

PRESENTATION

A Broader View

This volume of LSWP marks a turning point in its gradual progress from a departmental project to a school-wide publication, now attracting also submissions from further afield within the University of Reading, with two papers from staff and PhD students of the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences, one by a student at the Institute of Education, and another by a former teacher at the International Study and Language Centre. The wider scope of Vol. 4 largely reflects the efforts of Jacqueline Laws, who as Coordinator and Applied Linguistics PhD Programme Director has established fruitful links with other language-oriented departments. We are also indebted to Lynda O'Brien, who successfully chaired a special panel on 'Publishing Your Research and the Role of the LSWP' during the latest Annual PhD Conference in March 2012.

The contents of the present volume comprise two types of paper. Those in Part I are empirical studies in first and second language acquisition. B. Law, C. Houston-Price and T. Loucas examine the relationship between an infant's ability to follow the gaze of an adult and their ability to learn new words at different ages. Their study uses data from a group of 18-month-old subjects who performed a word-learning task involving gaze-following and subsequently had their vocabulary measured at the age of 18, 24 and 30 months. The findings show that the infants' receptive and expressive vocabulary, measured both synchronically and longitudinally, was significantly related to the results of the gaze-following task, thus suggesting that gaze direction is one of the main factors used by infants to build their vocabulary.

Moving from the acquisition of lexis to grammar, T. Doukas and T. Marinis investigate the acquisition of person and number verbal morphology in Early Greek, based on data from two monolingual Greek-speaking children. They carry out a quantitative analysis of the accuracy of person/number marking and a qualitative analysis of productivity, showing that agreement features in the verbal domain are available to Greek-speaking children from the earliest stages of acquisition. Their findings support the hypothesis of early acquisition of verbal agreement features proposed by similar studies in other languages, but contrast with previous research in Early Greek – a discrepancy attributed to the limitations of single-case data analysis.

In the third paper, Z. Šišková compares measures of lexical richness in narrative writing by Czech EFL learners, with a focus on diversity, sophistication and density. Each aspect is analysed using various parameters, and the results are compared both within and across each group. The author shows that the three aspects of lexical richness remain distinct, although some correlations were observed between lexical diversity and sophistication.

The contributions in Part II provide a critical overview of recent issues in applied linguistics. V. Pignot-Shahov assesses the notion of receptive (i.e. passive) vs. productive (i.e. active) vocabulary knowledge. Despite their widely-recognised importance to lexical development in L2 learning, these two aspects are assigned different degrees of significance in the literature and are accounted for by different theories. After comparing such contrasting views, the author draws common conclusions that emphasise the strong correlation between receptive and productive knowledge.

In the closing paper, L. D'Angelo reviews the evolution of conference posters and discusses the impact of digital communication and multimedia technology on this widely-used academic genre. As a result, the way information is delivered by presenters and perceived by their audience is undergoing changes whose linguistic dimension deserves closer scrutiny. For instance, cross-disciplinary research could be used to identify the strategies capable of maximising the impact of poster presentations in different settings.

It has been a pleasure, as usual, to read the work of academics who are (or have been) affiliated to the University of Reading. We are particularly grateful to those of you that have taken the plunge for the first time, bravely dealing with reviewers' comments and editorial adjustments (usually within the suggested deadlines). LSWP offers a freely-accessible venue for disseminating your findings, as well as an opportunity to learn the art of assembling a meaningful, well-written piece of research in only 5,000 words.

After this volume has finally gone online, we will send out the Call for Papers for Vol. 5. For updates and further details, simply keep an eye on the LSWP homepage¹ or drop us an email at any time.

The Editors

¹ <http://www.reading.ac.uk/english-language-and-applied-linguistics/Research/elal-research-language-publications.aspx>.