Editorial

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Volume 19(1) the first issue for 2013 houses 9 scholarly works on reading, writing, translation, the research article genre, differentiated instruction, Malaysian English, rhetorical strategies in political speeches and a literary text by academics from various parts of Southeast Asia.

Reading comprehension and the variables that impact on it have been investigated in numerous ways by researchers from all parts of the world. What we do understand today is that many variables can influence how a reader makes meaning from a text and these can vary from structural, linguistic, cultural, and social features. In *Revisiting the Role of Linguistic Complexity in ESL Reading Comprehension*, Jessie S. Barrot explores the linguistic variable, focusing on syntactic and lexical features. The writer proposes using lexical features to determine text readability and reading comprehension ability, because when the these features are complex, the readers find it more difficult to process narrative text. Barrot reminds us that while syntactic features are often viewed as a factor that can influence reading comprehension, these features can have an erratic pattern and as such may not be helpful in the process of aiding reading. The findings have implications for the selection of reading materials and suggest that selection of narrative texts should focus on lexical features while expository texts should be used to focus on syntactic features. This would ensure that sufficient emphasis is given to the two linguistic components that influence ESL reading comprehension.

Like reading, the writing skill has also had a huge impact on the field of language teaching and learning. The writing skill remains elusive to many language learners who struggle to write clearly and creatively. Cohesive devices have always been useful to investigate writing, whether in the L1 or L2 and Halliday and Hassan's(1976) taxonomy have featured in many studies on cohesion. Anongnad Petchprasert reports on one such study and concludes that writers use cohesive markers to ensure ideas flow smoothly when faced with syntax and lexicon limitations. *A Study of Cohesive Markers used in L1 and L2 Essay Writing: Translation versus Direct Composition* reveals that writers use more personal reference and demonstratives in direct composition. Petchprasert also claims that for translation, writers rely more on L1 rhetorical organization and language features in constructing L2 written texts.

While the use of tools like cohesive devices may prove beneficial in enhancing the writing skill researchers have also debated on whether writing should be an individual or collaborative work (Knowles & Hennequin 2004). Shokoufeh Ansarimoghaddam and Tan Bee Hoon compare essays written via face to face collaboration in class and with wiki. In *Co-constructing an Essay: Collaborative Writing in Class and on Wiki* they found that both wiki and face to face collaborative writing do improve individuals' essays but wiki was a more useful tool. When considering the three stages of writing; planning, drafting and revising, the wiki had a greater impact on the second and third stages as students had more

time to think and develop their ideas and were able to provide comments on each other's work easily. The writers claim perhaps the best way to teach writing is to blend face-to-face collaboration with the use of wiki.

Translation has a key role in helping to disseminate knowledge about religious texts and this is undertaken with the understanding that it is not only the translation between languages but also between cultures that matters. A good translator is one who can bring to the translated text the culture that shapes and molds the religious text. *The Trace of Translators' Ideology: A Case Study of English Translations of the Qu'ran* by Ameneh Mohaghegh and Hossein Pirnajmuddin looks at the effect of a translator's ideology on the translated text. Focusing on the translations of four translators, an Iranian Muslim, an English Muslim and two English Christians, the writers argue that translation is an important means of communicating with one another in a cultural diverse world. However, a translator's impartiality can be visible in the paratexts such as the introduction or preface, evaluative footnotes and even the book cover and can even be unfair. This is even more marked when the translator is not a Muslim in which case his translation will be ideologically based depending on his perception of Islam and its social context.

Bhatia (1993) posits genre analysis aims at explaining language in use rather than linguistic forms on the surface level. Genre analysis of research articles serves to contribute to a deeper understanding of how information is structured in a text and how it serves the needs of specific discourse communities. Mohsen Khedri, Seyed Jamal Ebrahimi, and Chan Swee Heng examine the research article genre in *Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in Academic Research Article Result and Discussion Section* in the disciplines of English Language Teaching, Civil Engineering, Biology and Economics. They present a mapping of interactional metadiscourse markers in the Research Article genre to highlight standards and norms of argumentation in academic writing. The findings do not conclude any major differences in the use of metadiscourse markers according to the four disciplines. The writers however, argue that knowing how to write this section will help writers gain entry into any discourse community and publish their work in international leading journals to attain the recognition and academic identity they need.

Differentiated instruction is based on the understanding that what students learn and how they demonstrate what they understand is linked to their interests, experiences and preferred way of learning. Parviz Alavinia and Tahereh Sadeghi's paper *The Impact of Differentiated Task-Based Instruction via Heeding Learning Styles on EFL Learners' Feasible Proficiency Gains* sets out to establish the importance of differentiated instruction (DI) on helping improve learners' proficiency. Unlike some of the works they reviewed (Alavinia & Farhady 2012, Tulbure 2011) they did not find any significant differences in proficiency gains among the EFL learners but do attempt to shed some light on the area of DI for future researchers.

Aspects of the Verbal System of Malaysian English and Other Englishes by Peter Collins and Xinyue Yao reports on a corpus based study of verbal categories in Malaysian, British, Singaporean, Philippine and Hong Kong English. The writers worked on two corpora comprising the Inner Circle varieties of British English and American English with four corpora comprising the Outer Circle varieties of Malaysian, Singapore, Philippine and Hong Kong English to explore how patterns of usage are shaped by sociocultural factors and local linguistic patterns. They conclude that Malaysian English is more linguistically orientated towards American English rather than British English, and the colloquial features have yet to be accepted in formal contexts.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the counterpart of both logic and politics and referred to it as the ability to recognize persuasion in speech. Political speeches have been studied widely to underscore how language is used to inform, persuade and motivate audiences. *Manipulative Rhetoric and Post-war Reconstruction in President Johnson-Sirleaf's First Inaugural Address* by Adeyemi Adegoju draws attention to how rhetorical strategies are used to exert a similar influence in political speeches. Using a Critical Discourse Analysis lens the writer focuses on the manipulative nature of the discourse and discerns how the political speaker exercises control on issues of social representation in politics.

In *Henry James and the New Woman: A Feminist Reading of the Bostonians* Pyeaam Abbasi explores the anti-feminist stance in the novel and situates the novel at a time when men were superior to women and only heterosexual bonds were accepted. Pyeaam Abbasi notes that James tries hard to appear disinterested in women's' rights but does not necessarily deny them the right to challenge patriarchal expectations. The study shows that Henry James was prepared to offer his readers a different future for America and especially women despite the prevailing notions of the time.

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