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Editorial

Issues in Applied Linguistics continues its commitment to publishing research representing diverse perspectives and research traditions in applied linguistics. This issue, which marks our twelfth year of production, reflects the breadth of our field by bringing together studies of language acquisition, discourse analysis, and language assessment. The articles reflect the interrelatedness of research across these core areas of applied linguistics. A study of child language acquisition from a formal linguistic perspective makes use of naturally occurring language data, reflecting the acquisition researcher's interest in data drawn from authentic discourse. A discourse analytic study of the speaking practices evident in graduate-level university seminars has implications for understanding the competencies needed by speakers, native or nonnative, functioning within such institutional contexts. A language assessment study aimed at defining constructs of coherence and cohesion that can be used to assess the writing of elementary school children draws on, and ultimately adds to, our understanding of the discourse analytic concepts of coherence and cohesion in written texts. It is not that the authors of these studies, or we as editors, set out to show such connections, but rather that these connections exist and are reflected in the crosscutting orientations and implications of research projects working from diverse goals and paradigms. That said, these articles also deserve to be considered on their own terms.

Working within a formal linguistic framework, John Grinstead examines the development of question formation in four Catalan children. He finds that the onset of adult-like Wh- question formation appears to correlate with the onset of production of a much wider variety of tense morphology. Grinstead suggests that children need to acquire contrastive tense features in order to make available a structural attachment site for the Wh- feature which enables the formation of Wh-questions. On a broad level, this study suggests that understanding question formation in more detail in first language acquisition may contribute insight into the theoretical enterprise of developing a theory of linguistic cognition. Since it makes use of naturally occurring language data, this paper additionally provides a basis for comparative study of such areas as bilingual development and impaired language development.

Hansun Zhang Waring's conversation-analytically informed study examines the discursive practices used for accomplishing disagreement and critique by participants in a graduate-level seminar discussion. Waring analyzes ways that novice seminar participants are able to both acknowledge another participant's viewpoint and simultaneously build a critique of that viewpoint within a single turn-at-talk within the institutional context of seminar discussions. This study adds to a small but rich tradition of analysis of discourse in academic meetings, and its findings

furthermore provide a valuable source for language educators concerned with the teaching of appropriate discourse practices to nonnative speakers engaged, or preparing to engage, in discussion within such academic settings.

We are especially pleased to offer our readers a special focus on language assessment in this issue. The later part of the issue includes a study examining the constructs of coherence in written discourse as well as interviews with two leaders in the areas of language testing and assessment research. Jungok Bae's study of coherence and cohesion addresses the practical but thorny problem of assessing the writing of elementary school students in a two-way bilingual immersion program, as well as those in English-only classes, through the use of a picture-based narrative writing task. Her study analyzes actual writing samples of such students in order arrive at quantifiable constructs for measuring cohesion and coherence, as well as for understanding their overall relationships to grammar and content. By using both monolingual and bilingual speakers in the study, Bae is able to shed some light on how the relationships among these elements of written text may be understood to be a part of an emerging ability in narrative writing across children with different linguistic backgrounds. This study has implications not only for the assessment of the writing of students in two-way immersion programs, but also for understanding the ways in which tests conceive of and measure writing ability more generally.

We are also fortunate to include in this issue interviews with two important figures in the field of language assessment, Charles Alderson and Dorry Kenyon. In these interviews, Viphavee Vongpumivitch and Nathan Carr explore current and emerging issues in the field of assessment as well as practical problems faced by language test developers within the constraints of real-world test projects. Among the highlights of the interview with Charles Alderson are a discussion of his seminal work on washback theory as well as his experiences with and views on the challenges and advantages of computer-based and web-based testing. Dorry Kenyon discusses a range of test development projects, including several related to the ACTFL scale of oral proficiency in foreign languages. He offers valuable insights into the issues and challenges faced in the development and validation of second and foreign language tests with the resources and constraints presented by various institutions seeking tests to use for particular purposes.

Finally, we would like to add that this issue of *ial* marks our third and final issue as co-editors. In addition to the range of new and developing research we have become acquainted with over the past two years, we have learned first-hand that the publication of a journal is a truly collaborative effort. The publication of this journal depends not only on the research of our many contributors, but also on the effort of many reviewers who contribute their time and judgment to the development of manuscripts, as well as the journal's staff, who put countless hours into keeping the organization running. Without the efforts of our graduate student staff, who volunteer their valuable time, *ial* could not remain in production issue after issue and year after year. We also want to welcome the new editors, Debra Fried-

man and Emmy Goldknopf, who have worked on the journal in various capacities over the past years. The next issue, Volume 12.2, will be their first at the helm as editors. We wish them the best of luck in carrying forward the long tradition of this student-run journal and look forward to the issues of *ial* yet to come.

June 2001

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