

Editor's Note

In this issue, we present four research articles, one report of practical classroom experience and one book review. These articles deal with a diverse range of topics all relevant to teachers in the context of English language teaching and learning in the tertiary level.

In the first research article, **Deng Xudong** and **She Qiongze** analyse ten biomedical research article introductions using a generalised model that Swales established in 1990. They find that these introductions largely follow the 'move' structure prescribed by the model. More specifically, biomedical researchers, in writing their research article introductions, tend to 1) indicate the importance of the research topic; 2) justify the present research by showing limitations or incompleteness in the previous research; and 3) describe what the present study is about. While biomedical introductions share the structural features given in Swales' generalised model, they also exhibit some distinctive patterns with respect to how various moves are realised, whether and how much cyclicity is used between different moves and how long biomedical researchers write for different moves and their constituent steps.

In the second article, **Jette Hansen** reviews studies on the use of peer response in second language writing classrooms in traditional face-to-face modes versus computer-mediated communication (CMC) modes. In particular, she addresses the question of whether CMC modes of peer response are more effective than the traditional modes in four main areas: students' attitudes about the modes of peer response, quantity of student participation, students' interaction and discussion of comments, and the revision of papers. She concludes that while there may be potential advantages of CMC modes over traditional modes in some of these areas, most of the results are confounding, suggesting that the use of the computer is also subject to constraints and may not automatically ensure effective peer response between students. She then proposes a number of ways to overcome some of these constraints so that CMC modes can be more effectively employed for peer response in second language writing classrooms.

In the third article, **Michael Rebaczonok** reports on a survey study carried out at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) to see whether international students improve in their command of English during their three years of study at NP. He finds that the majority of students surveyed indicate their improvement in the use of English. However, these students also express their frustrations with the English-speaking environment not only at NP, but also in the greater Singapore context. A number of recommendations are made based on the study.

Readers may remember that our previous issue (Vol. 3, No. 1, 2004) carried **David Deterding's** article on "How many vowel sounds are there in English?" In this issue, he addresses a parallel question with respect to consonant sounds: "How many consonant sounds are there in English?" Though the question may sound simple to many language teachers, he shows that discussion of the question and its related issues helps deepen our understanding of the structure of the sound system of the language.

In our On the Practical Side section, **Evelyn Tan** recounts her one-year experience of teaching in China, detailing how she incorporated games, presentation skills training and especially the performing arts (such as poetry reading, drama, singing and dancing, and multi-media) into her oral English classes for English majors. She shows that the use of such action-packed activities helps her students to be more fluent and more confident in their use of English.

Finally, we have one contribution for our Book Review section. **Phyllis Wachob** reviews Thomas Farrell's book *Reflective Practice in Action: 80 Reflection Breaks for Busy Teachers*.

I would like to thank all our contributors for this issue and would like, at the same time, to extend to our readers a call for more contributions on topics that are of interest to tertiary English teachers in our future issues.

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