

Introduction

Hanh thi Nguyen

Jean Kirschenmann

This issue of the *TESL Working Paper Series* covers the topics of computer assisted language learning, assessment, error analysis, reading for young children, task-based instruction, and project based language learning. The genres of these contributions are also diverse: they range from literature review, empirical studies, and book reviews to teaching activities and lesson plans based on theoretical concepts.

In *Hypertext Literacy: Reading Strategies and Comprehension on the Internet*, Mika Harashima succinctly reviews the features of hypertext in contrast with paper-based text. She also carefully considers the challenges and benefits of hypertext for second language learners. The next paper, on *The Effectiveness of Computer Technology in Vocabulary Development* by Kumi Matsushita Kojima, continues the theme of computer assisted language learning. In this paper, Kojima reported on a small-scale empirical study to investigate quantitatively and qualitatively the effectiveness of using a computer software on the learning of vocabulary.

In another paper, on *Authenticity in Language Assessment*, Yunai “Amy” Wang provides a coherent and practical review of what it means to have authenticity in assessment, and what it takes to design authentic tasks in testing. This focus on assessment is continued in Isuzu “Zuzu” Emura’s book review on assessment for young children, which appears later in this issue. Emura offers a thorough and insightful review of one of the most recent books on this topic.

Dan Van Dao’s paper, *Some Vietnamese Students’ Problems with English Grammar*, presents a detailed account of English and Vietnamese with respect to their use of tense and aspect, the copula, and the position of adverbs in verb and adjective phrases. Dao then reported on a preliminary study

investigating errors in these areas by college students in Vietnam. While most of the errors can be explained by the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957), Dao’s data also suggest that errors may be due to factors other than the students’ native language, such as the complexity of the second language and input frequency. These speculations from his preliminary study can provide a good starting point for further research.

Shifting the focus to a different student population, Rachel Liguzinski reviewed a book on the value of reading aloud to young learners. The book she reviewed, *Reading Magic: Why Reading Aloud to Our Children Will Change Their Lives Forever*, is a popular book mainly for parents of monolingual children. However, Liguzinski is able to link the author’s accessible discussion to theoretical concepts in the teaching of reading skills in second language acquisition.

The remainder of this issue presents teaching ideas that can be taken to the classroom right away. First, the paper by Debra Powers provides a brief overview of task-based instruction. Powers then applied this approach in a teaching unit to help international students accomplish an important task in their lives in the US: mailing a letter or a package at the post office. The second practical piece in this issue is a collection of projects designed on the basis of project based language learning. Following an overview by Professor Hanh thi Nguyen, the projects prepared by Dung thi Nguyen, Nicole Otero, Tai Vo, Dan Van Dao, Danny Spencer, Louis K. Wai, Yi-Jen “Christine” Wang, and Yunai “Amy” Wang cover topics ranging from health awareness to social issues to cultural awareness. The strength of these projects lies in the fact that they connect the language class with students’ real-life needs and concerns. As such, they reach

beyond the walls of the classroom and, in most cases, they can lead to positive changes in the communities where the students live.

We invite the reader to enjoy these works in progress by our students. We

would like to emphasize that these are working papers; further work needs to be carried out to grow the seeds planted in these papers.

Reference

R. Lado (1957). *Linguistics across cultures*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan