

**Gabriele Stein.** *Developing Your English Vocabulary: A Systematic New Approach.* 2002, VIII + 272 pp. Stauffenburg Linguistik 26. ISBN 3-86057-727-1. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag. Price: €33.

Gabriele Stein is professor of English linguistics at the University of Heidelberg in Germany and has published widely on lexicography and lexicology. The objective of this book is twofold: to compile a lexical core and to maximise the skills of language students by developing ways of expanding this core. It is intended to function as a teaching aid for teachers of English as well as a self-study book for learners of English as a second language. Lexical knowledge is a crucial part of language acquisition and depends on different external factors such as the age and profession of the learner, his/her goals, expectations and needs in learning a language. Beck *et al.* (2002) have demonstrated the small extent of the emphasis on the acquisition vocabulary in school curricula. After a brief introduction, the author looks in chapter 2 at major books which in the 20th century worked on a controlled vocabulary for foreign-language learners in Europe, Asia and America. This section provides the background for the elaboration of a core lexicon and shows how extensive studies have gradually developed in the area of second-language acquisition. In chapter 3, the author elaborates a *Common Core Vocabulary* and in chapter 4 as a continuation of chapter 3, she offers twelve major ways of expanding this core-word list and differentiating lexical items to create a learning framework in the mind of the learner. For foreign-language teachers, the introduction of a relational system of synonyms, antonyms and elementary grammatical structures will gradually build up a structural network for nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs that could then be put into practice by the user. The project of a core lexicon (further expanded in chapter 5) targets a more advanced and specialised level of study and acquisition, providing the learner with an *Advanced Common Core Vocabulary*.

The development of core vocabularies in the 1920s and 1930s have been paramount for modern lexicography and the understanding of what was required in English dictionaries for foreign users (Cowie 1998, 1999). They also helped in creating new, user-friendly ways of presenting the information. In the light of previous studies, Stein establishes a system of construction patterns that would prepare lexicographers for the compilation of successful monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, dictionaries of synonyms and thesauri, making them aware of the core concepts and utility words of the language required at various stages of the learning process. The success of such works would depend on the use of both spoken and written data.

Vocabulary expansion develops by associating strings of words. This can be realised, as Stein shows, by a variety of word-building techniques: exploring thematic associations, lexical fields, word-formation patterns, etymology, stylistic variation and phonetic relations, all build word awareness. Such exercises on enriching one's vocabulary increase the learner's understanding of these

items, help him/her in memorising their meaning and in finally putting them into practice.

In the wake of Stein's study, various scholars have recently compiled academic core English vocabularies that serve as the basis for multilingual dictionaries. In South Africa, for instance, where English is the main language for tertiary education, Read *et al.*'s dictionary covers English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Sepedi. Such dictionaries with English as the main language 'will participate in much-needed corpus development of the African languages' (Read *et al.* 1998).

Despite the large amount of research conducted in second-language vocabulary acquisition (Templeton 1989, Schmitt *et al.* 1997, Coady *et al.* 2002), this is a very useful book for enhancing vocabulary development and expanding writing and thinking skills. Although the book is quite accessible to students lacking a background in linguistics, one might regret the general layout which makes it a bit dry. However, this is a valuable resource that should help lexicographers in compiling the most appropriate learner's dictionaries.

## References

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