

Editorial

The first 2014 issue of *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching* brings together five papers, which either report the results of original empirical studies or provide valuable insights into the methodology of research into the processes of language learning, teaching and use. In the first contribution, Kay Irie discusses the tenets of Q methodology, an alternative approach to exploring individuals' views about complex issues or phenomena that combines the features of quantitative and qualitative paradigms but has yet to be applied on a larger scale to empirical investigations of language learning and teaching. She also presents a detailed procedure for conducting such research with reference to her study on language learners' self-concept, discusses the possible applications of this approach and addresses its limitations. In the next paper, Muriel Gallego presents the results of a study which aimed to tap learners' perceptions about dictogloss and showed, on the basis of the data collected by means of posttask surveys administered to 497 participants from two different universities, that this activity is favorably received by learners, with the caveat that it is appreciated more by those who represent higher proficiency levels and are cognitively ready to engage in a task of this kind. Abulfazl Mesgarshahr and Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh, in turn, touch on the relationship between the use of communication strategies and language learners' Willingness to Communicate, a potentially very promising line of inquiry that has thus far been, somewhat surprisingly, neglected by researchers. They found in their experimental study that training students in the use of a wide variety of communication strategies translated into a dramatic increase in the level of Willingness to Communicate, at least in the case of pre-intermediate learners. The final two papers included in the present issue focus on learners' interlanguage development, seeking to account for factors leading to fossilization and tracing the development of a particular linguistic feature. First, Musa Nushi puts to the empirical test Han's (2009) *selective fossilization hypothesis*, demonstrating

that although L1 markedness and input availability indeed influence whether or not second language forms fossilize, other factors, such as individual variation, have to be taken into account to explain adult language learning. Second, Shaopeng Li and Lianrui Yang explore the development of topic prominence in Chinese learners of English as a foreign language from a discourse perspective with respect to topic chains and zero anaphora, providing evidence that discourse structures are likely to be impacted by typological differences between the mother tongue and the target language. I am deeply convinced that all of these papers make a valuable contribution to the field of second language acquisition and will provide an inspiration for other researchers, both in terms of further exploring the themes addressed as well as embracing and refining the methodological procedures employed.

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References

- Han, Z.-H. (2009). Interlanguage and fossilization: Towards an analytic model. In V. Cook & L. Wei (Eds.), *Contemporary applied linguistics. Vol. 1: Language teaching and learning* (pp. 137-162). London: Continuum.