

## Book Review

DOI 10.1515/zaa-2015-0024

**Christoph Bürgel and Dirk Siepmann, eds.** *Sprachwissenschaft – Fremdsprachen-  
didaktik: Neue Impulse*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Hohengehren, 2013. Pb.  
225 pp. € 20.00. ISBN 978-3-8340-1208-1.

Linguistics has always been one of the principal feeder disciplines of foreign language teaching. Despite the natural relationship between the two fields, however, it has recently been a much-repeated request, especially in works on teacher training in Germany, that linguists and foreign language educationalists should cooperate more closely. In this respect, the volume edited by Christoph Bürgel and Dirk Siepmann fills a gap and makes a welcome contribution to the connection of both fields. The book stems from a symposium held in Osnabrück in September 2011, at which researchers from English and Romance linguistics and foreign language teaching came together to discuss multiple links between the two disciplines.

The prime motivation of both the symposium and the book, as Bürgel and Siepmann point out in their five-page preface, is – as the title implies – to give new impulses to a neglected dialogue between linguistics and foreign language teaching methodology. Bürgel and Siepmann are certainly correct in observing that the links between the fields are not as well established as one might wish – neither at the level of research nor in teacher education. They recommend that, while more recent findings from linguistic research should be explored in greater depth for models and concepts in foreign language teaching, the interplay between linguistic and practically oriented instruction should also be emphasised in teacher training. According to them, future foreign language teachers ought to be made aware of those linguistic insights crucial for learning and teaching foreign languages.

The volume comprises 225 pages of text, with 11 chapters altogether. With the exception of Peter Fenn's, all contributions are written in German by experts working at German universities, most of them having an interdisciplinary background in linguistics and foreign language teaching methodology. The volume is thematically organised into four parts, although the diversity of approaches, methods and topics as well as the range of contributions, from research papers to literature reviews and practical project reports, do not make this an easy task for the editors.

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The volume opens with contributions in the area of phraseology and collocation studies. With a careful analysis of phraseological units in Günter Grass's *Ein weites Feld* and its French translation, Lüger demonstrates the challenges and problems of translating German phraseological units into French. Whereas it remains rather unclear in which ways his contribution might help to provide new impulses at the interface of linguistics and foreign language teaching methodology, the following contribution by Dyka and Scharf is an excellent illustration of what linguistics has on offer to improve foreign language teaching and teaching materials. They analyse phraseological comments both quantitatively and qualitatively for 60 lemmata in four German-English dictionaries and argue convincingly that they serve to confuse the learner. They put forward suggestions for a more user-friendly integration of such phraseological details into bilingual dictionaries. In her contribution, Segermann describes how insights from corpus linguistics, construction grammar and formulaic language have shaped the creation of an online tool that allows learners to draw on an inventory of lexico-grammatical building blocks of the French language, so that they can form utterances following such patterns.

In a similar vein, the following contributions bring the question of how to design teaching materials and curricula into focus. Like Segermann, Herbst also makes use of insights from the fields of corpus linguistics, construction grammar and other usage-based approaches to analyse current teaching material. He describes the difficult decision-making process when compiling a vocabulary section for a school textbook and makes valuable suggestions on how to improve such sections. He also argues that the distinction between gerunds and participles made in current textbooks and school grammars is both not in line with current theoretical thinking and pedagogically unhelpful. Most interestingly perhaps, he also points out errors in the description of linguistic phenomena and shows how teaching material might benefit from the trained eye of a syntactician familiar with current trends in descriptive linguistics. Language learners' problems with *-ing* forms are also mentioned in Fenn's contribution, which discusses the role and function of grammar instruction in university courses for future teachers. Two issues are on his agenda: i) the structural examination of language should play a greater role in teacher education and ii) the fields of pure and applied linguistics, practical language training and foreign language teaching methodology need to be better connected. His insightful analysis of grammar problems of (future) teachers reveals a lack of systematic explication and illustration in practical language training that would help to dispose of persistent grammar myths and pseudo-rules. Polzin-Haumann extends the volume's scope by adding a report on a fascinating project, where students at the Universities of the Saarland, Luxembourg and Metz were taught in a transdisciplinary and transnational

seminar on various aspects of multilingualism while exposed to a multilingual setting.

A further part of the book offers contributions on learner language and second language acquisition research. Piske gives an overview of second language acquisition research over the last twenty years and examines its relevance for foreign language teaching contexts. From the pool of possible influential factors in successful foreign language learning, he isolates two that are likely to play a dominant role – even for early beginners: continuous high-quality input and frequent opportunities to use the target language. As a promising first study within a larger project, Diao-Klaeger and Thörle carry out a qualitative analysis of the use of discourse markers by German L2 speakers in telephone conversations with a French native speaker. They show that transfer and overgeneralization, among other processes, are responsible for a less varied and not always appropriate use of discourse markers in learner language. Such research projects as theirs, based on experimentally obtained corpus data, are necessary to determine exact differences between L1 and L2 output in a field notoriously difficult to teach, so that eventually teaching methods and materials can be developed. Callies also makes a powerful case for the idea that learner corpus linguistics can be a stepping stone for the development of foreign language teaching methodology, as it identifies problem areas of learners so that they may be systematically addressed in the classroom. Using the example of a corpus study of the construction of disciplinary voice in L1 and L2 academic writing, he points out possible avenues for using such studies in advanced learner instruction.

The final two contributions rely on insights from translation studies and text linguistics respectively to improve the teaching of specific foreign language skills. In a clearly laid out discussion, Siepmann argues that there is only a gradual difference between translation and mediation tasks in the classroom and that it is desirable for foreign language education and translation studies to work hand in hand to develop appropriate activities and tests in this domain. Bürgel develops a reading comprehension method which should provide learners with a first access to a new text by making them aware of its text type and structural characteristics.

Taken together, the contributions to this volume amply illustrate ways in which language teaching can draw support from linguistics, and they attest to the ongoing relevance of current topics and findings in linguistics for foreign language teaching. It becomes repeatedly clear, for instance, that foreign language teaching has profited immensely from the emergence of corpus and learner corpus linguistics (cf. Callies, Diao-Klaeger and Thörle, Dyka and Scharf, Herbst, Segermann). As a volume of conference proceedings – and against the background of its stated objective to provide new impulses – the book is bound to be eclectic rather than exhaustive in its treatment of the interface between

linguistics and foreign language teaching methodology. It is thus not surprising that equally relevant topics are not covered, for example linguistic impulses for the teaching of pronunciation, the use of linguistic tools in the classroom or pragmatics and language teaching. In the meantime, a new volume in the same series *Thema Sprache: Wissenschaft für den Unterricht*, written by many of the same researchers, has been published, with a special focus on language acquisition and linguistic competences, which partly remedies this situation. It would be a worthy initiative in its own right to build on these two volumes and offer a more systematic and comprehensive account of the connections between linguistics and foreign language teaching – for researchers, teacher trainees and teachers alike. However, the present book impressively covers a large number of points of contact and therefore more than justifies its *raison d'être*.

More could have been done, perhaps, to make the volume even more attractive for the reader by adding notes about the contributors, an index and a longer introduction that elaborates on some of the more general links between linguistics and language teaching. However, all contributions are easily accessible and highly readable. Addressed to experts in the fields rather than to students of linguistics or teachers and teacher trainees, the volume will be an inspiration for future scholars interested in this interface. It can certainly be argued that the dialogue between linguistics and foreign language education is crucial for successful foreign language teaching. In launching this dialogue, the editors and contributors offer a volume with valuable insights and rich perspectives on the complex links between the disciplines.