



Foreword

The more information is gathered about L2 learning contexts (formal or informal), the more challenging it becomes to address issues related to learning and acquisition. Research on L2 learning and acquisition in the past two decades has brought to light the fact that L2 acquisition, even in formal contexts, is highly variable. The variables and factors that come into play in the acquisition process are varied, complex and systemic. Communicative approaches breached the way to a deeper understanding that language (learning) is not a set of fixed contents that can be learned (acquired) in a straightforward continuum. Apart from social and psychological variables and factors, we have to take into account variables pertaining to the wider learning context(s). Policies, for instance, can considerably deter, both teachers and students, in their endeavour to develop the necessary skills to better achieve language proficiency.

In general, the articles in the current volume of the Asian EFL Journal bring such issues to our attention and thought.

The first article by Nuttakritta Chotipaktanasook and Hayo Reinders evaluates the importance that Instagram for Thai students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Chotipaktanasook and Reinders conclude that the use of Instagram to share information related to the class, students become more engaging and more confident to communicate in English.

The article by Malcolm Sim and Peter Roger evaluates the impact that both anxiety and beliefs may have for the language learning process by Japanese learners of English. Comparing two groups of students, one learning English in Japan and the other learning English in Australia, the study found that there is no difference in anxiety levels between these two groups. The study also reports that anxiety levels are closely related to the fear students have of making mistakes.

Hawraz Hama's article compares Kurdish pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs. The study is based on the assumption that teachers' beliefs can have a great impact on how they learn how to teach, but also on their perception of educational reforms. The study generally concludes that both groups shared similar beliefs, except for the fact that pre-service teachers considered that knowing the culture of the language they are teaching is important, contrary to what in-service teachers' beliefs on this topic.

Georgiadou's study discusses the role proficiency level, error-tolerance, and speaking habits have on self-repair behavior of Emirati EFL learners. The aim is to assess how elementary and lower-intermediate level students self-repair and monitor spoken speech by applying Kormo's taxonomy of L2 self-repair. The study concludes that even if there are no significant differences in speech monitorization, there is evidence from the results that proficiency does play a role in the choice of lexical and grammatical items.

The last two articles of the current volume discuss national testing systems, both in Korea and China.

Whithehead's article discusses the opinion of in-service teachers on the National English Ability Test, in Korea. The study concludes that even if teachers, in general, perceive the importance of the NEAT, they still express their concern for the fact that the educational system does not provide the necessary conditions for the smooth implementation of the examination. The teachers consider, for instance, that class size needs to be reduced, so that teachers may have the opportunity to help students prepare for the examination.

Qing and Stapleton discuss the university entrance examination in China, the *Gaokao*. The authors stress the fact that some regions in China may be "deemphasizing English in high-stakes tests". Qing and Stapleton contend that such measures by local educational authorities may contribute to the instrumental demotivation of students. Despite such fears, not all students that took part in the study showed negative attitudes regarding the test's washback.

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