

From the Editor-in-Chief

The Spring 2009 issue of the ATESL Journal presents a wide range of well-planned and clearly presented papers that illustrate the internationalism as well as the research skills of our contributors.

Mansoor Tavakoli and Behrooz Ghoorchaei, both from Iran, report an exploration of self-assessment of the oral proficiency of a group of Iranian students, but found no correlation between their self-awarded scores and the judgments of one of the researchers: they also found that the students' tendency to taking risks did not correlate with their self-assessments (the test in Farsi included in the appendix attests to the ability of our printer to handle foreign fonts). He An E (trained in China and Australia) and Elizabeth Walker (trained in Australia and Hong Kong), both teaching now in Hong Kong, describe a pioneering study of a corpus of content-based pedagogic monologues (at least 100 words long) of two Chinese speakers teaching science and geography in English-medium high schools. The study shows both the possibility and complexity of capturing the language of the classroom teacher.

Heng-Tsung Danny Huang, current studying in the USA, reports a study of a sample of Taiwanese students at a technological university showing the contribution of previewing to reading comprehension. Li Zhang, Tongshun Wang, and Yue Zheng all teach at universities in China; they analyze the strategies used by a group of university students to deal with communication difficulties. Mansoor Ganji, teaching at a university in Iran, describes a study of correction methods used for 8 weeks with some 50 Iranian students: least effective was correction by teachers, next was self-correction, and best was correction by peers.

Sawako Kato, teaching in Japan, studied the language learning strategies and personality traits of 187 Japanese university students; the results

suggested that an enjoyable and interactive learning environment is beneficial. Yongyan Zheng is studying lexical learning among students in a Hong Kong university: she has interesting findings about progression and the relation between receptive and productive lexicon. Zorana Vasiljevic, a genuine TESOL cosmopolitan who has studied in Serbia, England and Australia and is presently teaching in Japan, describes a pilot study of the effectiveness of a successful approach to teaching vocabulary to adults.

Recalling that these are the carefully selected and edited papers from an even wider range of submissions, we must first congratulate the authors on demonstrating the professional and academic skills required for publication in an international journal, and thank the members of the editorial team who helped in the selection and suggested any needed revisions. But we must not sit back and imply full satisfaction with the quality of the journal, but ask rather how we can continue to improve.

The most apparent limitation of the studies is not in the selection of topic, or the defining of hypotheses to test, or the planning of studies, or the analysis and discussion of results and their implications, all of which show the high quality of the contributors, but in the tentativeness of conclusions determined commonly by the restricted size of the studies in both number and variety of subjects and length of the experiments.

You might fairly say that this is an unreasonable expectation, for our normal contributor is unlikely to have funds available for supporting large-scale research projects by allowing time off teaching or hiring research assistance or paying subjects. How might this be remedied, apart from the provision by sympathetic foundations and governments of generous funds for research, as some of us were fortunate enough to receive in the 1960s and 1970s?

One idea might be to emulate the example of an older international English teachers' group, International TESOL, which established 10 years ago TIRF (The International Research Foundation for English Language Education). I have just been looking at its web site (<http://www.tirfonline.org/index.html>) and notice that among its most generous founders (donors who have donated

over \$75,000 each) are four major testing and publication organizations whose extensive operations in Asia might encourage them to set an example for similar local organizations to start building a regional research fund.

Perhaps the Asia TEFL leadership might be willing to explore this method of funding “a research and development program that will generate new knowledge and inform and improve the quality of English language teaching and learning.” Clearly, anything which would raise the resources to support research will contribute to raising the quality of the work being reported by the Asian cadre of highly qualified scholars and so of the Journal to which they contribute.

Editor-in-chief
Bernard Spolsky