

Introduction

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In this 14th volume of the *Hawai'i Pacific University TESOL Working Paper Series*, we welcome a stimulating set of papers, covering from sociolinguistics to second language acquisition, assessment, and materials evaluation. We also continue our “Voices From the Field” collection, which started with a focus on teachers’ voices in the 2015 volume. This time we shine the spotlight on the voices of language learners.

In the first paper, Hanashiro examined how current English textbooks in Japan represent the presence and cultural aspects of countries around the world. The biases in these textbooks, he argued, could impact how students perceive other countries. Continuing the sociolinguistic aspect of language learning and teaching, Hatanaka and Pannell investigated how Japanese users of English perceive English-derived words in contemporary Japanese. Low’s paper offers an intimate look at Pidgin, a creole spoken in Hawai'i, focusing on not only its linguistic features but also its speakers’ complex sociolinguistic attitudes. Together, these papers remind language teachers that language learning involves not only the mastery of language forms, but also an awareness of their social and cultural context.

Wheelock’s paper analyzes the pronunciation errors made by Italian users of English who shared their speech samples on the Accent Archives (<http://accent.gmu.edu/>). Through a careful error analysis informed by a contrastive analysis of the two languages, she was able to identify some possible factors that may affect pronunciation accuracy. Also focusing on second language acquisition, Chi reviewed the role of intake in second language learning and offered practical ideas for applying the research findings in teaching materials design. Choe’s paper drew from research in second language acquisition as well, but with the goal of critically evaluating the commercial Pimsleur’s language learning program. Finally, Phung’s paper provides a comprehensive and critical review of portfolio as a form of alternative assessment before giving concrete examples of how portfolio assessment can be implemented. These papers demonstrate that language teachers can benefit a great deal from insights in second language acquisition research.

The “Voices from the Field” collection brings together the experiences of eight learners, learning Catalan, Yap, Spanish, Italian, and English. From a farm in Andora to a village in Yap, from the parks of Madrid to Pimsleur’s audio tapes, from the streets of Italy to the traditional classrooms of Vietnam, these stories read like fun travel entries, all the while reminding us of the agonies, the struggles, and the excitements that the process of learning a new language may bring. Teaching must be informed by learning, and these learners’ stories offer valuable insights.

We invite readers to join us on these journeys and explorations.



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