Investigating Action Verbs in Writing Applied Linguistics Research Methodology

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Abstract

This study investigates how researchers used the verb to communicate with the readers in applied linguistics research methodology. The semantic theory in this study followed *Aktionsart theory,* which classifies verbs into four types, including *action* (*run*), *accomplishment* (*run a mile*), *achievement* (*win a game),* and *stative* (*like*). The sampling in this study was purposive sampling. The data collection was Q1 SCOPUS applied linguistics research articles from *System* and *Journal of English for Specific Purposes*. The dataset was made up of 302 independent clauses from the methodology sections. The data analysis followed descriptive statistical analysis. The results in the study showed that the action verbs in Q1 SCOPUS applied linguistics research methodology were reported at 98.35 percent. The verb found in this section has the semantic denotations of developing, evaluating, and creating. The results in this study complied with the definition of a research study in that research is an ongoing process and repeatability. For future research, it is recommended that other types of verbs in *Aktionsart Theory* could be studied to contribute other aspects of how the verbs in research studies are used.

Keywords: action verb**,** Aktionsart theory, applied linguistics research methodology, Bloom's revised taxonomy, SCOPUS Q1 journals

Introduction

Research studies are an ongoing process. One of the core principles of research studies is repeatability (Fallon, 2016). Not only does this show the reliability of the research paper, but also it shows the process of how a research study is conducted, which leads to *repeatability*.

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Writing research methodology is a challenge for novice researchers, as it is the report of the process from when a research study starts until launching the results of the study. If this section is written carelessly, it can be difficult for the novice researchers to repeat it in a new context.

The section on research methodology does not focus on the writers, semantically known as agents. It is widely known that the writers are researchers, so the agents are omitted. For example, *the data was analyzed by SPSS version 29*. In this sense, *the agent* or analyzer performing the action is covert contextually. Due to the missing agent, the finite verb in a matrix clause plays an important role for the readers to interpret the action themselves. In order to understand the key properties of the verb and its semantic interpretations of the hidden agent in research methodologies, the current study applied the semantic theory of *aktionsart theory* to analyze the data.

Aktionsart theory, which focuses on different types of verbs, such as *action, accomplishment, achievement,* and *stative*, is a prominent theory in semantics. The theory describes the relationships of verbs towards temporality. Originally, Aktionsart theory classifies verbs into four mainstreams, including activity, accomplishment, state, and achievement (Kearns, 2011; Kreidler, 2014; Vendler, 1957; Vendler, 1967). *Activity verbs,* sometimes known as action verbs, indicate ongoing processes with continuity, such as the verb *"run,"* as in (1).
      (1) *Opal is running.*

The verb *"run"* is ongoing and atelic, which does not have an endpoint. However, if the distance adjunct "a *kilometer"* is merged structurally, as in *Opal runs a kilometer every day,* the semantic denotation of the ending point has turned activity into *accomplishment.* The distance adjunct *"a kilometer"* indicates how far Opal reaches the final destination. *The achievement verb* only presents the results once the end point was finally reached, as in Opal Suchada won Miss World 2025. Once announced in declarative speech acts, *Opal Suchada is the new Miss World;* it is an achievement. With this change in the real world, Thai people love Miss Julia Morley, the CEO of the Miss World Organization. The stative verb is exemplified in *love,* affected by the animate subject's psychological states.

In contrast, activity differs from state and achievement, which cannot be made progressive. So, state and achievement in this study are classified as *non-activity*. State shows psychological expressions, such as *love* and *hate*. Uttering *"Mary is loving James,* and *Opal is winning the game"* is semantically anomalous. The principle is also applied with achievement verbs, such as *"find," "reach," and "win."* The sense of the verb *"won,"* as in "I *won the game,"* has the aspectuality of achievement. Saying *Mary was winning the game* is anomalous (Kearns, 2011; Vendler, 1967; Vendler, 1957).

Progressive tense is the criterion to divide non-activity and activity in Aktionsart theory (Kearn, 2011). The first group is non-activity, which includes state and achievement. *Activity* can be exemplified by the verb *"run."* The process of running is shown on the timeline. It is a continuous and ongoing event. The activity reflects no ending point. A certain verb has a semantic denotation of aspectuality, and the notion of aspectuality is crucial for learning the

English language. While some verbs can be assigned a continuous tense, as in *"Mary is running,"* others cannot, as in *"Mary was winning."* Mary needs to reach the ending point in order to win her marathon.

Related previous research studies in the field of Aktionsart theory are divided into two camps. The first camp is the study of aspectuality in different languages, such as French, German, and Spanish (Fábregas & Marín, 2012). The other camp examined the aspectuality through different materials, such as conversation, fiction, and news. Kober et al. (2020) experimented on the theory of aspectuality in their own created dataset called DLASPORA. It is the dataset of conversational dialogue. The main verbs were taken to study their state and event. The results in their study showed that the state and event in the conversational dialogue occur similarly. The percentage of states was about three percent lower than events. Hence, the aspectuality of conversational dialogues in everyday life is a mixture between activity and state.

A research study involves the process of ongoing study. One might claim that the researchers have already finished their research study at that time. However, some research studies applied the same theory or the same approach as a continuation of a previous one called *reputability* (Fallon, 2016). This study argues that the verbs presented in the methodology section should be *dynamic* or considered as ongoing events, as the study is an ongoing process to seek better results or should be scaffolded for the previous one in order to improve mankind. According to this perspective, the aspectuality of the main verb in the methodology should be action.

This study aims to fill the gap of the study by seeking the significant relationship between the action in Aktionsart theory and applied linguistics research methods. According to Vendler (1967) and Kearns (2017), action verbs are defined as processes. This is different from stative verbs, such as *"enjoy" and "love,"* as they indicate someone's feeling or emotion. Activity verbs, such as *"run," "walk," and "cry,"* denote actual processes that happen in the real world. Methodology describes the events of experimenting that were done as processes within a study. It is thought that activity verbs are assumed to be frequent in writing the section of methodology.

It is expected that novice researchers, English language teachers, and students who are conducting research in the fields of applied linguistics could visualize the usefulness of this research article. Especially, this would help them write the research methodology in a clear and concise way to reach the standard and expectation of publications they want to publish their papers in.

Objective of the Study
To investigate the properties of verb in applied linguistics research methodology

Research Question
What are the properties of verbs in applied linguistics research methodology?

Methodology

1. Sample

The sample in this study is the methodology in the field of applied linguistics research articles. This study gathered applied linguistics research articles as indexed in Q1 SCOPUS. The justification of the Q1 SCOPUS applied linguistics research article is due to the level of English proficiency. Those who could publish their papers in the Q1 SCOPUS database were considered proficient academic writers. They were the best guideline for novice researchers' academic writing to follow.

They are reliable and valid sources of data, as the papers are reviewed by several experts. The language in research writing is also proofread by editors before being published. This source of data could be the best example for researchers in the field of applied linguistics who would like to try submitting their papers to be published in the SCOPUS database. Thus, the source of applied linguistic research articles in the SCOPUS Q1 database is considered as reliable and valid to study the section of methodology.

2. Data Collection

The data collection in this study is the purposive sampling method. According to Rainger (2013), purposive sampling is suitable for the study that expects to gain insightful information from the homogeneous sample. There were two criteria for the data collection in this study. The first one is popularity. The popularity of research papers in the field was evaluated by their citation scores. The data collection in this study was *the Journal of English for Specific Purposes* and *System.* The citation scores of *the Journal of English for Specific Purposes* and *System* were 6 and 8, respectively. The website of SJR recorded at "find similar journal" that both *English for Specific Purposes* and *System* are similar journals. They were published between the years of 2023 and 2024 for the sake of being up-to-date. Therefore, the results of the study could be claimed as present-day English. These two journals of applied linguistics have been indexed in SCOPUS Q1 for over a decade. For a pilot study, a total of 10 articles, which consisted of five from each journal, were collected. There were 302 extracted tokens to study. In order to avoid the bias and prejudice of data collection, various topics of applied linguistics were gathered, such as teaching approaches, assessment and evaluation, ESP, educational technology, and reading skills.

3. Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study follows the activities in Aktionsart theory (Kearns, 2011; Vendler, 1967; Vendler, 1957). Activities are action verbs that indicate ongoing processes, such as *"analyze," "work," and "calculate."* The activity verb is tested by the adverbials "intentionally" and "imperative," such as in (2). Using these two structures to test the tokens leads to the right selection of action verbs. Theoretically, action is relevant to imperative, as it is the action commanding.

      (2) The researcher kept the data in 2024.

The main verb *"keep"* is analyzed as an activity verb. This can be tested by the adverbial, as in *"intentionally kept,"* and the imperative, as in *"kept."* The main verbs in independent clauses were taken to be analyzed. According to the coding system, the main verb follows Vendler's. The extract of the data analysis was given in (3).

(3) To ensure appropriate classification, two researchers of this study **worked [ACTIVITY]** independently to assign functional roles to each target bundle after a close reading of KWIC lines or longer stretches of discourse using AntConc (Wang & Csomay, 2024, p. 99).

According to the extract in example 3, the main verb *worked* in the matrix clause or independent clause is taken to be analyzed as activity. When doing the analysis, the inflectional morphology *"-ed,"* indicating past tense, was removed from *"worked"* to become *"work."* Then the lexical item *"work"* is analyzed regarding its activity via adding the adverbial *"intentionally,"* as in *intentionally work,* and the imperative verb, as in *work* was assigned. The data analysis in this study followed descriptive statistical analysis, including frequencies and percentages.

In order to evaluate the depth of action verbs as used in the Q1 SCOPUS database, Bloom's revised taxonomy is used as the data analysis. This allows novice researchers to visualize which cognitive levels of analysis were usually accepted to get published in Q1 SCOPUS database.

Table 1
Bloom's Revised Taxonomy

Levels	Interpretations
Create	Production
Evaluate	Justification
Analyze	Drawing connection
Apply	Using information
Understand	Explain information
Remember	Recalling facts

The verbs found in the data analysis in applied linguistics research articles will be compared with the principle of Bloom's revised taxonomy to see how deep the research needs to be analyzed in order to be published in the SCOPUS Q1 database. The comparison with Bloom's revised taxonomy would show which cognitive approaches were found as the method in the SCOPUS Q1 database. This means how deep the researcher needs to go if they want to get published at this level.

Results

1. Relationships between Activity and Methodology

From a total of approximately 100,000 words in the section of methodology in applied linguistics research articles, there were 302 tokens to study. The results shown in Table 2 are the frequencies and percentages in this study.

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages concerning Properties of Verbs in Applied Linguistics Research Methodology

Properties of Verb	Raw Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Action	297	98.35
Accomplishment	5	1.65
Achievement	0	0
State	0	0
	302	100

The examples of action verbs in the section of methodology are given in (4). In example (4), the main verbs *analyzed*, *checked,* and *attended* are interpreted as processes in the methodology section. Moreover, the dominant result of this study is that the activity verbs are commonly used with passive voice as presented in (5). In (5a)-(5b), verb phrases are used in the form of passive voice, and the main verb is semantically analyzed as an activity such as *design* or *ask.* The disappearance of achievement and states in research methodology could be explained by subjectivity and ongoing processes.

Table 3

Examples of Action Verbs in Active Voice and Passive Voice

Active Voice	Analyze	(4a) Therefore, the instructor first analyzed each phrase-frame utilized in class activities for presence and productivity in the disciplinary corpora. (Casal & Yoon, 2023, p. 106)
	Check	(4b) The transcriptions collected in this study were checked manually, accompanied by corresponding video clips to confirm accuracy. (Wang & Csomay, 2024, p. 99)
Passive Voice	Design	(5a) Following the "three-stage teaching method," these activities were specifically designed to nurture the emerging genre awareness of first-year university students. (Deng et al., 2024, p. 13)
	Ask	(5b) Before the interviews, each participant was asked to sign the consent form. (Aizawa, 2024, p. 23)

2. Activity Verbs in the Applied Linguistics Research Methodology

This section answers the following question. What are the action verbs in applied linguistics research methodology? As reflected via the activity verbs, the data analysis in applied linguistics research articles in SCOPUS Q1 appears to be various, as in (6).

> (6a) Therefore, the instructor first **analyzed** each phrase-frame utilized in class activities for presence and productivity in the disciplinary corpora. (Casal & Yoon 2023, p. 106)
>
> (6b) The results from the content tests were also **compared** to the themes and patterns identified in the interview data, illuminating the relationship between students' perceived challenges and actual test scores. (Aizawa, 2024, p. 23)

The activity verbs in the data analysis are *"analyze," "utilize," "apply," "develop," "compare," and "interpret."* According to Bloom's Taxonomy, the results in this section will provide the basis of discussion for the answers of the second research section. In order to gain better understanding of the results. The theory of Bloom's taxonomy was taken to be compared as in

Table 4

Activity Verbs in the Current Study's Findings

Levels	Interpretations	Examples
Create	Production	*develop*
Evaluate	Justification	*argue and critique*
Analyze	Drawing connection	*compare, differentiate*
Apply	Using information	*interpret, use*
Understand	Explain information	*describe, explain, report.*
Remember	Recalling facts	*define, list*

Table 4 represented Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson et al., 2001). The activity verbs in the data analysis found were *"analyze," "utilize," "apply," "develop," "compare," and "interpret."* When we study to understand some phenomena in applied linguistics research articles and want to publish in the Q1 SCOPUS database, it seems that it is not enough. Analysis is reflected by the activity verbs *"analyze" and "compare."* Moreover, the creation in the data analysis is also required, and it is reflected via the activity verb *"develop."* The findings are viewed as the beginning of a future study to use the inferential statistics of regression to analyze the significant relationships between Bloom's Taxonomy and activity verbs in the data analysis. We could see that the data analysis in applied linguistics research papers is the techniques of interpretation, comparison, and argument. However, development of something new is rarely found.

Discussion

1. Aktionsart Analysis in Applied Linguistics Research Methodology

The main findings of the Aktionsart analysis reveal that action verbs are the most frequent type of verbs as used in Q1 SCOPUS applied linguistics research articles. As mentioned by Fallon (2016), repeatability is an important keyword in research methodology. Since research is studied to improve the quality of mankind. It is an ongoing process as one piece of research leads to the development of the next one, called further studies. Using states such as *"like" and "love"* would affect the reliability of the research methodology. Research methodology must be designed scientifically. Saying *I choose a qualitative study because I like it* may be too subjective.

As mentioned by Thomas (2021), the section on methodology is a difficult section to write in research writing. Stapa, Maasum, and Abd Aziz (2014) also indicate this point when they point out that new scholars entering the field of research studies struggle when writing research methodology. It is difficult because the writers may not know that the nature of methodology in an applied linguistics research article is a process where the researchers point out the steps they carried out systematically from the start until the results were found. The process in the methodology is not about feelings and emotions. Rather, they are activities happening in the real world. Having this concept in the researcher's mind, the struggle of writing methodology can be minimized. Although there is no conventional practice, and each advisor's style of writing the chapter of methodology is idiosyncratic or personal preference, in saying what the researchers did, the main verbs should be activity verbs for the sake of replication. When comparing the results of this study with previous studies (Friedrich & Plamer, 2014; Granath & Wherrity, 2014; Martínez-Vázquez, 2018), the aspectuality in everyday conversation, novels, news, and magazines is similar to the methodology in that it appears to be activity. Like daily conversation, experiments are part of everyday life. A process is required, and the researcher cannot use their feelings to judge. Accomplishment is not a pattern in methodology unless something is disproved.

2. Aktionsart Analysis and Passive Voice

This study innovatively found that the main verbs in passive structures are activity verbs as reproduced in (7).

> (7) Following the "three-stage teaching method," these activities were specifically **designed to** nurture the emerging genre awareness of first-year university students. (Deng et al., 2024, p. 13)

The passive voice with activity verbs is used for two reasons. They are *pragmatic discourses of given and new information* and *widely known agents* (Wongkittiporn, 2023). In (7a) the DP, *these activities* were raised as the given information to link with the topic of the *three-stage teaching method*. With the widely known agents, the agent who performs the activity of design in this case is not required to be spelled out, as it is obviously known that the one who performs the activity of designing research is the researcher(s). The properties of activity verbs in methodology are concluded as follows:

[+Activity] [-Present] [-Active Voice]

In a syntactic diagram or syntactic representation, the common feature of the node T is [PAST]. The common feature of the node V is [ACTIVITY].

The methodology in different fields of research papers is unique and written in their own way. The frequent research method in the field of applied linguistics is the qualitative approach. Rezaei (2012) mentioned that the identity of methodology in applied linguistics is interviewing, teaching experiments, ethnographic observation, questionnaires, and diaries. The form of the activity verb usually appears with this theme, as in (8)-(9).

(8) Finally, all students **attended** the same lectures given by the same lecturer, thereby minimizing the effect of different pedagogical approaches on success in EMI. (Aizawa, 2024, p. 23)

(9) The researchers collaboratively **developed** the framework and then independently coded the data. (Casal & Yoon, 2023, p. 106)

According to Rezaei (2012), in the theme of interviewing and distributing questionnaires, the activity verbs appear with the semantic networks of *"recorded" and "ask."* With the theme of teaching experiment, the activity verbs appear with the words "measure," "watch," and "attend." Each theme, therefore, has its own preferences of lexical semantics of hypernyms.

3. Aktionsart Analysis and Bloom's Taxonomy

Applied linguistics research articles are analysis and creation. Applied linguistics in the last two decades includes aspects such as language teaching and learning, evaluation, discourse analysis, and language acquisition. Once we have a clear notion of applied linguistics based upon the previous researchers' work, the researchers in the field of applied linguistics in the 21st century tend to study in depth to analyze language and create new teaching methods to fit learners' needs. The data analysis in applied linguistics today focuses on the theme of creating new technologies and new ways to learn language. In addition, the evaluation of it is usually found in learners' needs, learning materials, and testing. One of the up-to-date studies to support this claim is Yang, Xu, and Swale (2023). They found that needs analysis has become increasingly popular internationally. The study of needs analysis has increased significantly since the 2010s. When it started, the needs analysis was limited to only 28 countries around the world during the 1980s. However, it had expanded to 41 countries in the 2010s. This is an example of the analytical aspect of study in applied linguistics.

Conclusion

The results in this study show activity verbs in Aktionsart theory. This means that the activity verbs are preferred in methodology sections. They are used to report the process of factual events in the real world, such as *sign, participate, observe,* and *analyze*. Methodology is viewed as action. Although methodology contains different sampling methods, analytical frameworks, and validation, they must be practical. Given the activities involved, researchers are usually asked about the practicality of their research methodology. If the researchers can explain the process of their study in the methodology clearly enough via action verbs, this could increase the clarity and reduce the questions that may be asked by advisors, examiners, and editors.

Using cognitive or stative verbs may result in unclear methodology, as in "I *feel that this way of data collection is good.*"

In addition to activity verbs, the verb phrases of activity verbs are frequently used with passive voice, as in *"The interviews were audio-recorded."* This is a common feature in writing methodology, as the agent is widely known, so it is not necessary to be spelled out.

The research design in the section of data analysis has an effect on the opportunities for publishing in the SCOPUS database. Based upon Bloom's taxonomy, it seems that the academic papers that have been published in SCOPUS Q1 employ the data analysis of applying, comparing, and developing, while gaining understanding of certain phenomena might attract the readers' interest. The results of this study can only gain external validity of applied linguistic research articles in English. The activity verbs in data collection, data analysis, and data validation in applied linguistics research articles may differ from the activity verbs in psychological journals, chemistry journals, and scientific journals. For example, the empirical evidence of activity in data analysis is *translate*, *interpret, teach,* and *test.* These activity verbs are different from the methodology in other fields. For future studies, it is recommended that the same theory could be tested with other types of documents, such as novels and other types of research articles, in order to contribute something new to the field.

Recommendations
Pedagogical Implications

In research papers, the main verb that conveys the action of the experiment will undoubtedly help the researcher understand the method. This current study contributes to learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is true that writing a good research article, especially the section on methodology, is not easy. Writing is permanent. When it is published, it will be available online forever. When those who are interested in reading our research have questions, it would be difficult to ask. If they do not understand, they will lack interest to continue reading our papers. Because of this, clear presentation of the chapter of methodology is important for the sake of research replication in the future. If the novice scholars enter the field and they would like to replicate one's research papers, clear and systematic writing of methodology would encourage the new researcher to replicate the research study easily and successfully. Although some advisors have their own written style of presenting the same information via active voice or passive voice, the main verb in the methodology is the key to being written with the semantic feature of activity for the sake of understanding.

     (10) The researchers **gathered** information in 2024.
     (11) In 2024, the information was **gathered**.
     (12) The researchers **kept** in formation in 2024.
     (13) The information was **kept** in 2024.

The information in examples (10)-(13) is presented with variation and demonstrates different styles of writing, such as active voice, passive voice, synonyms, and placement of temporal adjuncts. However, the semantic feature of the main verb is activity. Therefore, the definitions

and activity verbs commonly used in writing a research methodology section should be taught separately before teaching how to write methodology.

Since the section/chapter of methodology is usually reported with the past tense, the EFL teacher might leave the blank for students to fill in as an exercise to practice. As English language teachers, we could see that research classrooms only offer the students an introduction to research study, such as sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Although the students try so hard to understand these concepts, the problem of how to write their research in English for their international publication has never been eliminated. The research teachers should guide their students on how to write this section by creating material as exemplified below.

Validate, collect, analyze

1. The data in this study ……………… from *The New York Times.*
2. *The New York Times* ……………….. as the data in this study
3. The instruments in this study were ……………….. by three experts.
4. Three experts …………………… the instruments in this study.
5. The data in this study …………………… SPSS 29.

This exercise of filling in the blank allows the students to practice writing academic research reports in English contextually. Not only do the students learn the course *Introduction to Research Methodology*, but also, they learn research writing in English simultaneously.

The results in this study build on existing evidence by contributing more examples in the field of applied linguistics. The current study contributes to the theory of action verbs in aktionsart theory via quantitative research methodology and research writing in English.

Acknowledgement

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