

## Foreword

Welcome to the first quarterly issue of 2011 in which we again cover a wide range of topics investigated in many different locations in Asia. Several of these studies illustrate attempts to use new developments in language learning scholarship to improve curriculum.

Dr Mohammed Zaid (*Effectiveness of Organised E-mail Exchanges and Online Reading/Writing on College Students' Literacy Development and their Attitudes towards English: A Study from Saudi Arabia*) explores the effectiveness of organised emailing and webquesting on college students' attitudes towards learning English. His findings indicate that the model is especially effective when integrated with collaborative learning within a "problem-solving inquiry-based learning environment". Improved attitudes towards English were an additional bonus.

Amin Saleh Moheidat & Abdallah Ahmad Baniabdelrahman in *the Impact of Omani Twelfth-Grade Students' Self-Assessment on their Performance in Reading in English* investigate the impact of Omani twelfth-grade students' self-assessment on their performance in reading in English using one-minute papers and rating-scale sheets. The findings indicate that the students' self-assessment had a positive effect on their reading performance in English.

In *EFL in Higher Education: Designing a Flexible Content-Based Curriculum at University-Level*, Zubeyde Sinem Yildiz-Genc emphasizes the need to offer ELT students in higher education more than general proficiency

in English. Her description of a content-based language program at a Turkish university should provide a useful comparison for curriculum developers in other contexts.

In *Effects of L2 proficiency and gender on choice of language learning strategies by university students majoring in English*, Adel Abu Radwan responds to a call by Rebecca Oxford to examine the relationship between LLSs and various factors in a variety of settings and cultural backgrounds. Radwan investigates the use of language learning strategies of 128 students majoring in English at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. The study extends our current knowledge of the relationship between the use of language learning strategies and gender and English proficiency. The findings allow Radwan to suggest that the EFL cultural setting may be one factor that determines the type of strategies preferred by learners.

In an investigation of tertiary-level EFL students, Ayten İflazoğlu Saban and Dilek Yavuz Erkan (*Writing Performance Relative to Writing Apprehension, Self-Efficacy in Writing, and Attitudes Towards Writing: A Correlational Study in the Turkish Tertiary-Level EFL Context*) report a negative correlation between writing apprehension and writing performance and between writing apprehension and writing self-efficacy. The surprising result that would warrant further investigation is the positive correlation between writing apprehension and attitude towards writing. This study again underlines the importance of raising students' levels of confidence to improve their performance.

In *the Role of Portfolio Assessment and Reflection on Process Writing*, Ahmad Sharifi and Jaleh Hassaskhah underline the close link between

language teaching and testing, arguing that it is “impossible to work in either without taking the other into account”. Their present study investigates the effect of using a portfolio assessment technique and reflection activities on students' writings and process writing. Their findings point to a positive effect of the treatment and also reveal that the students' attitude was positive towards portfolio-based learning.

Sun Xiao-zhao & Du Juan (*Understanding the influence of L1 and lexical aspect in temporal acquisition: Quantitative and qualitative studies*) report a mixed-method comparative investigation of Chinese and Japanese EFL learners on the influence of L1 in temporal acquisition. Study one used a written error recognition and correction task whereas study two examined the meta-cognitive process by means of qualitative data obtained from retrospective interviews. L1 influence was found to be an active factor in Japanese learners' progressive marking performance but L1 influence was not found in Chinese learners.

Fatemeh Takallou (*The Effect of Metacognitive Strategy Instruction on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension Performance and Metacognitive Awareness*) uses a multi-method approach to investigate metacognitive strategy instruction in relation to reading comprehension performance (on authentic and inauthentic texts) and metacognitive awareness. They found that instruction on 'planning' and 'self-monitoring' did have an impact on performance and that awareness of metacognitive strategies significantly increased after instruction.

Tzung-yu Cheng (*the Ability of Taiwanese College Freshmen to Read and Interpret Graphics in English*) investigates a topic that is arguably not given

enough attention in language learning publications: the ability of college freshmen to read and understand English graphics. The study finds that the ability to read English itself is a major cause of difficulty, concluding therefore that it is “important to train high school students to read and interpret graphics before they enter college”.

Xiaozhou Zhou and Victoria Murphy, in *How English L2 Learners in China Perceive and Interpret Novel English Compounds*, investigate the way English learners in China interpret novel English noun-noun compounds. Their study “extends the research area into the L2 domain with a view to comparing interpretations of L2 learners with those of L1 children”. Results pointed to overall competence in understanding and interpreting novel English compounds. The differences in performance success between the intermediate and advanced groups were not found to be statistically significant. Possible factors affecting participants’ interpretations and vocabulary teaching implications are discussed at the end of the study.

Hideki Sakai (*Do Recasts Promote Noticing the Gap in L2 Learning?*) reports the effects of implicit negative feedback in the form of recasts on noticing. The participants’ verbal reports about noticing their errors were elicited through stimulated recall. Results suggest that recasts did have an impact on L2 learners’ ability to notice their errors and that merely providing opportunities for production is not likely to have the same impact.