Christopher Brumfit Thesis Award

Christopher Brumfit Ph.D./Ed.D. Thesis Award 2012

The Editor and Board of *Language Teaching* are pleased to announce that the winner of the 2012 Christopher Brumfit thesis award is DR JIM RANALLI. The thesis was selected by an external panel of judges based on its significance to the field of second language acquisition, second or foreign language learning and teaching, originality and creativity and quality of presentation.

Dr. Ranalli's Ph.D. thesis was entitled *The VVT Project: A web-based platform for strategy instruction and research into self-regulated learning in L2 vocabulary*. The focus of this thesis is a web-based second language (L2) instructional resource called VVT (*Virtual Vocabulary Trainer*) designed to teach integrated vocabulary depth of knowledge and dictionary referencing skills to tertiary-level learners of English as a Second Language. The findings provide evidence of the feasibility of automated, online strategy instruction for complementing teacher-led forms, while also shedding light on the challenges many L2 learners face in self-directed learning of vocabulary depth of knowledge. The thesis also demonstrates the potential of an integrative, multicomponential model of self-regulation for researching and theorising about L2 learning. The external referees remarked of the thesis that 'the candidate succeeds well in framing the research problem and situating the study in both the research literature and real-world challenges of developing proficiency in vocabulary. Moreover, he provides a cutting-edge treatment of the potential and possible constraints of virtual environments as part of the research problem. . .and presents the work in a highly accessible and coherent writing style'.

Dr. Ranalli completed his thesis at Iowa State University, USA under the supervision of Professors Volker Hegelheimer and Carol Chapelle.

This year's runner-up was DR ANKE LENZING with a thesis entitled *The development of the grammatical system in early second language acquisition* at the University of Paderborn, Germany and supervised by Professor Manfred Pienemann. The study focuses on an explanatory account of the mental grammatical system and its development in early L2 learners of English. In order to account for both syntactically and semantically ill-formed utterances produced by these learners, she proposes specific hypotheses concerning the early L2 grammatical system which are based on Lexical-Functional Grammar and Processability Theory.

The examiners remarked that it is 'a highly impressive thesis which advances our understanding of children's early L2 development at primary school. The findings deserve to be taken seriously and made available in suitable ways for a wide readership that

goes well beyond the specific community of SLA researchers. The detailed argument is developed with exemplary clarity. The way in which the thesis is structured makes it easy for the reader to find their way about, and data are presented in a very user-friendly manner'.

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Aim To recognise doctoral thesis research that makes a significant and original contribution to the field of SLA and/or foreign/second language teaching and learning.

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Eligibility To be considered for the award:

- The candidate's institution must have accepted the thesis for the PhD/Ed.D. NO MORE THAN TWO YEARS BEFORE the date of the award application.
- The research must have been completed as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree or its equivalent at a university.
- Although the thesis under consideration must be in English, the research may be related to work concerning any second/foreign language.
- Candidates should not have applied for the award on a previous occasion.

Application Process In the first instance, applicants must submit the following:

- **Two files**: ONE MS WORD FILE CONTAINING A SUMMARY OF THE THESIS, not to exceed 17 double-spaced pages, with references, font size 12, AND A SEPARATE MS WORD FILE CONTAINING A 150-WORD ABSTRACT of the thesis. Both files should be clearly labelled with the candidate's name. Neither file sent should exceed 2 MB.
- Care should be taken in drafting the summary so that the referees are provided with as detailed a report as possible on the work undertaken. Candidates should prepare the text for an audience that may not be expert in all the specific concepts or methods used in your specialist topic area.
- The summary should include a brief description of the theoretical background of the research and (where appropriate) specify the research questions, the research methods (including data analyses) used and why these were chosen, the results and implications of these outcomes. Examiners will pay particular attention to: whether the study makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge and understanding of the field concerned; whether the problem tackled emerges naturally and clearly from the review of the theoretical background of the research; whether the method is presented in sufficient detail and with enough explanation of why the methods used were chosen; whether the analytic methods used are justified and shown to be sufficient for the task