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Editorial

In this issue, we present three articles that sample the varied scope of research in the field of applied linguistics. They range from culture-bound behavioral analysis to the evaluation of language production. More specifically, the first article examines the influence of individual differences of working memory in the development of speech production; the second article addresses the acquisition of certain grammatical structures of French, namely irrealis, by Irish learners; and the third article examines the so-called reticent participation behavior of East Asian students of English.

A current hot topic in the field of applied linguistics is the influence of individual differences on various aspects of second or foreign language acquisition. In the first article, Weissheimer and Mota draw a correlation between individual differences in working memory and the development of speech production in a second language. The authors analyze data collected from tests applied to thirty-two undergraduate students of English as a foreign language in Brazil. Based on a working memory test and on a speech generation test conducted two months after the first test, the test takers' performance was analyzed in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. Among other findings, Weissheimer and Mota show that span improvement was not related to language proficiency and that lower span test takers demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in working memory. Another conclusion derived from this data is that span test predicted fluency and complexity in participants' L2 speech but was not a good indicator of speech accuracy.

Our second article addresses the acquisition of grammatical structures in a second or foreign language. Howard reminds us of the challenge of learning the structural nuances of a foreign language, which is widely accepted to be more or less demanding depending on the learners' first language, on other linguistic abilities, prior exposure, and their level of proficiency in the target language. In this article, Howard presents a quantitative analysis of the morphological expression of irrealis through the conditional in spoken L2 French by advanced Irish learners. The author disproves the assumption that the conditional is acquired at a later stage of French acquisition by demonstrating its frequent use by advanced learners.

The participation behaviors of East Asian students in English-speaking classroom settings are a widely discussed and controversial topic in applied linguistics and language teaching. Researchers have identified a variety of factors that affect these students' tendencies toward reticence, including students' attitudes, language proficiency, and learning styles. Reporting on a two-year study of seven East Asian graduate students, the third article builds on this research by examining the situational factors that prevent students from participating, the strategies that students use to get themselves to participate, and the situated moments that signal when students are indeed ready to participate. Analyzing data from questionnaires,

semi-structured interviews, and observations, Saihua Xia uses grounded theory to identify five reasons why students struggle to participate, ranging from self-pressure to conceptual fluency; eight production strategies, including borrowing peers' strategies and monitoring one's own participation behaviors; and four moments signaling readiness to participate, such as noticing that interlocutors wait for "slow" responses. Xia's attention to a complex mix of factors—situational, affective, cognitive—enriches our understanding of how English learners become competent participants in English-speaking classroom settings and calls for teaching materials targeted to the specific challenges and strategies identified.

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