

Editor's note

As STEPHEN STOYNOFF points out in his state-of-the-art review of four major international ESOL examinations, more than 500,000 examinees take each of these tests annually, making them among the most widely used ESOL examinations in the world. The inferences and decisions made with the scores from these tests have significant consequences for examinees, score users, and society. Thus, his review will contribute to the professional discourse in several ways: by providing a context for discussing some of the fundamental considerations and persistent issues in language assessment, by demonstrating how language testing research and concerns for test consequences are affecting the test design and validation activities related to these four extremely influential assessments of L2 ability, and above all by encouraging a thorough consideration of important aspects of these high-stakes assessments. The paper is accompanied by a comparative review of books by CHRISTINE COOMBE.

ALISTER CUMMING, in his Research Timeline on the assessment of academic writing in foreign and second languages, looks at a number of historical trends and makes the timely reminder that, while since the early 20th century many progressions and differentiations have appeared, many of today's typical methods of writing assessment were already well established in education and other institutions.

Our research survey strand of recent research in second languages other than English focuses on L2 German. During the past decade there has been a steady increase in the amount of empirical research into the teaching and learning of L2 German. However, in the period covered, this growth has been exceptionally distinctive, not just in terms of the sheer number of publications, but also with regard to their theoretical and methodological sophistication. JOHANNES ECKERTH, KAREN SCHRAMM and ERWIN TSCHIRNER present the first of a two-part review focusing here on studies on the acquisition of grammatical and pragmatic categories and followed by the characteristics of the individual learner and their role in language learning.

Our plenary speech section presents a paper by STEVEN THORNE from the University of Wisconsin–Madison Language Institute invited lecture series and an address by ANGELA SCARINO to the TESOL Research Network at the University of Sydney. Thorne focuses primarily on issues relating to 'community' in the context of Internet-mediated scenarios and processes through the presentation of three case studies. Scarino presents a description of language learning within an intercultural orientation and a model for understanding assessment. Basing her argument on the experience of ongoing studies, she investigates assessment of the intercultural capability in learning languages and in international education.

JOHANNES ECKERTH presents an approximate replication of Foster's (1998) study on the negotiation of meaning. The replication study duplicates the methods of data collection and data analysis of the original study, but alters the target language (L2 German) and adds

a stimulated recall methodology. Eckerth partially confirms Foster's results, and introduces some further differentiated findings.

In the Research in Progress section, ROSEMARY WILDSMITH-CROMARTY reports on research into the use of the African languages for academic purposes presented on the occasion of the launch of the new AILA Africa regional network.

The Editor and Board of *Language Teaching* learned with great sadness of the passing of Dr. Subarna Banerjee in July 2008. Subarna – along with her co-author Amir H. Soheili-Mehr – had been commissioned to write the comparative review of books on native and non-native speakers of English (*Language Teaching* 41.3 – July 2008) but illness meant that she was unable to work on the project beyond the early stages.