

Corpus linguistics and second language acquisition: perspectives, issues and findings

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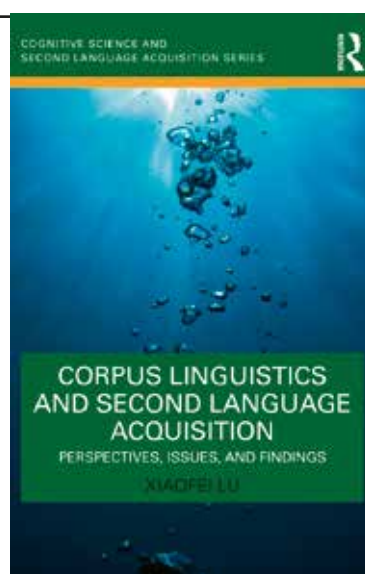
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Although second language acquisition (SLA) studies and corpus linguistics are essentially different fields of L2 research that have their own paradigms and agendas, the potential in their mutual benefit can be huge. However, systematic collaboration between the two fields is lacking. This volume is the first monograph that comprehensively and systematically introduces empirical studies that utilize corpus linguistic methods to address pending issues in SLA, and test theoretical hypotheses related to L2 variation, processing, production, and development. It not only demonstrates the usefulness of learner corpora in addressing SLA issues from the perspective of usage, but also corroborates that “corpus studies, in addition to methodological rigor, also require theoretical sophistication” (Gilquin, 2022, p. 110). The book consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 briefly introduces the research background, methods, aim and structure of the book, focusing on the key term *corpus linguistic methods*. Chapters 2 through 4 provide an overview of empirical studies that employ corpus linguistic methods. Chapter 5 reviews studies that utilize corpus linguistic methods to investigate inter and intra-learner variability and individual variation in L2 development. Chapter 6 summarizes corpus linguistic methods adopted in SLA research.

In Chapter 2, empirical research on variation in L2 use is reviewed. The triad of *complexity*, *accuracy*, and *fluency* (CAF) are expounded first as indices for measuring variation in various dimensions of L2 use. Different patterns of L2 variation are found across L2 proficiency levels for different dimensions of language use. Moreover, L2 learners' L1 background is also found to account for the variation of some aspects of L2 use.

Chapter 3 considers factors that influence second language processing and production. In addition to frequency and contingency, which are key construction-related factors, other factors like recency, semantic prototypicality, and saliency, though of lesser importance, are also found to play a significant or close to significant role in L2 processing or production of constructions.

The reviewed studies in Chapter 4 examine L2 development trajectories and input, learner and task factors. The review covers studies on L2 learners' development of CAF,



lexical proficiency, phraseological lexical bundles, as well as grammatical and morphosyntactic constructions.

Chapter 5 reviews longitudinal learner corpus studies that examine variability and variation of L2 development at the individual level. The learner corpus studies, which adopted the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, demonstrate nonlinearity in L2 developmental trajectories and inter- and intra-learner variability as an intrinsic property in L2 development. Recent research utilizes mixed-model designs to trace individual variation that may be concealed by patterns of L2 group development.

Chapter 6 concludes the book by summarizing the core issues addressed in each chapter, reflecting on methodological issues concerning previous empirical studies, and proposing several directions for future SLA research with corpus linguistic methods.

Overall, this book is applauded for its critical appraisals of previous SLA research that adopts corpus linguistic methods. The critical analyses and comparison within each line of research reveal connections and successiveness between empirical studies, highlighting research gaps. The insightful discussion of future research directions that follows the review of each domain manifests rational reasoning supported by profound knowledge of SLA theories and proficient use of corpus linguistic methods.

Another strength of this volume is its comprehensive coverage of topics, theories and methods. The topics in the book include L2 production, processing, development, and variation in L2 use and variation and variability in L2 development. Under each topic, representative and up-to-date literature is selected, showcasing the application and validation of principal theories and hypotheses in SLA. The corpus linguistic methods utilized in the reviewed studies demonstrate their usefulness in L2 research, varying in terms of data sources, the nature of the analysis, corpus design, and various statistical analysis of corpus data. In addition, the clarification and explanation of the corpus linguistic terms in the reviews feature a bonus for novice researchers in corpus linguistic research.

Nevertheless, there is still room for further refinement. For example, the criteria for the selection of studies for review could be more explicitly stated to facilitate readers' judgement of the representativeness and generalizability of the results and conclusions; key terms in the reviewed literature may not be familiar to readers, and deserve some explanation in their first occurrence. Despite these minor limitations, this volume is highly informative and inspiring, and is bound to benefit interested researchers.

REFERENCES

Gilquin, G. (2022). Cognitive corpus linguistics and pedagogy: From rationale to applications. *Pedagogical Linguistics*, 3 (2): 109-142. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pl.22014.gil>