

REVIEWS

Päivi Pietilä, Katalin Doró and Renata Pípalová (eds) (2015) *Lexical Issues in L2 Writing*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 237 pp.

Meritoriously enough, the 2014 ESSE conference held in Košice, Slovakia, inspired three prominent scholars, who had convened a session called *Lexical Issues in L2 Writing* at the event, to design, edit and publish a thematic monograph under the same title. All the co-editors, viz. Päivi Pietilä (University in Turku, Finland), Katalin Doró (University of Szeged, Hungary) and Renata Pípalová (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic), along with other authors of individual chapters, manifest shared professional interest in lexical matters within written performance of language learners.

In the *Introduction* to the volume, justifying the emergence of the present collective monograph, the co-editors argue that lexis “enjoys a special status in language, in that it undergoes change more rapidly than grammar, which tends to be fairly stable” (p. 1). Furthermore, discussing the specific features of lexis within ELT in general, they go on to claim that “achieving native-like command of second language vocabulary poses a real challenge” (ibid.). Taking into account a whole array of lexis-specific aspects, spanning from topics such as contextual sensitivity of vocabulary, its idiomatic use, or different shades of inter-word relations, to cohesive chains or semantic structure of words, they propose to shed light on this multi-layered and multi-faceted phenomenon, thus maintaining “the principle of unity in diversity” (p. 2). Accordingly, also the provenience of individual authors, their language background as well as their professional experience are rather diverse. In terms of particular linguistic and/or didactic disciplines, the studies offered in the volume range from “corpus linguistics, English for academic purposes, (academic) writing pedagogy, stylistics, text linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics” (ibid.). To name just a few lexical topics, the studies deal, for instance, with lexical distribution, lexical density, lexical variation, lexical errors or lexical frequency. Such an approach to the study of this varied, multidisciplinary and multifarious realm of lexical issues in L2 undoubtedly deserves appreciation and professional appraisal.

As far as research methodology of individual chapters is concerned, it can be characterized by a number of features. The first of these will definitely be the fact that the studies are unanimously focused on lexis in L2 writing; whether it is the specifics of the mode (unlike spoken language), its genesis, interaction with the readers or intricate inner texture of the discourse, they all undoubtedly

manifest traits *sui generis*. On top of that, all chapters in the volume are corpus-based and deal with authentic data in recent corpora, mostly making use of computer-assisted tools. Another common denominator of the different studies is an omnipresent educational aspect; from the point of view of practical impact of the research presented, one may say that various pedagogical implications seem to be interwoven within most of the texts. Some chapters present comparative analyses of the native/non-native writers respectively, while others evaluate processes within native corpora implicitly. To sum up, the volume appears to be firmly anchored in well-thought, systematic, yet functionally diverse methodology that takes into consideration not only the theoretical resources but also pursues practical exploitation.

Apart from an opening review chapter by K. Doró and P. Pietilä, in which the editors offer an outline of recent developments in research methodology, the nine follow-up chapters contained in the monograph are thematically structured into three main parts. Each of the sections is neatly designed to cover a somewhat distinct area of lexical issues in L2 writing, looking at them from slightly different angles: *Influences and Strategies* (Part I); *Disciplinary Differences* (Part II); and *Collocations and Lexical Bundles* (Part III). The main body of the book is then complemented by biographical notes on individual authors and a subject index.

In Part I, three scholars discuss sundry external influences that potentially have impact on L2 vocabulary competence. To be more exact, B. Henriksen and L. Danelund examine several studies of Danish L2 learners' vocabulary knowledge and the lexical richness of their written production in English; the results are discussed through the prism of meaning-based teaching approaches adopted in Danish EFL classes. K. Doró addresses the changes in the lexical measures of undergraduate EFL students' argumentative essays, seeing a difference between lexical richness (defined as the proportion between high and low frequency words), and lexical variation derived from the type/token ratio. Focusing on a similar topic, M. Mutta strives to throw light on lexical richness in expository essays written by learners of L3 French; the study discussed in this chapter looks at how Finnish students construct their texts in a context where they were instructed to produce an essay under time pressure as well as without any external resources at hand.

The triplet of chapters in Part II of the book manifest a number of common central features, such as an emphasis on undergraduate theses, an overall cross-disciplinary character and analogous concern about two disciplines, viz. linguistics and literature. More specifically, P. Pietilä, exploring MA theses conclusions written by Finnish, Czech and native speakers of English, raises the question of lexical diversity in L2 academic writing; she pays attention to both extrinsic (lexical sophistication) and intrinsic (lexical variation and density) measures of literary and linguistic theses. R. Pípalová then presents a study on

reporting verbs in native and non-native academic discourse. She also examines a corpus of literary and linguistic MA theses written by non-native undergraduates, comparing them with published professional monographs in the two fields, and, in addition, juxtaposing the tendencies in texts by female and male writers. S.-A. Lindgrén's chapter, maintaining an analogous spirit of research, discusses academic vocabulary and degrees of readability in EFL theses. For that purpose, investigating two prominent academic word lists, the author correlates lexical parameters with the readability levels of the theses under examination.

One of the common foci of both the chapters presented in Part III is undoubtedly the scrutiny of varied syntagmatic relationships in lexis. Specifically, B. Erman researches two different methodologies in the identification of recurrent word combinations in English L2 writing, namely in argumentative essays by native and non-native undergraduates at the BA and MA levels. In her view, in comparison with non-native groups, the native groups exhibit a larger range of both collocations and lexical bundles. In the concluding chapter of the volume, M. Lehmann carries out a lexical analysis of in-service EFL teaching portfolios produced by graduating part-time students (teacher trainees) and addresses the topic of lexical bundles by looking at a corpus of computer-derived frequency-based four-word clusters.

To sum up, the overall conception of the volume along with the array of topics treated by individual authors certainly observes the editors' premise of unity in diversity and/or diversity in unity. Another overt leitmotif of the book – the fruitful interconnection of the theoretical background on the one hand and, on the other hand, its practical, pedagogical implications – seems to provide the reader with a variety of routes to a better understanding of non-native lexis, unveiling all different aspects of L2 lexical issues, be it different patterning of non-native lexis, diverse writing tendencies or teaching/learning methodological tips and useful insight.

In conclusion, it remains to be stated that the monograph titled *Lexical Issues in L2 Writing*, carefully and professionally edited by Päivi Pietilä, Katalin Doró and Renata Pípalová, undoubtedly presents an inspiring contribution to, in fact, two disciplines at the same time: linguistics and EFL methodology. Significantly expanding the scope of inquiry into lexis in L2 writing, the volume undoubtedly deserves readers' attention. In reference to the editors' belief that they will be able "to appeal to a wide variety of readers, including scholars, researchers, specialists, Ph.D. students, foreign language teachers and undergraduates, who share our interest in non-native lexical resources as they are reflected in written discourse" (p. 7), it is possible to say that their confident yet legitimate ambition is – through the publication of this monograph – making the first step to come true.

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