, and letting the data generate the theory, rather than trying to fit a pre-conceived theory to the data, resonated with many researchers in the social sciences, who used and developed GT. Second-generation grounded theorists, represented by Strauss, Corbin and Clarke, evolved the methodology to include establishing a philosophical foundation of a study, namely clearly elucidating the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the study (Chamberlain-Salaun et al., 2013). GT has been extended further since then, to a constructivist approach (Chamberlain-Salaun et al., 2013), which also takes into account researcher positionality, making it particularly useful to applied linguists, especially those operating in the decolonial space (Goundar, 2025a).

While all three variants of GT are built on the collection of data, subsequent coding of the data and then grouping the codes to form categories from which theory emerges, the principal difference between the three variants lies in the use of memoing. Memoing is the written record of the researchers' encounters with their data as they work towards discovering the core category, from which the theory emerges (Urquhart, 2013). Memoing is pivotal to GT, but its use differs depending on whether the researcher takes an evolved or constructivist approach (Birks & Mills, 2022; Chamberlain-Salaun et al., 2013). Evolved grounded theorists use memoing to keep a record of their decisions regarding coding and grouping of codes into categories, until the core category emerges (Goundar, 2023b). Constructivists extend the use of memoing to include identifying their world view, memberships of social worlds, and biases. This reflection on researcher positionality can then

provide guidance on important methodological decisions (Goundar, 2025b) by deepening the symbolic interactionism inherent in the study.

Grounded Theory has evolved into several methodological variants, each reflecting different epistemological assumptions and analytic procedures. **Table 1** summarises the key distinctions between classic, evolved, and constructivist Grounded Theory, along with examples of their application in applied linguistics research.

Following the distinctions outlined in **Table 1**, this study aligns most closely with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2003, 2014). This approach recognises that meanings and interpretations are constructed through the interaction between the researcher, participants, and the broader sociocultural context. In applied linguistics research, where language practices and learning experiences are shaped by social, cultural, and institutional dynamics, a constructivist perspective provides a flexible and context-sensitive framework for analysis (Hadley, 2017). Accordingly, the analytical process in this study involved iterative coding, constant comparison, and reflexive interpretation of the data. Rather than assuming that theory emerges independently of the researcher, constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the researcher's interpretive role in identifying patterns, developing categories, and generating theoretical insights. This approach therefore enabled the study to produce a nuanced understanding of the phenomena under investigation while remaining grounded in participants' experiences and the broader linguistic context.

Use of Memos

A defining characteristic of Grounded Theory is the use of memos, which Birks and Mills (2022) recommend commencing as soon as a study is conceptualised--even before data collection begins. Not only do memos provide the researcher with an in-depth record of their thought processes and reasons behind their decision making, but Charmaz (2014) recognises that memos are also a technique for initiating and maintaining productivity.

Table 1. Comparison of Grounded Theory (GT) Variants and Their Application in Applied Linguistics (AL)

Grounded Theory Variant	Key Features	Epistemological Assumptions	Examples in Applied Linguistics
Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 2017)	Emphasis on emergence of theory from data; minimal reliance on prior literature; constant comparative method; open coding leading to core categories.	Positivist/empiricist orientation; assumes theory can emerge objectively from systematic analysis of data.	Studies examining patterns in classroom discourse, language learning strategies, or emergent themes in learner experiences without imposing prior theoretical frameworks.
Evolved Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994)	Structured analytic procedures including open, axial, and selective coding; use of coding paradigms; systematic categorisation of relationships among concepts.	Post-positivist; acknowledges the researcher's role but emphasises systematic procedures to ensure rigour and analytical clarity.	Research investigating language teaching practices, curriculum development, or institutional language policies using structured coding frameworks.
Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2003, 2014)	Flexible coding procedures; emphasis on co-construction of meaning between researcher and participants; reflexivity and interpretive analysis.	Constructivist/interpretivist; recognises that findings are constructed through interaction between researcher, participants, and context.	Studies exploring learner identities, multilingual experiences, teacher beliefs, or sociocultural dimensions of language learning.

The study from which this paper evolves also utilised memos, which are a defining characteristic of GT. Some of the things that can be included in the memos are:

1. Your feelings and assumptions about your research.
2. Your philosophical position in relation to your research.
3. Potential issues, problems, and concerns in relation to your study design.
4. Reflections on the research process, including factors that influence quality in the study.
5. Procedural and analytical decision making.
6. Codes, categories, and your developing theory. [Adapted from Birks and Mills (2015, p. 42)]

Equally as important to the grounded theorist are theoretical memos, which differ from the memos that Birks and Mills (2022) discussed above. These memos discuss what is going on with the data and the basis of theoretical memos during the coding process. Glaser (1978) and Urquhart (2013) view theoretical memos as a vital tool for theorising, with Urquhart (2013, p. 71) suggesting that “*regardless of whether you are engaging in a theory building design or not—adopt this practice when coding your data*” (2013, p. 71). During the data analysis process, theoretical memos are beneficial in that they help to reveal the relationships between the codes and the categories.

RESEARCH NEEDS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

A central challenge in Applied Linguistics lies in the complex, exploratory, and situated nature of its research questions. Language is deeply embedded in social life, shaped by identity, power, and context. As such, AL research must account for non-linear, emergent processes that often resist quantification. Increasingly, scholars are turning toward interpretive and qualitative paradigms that allow for the nuanced investigation of meaning-making practices, agency, and interactional dynamics (Canagarajah, 2012; Pennycook, 2021). This shift underscores the need for methodologies capable of capturing context-sensitive phenomena while supporting rigorous analysis.

One significant research need is the development of mid-range theories—conceptual frameworks that are grounded in data yet abstract enough to be transferable across similar settings. While macro theories such as sociocultural theory or critical pedagogy provide valuable lenses, many subfields within AL remain undertheorised at the mid-level (Hadley, 2017). For instance, in SLA, there is a growing recognition that socially oriented approaches (e.g., complex dynamic systems theory, translanguaging, and ecological models) require clearer theoretical articulation to guide empirical work (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007). Similarly, in classroom discourse and language teacher education, there is a need for theoretical models that explain how professional agency, identity negotiation, and reflective practice unfold across cultural and institutional contexts (Tang et al., 2022).

Moreover, there are emerging areas where theory-building is still in development. In multilingual education, for instance, while translanguaging has gained traction as a pedagogical and ideological stance, its theoretical boundaries and applications continue to evolve (McKinney et al., 2024). In digital communication, the linguistic practices of learners on social media, learning platforms, and mobile apps remain insufficiently theorised—particularly in terms of identity performance, affect, and digital literacies (Arshad et al., 2025). Similarly, in language policy research, more work is needed to theorise micro-level enactments of policy, particularly in decolonial and Global South contexts (Ndhlovu, 2023).

To address these gaps, the field must continue to embrace theory-generating methodologies, such as Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2003). This approach enables researchers to build theory inductively from data while attending to participants' voices, social positioning, and lived experiences. Ultimately, advancing mid-range theory in AL will help bridge the divide between empirical observation and conceptual generalisation, enabling the field to offer more actionable insights for language educators, policymakers, and communities (Hadley, 2017).

WHY GROUNDED THEORY FITS APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Applied Linguistics (AL) is increasingly characterised by its engagement with complex, context-sensitive phenomena involving language use in real-world settings. Grounded Theory (GT) provides a particularly suitable framework for such inquiry, offering a systematic yet flexible approach to theory-building that resonates with the applied and empirical nature of AL research (Hadley, 2017).

Epistemological Alignment

GT's inductive logic and constructivist orientation (Charmaz, 2014) align well with the epistemological foundations of Applied Linguistics. Rather than beginning with predetermined hypotheses, GT allows researchers to investigate how meanings emerge through social interactions, which is essential when studying phenomena such as multilingualism, classroom discourse, or identity formation. This orientation is particularly important in AL, where researchers often seek to understand the lived experiences of language users, learners, and educators (Cook, 2012; McKinley & Rose, 2016). Unlike traditional experimental or positivist approaches, GT facilitates nuanced, emergent interpretations of how language operates within dynamic cultural, institutional, and interpersonal contexts.

Flexibility and Responsiveness

One of GT's key strengths is its adaptability to various research environments, making it especially valuable for AL studies conducted in classrooms, digital spaces, or multilingual communities (Blommaert, 2010; Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007). GT allows for iterative data collection and analysis, enabling researchers to respond to emergent insights during the research process. For example, in studies of classroom interaction or feedback practices, GT's open coding and constant comparison methods allow for the tracking of evolving discourse patterns and the interpretation of participant responses in real time.

In digital or transnational contexts, where linguistic practices are continually reshaped by shifting social and technological landscapes, GT is particularly effective in capturing the fluidity of language use and identity negotiation (Arshad et al., 2025).

Theory Generation from Practice

Applied Linguistics aims not only to describe language phenomena but also to improve pedagogical and policy outcomes. GT contributes to this goal by generating theory directly from practice. For instance, in studies of teacher cognition, assessment design, or feedback literacy, GT enables the development of grounded conceptual frameworks that reflect the actual conditions and values of practitioners (Borg, 2015; Hyland & Hyland, 2019). This bottom-up approach contrasts with more deductive methods that may overlook the contextual nuances of educational settings.

In language testing, for example, GT can illuminate how educators interpret assessment rubrics or negotiate sociolinguistic expectations, revealing discrepancies between policy and practice. Such insights are crucial for informing responsive curriculum and assessment design.

Existing Applications in Applied Linguistics

While still underutilised compared to other methodologies, GT has been successfully applied in several notable AL and TESOL studies. Richards (2015), for example, used GT to investigate how language teachers develop professional knowledge, providing a framework grounded in their narratives rather than imposed theoretical categories. Similarly, Li et al. (2024) applied constructivist GT to understand how Chinese EFL students interpret and apply teacher feedback, highlighting the influence of sociocultural values and emotional factors.

Menard-Warwick's (2009) work on identity construction among migrant learners also demonstrates the power of GT in capturing personal and institutional negotiations of language and power. These studies illustrate how GT can yield robust mid-range theories—conceptual tools that are grounded in data yet generalisable across contexts—addressing ongoing concerns about theoretical fragmentation in Applied Linguistics (Ushioda, 2020).

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Grounded theory is a methodology aligned with qualitative studies which rely on interviews, observations and documents. Such data collection strategies are common in Applied Linguistics, meaning that GT should be seen as a promising methodology for emerging AL studies (Hadley, 2017). Birks and Mills (2022) point out that GT coding has three phases, initial, intermediate and advanced coding, and the analysis of these codes is both inductive and abductive.

When undertaking initial coding, the grounded theory researcher compares incident to incident and code to code, all the while generating new codes as new material is analysed. The researcher looks for patterns emerging from the coding of the data (inductive) as well as confirming or disconfirming explanations for observed phenomena which emerge (abductive) (Birks & Mills, 2022). After initial coding comes intermediate coding, whereby the initial codes are placed into categories, and some may be amalgamated or pulled apart. Following intermediate coding, a core category which captures the theory that has emerged, is constructed.

In the case of Applied Linguistics, studies which incorporate transcripts and observations, are the most amenable to GT coding. Examples of Applied Linguistics research for which GT could be most useful are studies which focus on linguistic minorities and their participation education, the political arena or the workforce among others (Hadley, 2017).

Such studies would include interviews to gain insight into lived experience, along with observations such as data gained from language testing, analysis of language competencies, or comparisons between groups such as genders, groups defined by socio-economic advantage, geographic distribution and so on. Goundar's (2025a) research on educational inequalities in Fiji is a perfect case study for the use of GT in Applied Linguistics and will be discussed in more detail later.

Despite its usefulness and flexibility as a methodology, grounded theory does also present challenges. It is time-intensive, can be distorted by researcher bias and is not always implemented well unless training is provided for the researcher. Done well, GT will always be a powerful tool for data-led analysis and theory development, but its deceptively simple-sounding principles can lead to a misapplication of the methodology resulting in less robust more simply descriptive results.

APPLYING GROUNDED THEORY IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS: A CASE STUDY ON EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY AND ACADEMIC ENGLISH

To illustrate how Grounded Theory (GT) can be effectively pragmatic in Applied Linguistics, in this section, we present a practical example drawn from Goundar's (2025a) study on educational inequality and its impact on students' academic English proficiency. This research adopts a constructivist GT approach (Charmaz, 2014), which is particularly suited to uncovering emergent issues in socially embedded contexts such as language education.

Research Context and Aims

Goundar's (2025a) study had two core objectives: first, to contribute empirical insights into the structural educational inequalities that restrict students' epistemic access—particularly access to academic English skills—across school and university transitions; and second, to explore how GT methodology can be employed longitudinally in language testing and policy research. Grounded in the recognition that students from rural and under-resourced schools face systemic barriers to linguistic and academic development, the study focused on how such disparities affect preparedness for tertiary education in the South Pacific region (Goundar, 2023a, 2023b, 2025a; Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018).

Data Collection and Coding

In this study, 30 university students were sampled from a cohort of 120 and participated in individual semi-structured interviews. The participants came from diverse educational backgrounds, including rural, urban, and island schools, ensuring variation in their sociolinguistic and educational experiences. Interviews, lasting 30 to 40 minutes, were transcribed and manually coded by the researcher using a three-stage GT process: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding (Urquhart, 2013). Line-by-line open coding allowed key concepts to emerge from the data, without being constrained by prior literature—a principle central to Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Goundar, 2023a). These concepts were then refined through constant comparison and grouped into conceptual categories, which were developed further into theoretical insights through selective and theoretical coding.

Informed Consent

Ethical approval for this study was obtained in accordance with institutional research ethics guidelines. Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used and identifying details of individuals, institutions, and locations were removed during transcription and reporting. Data were stored securely on password-protected systems accessible only to the research team, while hard copies of consent forms were kept in locked storage. Findings are reported in anonymised form to ensure that participants cannot be identified.

Findings and Theoretical Emergence

Goundar's (2025a) findings revealed significant inequalities in educational access and outcomes. One emergent theme was the lack of epistemic access due to inconsistent English language instruction in primary and secondary schools. For example, participants recalled attending schools where English classes were infrequent and where teachers lacked adequate training or resources. One student noted receiving only a

single English lesson per week, depending entirely on teachers' discretion in scheduling. From these interviews, grounded categories such as "curricular neglect," "teacher under-preparedness," and "language barriers" were constructed. These categories form the basis of a theory that links socio-educational background to linguistic preparedness in higher education. Such findings have implications for language-in-education policy and support services at the tertiary level (Goundar, 2023a, 2025a).

Significance for Applied Linguistics

Goundar's (2023a, 2025a) research demonstrates GT's strength in producing empirically grounded theory from real-world educational contexts. By tracing the effects of unequal schooling on academic language use, the study offers a model that addresses how systemic inequities affect learning trajectories. This work contributes to Applied Linguistics by generating theory in under-researched contexts, such as the South Pacific, where educational and linguistic marginalisation intersect.

The use of GT in this context also supports calls for context-sensitive methodologies in language education research (McKinley & Rose, 2016; Ushioda, 2020). Goundar's (2023a) methodological clarity—documenting coding stages, interview strategies, and narrative analysis provides a replicable framework for other researchers exploring language, equity, and identity in multilingual or postcolonial settings.

Grounded Theory in Global and Decolonial Applied Linguistics Contexts

While Goundar's work provides an important case study of grounded theory applied to issues of educational disadvantage and multilingual policy in Fiji, it is important to situate such scholarship within a broader global landscape of applied linguistics research. Grounded Theory has increasingly been used by researchers across diverse sociolinguistic contexts to explore language practices, identity formation, and educational inequality. For example, studies in African contexts have used qualitative and grounded approaches to examine multilingual classroom practices, language policy implementation, and the relationship between colonial language hierarchies and contemporary educational outcomes (Bamgbose, 2011; Makoni & Pennycook, 2006). Similarly, Latin American scholarship has drawn on critical and decolonial approaches to analyse how Indigenous and minority languages interact with dominant colonial languages such as Spanish and Portuguese in educational and policy settings (Hornberger, 2008).

These studies demonstrate how grounded and interpretive methodologies can illuminate the lived realities of multilingual communities while challenging dominant epistemologies that privilege Western models of language education. By situating Goundar's work alongside these broader scholarly traditions, the present study highlights the relevance of grounded theory for examining language policy, multilingual education, and decolonial knowledge production across diverse global contexts. Such comparative perspectives strengthen the methodological contribution of the study and underscore the potential for grounded theory to generate contextually grounded yet theoretically transferable insights within applied linguistics.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS

Grounded Theory (GT) offers a valuable methodological lens for researchers in Applied Linguistics (AL), especially when exploring areas that are under-theorised, context-specific, or socially embedded. Its inductive, iterative nature impacts research design by requiring researchers to remain flexible and responsive to emerging data (Charmaz, 2014). Rather than starting with fixed hypotheses, projects using GT are structured around open-ended research questions and theoretical sampling. This adaptability is particularly beneficial for longitudinal and exploratory studies, such as those focusing on learner identity, classroom interaction, or language policy implementation in multilingual settings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Goundar, 2025a; Goundar et al., 2025).

Beyond research design, GT has direct pedagogical and professional implications. For language teachers and curriculum designers, GT-based findings can provide context-rich, theory-informed insights into student learning behaviours, classroom dynamics, and challenges in academic writing or feedback interpretation (Tang et al., 2022). GT helps policymakers understand the finer details of complex issues, ground-level realities of educational inequity, language access, and identity negotiation—offering evidence-based recommendations for more inclusive and responsive policies (Tollefson & Pérez-Milans, 2018). For instance, GT has been successfully applied to understand supervisory feedback in doctoral education, revealing how misalignment in expectations affects student experience and progression (Unlu, 2015).

Future directions for GT-based research in AL are extensive. There is scope for its application in digital discourse analysis, language and migration, translanguaging in classrooms, and AI-mediated language learning. These areas are dynamic, emergent, and closely tied to social realities, making them fertile ground for Grounded Theory inquiry (Hadley, 2017). As AL continues to diversify, GT can play a crucial role in developing locally rooted, empirically grounded mid-range theories that reflect linguistic complexity and sociocultural variability (Duff, 2006; McKinley & Rose, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Researchers working in the increasingly complex and nuanced field of Applied Linguistics (AL) can benefit from greater engagement with Grounded Theory (GT) as a methodological approach. GT is particularly well suited to AL because it allows researchers to theorise about practical, real-world issues in a flexible and responsive manner, enabling theory to develop from lived experiences and empirical data (Hadley, 2017). This orientation aligns closely with the epistemological foundations of much AL research, which seeks to understand language practices within dynamic social, cultural, and educational contexts. Furthermore, the systematic processes of coding, constant comparison, and memoing, which are integral to GT, provide methodological transparency and analytical rigour.

The case study discussed in this paper demonstrates the practical value of GT for AL research. Goundar's (2025a) study of educational disadvantage in Fiji successfully employed grounded theory to generate context-rich and theoretically informed insights that are relevant not only to applied linguistics researchers but also to the university sector, educators, and policy makers in Fiji. While grounded in a specific sociocultural context, the conceptual tools and analytical insights developed in the study have broader applicability. In particular, the findings offer perspectives that may be relevant across diverse educational contexts, especially those currently grappling with issues of linguistic inequality, multilingual education, and decolonisation.

The uptake of grounded theory within applied linguistics is steadily increasing as researchers seek methodologies capable of addressing the evolving realities of language learning and use. As educational environments become increasingly shaped by digital technologies, global mobility, and linguistic diversity, GT provides a powerful framework for investigating emerging phenomena and developing new theoretical insights.

- Future research in applied linguistics may therefore benefit from applying GT to questions such as:
- How do AI-powered tools influence translanguaging practices in online language classrooms?
- In what ways do multilingual learners negotiate identity and agency in digitally mediated learning environments?
- How do teachers adapt pedagogical strategies in response to increasing linguistic diversity in classrooms?
- What role do emerging technologies play in reshaping language ideologies and language learning practices?

By addressing such questions, grounded theory can contribute to a deeper understanding of contemporary language practices while informing educational policy and pedagogical innovation. Ultimately, this methodological study aims to support applied linguistics researchers in the design, implementation, and critical application of grounded theory, encouraging its continued development as a valuable research methodology within the field.

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