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Editorial

This is a special theme issue focusing on nonnative discourse. In addition to our general issues that publish a wide range of applied linguistics research, from time to time *ial* publishes special thematic issues to bring together emerging research and perspectives on particular areas of applied linguistics. Special topics in the past have included neurobiology of language, ethical issues of applying linguistics, applied linguistics and education, applied linguistics from an East Asian perspective, sociolinguistics and language minorities, discourse based perspectives on second language acquisition, and the organization of participation.

This issue's focus, nonnative discourse, is motivated in part by an increasing interest among applied linguists in looking at the details of nonnative speaker participation in interaction in natural social contexts, including such research perspectives as micro-ethnography and ethnography of speaking (Rampton, 1995; van Lier, 1988), socio-cultural theory (Hall, 1993; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Ohta, in press), and conversation analysis (Markee, 2000). There have also been challenges to psychometric and experimental SLA research posed from an ethnomethodological perspective (Markee, 1994; Firth & Wagner, 1997) and discussion of the ways micro-sociological approaches to interaction intersect with notions of context in SLA (Tarone, 2000).

In recent years, research in conversation analysis has increasingly expanded from its roots in ordinary conversation to include research on interaction in institutional contexts such as doctor-patient interactions, courtroom discourse, 911 emergency calls, and classroom discourse (Drew & Heritage, 1993), and conversation analytic work has also emerged on interaction and language disorders (Wootton, 1997).

At the same time, many societies around the world are becoming increasingly multilingual and multicultural due to immigration, international business, and electronic communications. Interactions involving nonnative speakers are an everyday occurrence in the US and many countries where people of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds come into contact, not only in schools and government offices, but across the work and social dimensions of day to day life. While research on cross-cultural communication, foreigner talk, interlanguage pragmatics, and genre analysis offers valuable insights, there is still little research on the micro-interactive organization of encounters between nonnative speakers and their co-participants as they unfold in everyday life. It is our hope that the research brought together in this issue will make a contribution to our understanding of nonnative discourse and help to stimulate interest in further research across a variety of social contexts.

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As a step toward the understanding of naturally occurring nonnative speaker interactions, this issue includes research on diverse kinds of speakers and discourse: it includes research looking at both native speaker-nonnative speaker (NS-NNS) interaction, which is by its nature cross-cultural communication, and nonnative speaker-nonnative speaker (NNS-NNS) interaction, or *lingua franca* talk; it includes both conversational and institutional discourse; it includes nonnative speakers of English and Japanese; and it includes data collected in foreign language and second language contexts. Mardi Kidwell looks at interactions between ESL students and English speaking staff at the front desk of a language institute. Yuri Hosoda looks at Japanese conversations between native and nonnative speaking peers. Donald Carroll looks at English conversations among Japanese low level English students in Japan. The fact that all the articles are conversation analytic in approach provides a unified focus for the issue, though this is a result of serendipity, more an artifact of how the issue naturally evolved, than any editorial plan. The interview with Schegloff on issues regarding the use of conversation analysis to study nonnative discourse rounds out this special issue, and further contributes to an overall theme of conversation analysis and nonnative discourse. David Olsher's introduction to the issue considers the nonnative discourse theme in the context of a broad range applied linguistics research and makes a case for an expanded body of research that is guided by a micro-interactional perspective on nonnative discourse, rather than in service of other research areas.

While we feel that conversation analysis is a valuable analytic tool for studying talk and interaction with much to contribute to our understanding of nonnative discourse, we want to emphasize that the purpose of this issue is to encourage research on the details of naturally occurring nonnative discourse more generally, including, for example, work from the perspectives of linguistic anthropology and the ethnography of communication.

Our upcoming general issue (December, 2000) promises to include articles reflecting a wide range of applied linguistic research interests. We are currently considering future special theme issues on areas that have not been so well represented in *ial* in recent years, such as language assessment, language acquisition, language disorders, and language policy. As a student-run publication housed in a department of applied linguistics, we hope to bring forward a wide range of research ideas and approaches, with a continued emphasis on interdisciplinary work. We also see it as part of our mission to foster the development of graduate students and new researchers, so we welcome your submissions and ideas for future issues.

June 2000

David Olsher
Leah Wingard

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