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BOOK REVIEW



Research Methods in Vocabulary Studies, Philip Durrant, Anna Siyanova Chanturia, Benjamin Kremmel, Suhad Sonbul. John Benjamins Publishing Companies, (2022). (Hardback), ISBN: 978-90-272-1108-8 (Paperback), ISBN: 978-90-272-1109-5.

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Research Methods in Vocabulary Studies contributes a diverse collection of theoretically informed, well-researched, and well-arranged strands of inquiry, and a solid grounding to vocabulary research. The volume sheds light on fundamental concepts and evolving methodological debates in the field considering four distinctive foci encompassing corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics, language testing, and language teaching and learning that provides a syncretic overview of vocabulary research.


The book includes eighteen chapters, providing a well-organized state-of-the-art overview of the recent developments in the field. The content could be classified into six parts. Within each part excluding the first and the final part, the first chapter explicates the key aims and the theoretical ideas, the second chapter overviews some fundamental considerations, the third chapter showcases particular research methods and tools in depth, and the final chapter reviews some key topics in the area intending to introduce the readers to cutting-edge research. Part I serving as Chapter 1 of the volume, provides an introduction to the book. The key aims and concepts, theoretical ideas, and different areas pertinent to vocabulary research including corpus linguistics, language testers, classroom researchers, etc. are smoothly addressed and well-defined in Chapter 1.

A detailed description of vocabulary in use from the view of corpus linguistics has been provided in part two including Chapters 2 to 5. Chapter 2 explicates core issues basic to all corpus linguistics research including its meaning and significance, vocabulary-related discussions in corpus linguistics, linguistics theory, and applied linguistics, as well as vocabulary materials and instruments. Furthermore, the chapter elaborates on how words are used and how vocabulary

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differs across contexts. Corpus linguistics as a methodology and not a field of study has been a critical issue for vocabulary specialists and its application has ramified into central shifts in theory and practice. It is striking that most sound vocabulary research encompasses some corpus element (Schmitt, 2010). Chapter 3 expounds on topics central to corpus linguistics research which have a preponderant role in the study of vocabulary acquisition. As the most outstanding topics in this chapter, one can refer to the relationship between corpus data and theoretical claims, corpus representativeness, encoding, markup, and annotation. Chapter 4 presents different methods of analyzing a corpus in both quantitative and qualitative types and the key resources like word frequency lists and concordancing as the central example of each type. The discussion continues to underpin how specific corpus methods can be practically applied to vocabulary research. Chapter 5 discusses word list creation as a thriving area of applied research; the practical point about this chapter is that it refers to word list creation as an accessible area that can have practical applications for practicing teachers, masters-level students, and even senior undergraduates, even though it is a cumbersome task with currently unresolved complexities.

A broad examination of vocabulary in the learners' minds based on psycholinguistic approaches is observed in part three encompassing Chapters 6 to 9. Chapter 6 expounds on psycholinguistic issues such as age-of-acquisition effects and ambiguity in lexical processing and sensitivity to frequency in language processing. Chapter 7 reiterates the fundamental considerations of psycholinguistic research including methodological and practical issues. One crucial point about this chapter which makes it theoretically and practically more valuable is that it benchmarks the mixed-effects models against traditional approaches as a relatively new approach to data analysis in applied linguistics and vocabulary research. Chapter 8 introduces the most prominent psycholinguistic methods in vocabulary studies which are well-established in terms of reaction time measures, eye movements, event-related potentials, and measuring productive language use. Chapter 9 presents key topics in psycholinguistic vocabulary research including the role of phrase frequency in language comprehension and production.

Vocabulary testing has been addressed in part four including Chapters 10 to 13. The most prominent concern of Chapter 10 is to provide a tangible view of the nature of vocabulary testing research and its significance. Besides, it has partnered researching vocabulary tests with a clear definition of the construct of vocabulary knowledge. Chapter 11 systematically deals with the major principles that should be taken into account in researching test meaningfulness, adequacy, validity of vocabulary test interpretation, and the dominant issues in vocabulary assessment which have an undeniable impact on score interpretation. Chapter 12 elucidates the most distinguished methods manipulated in vocabulary validation research pinpointing different methods in researching test scores, test content, and processes, test use, as well as a description of popular vocabulary tests. Some core topics including item format effects, cognate effects, and sampling effects are laid out in Chapter 13.

The issues of understanding vocabulary development, teaching, and learning have been dealt with in part five, inclusive of Chapters 14 to 17. Chapter 14 provides a three-dimensional perspective of vocabulary development. The Chapter starts with a clear description of L2 vocabulary development as a complex process. The discussion then extends to different approaches to learning vocabulary. The Chapter ends with a description of the most prevalent burdens of learning lexical items. Chapter 15 reviews the fundamental considerations in vocabulary development research such as participant sampling, target item selection, development of tasks and materials, etc. Chapter 16 elaborates on the methods in vocabulary development research including experimental methods, computational modeling, etc. Chapter 17 considers learning vocabulary from audio-visual input, evaluating explicit vocabulary exercises, and tracking vocabulary development serving as key topics in vocabulary development research.

Finally, the idea of working across the four areas has been addressed in part five that includes Chapter 18 (the final chapter), references, and index. A broad taxonomy of models for blending the areas has been set out in Chapter 18 to pave the way for the researchers who intend to surpass the constraints imposed by the bounds of a single area. This chapter pinpoints both the potential advantages and the dangers of such scrutiny to foster research spanning the controversial areas in the field. What makes this final chapter quite valuable is that it depicts a thorough integration through instantiating different kinds of models for working across areas including consumer model, hypothesis generation model, co-option model, data combination model, and triangulation.

The volume introduces relatively new ways of data analysis like Mixed-Effects Models (MEM) as the gold standard in the fields of applied linguistics and vocabulary research in the near future and unveils its advantages by shedding light on the major distinctions between mixed-effects modeling and means-based statistical tests like ANOVAs and *t*-tests. This serves as a reminder for future researchers to reflect on mixed-effects modeling as a dramatic change in the field.

One of the major distinctions that make the volume different from the other recent books in the field like *Vocabulary in Language Teaching* by Schmit and Schmit (2020), is that it tries to provide a syncretic view of the vocabulary research by gathering data from four different fields systematically which brings a healthy diversity to the field and allows making conclusions with a fair degree of confidence and precision. As a result, the readers are provided with valuable information about the essential underpinnings of each field along with the crucial role they have played in vocabulary research in recent years.

Regardless of the merits, the volume would become more comprehensive by addressing some areas deserving further attention. Assessing the learners' depth of vocabulary as a woolly concept has persistently proved to be an unresolved issue in recent years. As mentioned by Schmitt and Schmitt (2020), the "need for more validation applies to virtually all measures of depth of knowledge" (p. 173). The book has provided some descriptions of the developmental scales such as the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) intending to measure vocabulary depth. However, more critical analyses highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of the existing scales and measures may lead to more innovative developments in this area.

As another drawback, one can refer to the idea that the addition of a new chapter focusing on modern technology, computer-delivered tests, vocabulary tools, and similar topics, which are in line with the scope of the book, would make the volume more comprehensive.

Finally, the addition of another new chapter focusing on controversial issues in the field considering the four major foci of corpus linguistics including psycholinguistics, language testing, and language teaching and learning could make the book more practical. In other words, the overlaps of critical topics from different chapters discussed in a single chapter, can provide a syncretic overview of the challenging issues that may act as a momentum for future developments.

References

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