



## Book Review: Ana Bocanegra-Valle (Ed.) (2020). *Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Employability, Internationalisation and Social Challenges*. Bern: Peter Lang.

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“Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Employability, Internationalisation and Social Challenges”, edited by Ana Bocanegra-Valle, explores the impact that Applied Linguistics can have on society in different ways. The volume sheds light on the relevance of applied linguists for research in different areas in which their potential contribution is not always taken into consideration or is somehow less visible. As a result, many of the chapters in this book argue for the need to conduct interdisciplinary research in which applied linguists can collaborate with professionals from other areas, such as computer engineers, health professionals and business professionals, to name just a few.

The opening chapter by Ana Bocanegra-Valle is a brilliant introduction to the volume, as it reviews the concept of knowledge transfer and it links the twelve chapters that follow together. Knowledge transfer as defined in this volume encompasses different activities through which higher education institutions can collaborate with the business and public sectors in a way that can bring positive outcomes for all the parties involved. An example can be found in how knowledge transfer enables business professionals to inform higher education institutions and students about the employability skills that recent graduates need, and in turn, universities can use this information to design or adapt the curriculum in order to ensure that students will acquire these necessary skills. Knowledge transfer is linked to internationalization and social challenges, particularly employability. According to Bocanegra-Valle (p.12), Applied Linguistics can help build employability skills, such as foreign language skills, pronunciation or intercultural skills, as some of the chapters in the volume show.

The book is divided into three different parts. As explained by the editor in the introduction, the three main themes tackled in the book intertwine, and therefore each chapter has been assigned to the part of the book that is most closely aligned with its objectives.

Part 1, Knowledge Transfer, starts with the chapter by Ricardo Mairal-Usón and Pamela Faber, titled “Linguistic Research in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Looking Beyond”. This chapter explores different ways in which research in linguistics can have an impact on current social challenges in four different areas, namely research related to the digital and information revolution, research on human-machine interaction, research into the human brain and neurodegenerative diseases, and biological research. Regarding the first research area, the authors stress the opportunities offered by the vast amount of data available for linguistic analysis on the Internet and the computational tools for analysis that linguists have at their disposal nowadays. The authors deem the

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involvement of linguists in human-machine interaction to be necessary, given the role of language processing in this area. Similarly, as several neurodegenerative diseases cause linguistic deficits, the contribution of linguistics to this field is also very relevant. Finally, linguists can work together with biologists to inquire into “the evolution of the language faculty” (p.45). By providing examples of pioneering research in each of these four areas conducted in Spain, this chapter emphasizes the wide variety of fields in which interdisciplinary research carried out in collaboration with linguists is possible and relevant to “create a better world” (p.45).

The second chapter in this section is “Integrated Writing Assistants and Their Possible Consequences for Foreign-Language Writing and Learning” by Sven Tarp. As indicated by the title, this chapter focuses on lexicography, and more specifically, on writing assistants. After reviewing the impact of new technologies on lexicography, Tarp concentrates on a specific tool called “Write Assistant” developed in Denmark by Ordbogen A/S (p.60). “Write Assistant” can be used with text-processing programs to help users with L2 text production. Over half a million Danish school children had the opportunity to use the Danish-English version of this tool in 2018 and the outcomes were positive, as “Write Assistant” allowed students to write more quickly and fluently in English, while making fewer mistakes. Moreover, some of the students used “Write Assistant directly as a *learning tool*” (p.69). Tarp stresses the benefits involved in using writing assistants, but the chapter ends with some food for thought on the distribution of tasks between humans and machines and with a call for interdisciplinary collaboration to tackle future challenges in this field.

Also linked to the advantages provided by the Internet to foreign language learning, Jonás Fouz-Gonzalez’ contribution to the volume is called “Using the English File Pronunciation App for Pronunciation Training: The Learners’ Views”. Fouz-González argues that “the tools teachers use or recommend and the tasks they design should always have a sound pedagogical foundation that builds on the findings from previous research on second language acquisition and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL)” (p.77), an idea which is to a certain extent in line with Tarp’s warning regarding the importance of the distribution of tasks between humans and machines, as the use of new technologies per se does not necessarily lead to learning gains. While the use of new technologies can give rise to positive outcomes for the different skills related to foreign language learning, it is considered particularly beneficial for pronunciation, an area which needs a level of customization that is not always possible in class (p.78). This chapter illustrates the benefits of using the English File Pronunciation app (Oxford University Press, 2012), as shown in questionnaires retrieved from 63 participants before and after using the app autonomously for two weeks. This type of apps can therefore be used “as a complement to classroom instruction” (p.92) that students can access individually at home.

The fourth chapter in this section, entitled “The Discourse of Engineering Students’ Entrepreneurial Proposals at the *Universidad Politécnica de Madrid*”, is written by Carmen Sancho Guinda. The chapter starts with an overview of entrepreneurship as one of the main lifelong learning competencies, clearly linked to innovation. It then explains the stages involved in the ACTÚA-UPM contest, “a competition of business ideas among the different schools” at this university (p.108) and it stresses the fact that participants are provided with rather vague criteria regarding the type of communication required for the contest. Drawing on ten contest-registration forms, Sancho Guinda examines the entrepreneurial discourse features used by the students. The results show a combination of features of engineering writing, academic writing and computer-mediated communication. Sancho Guinda advocates a close collaboration between content and language instructors to teach the discourse of the discipline together.

Overall, the first part of this volume shows how knowledge transfer can take place in different ways: how linguists can contribute to different fields, from artificial intelligence to health sciences; how tools developed by

technology companies can help L2 writing and learning and how linguists can collaborate in building/improving these tools; how new technologies can help foreign language learning and how linguists can measure the effectiveness and use of these apps; how linguists can help improve discourse to enable students and future graduates better articulate entrepreneurial proposals.

The chapters included in the second part of the volume deal with internationalization, which, like knowledge transfer, is also clearly related to employability, as job providers look for candidates who have undergone an international experience. The first chapter in this section, written by Elspeth Jones, sets out to explore “The Role of Languages in Transformational Internationalisation”. This chapter analyzes the different aspects of internationalization, such as the positive outcomes of student mobility, as well as the limitations it implies. Jones explains that mobility is an option for only a small minority of students, but “a more inclusive approach” (p.135) can lead to Internationalization at Home (p.140), which will be beneficial for all students on campus. The advantages of foreign language learning are emphasized in this chapter: speaking a foreign language is not only valuable per se, but it can also have a positive impact on developing intercultural communicative competence and it “can transform mindsets in important ways” (p.146).

In the following chapter, “Service-Learning and Social Networks in Study Abroad Contexts: Engaging International Students in the Host Communities”, Carmen Carracelas-Juncal focuses on the challenges implied in study abroad programs. Carracelas-Juncal claims that host country curricula have to be scrutinized and adapted to the needs of study abroad students. One possible way of achieving this goal is through the addition of service-learning, as this engages study abroad students in “meaningful target language interaction” (p.176) with members of the host country. Drawing on class assignments, observations and questionnaires retrieved from 30 study abroad students at the Universidad de Navarra in Pamplona, Spain, the chapter shows that service-learning, which in this case consisted of offering after-school support to different groups of students, helped maximize the benefits of the study abroad period. In spite of individual variables, the study abroad students involved in this research reported having improved their language skills in the target language, as well as their confidence in using the target language.

Also on the topic of student mobility, the chapter by Vasi Mocanu and Enric Llurda is titled “Constructing and Reconstructing Attitudes towards Language Learning in Study Abroad”. The study is based on data collected through questionnaires distributed to 155 participants in the Erasmus study abroad program in three different contexts and examines students’ attitudes towards English and the local languages in the contexts studied, namely Finnish, Romanian, Catalan and Spanish. The results show an imbalance in the expectations that students had prior to the stay abroad and their actual experience in terms of the use of different languages and the time spent interacting with local people and with other international students. The study also indicates “a clear *hierarchisation* of languages and a resulting different degree of investment in each of the encountered languages according to their economic value” (p.201), with English and local language Spanish standing out as the most valued languages by the students. Surprisingly, at the end of the stay abroad, students displayed “an increased adversity towards the local languages in all three contexts” (201), which might indicate that experiencing a study abroad period does not necessarily lead to the expected outcomes.

The last chapter in this section, ““There Are So Many Dimensions of Internationalization”: Exploring Academics’ Views on Internationalization in Higher Education”, by Oana Maria Carciu and Laura-Mihaela Muresan delves into the role of internationalization as perceived by academics in teaching, learning and research. The study draws on 10 semi-structured interviews with faculty at The Bucharest University of Economic Studies in Romania. The results of the study indicate that academics perceive internationalization as a complex

phenomenon involving multiple dimensions. The subjects that emerged from these interviews include the following: challenges regarding human resources, the use of English and other lingua francas and the need for a clearly defined internationalization plan at the institutional level. Carciu and Muresan explain that such a plan was implemented upon completion of their research, which is why “it would be important to follow up on this study’s findings to examine the relationship between faculty perceptions and the strategic plan implemented by the institution” (p.219). This chapter therefore links internationalization and knowledge transfer and offers an example of how the research carried out by linguists on internationalization in higher education institutions can have implications for policy making.

All in all, the chapters in the second section present a range of manifestations of internationalization, from study abroad to Internationalization at Home (Beelen and Jones, 2015) and point to ways in which students and higher education institutions can deal with the complexities involved in this multifaceted phenomenon and maximize its potential benefits.

The third part of the volume focuses on employability and social challenges. The first chapter in this section is “Pronunciation and International Employability”, by Martha C. Pennington. The chapter starts with the claim that pronunciation “is a rich and complex surface characteristic of speech that listeners use to judge deeper level characteristics such as intelligence, education, and social class as well as such qualities as friendliness, openness and trustworthiness, or their opposites” (p.225). Pennington then explains that, in spite of the fact that linguists and applied linguists underline “the value and legitimacy of all accents and varieties of language” (p.226), pronunciation can make a difference to employability. After outlining different ways in which pronunciation can have a negative impact on communication and hearer perceptions in general, the chapter then specifically turns to the impact of pronunciation in job-related communication in L2 and to perceptions and stereotyping based on accent. The final part of the chapter suggests strategies that L2 speakers can use to adjust their pronunciation in order to obtain their desired outcomes in job-related communication.

The subsequent chapter, “Disparities between Foreign Language Skills Taught in Higher Education and Job Market Needs”, is written by Troy B. Wiwczaroski and Mária Czeller. Given the importance of foreign language skills for today’s globalized workplace market, higher education institutions need to ensure that students acquire these skills. Nevertheless, there seems to be a mismatch between employers’ expectations and graduates’ IT and foreign language skills. Wiwczaroski and Czeller take Debrecen, Hungary as an example and analyse the language-related needs of businesses operating in and around the city in an attempt to make students realise how important L2 skills are, thereby preparing graduates for the job market. The chapter argues for collaboration between university departments involved in foreign language teaching on the one hand and business leaders and Human Resources managers on the other, so that the L2 skills that students acquire are those that they actually need to carry out job-related tasks in the workplace. Moreover, Wiwczaroski and Czeller contend that foreign language proficiency involves personal investment after graduation and that this dedication needs to be maintained throughout their whole professional life.

The following chapter moves away from employability to deal with another current social challenge, namely immigration. Penny MacDonald and Llum Bracho are the authors of “What Do Young People Think of the Phenomenon of Immigration? A Corpus-Based Study of University Students’ Ideas and Attitudes as Expressed in EFL Classes”. Drawing on 150 compositions written in English as a Foreign Language by local and incoming Erasmus exchange students at a technical university in Spain, students’ attitudes towards immigration were examined for positive, negative and neutral points of view. The compositions belonged to two corpora collected in 2008 and 2013. Overall, the findings showed more negative than positive comments. Nevertheless, over time

some of these attitudes had changed and students' compositions displayed more empathy. McDonald and Bracho suggest that social issues like immigration should be addressed in language and foreign language classrooms.

The volume closes with a chapter that addresses yet another social challenge that is relevant for today's society, namely the role of women in Engineering. More specifically, the chapter by Silvia Molina-Plaza and Samira Allani, "Multimodal Women Engineers' Identity Construction", deals with the multimodal strategies employed on the website of the Women's Engineering Society (UK) to portray women engineers. Based on Halliday's (2004) meta-functions and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) visual grammar, the analysis indicates that the information offered through the verbal, visual and aural modes is carefully organized on this website "to engage the addressee both visually [...] and conceptually" (p.308). The discursive strategies employed make it possible to create a persuasive message that presents women engineers "in a positive light" (p.308) on this professional website, which in turn may have implications for how women engineers are viewed by engineering companies and by the engineering community in general.

On the whole, the chapters included in the third section of the volume suggest that paying attention to specific aspects of linguistics such as pronunciation, professional task-related foreign language skills and multimodal communication can have an impact on employability. In addition, they link linguistics to further social challenges such as immigration and the challenges faced by women in a predominantly male-supportive professional field like Engineering.

To conclude, this edited volume covers a wide range of research topics that bear witness to some of the contributions that research in linguistics can provide to society. Given that we are currently immersed "in an increasingly international HE context" (Macaro, Akincioglu and Han, 2019:3), this book is a thought-provoking read that underlines the relationship between linguistics, internationalization, employability and further social challenges. Throughout the different chapters, the role of linguistics and foreign language skills in current society are underscored, while at the same time it is argued that the globalized workplace market requires more than L2 skills, just as internationalization in higher education institutions requires more than translating the curriculum and the presence of international students on campus. Researchers in linguistics and higher education policy makers will therefore find the book of great value. A minor drawback of this volume is that at times the link between one chapter and the following one is not immediately apparent. Nevertheless, once one reads the book as a whole, it becomes obvious that its three different parts complement each other. For all the reasons mentioned above, "Applied Linguistics and Knowledge Transfer. Employability, Internationalisation and Social Challenges" makes a significant contribution to research on linguistics, as it shows that the results of research in linguistics can be used to help society cope with real current challenges and it points to several possible areas of future (interdisciplinary) research.

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