

## Book Review

### *UPRT 2017: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics*

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UPRT, which stands for University of Pécs Round Table, is a conference series that came into existence in Hungary, at the University of Pécs, with the primary objective of creating an international forum for the discussion of empirical research in the field of applied linguistics. In addition to providing a venue for researchers to publicize their work, the conference series has spawned an academic publication. A compilation of English-language conference papers presented at the UPRT has been published annually since 2006. Papers can be published in the compilation once they have undergone a double-blind peer-review process. Although the majority of contributors work in or near Hungary, the publication has drawn in research from further afield, including Poland and countries outside Europe such as China and Iran. UPRT compilations are aimed at a wide readership as the research areas featured (e.g., individual differences in language learning) are of interest to an international audience of scholars.

The volume presently under review is *UPRT 2017*, which is comprised of 16 papers that were presented at the UPRT conference in June of 2017. All the papers report on empirical research within the field of applied linguistics, albeit the primary focus is education. In what follows, a subset of the papers will be

briefly reviewed as the critical analysis of all the studies that constitute *UPRT 2017* would be beyond the scope of the present review. The papers can be classified into two broad areas of enquiry: teachers and tertiary education.

A sizeable segment of the research presented in *UPRT 2017* is concerned with teachers, including future teachers who receive pre-service teacher training as well as active classroom practitioners. A paper by Kata Csizér presents the findings of important exploratory research on the language learning experiences and L2 motivation of practicing teachers of English in Hungary. The study fills a niche in that it focused on teachers, whose individual differences – despite having the potential to influence the process of language learning – have received little attention compared to those of language learners. The findings indicate that three major types of experience have influenced the participants' views on language learning and, ultimately, teaching: communicative success experienced whilst using the language, exposure to the language and contact with its speakers, and the teacher's perceptions of their erstwhile language teachers. As this was a qualitative investigation, the findings cannot account for more than the language learning experiences of the participants; nonetheless, the results shed light on aspects of learning that may have implications for teachers and students alike. Csizér points towards a set of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors that highlight the complexity of L2 learning experiences and indicate that L2 learning experiences cannot be conceived of only in terms of attitudes towards the target language. Although the author of the study does not claim to present comprehensive findings, the results may nevertheless be seen as a contribution to individual differences research that may bring about an improved understanding of how L2 learning is conceptualized.

Another study in the volume investigated trainee teachers' willingness and unwillingness to communicate, thereby exploring a different facet of teachers' individual differences. The research, undertaken by Reyhan Yildiz and Katalin Piniel, is unique as it focuses on pre-service teachers in Turkey and attempts to explore the factors that have a bearing on their willingness to communicate in English. The participants were requested to write paragraphs in which they were to describe times when they were willing to communicate and occasions when they were not. The qualitative data were coded and analyzed using computer software. The researchers appear to have taken extra care in that the full set of data, rather than only a subset, was co-coded. However, the fact that the Turkish-language data were translated into English for analysis is likely to have resulted in some loss, irrespective of however earnest an attempt the translator made at preserving meaning. It was found that determinants such as motivation, perceived proficiency in English, self-confidence, or the topic contributed both to the participants' willingness and unwillingness to communicate in English.

Even though the participants of the study represent a narrow segment of the global community of ELT practitioners, some of the findings may be transferrable to similar professional contexts. In addition to determining determinants that exert influence on the inclination of the Turkish participants to communicate in English, the study offers more general pedagogical implications as teachers' willingness to communicate is likely to have an effect on students' willingness to engage in target-language communication.

The volume also includes several papers that report on research related to aspects of university education; this encompasses both English Studies and other disciplines taught in English (i.e., English-medium education). An example of a study on university students is a report on corpus research conducted by Jing Feng, in which the researcher presents an analysis of English-language academic discourse produced by Chinese and Hungarian students. In particular, Feng compiled a 30-text corpus (consisting of three smaller corpora) of MA theses and research papers in order to analyze the frequency with which the student writers make use of interactional metadiscourse markers in their reviews of the literature. One of the contributions that the study makes to academic discourse analysis is its delineation of international differences in the use of metadiscourse markers. Even though Chinese student writers cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group in any sense, the author of the study highlighted some noteworthy patterns of use in the samples. Furthermore, the results of the research draw attention to the interpersonal features of academic writing, indicating a need for these aspects of composition to feature in EAP instruction. Despite the merits of the study, some criticism may be levelled at its approach on the grounds that academic texts produced by "English speaking Anglo-Saxon experts" (p. 296) comprised one of the corpora despite the fact that the researcher aimed to explore "how non-native English writers use metadiscourse markers" (p. 292). Although a comparison between academic writing produced by students and by experienced academics may provide insights into the characteristics of the former, it is not apparent why academics who happen to be non-native English speakers should be excluded from the comparison.

Focusing on international students' personal experiences, Zoltán Krommer carried out research to explore the accounts of 30 international students studying at a medical school in Hungary. The fact that there are large bodies of international students studying at Hungarian universities prompted the researcher to undertake the enquiry as these students have language learning experiences that may differ from those of the domestic students. The participants provided written data (i.e., essays), which were analyzed for emerging themes. Communication difficulties, the importance of social networks, and the need for intercultural adjustment were among the themes that emerged from the data. The research design appears to be in line with the aims of the study; however, the methods

section of the paper could have possibly been made more detailed. For instance, it is explained that the “participants were instructed to write a ‘one-page story’” (p. 277) for the purpose of data collection, but the language in which the students were to write is not specified. The reader can only assume that the written data were collected in English, in which case the dependability of the data may have been somewhat compromised in that the participants had to articulate their views in a language other than their L1. Nevertheless, this should not be seen as a major limitation because the objective of the study, which was to identify broad emerging themes, has been accomplished. The findings are likely to be relevant to ESP professionals and, notably, to teachers of Hungarian for Specific Purposes. The research touches upon several aspects of studying (and living) abroad; therefore, it has implications for educators and for researchers interested in intercultural communication. As the research investigates the experiences of international students in Hungary, the findings are also potentially of relevance to universities in other member states of the European Union.

In summary, *UPRT 2017* presents a collection of peer-reviewed research that may be of interest to a wide readership of applied linguists and language teachers alike. Although the present review examined only a handful of the papers that comprise the compilation, the selection provides a glimpse into the diversity of the studies published in *UPRT 2017*. The book offers up-to-date content that reflects recent developments in applied linguistics. One of the strengths of the volume is that it presents the results of various types (i.e., qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) of empirical research in a readily accessible style. Furthermore, the editors encourage a wider community of scholars to engage with the research presented in the compilation and carry out replication studies in their own contexts of research; this is facilitated by the inclusion of the instruments of data collection used by the authors of the papers. Another feature of *UPRT 2017* which is likely to appeal to a heterogeneous audience is its inclusiveness: The volume includes research studies that concern a range of teaching contexts “from pre-school to young adult language learners” (p. i) and several languages (including, e.g., Chinese, Croatian, Japanese, and Turkish). Despite the multiplicity of content, English remains the main focus of the publication. Because the participants of the studies are non-native speakers of English, some of the findings and issues discussed in the papers can also be associated with the use of English as a lingua franca. *UPRT 2017* is freely available in a downloadable format via Google Books.

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