

Editorial

"If and when all the factors for successful language learning fall into place..."

The success of a language learning endeavour benefits from receiving the right stimuli and is heavily dependent on a number of factors. Other than factors internal to the individual learner, such as those which Ellis (1985, p. 10) called the "five general factors that contribute to individual learner differences", namely (1) age, (2) attitude, (3) cognitive style, (4) motivation and (5) personality, there are many more external and circumstantial factors that play a big role. Circumstantial factors include the ones that we have all become familiar with in the current pandemic situation: while we language teachers were still lamenting about how helpless we were feeling with regards to the absence of a physical classroom, many students as well as would-be language learners have since emerged *en masse* in the cyberspace, transferring their language learning activities from the real world to the virtual one. Even online language learning resources, including the new bite-sized ones seen on some social media networks, have mushroomed more quickly than ever in these past two years. The spike in language learning interests is indeed universally palpable; it just takes a simple inquiry on the Google Trend website with a search of the two-word phrase *learn language* to generate a graph showing that an unprecedented spike worldwide in the number of Google searches involving these words at occurring around April 2020 — the month which arguably coincided with the time when "social distancing" and "stay home stay safe" became universal catchphrases.

The articles included in the current issue reflect precisely this undeniable importance of external and environmental factors at play in foreign language education: indeed, if we can attribute the success of language learning experiences to [both internal and external factors], then surely the same can also be said about the achievements in teacher education, whether during the initial teacher training phase, or subsequently in their in-service professional development phase. Specifically, this issue offers views from the perspectives of both students and teachers, with contexts as varied as those of secondary and tertiary educational levels, and from countries in at least three (or some may say four) continents, namely Indonesia, Vietnam, Turkey, Jordan and Colombia. The external factor may just be the provision of a language preparatory course for students preparing to study abroad, or the introduction of an educational project that puts the student at the centre of his learning. These examples are illustrated in the opening articles of this volume, which we will now introduce:

The opening article by **I Putu Indra Kusuma (pp. 5–17)** "*Speaking issues faced by Indonesian students during classroom discussions in the US*" focuses on ESL/EFL Indonesian students during their studies in American universities, where they are often required to be involved in oral discussions as part of their courses. By analyzing the perceptions that they had of their own oral language skills, the author revealed that many non-native speakers of English found it challenging to participate in the same manner as would be expected of a native English-speaking student. Those surveyed pinpointed the source of their uneasiness in classroom discussions in terms of their inability to confidently demonstrate lexical knowledge and grammatical mastery, while citing anxiety as a non-negligible stumbling block. In the light of these findings, the author advocated strongly for the need to concentrate more efforts in equipping language preparatory programs with stronger emphasis on oral skills and on grammatical and vocabulary knowledge for Indonesian students intending to embark on an overseas study program conducted in a foreign language like English.

The second article (pp. 18–37) brings us to the transcontinental country of Turkey, where **Ali and Birgen İşik** conducted an innovative experiment involving the use of student-generated stories as readers for high school EFL students. Their objective was to find out to what extent the awareness that they were reading texts created by their peers would affect their English language development and attitudes towards the language learning. A rather detailed analysis and comparison between the students who read peer-generated work versus the control group that were given ready-made readers indicated that reading texts that their peers wrote gave them a boost in self-confidence, improved their satisfaction

of their language development, and made them feel empowered about their ability to achieve what they would have otherwise not imagined themselves to be capable of. All in all, the article confirms the idea that student-centeredness is an essential key ingredient in any language learning course.

The third article (pp. 38–59) by **Son Van Nguyen and Anita Habòk**, turns our attention to the language teacher as an external factor of language learning; the authors investigate the extent to which ESL students in Vietnam regard the language teacher as an impactful figure using a 8-item BTR (Beliefs about Teachers' Roles) scale that had been validated in earlier studies. Surveying more than 1500 university students majoring in a subject other than English, it turned out that the Vietnamese students tended to regard their teacher as the centre of their language learning experience, a view which very also correlated with the students' gender (more males than females felt this way) and inversely correlated with the students' achievement levels.

In the fourth article (pp. 60–73) entitled *Do Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) help Indonesian teachers shape their professional development virtually?*, **Yansyah** from Universitas Muhammadiyah raises the question about the effectiveness of online instruction as compared to a purely face-to-face one in the particular case of teacher education, and more specifically that of in-service professional development training courses. Based on the assumption that the effectiveness of any course can be measured by the types and extent of post-course changes observed in teaching practice of the course participants, the author argued that these courses, when enriched with immediately reusable and practical teaching ideas or content, do indeed enable teachers to reflect on and to revise their own teaching strategies and methodologies accordingly.

The last two articles of this issue are contributions from our French-speaking colleagues in two different continents. The fifth article (pp. 74–89) by **Nisreen Abu Hanak** from The University of Jordan, entitled *La pédagogie du projet dans un contexte universitaire : exemple d'application dans un cours de français du tourisme et de l'hôtellerie* [Project-based learning at the university-level: example of application to a course on French for tourism and hospitality] provides an insightful evaluation of a project-based learning (PBL) approach as applied to a French course for students intending to work in the hospitality and tourism service sectors, while the last article (pp. 90–113) by **Fanny Janneth Baquero** entitled *Le stage pédagogique pour futurs enseignants de français langue étrangère en Colombie: un coup de projecteur sur la perception des stagiaires* [The teacher training internship for future teachers of French as a foreign language in Colombia: Spotlight on the perceptions of teacher trainees] shares with us how the results of a survey on trainee teachers' views about their experience could be used as a benchmark for assessing the effectiveness of the teacher training programme, while serving as useful reference notes for future courses.

The issue closes with the review of two recently published books, one on English language teaching (pp. 114–116) which was reviewed by **Ka Long Roy Chan** of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and another on English language learning (pp. 115–117) whose review was offered by **Yulia Hapsara** and **Winda Sari** from Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia.

I hope this collection of articles and book reviews will be of interest to our readers and on behalf of the editorial board, I would like to express our gratitude for your continuing support as we continue to look forward to receiving quality submissions for publication in subsequent issues.

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Bibliographical reference

Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press