

REVIEWS

María Moreno Jaén, Fernando Serrano Valverde and María Calzada Pérez, eds. *Exploring New Paths in Language Pedagogy: Lexis and Corpus-based Language Teaching*. London: Equinox, 2010.

This book offers many new and interesting insights into the pedagogical use of corpora in foreign languages, and especially into the way in which they can be applied to the teaching of vocabulary. It is a certainly deserved homage to Carmen Pérez Basanta. One of the greatest virtues the book has is the fact that it is convincing. As a researcher, I have probably always had doubts about the real use that corpus linguistics may have for other researchers and students. After reading this volume, I have radically changed my opinion concerning its usefulness, and this is partially because of all the wealth in approaches, practical suggestions for learning and teaching and, in a few words, the enormous amount of information that the book contains. Another main asset of this publication is the way in which it keeps on questioning the reader about main issues in the current state of English teaching, as it probably opens up as many questions as the answers it offers. It is also broad in scope and participation by different researchers from highly prestigious institutions, which undoubtedly signals its wide international covering of the main issues concerning the topics it covers. Although about half of the researchers taking part in the book come from some Spanish university—twelve out of a total of twenty-three—four other contributors come from the UK, and the rest from the U.S., New Zealand, Ireland, Belgium, Italy, France, and Japan. This certainly gives the book a wide perspective, and in the current debate surrounding

native and non-native varieties of English, offers a wide panorama that undoubtedly improves the final result, as so many experiences in dealing with the learning and teaching of foreign languages combine to offer a finely tuned perspective on the implementation of ICT for language pedagogy.

This book is divided into three large sections, each introduced by one of the editors. This is fully justified by the nature of the three blocks. The first block covers second language vocabulary teaching and is introduced, with his habitual *savoir-faire*, by Dr. Fernando Serrano. As anybody who has taught a foreign language for a number of years knows, this is still a highly controversial issue in the field, since we have witnessed all sorts of approaches, methods and ideas concerning the basics and the development in this area, from the use of extensive lists of words learnt by heart in a decontextualised setting to the relative lack of importance given to it for a number of years to a reappraisal, with proper methodologies and clear objectives in mind, in recent years. This latest tendency is what we can see in the eight contributions covering this first section. This is probably the central part of the book, not just because it contains eight of the eighteen chapters in it, but also because vocabulary building in learners, and the way in which we as teachers face it, is still one of the most productive areas of research in applied linguistics to the learning and teaching of modern languages, and, last but not least, it was one of the central researching concerns of Dr. Pérez Basanta for a number of years.

The contribution by Paul Nation combines a presentation of the theory to date in a field of study with an emphasis on evaluative means of analysis of vocabulary activities. Probably the



greatest contribution of this initial chapter is the crystal-clear presentation of Nation's suggestion concerning evaluation of different criteria for the analysis of vocabulary activities in books. Kirk and Carter's contribution, "Fluency and spoken English," is an excellent reflection on real speech, with an emphasis on the difference between native (NS) and non-native (NNS) speech, at a time when this is a highly controversial issue—see Jenkins (80-83) for a good summary and critical perspective on the issue, and Truss, Crystal for conflicting views on standards in the use of English worldwide. They deal extensively with the notion of fluency, adopting new views on it, concluding that there are many elements that are normally seen in a very negative light by teachers of the spoken dimension of English as a foreign language, when in fact these are frequent features of the immediacy normally present in the spoken domain in English as a native language for a transcript of natural language—incidentally, a similar reflection was offered a number of years ago by Nieto García, "Oral"). The contribution by Eyckmans is highly technical, in the sense that it offers a psycho-sociolinguistic approach with very strong theoretical bases to such a complex phenomenon as phrase-learning in English. The following chapter addresses noun+preposition+noun sequences in Spanish, by Butler. This is an excellent interlinguistic analysis that covers the use of these expressions both in the peninsular and Latin American varieties of the language, through the use of electronic corpora. The chapter by Meara and Suárez García is the second devoted to teaching Spanish as a foreign language, and surveys the vocabulary employed in a total of six methods published between 1965 and 1995. What this contribution addresses is the frequency of use of the words in these methods, intended for levels A1 and A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe). This chapter clearly supports a contextualised dealing with new vocabulary, and the relevance of including as many frequent words as possible in the early stages. The sixth chapter, by Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba, deals with connectors in English as a foreign language in the written domain, and it is probably one of the least conclusive in the book, to my view. Although a

proper study of connectors in academic English is necessary, it is unclear to what extent they are normally present even in native or nativised forms of written English, much less when dealing with A1 level teenagers (86), and when most forms of written English at this stage seem to be associated to electronic writing, where connectors other than the most basic forms are infrequent (cf. Halliday 361): "Electronic text tends to lessen the distance between the spoken and the written medium." The following chapter, by Abello-Contesse and López-Jiménez, is the third addressing different forms of collocations in the book. This time, the researchers very sensibly deal with lexical collocations, reaching highly valuable conclusions in the last paragraphs, where the emphasis lies on how textbook writers should select their expressions to be included in new publications. The closing chapter in this first section, by Rizo-Rodríguez, is one of the most informative in the whole book, and it very professionally deals with five of the most widely used electronic dictionaries of English. The chapter is very well written, highly pedagogical and exhaustive, with lots of examples and illustrations actually taken from the dictionaries.

Section two in the book does not concentrate so much on vocabulary as on the application of corpus studies to TEFL. It comprises both general, more theoretically-oriented approaches and practical ones, starting, in the chapter by Boulton, with a general presentation of different tools to use data-driven learning (DDL). It is both a summary of previous programmes and an honest, down-to-earth explanation of the pros and cons of using such programmes. As it stands, it is tremendously helpful for the newly arrived in the field, for its clarity and its open approach. In chapter ten, Angela Chambers revises descriptive and pedagogic issues in the teaching of French for academic purposes, although her approach seems to be slightly limited, as it centres on just one written text; even so, her conclusions are, to my view, perfectly applicable to other examples in the same field. The following chapter, by Pérez-Paredes, is excellent, methodologically speaking, since it covers different registers and reaches conclusions on the current controversy between NS (Native Speech) and NNS (Non-

Native Speech). This being so, it is of special interest to those working on TEFL, as some of the conclusions reached tend to blur traditional distinctions in the delicate area of adverbs as a word class, especially when it is so unstable in some forms of non-standard English. Next, the chapter by Baldry applies functional linguistic principles to a classification of texts and sub-texts on the internet, it is full of good principles and presents excellent methods for analysis from a pedagogic and descriptive perspective. The final chapter in this section, by María Calzada, is entertaining and informative, and it is presented as a journey, back and forth, from macro corpora to generic and individual ones. It is an interesting presentation of programmes for corpora analysis, and reaches equally interesting conclusions on ideology and language.

The third and final section in the book covers what is probably Carmen Pérez Basanta's greatest contribution to this field of research, the ADELEX project. It is a presentation of its main leading principles and tools, and of some interesting findings after a number of years doing research in the area, with the necessary proviso that some of the contributions imply work to be fully developed in the future. The section starts with the chapter by Carini, a finely grained approach to "very" and "muy," with excellent pedagogical conclusions, interesting from both a stylistic and interlinguistic point of view, which shows that these issues have a proper place in updated approaches to TEFL. The chapter by María Moreno shows a perfectly defined methodology, although it is still doubtful to me that collocations are so relevant in a world where an international approach to English, rather than a native one, is somehow becoming a new paradigm—see Nieto García (*Variedad*) for a study of the evolution of the canon in English studies in the last twenty-five years—, and where the group of students surveyed have a B1/B2 level of English. Undoubtedly, with NS as a goal, and/or with a level above B2 in mind, the result would have been much more convincing. Chapter sixteen, by Rodríguez-Martín, is the first of two covering the use of films for TEFL, it is mainly a summary of previous research in the field and is basically an initial suggestion that is not fully exploited in the

chapter, with the advantage that it leaves ample space for further development in later publications. My only doubt concerning this chapter, however, lies in the fact that I wonder whether a continuum view of spoken discourse would not have been more useful than the opposition view followed in dealing with the corpus employed, especially when the term itself is mentioned in the chapter (247) and when, after all, film scripts cannot be taken to be purely conversational in nature, as they are anything but an improvised form of talk. Something similar happens in the case of the following chapter, by López-Sako, which is an interesting, original approach with good pedagogic implications, especially as it centres on such a delicate discourse marker as "please," with the interlinguistic implications that it may bring. The final chapter, by López-Mezquita, is a highly convincing reflection on the evolution of the ADELEX project from its inception, and it is an ideal way of closing the book.

All in all, this publication is invaluable to the non-expert on the field, and it additionally admits very different readings by researchers on the teaching and learning of languages and by anyone interested in English studies in the current situation of conflicting paradigms. It contains an incredible amount of information on new approaches to corpus linguistics both from a descriptive and an applied perspective. We can say that it is definitely an excellent way to honour and show respect to a great teacher and researcher from whom we still have lots of things to learn, from both a professional and human perspective.

Jesús M. NIETO GARCÍA

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