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Title
Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries by Alison Wray. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, xv+305 pp.

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Researchers in Applied Linguistics have been analyzing how second language proficiency develops through the internalization and use of prefabricated language for decades (Hakuta, 1974; Pawley & Snyder, 1983; Weinert, 1995), but Alison Wray's more recent work has persistently pushed this research agenda forward (e.g., Wray, 2000; Wray & Perkins, 2000; Wray, 2002). Wray's (2002) definition of "formulaic sequences" as multiword units that are stored and retrieved from memory as lexical units has become increasingly important for language teachers, researchers, and testers to understand. Studies have suggested that learning and utilizing formulaic language may help learners at different levels of proficiency build fluency and automaticity (e.g., Wood, 2006; Ding, 2007), begging the more fundamental question: What is the role of formulaic language in language acquisition?

Wray's new book on formulaic language serves as an introduction to major conceptual issues, a review of relevant theoretical models and recent empirical research, and an examination of five key research questions. Part One consists of five chapters that contextualize the major themes of the book by providing definitions and an overview of previous work. After a brief introduction (Chapter 1), the author's conceptualization of formulaic language (Wray, 2002) is summarized in Chapter 2. This chapter details three key claims entailed by the author's view: *The mental lexicon is heteromorphic*; *the content of the lexicon is determined through Needs Only Analysis*; and *morpheme equivalent units allow the speaker to manipulate the hearer*. Chapter 3 then examines the interactions between novel and formulaic language. The importance of formulaic language in oral tradition and its subsequent influence on writing is explored in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 examines factors that may influence the extent to which speech and writing contain formulaic language. Part Two contains four chapters that explore and attempt to integrate relevant concepts, models, and methods in grammatical theory, corpus linguistics, and psycho-social theory. Chapter 6 proposes requirements for a model of language use drawing upon perspectives from these three fields while Chapter 7 evaluates how well current models meet these requirements. Chapters 8 and 9 move on to the problem of identifying formulaic language, first by reviewing current methods and then by proposing an alternative approach based on intuition. After providing an overview of conceptual issues and methodology in Parts 1 and 2, Part 3 details six recent empirical studies completed by the author and her colleagues. These studies examine formulaic language in a variety of language use domains, including machine translation used in a post office (Chapter 10), computer soft-

ware for people with cerebral palsy (Chapter 11), the language learning classroom (Chapters 12, 13), native speakers' use of racial slurs (Chapter 14), and scripted versus improvised speech (Chapter 15). This collection of studies is presented largely without discussion, but serves to further contextualize discussion in Part 4, which draws upon all previously presented material to address five key questions. The first question "Do we use formulaic language by default?" is examined in Chapter 16 and the author suggests that the frequent use of formulaic language is consistent with the view that humans seek to minimize processing demands. Chapter 17 asks "What determines the level of formulaicity in language?" and concludes that speakers may determine appropriate morpheme-equivalent units, or their language use, based on personal and shared identity. Next, the author turns to the questions of "How central is formulaic language in natural language learning by humans?" (Chapter 18) and "How central should formulaic language be when modeling such learning for computers?" (Chapter 19). Finally, the question "Does formulaic language constrain what we say and what we think?" is addressed. This constraint may be self-imposed by learners who perceive prefabricated language as a more reliable path to being viewed as proficient (Chapter 20), or imposed by the nature of formulaic language itself – in other words, 'language as a straightjacket' (Chapter 21). Chapter 22 concludes by again focusing on the benefits of formulaic language in particular language use domains, and suggests additional questions to motivate empirical inquiries.

The theme of 'boundaries' pervades the text and its organization, continually calling the reader's attention to key points of tension. Some of this tension may be traced to the uncertainty inherent in defining key conceptual issues, but the author also examines the boundaries that exist between disciplines (e.g., grammatical theory and corpus linguistics) and elements of language (e.g., novel and formulaic). While the focus on 'boundaries' may seem easy to apply to most theoretical and empirical investigations, it is particularly useful here. The author strives to maintain as broad a perspective as possible, as evidenced in the careful attention paid to research in grammatical theory, corpus linguistics, and cognitive linguistics while simultaneously constraining the discussion in an attempt to build and evaluate an integrative model.

Formulaic Language: Pushing the Boundaries reads as a natural progression of Wray's earlier book *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon* (2002), but is easily accessible to newcomers. The five questions identified should interest a cross-section of language teachers and researchers as the conclusions have implications for models of language use and strategies for language learning, teaching, and assessment. In particular, it will serve researchers well as it pulls methods and research from several fields to offer a contemporary, integrated approach to the problem of identifying formulaic language as part of an empirical investigation.

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