POSITION/FOCUS PAPER

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Can writing and WCF facilitate the development of a richer vocabulary? Advancing research agendas

The concerted effort that has been made to try to bridge the gap between second language writing and SLA research (cf. Ferris, 2010; Manchón 2011; Bitchener and Storch, 2016) does not adequately address the vocabulary learning potential of writing, partly because a look through influential SLA monographs (Mitchell and Myles, 1998; Ellis, 2008; Ortega, 2009) shows that mainstream SLA research has given little attention to second language vocabulary acquisition. Second language vocabulary research, in turn, has tended to focus on the development of receptive knowledge. While it provides useful insights into receptive vocabulary size requirements, what vocabulary learners should study and the number of exposures needed for receptive acquisition; none of these issues has been adequately addressed with regard to production. Corpus researchers' characterizations of second language writers' texts as displaying a lack of register awareness, underuse and overuse of single and multiword lexical items, semantic misuse, incorrect collocations, and a range of lexico-grammatical errors (Hinkel, 2002; Paquot, 2010) highlight the componential nature of word knowledge. While some progress has been made in developing a better understanding of the order in which learners acquire these components (Webb, 2005; Chen and Truscott, 2010; González-Fernández, 2016), such studies tend to operationalise productive vocabulary at the sentence level and thus provide limited insight into how EFL writing instruction and written correct feedback might support learners development of vocabulary through writing. This paper will identify a research agenda that brings together corpus research, vocabulary acquisition studies and cognitive approaches to SLA to consider how writing might facilitate noticing gaps in the size and depth of learners' vocabulary repertoires and whether common instructional approaches to writing instruction and written correct feedback can provide sufficient, quality practice to enable implicit, automatized use across the range of word knowledge components.