
‘Vocabulary specialists in different fields do not talk to one another’ (Schmitt 2010, p. 42). As vocabulary researchers working in the areas of reading and vocabulary, frequency and incidental vocabulary acquisition, and phraseology, we aimed to bridge this gap by collaborating on the reviews for three books that offer timely contributions to the field of L2 vocabulary acquisition. By distilling and synthesizing a vast and complex body of research findings into readable and approachable volumes, these three books have become standard references for many L2 vocabulary researchers. Additionally, these contributions have the potential to assist with breaking new ground in L2 vocabulary research through the authors’ efforts at making the field more accessible. The first book (Schmitt, Researching Vocabulary: A Vocabulary Research Manual) focuses on providing guidance for conducting applied linguistics vocabulary research, which is beneficial for heightening awareness of vocabulary research, teaching, and assessment. The second book (Nation and Webb, Researching and Analyzing Vocabulary) provides direct implications for teaching and learning L2 vocabulary, with a focus on intentional learning, incidental learning, and the measurement of vocabulary knowledge. It is intended to guide junior researchers in critical analysis of published studies as well as intended methodologies of their own studies. The third book (Meara and Miralpeix, Tools for Researching Vocabulary), in contrast to the previous two, presents a set of computer programs that can aid, simplify, and quicken analysis and data collection for L2 vocabulary research.

1. NORBERT SCHMITT: RESEARCHING VOCABULARY: A VOCABULARY RESEARCH MANUAL. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2010

This book is helpful for facilitating research in vocabulary teaching, corpora analysis, and vocabulary assessment. The first part touches upon some important vocabulary issues, including formulaic language, the incremental nature of vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary attrition, and corpus analysis. Part two covers various aspects, including a connection between form(s) and meaning(s), lexical networks, word associations, word exposure frequency, the influence of L1 in word learning, vocabulary learning strategies, genre and register, computer simulations, and psycholinguistic research. For example, based on the findings of eye-tracking studies, Schmitt thoroughly discusses the process and acquisition of formulaicity, a hallmark of language mastery.
Schmitt also discusses the functions of formulaic language and how to identify formulaic language through various association-strength measures. Part three delves into research methodology issues by offering practical advice on how to carry out valid and reliable first- and second-language vocabulary acquisition and assessment research. Through documenting the intricacies of interpreting and reporting results related to vocabulary measurement, vocabulary researchers will gain knowledge about assessment formats, test reliability, vocabulary breadth and depth, lexical automatician, and word retention. For measuring various aspects of and the depth of vocabulary knowledge, Schmitt proposed a dimensions approach (p. 224). The final part offers various resources for vocabulary research and teaching. Included are full versions of two vocabulary test instruments, instructions for using corpus tools (e.g. concordancer), and links to vocabulary research websites and corpora (e.g. Corpus of Contemporary American English and American National Corpus).

However, we also found some features of this book unsatisfying. Readers who do not have sufficient knowledge of research methodology for vocabulary issues or a basic understanding of statistics may find this manual challenging to understand. With frequent advances in technology, the list of resources undoubtedly needs to be updated. Although Schmitt (2010) attempted to include many resources for vocabulary research, practitioners or learners may still find it challenging to identify which are most useful due to the lack of examples. Another area open to critique is the questionable amount of weight given to frequency—maximizing target word encounters—at the expense of ignoring, as the latest research shows, the influence of target word contextual clues (Teng 2016). Webb and Nation (2017) also further acknowledged that acquisition is the result of not only retrieval of target word meaning but retrieval that is triggered by encounters in new contexts. In addition, Schmitt’s (2010) book failed to examine language learning activities that set up optimal vocabulary learning conditions of noticing, retrieval, and varied use. Finally, skills that can induce vocabulary learning, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are not discussed, thereby not providing insights into teacher-created activities that can be modified to optimize vocabulary learning conditions.

Despite these limitations, this book has much to offer vocabulary researchers. The major contribution of this book is the synthesis of research findings found within a complex and growing L2 vocabulary literature. This book affords researchers with access to resources for piloting vocabulary studies and facilitates teachers in executing quality L2 vocabulary instruction as well.

2. I. S. PAUL NATION AND STUART WEBB: RESEARCHING AND ANALYZING VOCABULARY. HEINLE CENGAGE LEARNING, 2011

This book provides a thorough introduction to L2 vocabulary research, especially for the junior researcher. It is separated into four sections: Deliberate
Vocabulary Learning, Incidental Vocabulary Learning, Corpus-Based Research, and Testing Vocabulary Knowledge. The comprehensive yet concise and readable style makes the text suitable as both an MA/PhD level course textbook and a reference for the individual researcher completing a thesis or dissertation investigating lexical issues. In each chapter, Nation and Webb provide explanations for why one specialized area of vocabulary research is valuable and how this specialized area fits within the general L2 vocabulary research field as a whole. This renders the book especially approachable by beginning vocabulary researchers. Furthermore, the authors selected methodologies used in key published papers to highlight the proper techniques that should have been or were employed to answer the studies’ original research questions. This presentation and review of previous studies through a critical lens guides junior researchers into becoming critical readers and provides them with the know-how to design studies that employ sound and logically valid methodologies. For example, when discussing how to select target words for studies investigating the incidental acquisition of vocabulary through reading, Nation and Webb discussed how the use of nonce words or real words affects both methodological control and ecological validity.

Still, no book is immune to time. Nation (2013) noted that half of the existing L2 vocabulary research studies have been published within the 10 years prior to when the second edition of his seminal work *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* was released, justifying the new edition. The age of *Researching and Analyzing Vocabulary* is most evident when reading Chapter 1, in which Laufer and Hulstijn’s (2001) Involvement Load Hypothesis is examined in depth with a call for more studies investigating vocabulary teaching and learning activities and tasks. Since 2011, many studies have been published addressing this issue with the help of involvement load as a frame. Another critique of the book is that much was written about vocabulary acquisition and teaching under the assumption that the ‘word family’, referring to a root word and all its related inflected and derived forms, was the most suitable way to measure word frequency. Strong evidence to support this assumption is not yet available (see Reynolds 2013; Reynolds and Wible 2014 for further discussion). Finally, the majority of this book deals with the learning, teaching, retention, and assessment of individual words. While Chapter 10 does address the researching of multiword units, this is a rather miniscule amount of coverage compared to the remainder of the book. Schmitt (2010) claimed that less attention is given to multiword units by researchers due to convenience, as individual words are easier to isolate, teach, and research. Those interested specifically in multiword units and formulaic sequences may need to refer to other books for a more in-depth discussion.

Nevertheless, this book contributes much to the field of vocabulary studies. From our own experiences as teachers of research methods courses, we know that the best way for students to learn how to research is to start a research project. Many junior researchers feel hesitant in selecting a topic, assuming that everything has been discussed or researched before. One strong feature of
this book is the discussions about needed research on chapter topics that appear at the end of each chapter and how published studies can be built on previous findings through research replication. Each chapter also provides full details for the design of a new study that could address one or more of the gaps in the literature found in these end of chapter discussions. The first place that students will want to turn to is likely to be Chapter 14. Here, Nation and Webb deliver a full summary of all the issues that need to be considered when researching and analyzing vocabulary. Teachers of research methodology courses and supervisors of theses and dissertations will find this book valuable for helping students to settle quickly on a research topic and start a project.

3. PAUL MEARA AND IMMA MIRALPEIX: TOOLS FOR RESEARCHING VOCABULARY. MULTILINGUAL MATTERS, 2016

This book contains six main parts. The first part focuses on V_Words v2.0 and V_Lists v1.0, two programs which are useful for conducting basic analysis of raw data. For example, V_Words is suitable for turning short texts into word lists and providing alphabetical and frequency lists for word types. V_Lists is helpful for conducting basic operations on word lists. The second part introduces four additional programs. D_Tools V2.0 is a type/token measure, which is beneficial for analyzing a text’s lexical richness. P_Lex V.3.00 measures lexical sophistication, an important dimension of vocabulary development for L2 learners. Lexical Signatures are for identifying lexical similarities and differences while V_Unique V1.0 is for measuring lexical originality. Part three introduces programs that measure vocabulary size, for example, V-Yes/No, which measures receptive vocabulary size. V_Size in Chapter 7 and V_Capture in Chapter 8 measure productive vocabulary size. Part four presents Q_Lex, which is used for measuring lexical access, for example, how a learner can access a small set of high-frequency words. Part five discusses the LLAMA_B v2.0 program, which can measure language aptitude through looking at individual differences. Part six covers Mezzofanti, which models the growth of vocabularies in varying settings.

Although the book covers eleven programs, while providing clear instructions on how to implement these programs, there are different software programs out there that are arguably more powerful with graphical user interfaces that are more friendly for the less computer savvy individual. For example, all programs reviewed are written in HTML code, which is limited in what it can output on screen and the lack of sophisticated graphics or a graphical user interface of other computer programs available may make the less savvy computer user hesitant. Some of the reviewed programs may become outdated when computer manufacturers update operating systems. This issue is most evident in Chapters 6 and 9, which reviews older empirical studies conducted using pencil and paper means. Although Meara and Miralpeix (2016) stated...
the purpose of the book was to encourage readers to think creatively and critically about vocabulary research, the two examples provided may not provide insights into the use of the introduced programs. In addition, the programs are designed to address issues concerning vocabulary size, organization, and accessibility but fail to address vocabulary building or learning through interactive learning programs. Finally, some programs, for example, V_Capture, depend on mathematics knowledge. Readers who are not proficient in science or mathematics may find it difficult to run such programs.

Despite the inherent limitations, the book contributes to the four significant vocabulary dimensions: processing, collecting, analyzing, and generating data. This book allows readers to gain a basic understanding of several digital tools that can be used for lexical analysis. Along with the manual, readers can reference a synthesized summary of research findings obtained through the use of these programs as well as suggestions for future research using these programs. Researchers who have little background knowledge of vocabulary research tools can learn about measuring and modeling vocabulary knowledge by using the programs discussed in the book.

In summary, the three books complement each other. First, Meara and Miralpeix’s (2016) book addresses the technology that is overlooked in Schmitt (2010) and Nation and Webb (2011) through providing a rich collection of Web-based programs that sidestep the difficulties involved in performing independent research on vocabulary acquisition. For example, the programs can be used to complement those recommended by Schmitt (2010) and conduct corpus-based or lexical richness research suggested by Nation and Webb (2011). Second, Schmitt provides a synthesis of background knowledge necessary to the development of rigorous and effective research studies discussed by Meara and Miralpeix (2016) and Nation and Webb (2011). Finally, Nation and Webb (2011) provides a full summary of all issues related to researching and analyzing vocabulary, which complements what was proposed by Schmitt (2010). Together, the three reviewed books offer a bridge for readers to synthesize the knowledge and skills needed to understand and carry out vocabulary research.

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