

## Christopher Brumfit Ph.D./Ed.D. Thesis Award 2008

### **Sponsored by Cambridge University Press and promoted by *Language Teaching***

The Editor and Board of *Language Teaching* are pleased to announce that the recipient of the 2008 Christopher Brumfit Thesis Award is Dr ANDREA BORBÉLY HELLMAN.

Dr Hellman's Ed.D. thesis, entitled 'The limits of eventual lexical attainment in adult-onset second language acquisition', was selected by an external panel of judges based on its significance to the field of second or foreign language learning and teaching, originality and creativity and quality of presentation. The study investigates whether adult-onset second language (L2) learners achieve native level vocabulary after decades of immersion. A series of vocabulary tests were given to three groups of participants: highly educated and successful adult-onset learners of English, monolingual English speakers, and bilingual native speakers of English. Overall, the native speakers outperformed the non-native speakers; however, the rate of native-like achievement was remarkably high among the successful adult-onset learners, which indicated that native level L2 vocabulary was attainable even in adulthood.

The external referees remarked that the study makes an 'original and valuable contribution to an area of research of considerable theoretical and practical interest, namely the role played by age in L2 acquisition. Most of the SLA research on this issue has investigated grammatical or phonological competence, so Hellman's study is noteworthy in being one of only a few that focus on lexical attainment'. It was further observed that 'the study is well theoretically-informed and well designed, with a careful and insightful analysis, making use of statistical tools in a sophisticated way to support it'.

Dr. Hellman completed her dissertation at the Boston University School of Education, USA, under the supervision of Dr Shanley Allen, Dr Mary Catherine O'Connor, Dr Marnie Reed and Dr John Read.

This year's runner up was Dr. YOUNGHEE SHEEN. Her Ph.D. thesis, 'Corrective feedback, individual differences, and the acquisition of English articles by second language learners', was presented at the University of Nottingham, UK, under the supervision of Dr Zoltán Dörnyei. It was singled out for praise for its 'extraordinarily well written and organized nature' and the fact that 'it makes an original and strong contribution to the instructed L2 acquisition literature investigating the effects of corrective feedback on L2 development. Another innovation is that the researcher examined individual learner variables and the extent to which they mediated the effects of different types of corrective feedback on L2 learning'.