L2 Vocabulary Knowledge Constructs and Assessment - What Is the Way Forward?

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Abstract

With the recent upsurge of interest in L2 vocabulary and L2 vocabulary assessment follows a situation where a large number of knowledge constructs are proposed and investigated. Even though the development of competing definitions and perspectives is part and parcel of any thriving academic domain, it becomes problematic if constructs are given very different interpretations from study to study. Taking the predominating constructs of vocabulary breadth and depth (Anderson & Freebody 1981) as a point of departure and drawing on some critical work on their viability and use (Read 2004; Meara & Wolter 2004), this paper discusses some of the basic assumptions underlying these constructs. In particular, empirical data on the learning and assessment of lexical items larger than single words, e.g. phrasal verbs, collocations and idioms, raise questions as to where to draw the line between breadth and depth and consequently their usefulness. Suggestions for potential remedies are presented.

References