

○ EDITORIAL

We are pleased to present the second issue of ARAL for 2013. This issue has a second language learning slant with papers on learning of Chinese characters, English phoneme differences and effects of willingness to communicate. It also showcases a systematic-functional cross-cultural analysis of stance in newspaper reports.

In a study on vocabulary acquisition in Chinese as a foreign language, Michael Harrington and Wenying Jiang investigated learners' recognition of the forms of Chinese characters and words romanized in pinyin without focusing on semantic meaning. Learners were exposed to new words and later asked to indicate whether they had encountered the word before. Harrington and Jiang found that learners were able to recognize word forms, which raises interesting issues for Chinese as a foreign language instruction.

Gary Linebaugh and Thomas Roche report a form-focused approach to training learners' phonemic discrimination. They administered productive practice in distinguishing /b/ and /p/ in English to native Arabic speaking students and compared them with a group who only received aural exposure to these phonemes. The experimental group clearly outperformed the control group and learners in the experimental group maintained their gains on a delayed post-test.

Catherine Cao undertook a longitudinal qualitative study on an individual difference factor that has been gaining currency: willingness to communicate (WTC). She collected observational and self-report data from a group of migrant ESL learners over a 20-week period, and supplemented this group data with an in-depth case study of a learner. She demonstrates that WTC is dynamic rather than an immutable trait and fluctuates in the short and long term.

Also investigating WTC, Denise Cameron takes a somewhat different approach. She conducted in-depth interviews with Iranian migrants to New Zealand and identified six individual difference factors that impact the speakers' willingness to communicate. Similar to Cao, she also found that WTC is dynamic and not a fixed trait.

Lian Liu and Marie Stevenson analysed reports on the 2008 Sichuan earthquake from an Australian newspaper, an Australian-Chinese newspaper and a Chinese newspaper. They found notable differences in stance, with the Australian paper focusing on the overall situation while the Chinese paper and (to a somewhat lesser extent) the Australian-Chinese paper focused on assessing the participants and their behaviour during the aftermath of the earthquake. They relate their findings to the socio-cultural contexts of the papers' readership.

The issue concludes with two book reviews. As always, we welcome submissions, especially empirical studies on any aspect of Applied Linguistics. Please send submissions to our email address araleditor@gmail.com. The next and final issue of 2013 will be guest edited by Gillian Wigglesworth and entitled “Kids, Creoles and Classrooms”.

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Co-Editors