

From the Guest Editor

I am honored to have been asked to edit a special issue of *Reading in a Foreign Language*. *RFL* has become an increasingly important journal in an increasingly critical and complex field. Fundamentally, I believe that there is no more significant area in the general field related to language learning and use than literacy learning. Surely, all language skills are important and the research into their acquisition and use is essential. Yet no other skill is as far-reaching, as useful, or as influential in the modern world as the ability to read and interpret with comprehension. Across the globe, the access to materials written in languages not native to a particular region is easy and essentially cost-free. *Essentially* is an important concept. While cost-free points toward economic resources, the question of cost envelopes more than monetary currency. There are critical costs in intellectual currency if readers are given broad access to written materials with none of the strategies or capacities to comprehend those materials with skill and wisdom. Which website contains accurate information? What are the political leanings of this newspaper or that journal? How can I absorb the vocabulary that I need for new technical material? How can I glean the affective reference of words? How do I know how much I have understood if no one is there to question me? Why do I keep looking up words and still think sentences are jumbles of words? How can I possibly get through the textbooks I am given in my study abroad courses? These are real, critical, and practical questions that researchers in second-language reading struggle with in the academic arena on behalf of billions of learners and users of second languages.

Academics cannot answer these questions with credibility without solid understandings developed from significant and substantial empirical work. I hope that this special issue adds to our knowledge of how to conduct more formidable work. Brantmeier's piece "Statistical procedures for research on L2 reading comprehension: An examination of regression models and ANOVA" reminds us that the choice of a statistical technique must be seated in the question posed. Those of us who attended graduate school in the 1980s were often taught that analysis of variance was the way to conceptualize a problem. This naturally entailed a notion of "group" that much research now tells us is a fluid and at times untenable concept. Brantmeier demonstrates through a re-analysis of her own data using multiple regression that the statistical choice, the analytic method, both reveals and clouds findings.

This special issue also reflects the frequent and necessary use of hybrid research techniques to answer questions about second-language reading. Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, and Gorsuch, "Developing reading fluency in EFL: How assisted repeated reading and extensive reading affect fluency development" deliberately sets forward the conditions under which a study of an instructional method, in this case, repeated reading, needs to be assessed and analyzed both quantitatively (in order to answer comparative questions) and qualitatively (in order to answer perceptual questions). This article forms a bridge to the third contribution to the special issue focused on qualitative data analysis. Heinz' "The development, evaluation, and application of a computerized second-language reading comprehension assessment procedure" focuses on the

touchy problem of applying a widely used technique, the recall of reading material as a comprehension measure, to large data sets while maintaining reliability and efficiency. Heinz explores whether a computer can perform a scoring routine with accuracy.

Many dimensions of research methodologies for second-language reading are absent from this special issue. In my view, the field still needs a substantial handbook that delineates research design issues that meet the unique needs of conducting second-language reading research. The following three areas need specific attention. First, there needs to be some established expectations for research studies. All studies should meet some fundamental criteria: first, employing more than one text in order to insure that data are not essentially single subject in nature; 2) delineating subject groups and native language backgrounds; and 3) specifying L1 literacy level. I urge members of the field to generate commentaries on these fundamental criteria and others. Second, work on vocabulary in relation to text understanding is critical. Studies inevitably focus on vocabulary outside of textual contexts and then imply how words are used in online processing. We need to solve the problem of how to conduct research to get at the crucial issue of vocabulary use and learning. Third, our field needs a better understanding of how to conduct research with young, developing readers. Ours is a field by and large separate from work with children in school settings. This false separation leads to skewed findings and theory. Yet, working with adults, and readers who are already literate, are the subject groups with whom we probably feel most comfortable. Including young children in our work and being included in the work of others working with young children would go a long way toward filling this hole in our field.

This special issue of *RFL* represents the work of many. Many thanks to those who reviewed manuscripts for us: Andrew Cohen, Bill Grabe, Joann Hammadou, Michael Kamil, Batia Laufer, James Lee, Nooreiny Maarof, J.A. Mondria, Norman Segalowitz, and Annela Teemant. Personal thanks to Richard Day and Thom Hudson for this great opportunity as well as to Gerald Bullock, Frank Lefrandt, Lina Terrell, and Lauren Wehr for their precise and meticulous editing. Most especially, I want to express sincerest thanks to Managing Editor, Kerri Russell, for her patience, kindness, and diplomacy when I was lost in a forest of manuscripts and details. Kerri provides the field of reading in a second language an enormous service.

I would also like to thank the [National Foreign Language Resource Center](#) and the Department of [Second Language Studies, College of Languages, Linguistics and Literature](#), University of Hawai'i for their continued support of *RFL*.

Elizabeth Bernhardt

From the Reviews Editor

In this issue, readers of *RFL* will find three reviews of short volumes that have a similar audience in mind - that of the reflective classroom practitioner wishing to deepen his or her knowledge of contemporary reading theory and to draw critically on this body of work for applications to the local teaching context. Each of the books - or "booklets" as one reviewer (Andrew) rather aptly puts it - is a short volume that synthesizes rather than expounds on recent studies and theoretical ideas on reading.

As Kidder notes the aim is not towards "detailed consideration" of theoretical ideas and questions. In this respect, all three volumes are more realistically evaluated as "reader-friendly" (Kidder) "easy-to-read" (Hill) and "very navigable" (Andrew) teacher-focused publications. Perhaps even more importantly from a teacher's point of view, each draws out practical applications and strategies that can be explored further, offering tried and true suggestions for activities and approaches from three authors skilled and experienced in teaching reading in a variety of different settings.

Judging by the reviewers' evaluations, taken together the three volumes offer a valuable professional development resource for busy but professionally motivated teachers interested in continuing their professional development and exploring the interfaces of theory, practice and research. The volumes offer "practical tools" (Kidder), "excellent starting points" (Hill) and "maps rather than recipe books" (Andrew) for those wishing to become critical classroom explorers of the teaching of reading.

Anne Burns

In This Issue

- Cindy Brantmeier examines ANOVA and regression models as statistical procedures used in L2 research.
- Etsuo Taguchi, Miyoko Takayasu-Maass, and Greta J. Gorsuch investigate repeated reading and extensive reading in terms of fluency development.
- Peter J. Heinz compares computerized and manual scoring of written recall protocols.
- Kelly L. Kidder reviews *Teaching Reading* by Jen Tindale.
- Lynn-Elisabeth Hill reviews Mary Lee Field's *Text Features and Reading Comprehension*.
- Martin Andrew presents a review of *Planning Lessons for a Reading Class* by Thomas S.C. Farrell.