

## English in Malta between EFL and ESL varieties: A comparative corpus-study of lexical innovations

In the context of current research in the field of corpus linguistics that challenges the traditional division between foreign language / learner varieties of English (EFL) and institutionalized second-language varieties of English (ESL) (see e.g. Gilquin 2015), this paper discusses English in Malta on the basis of a comparative corpus-study of lexical innovations and creative coinages in derivational morphology. Data taken from the recently published *Corpus of Learner English in Malta* (CLEM; 2014) will be compared to EFL writing from the *International Corpus of Learner English* (ICLE; Granger et al. 2009) and to similar ESL data from the *International Corpus of English* (ICE; Greenbaum 1996).

The testing ground for examining English in Malta at the interface of these two types of varieties is word formation, a major mechanism for the expansion of vocabulary in a language that involves knowledge of the combinatory properties of affixes and bases. There is surprisingly little research on EFL learners' productive use of derivational morphology. Similarly, studies on word-formation in ESL varieties have been rather sparse (mostly lacking quantitative documentation), or have focused on selected varieties and descriptive accounts of a small number of productive nominal and adjectival suffixes (see e.g. Biermeier 2009, 2014).

The paper adopts a process-oriented approach to EFL and ESL varieties and investigates to what extent they are (for ESL at least in the initial phases) driven by general cognitive processes of first and second language acquisition such as simplicity, regularity, analogy, or isomorphism (Sharma 2012, Schneider 2012). An earlier study of advanced EFL varieties (Callies 2015) based on data from the ICLE confirmed that overgeneralizations and paradigmatic formations (e.g. back-formations) play an important role in learner varieties (see also Plag 2009), while processes such as conversion or subtraction of form seem to be dispreferred. The paper examines if similar processes can be observed for ESL varieties and the type of English featured in the CLEM.

## References

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