

From the Editor-in-Chief

Now that the *Journal of Asia TEFL* is indexed in SCOPUS, we will continue to seek indexing in other places and further academic recognition. Critical to this is raising the number of citations, a measure commonly used to approximate academic excellence. We should expect to find citations to articles we have published in papers submitted for consideration; this will show connectivity and contribute to building collegiality in our publication. We have also appealed to our regional representatives to nominate more scholars, whether resident in Asia or not, who will share in the review process by serving on the editorial board. It is the editors who guarantee the real quality of the journal, and we welcome offers to serve from senior scholars or suggestions of whom to invite.

Readers might notice that my comments in this editorial raise questions about specific articles. This is part of a growing concern for quality, and suggests that authors might be a little more worried stating conclusions. I mention one bugbear: the interpretation of non-significant results as still favoring one side. In fact, even statistically significant results are often only weak evidence. We need to keep clear the difference between evidence and opinion.

This issue presents another group of fine papers, selected by the editorial team from a large number of offerings. They are as usual well spread in region, and show signs of collaboration across national boundaries. A good number, it will be noted, deal with the nature and teaching of vocabulary, a topic popular in the 1920s and then relatively ignored until quite recently.

Angkana Tongpoon-Patanasorn (Khon Kaen University, Thailand) deals with a key problem in curriculum revision, namely how to train or persuade teachers to adapt innovation. Many years ago, in the heyday of the NDEA in the USA, it was found that intensive summer courses changed teacher's vocabulary but not behavior. In this paper it is found that a change to "learner-centeredness" in the Thai curriculum has still not been understood or

implemented by teachers many years after it was adopted; clearly, a great deal of training is needed, or perhaps better still, curricular changes need to be carried out with full teacher participation.

Although there is a common perception that tutorials and seminars are a better way of teaching at the university level, economic considerations and tradition alike agree in setting lectures as the general mode. A team of teachers from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia (Radha M.K Nambiar, Saran Kaur Gill, Noraini Ibrahim and Tan Kim Hua) reports on a study of how Malaysian university students respond to various styles of lecturing. They favor organized presentations, with some unthreatening calls for student interaction.

The reinvigorated study of vocabulary has been associated also with a growing concern for the relevance to language learning of *collocations*, words that are frequently juxtaposed to each other. In an ambitious and carefully designed study, Ali Roohani (Shahrecord University, Iran) sets out to compare the frequency of collocations in locally produced and British EFL textbooks and to try to trace the influence of any difference. Not surprisingly, the Cambridge series, composed under the direction of the well-known applied linguist Jack Richards has more frequent collocations, but the difference does not reach statistical significance. The study found also that students in private schools using the Cambridge texts did a little better on collocational tests.

A popular solution to the shortage of qualified English teachers produced locally in Asia is to hire native speakers from abroad. The topic is controversial and deserves continued study. Christian Youngwan Shin (from South Korea which has a government policy of inviting English teachers from overseas) explores one interesting aspect of the phenomenon, the problems a group of such teachers had in teaching large classes of engineering students. Some solutions are suggested.

Language teachers, though aiming to produce bilinguals, have long been told to keep the language classroom pure by using and allowing only the target language. This belief, a legacy of the Direct Method fashionable at the

end of the 19th century, is perhaps more honored in the breach than the observance, and obviously ignored in many foreign language classrooms in Asia where the main language is the national language (I was shocked at a classroom where every English sentence spoken by the otherwise fluent teacher and her highly proficient advanced students was immediately translated into the pupil's language).

While little empirical evidence has been produced to support Robert Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and the theory is generally discounted among psychologists, it has been taken up as is not uncommon by educators who hope that it may assist with the challenging task of teaching. Zia Tajeddin (Allameh Tabataba'i University) and Nazila Chiniforoushan (Islamic Azad University) ask whether students' self-reported scores on tests claimed to measure visual intelligence correlate with scores on vocabulary tests. The lack of significant results agrees with the general distrust of the theory, but they still report that their low proficiency students like vocabulary teaching that included pictures.

Idioms are another aspect of vocabulary that presents problems to the language learner and teacher. Zorana Vasiljevic (Bunkyo University, Japan) has carried out a small but suggestive pilot study on whether grouping idioms conceptually, following the semantic theory of Lakoff and Johnson, will assist. Doing this and discussing the arrangement in the students' language, turned out to be helpful.

What are the components of problems of listening comprehension, and can awareness of these problems help overcome them? Zhenghou Zhang of the School of Foreign Languages, Weifang Medical University and Lawrence Jun Zhang of the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore have developed and tested a self-report scale of listening comprehension problems that they hope might help.

In another study of vocabulary, Yongyan Zheng (Fudan University, Shanghai, China) has designed and tried out a test of deep knowledge of English vocabulary that also assesses the influence of native speaker's Chinese.

In a study that connects the provision of translation (or rather glosses of various types) with vocabulary learning, Jonghua Liu of Zhuhai Radio and TV University, China finds no immediate differences in effect among monolingual, bilingual, and multiple choice glosses, but the multilingual exercises do have a long term effect.

Rounding out the issue, a paper by John Trent (Department of English, Institute of Education, Hong Kong) reports on a study of eight Mainland Chinese students who have come to Hong Kong for a teacher education program. It analyzes the language learner identity process in these students, showing common as well as varying tendencies. It contributes thus to the growing research on language study abroad programs.

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Bernard Spolsky

Editor-in-chief and Asia TEFL Publications Executive Director