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Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies
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Editorial Policy

The purpose of the *Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies (CPALS)* is to publish work in progress by Carleton faculty and students, as well as colleagues who share our interest in applied language studies and educational linguistics. Of particular interest are papers on communicative language teaching, syllabus design, French immersion, second language learning and acquisition, computer assisted language learning, linguistic development in the first language, literacy and writing development, discourse analysis, and applied sociolinguistics.

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Table of Contents

Preface.....	i
Why Do They Do It? A Reflection on Issues Surrounding the Issue of Chinese Student Motivation. <i>Mike Barker</i>	1
A Brief Introduction to High School Education in China <i>Yuhui Yang</i>	6
‘Shooting Yourself in the Foot’ or ‘On the Yellow Brick Road’? Chinese Students in an Intensive ESL Program. <i>Louise Smith</i>	15
An Inquiry into Characteristics of Motivation Among Chinese Students in a University Credit EAP Program <i>Mike Barker</i>	42
Understanding Motivation: a Review of Relevant Literature <i>Mike Barker</i>	71
The Evolution of Asian ESL Students’ Perceptions of Grammar: Case Studies of Nine Learners <i>Sunkyoun Yoon, Kyoko Hoshi & Hong Zhao</i>	116
Oral versus Written Grammar: Teacher Perspectives and Common Practices <i>Peggy Hartwick</i>	152
Towards an Understanding of Student Perceptions on Feedback <i>Ahmed Nazif, Debasish Biswas & Rosagela M. Hilbig</i>	165
Students’ Perceptions of Progress: Are Grades, Peers and ‘Successful Use of the Language’ Indicators? <i>Christine Doe</i>	192
Building Bridges and Crossing Borders: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on the Impact of ESL Learners’ Beliefs, Expectations, and Experiences in their Sense of Progress <i>Mohammed Al-Alawi</i>	208
Towards a Conceptualization of the Construct ‘Sense of Progress’ in L2 Learning <i>Juliana Bahia</i>	236
The Ups and Downs of Becoming a Graduate Student Researcher <i>Karen Rishel</i>	255

Preface

The papers in this double volume of the Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies report on research projects done in graduate courses carried out during the period from 2003 to 2005 at Carleton University which focus on classroom research and exploratory practice. Each year, the class has chosen a particular theme that has either been conspicuously prominent in the current literature in classroom research, or one which has been conspicuously absent. The themes that are represented by the papers here are *Motivation* (2003), *The Explicit and Implicit Teaching of Grammar* (2004), *Feedback* (2004), and *Sense of Progress* (2005).

The concept of a class theme for research began the “reflection” submitted by Mike Barker early in the term, found on page 1 of this volume. This reflection, shared with the class, struck a chord among all who were there, and the decision was made to develop a collaborative “attack” on the elusive concept of ‘motivation’. In the language teaching and learning literature, the concept of motivation, long ruled over by the instrumental-integrative dichotomy, had often been treated as an abstract concept largely researched separately from concepts such as language learning strategies, learning styles, and learner beliefs. Other students in the class, several of whom were working with students in the Academic English program at Carleton, agreed with the insights in this reflection. They had also noted that the students from China seemed exceptionally highly motivated to learn English to get into an academic program, but at the same time seemed exceptionally motivated to *avoid* doing many of the language learning activities that their very experienced teachers were assigning them. Motivation seemed not so much like a straightforward entity that was simply “high” or “low” (as has sometimes been implied in the research literature) affecting overall language learning success, but rather very complex and situation specific, interwoven with goals and beliefs and strategies and culture, that could drive students to enthusiastically pursue certain strategies and run away from other strategies. The class became interested in embarking of a set of studies of “motivation-in-action”. The papers by Yang, Smith, and Barker were part of this thrust to understand what drives language learners to

make the learning decisions that they do. This initial reflection by Barker is a good example of how productive research can develop out of a thoughtful and reflective practitioner's attempt to make sense of what is going on in his teaching.

One of the chief results that developed out of the studies on motivation was related to the issue of explicit versus implicit teaching of grammar. It was found that an important factor in their motivation and choice of learning strategies was how the students perceived grammar to be taught (or not taught) in their courses, and that the students had very different perceptions of what grammar teaching consists of (and how it is manifested in the classroom) than did their teachers. They also had very different conceptions of the goals of the ESL courses, different beliefs about how English should be taught, and different expectations of what classroom activity should be like. Exploring this issue from the perspectives of learners and teachers became the theme of a graduate class the following year. The papers by Yoon, Hoshi and Zhao and by Hartwick exemplify the two sides of this equation.

In the next incarnation of the course, many students delved deeper in the issue of explicitness by examining the complex issue of feedback to students. In particular, since several of them were or had been practicing teachers, they were interested in what students DID with the feedback they received, something that is often hidden from view to the teachers themselves. The graduate students undertaking the projects, many of whom were working closely with learners in the program, felt that they might have a window into this process. The paper by Nazif, Debasish and Hilbig is an example of this. It also provides an excellent review of the literature related to this topic.

In 2005, the question of motivation resurfaced under a new guise. In a number of theoretical conceptions of motivation, the concept of success has gained an important role. The traditional way of relating success to motivation is to attempt to explore the effect of motivation on language learning success. However, the point has been made that success causes motivation as well – learners become motivated by success. If this is the case, then it seemed to be very interesting to explore how it is students come to an understanding of how successful they are. This question spawned the theme of “sense of progress”. The papers by Doe and Al Alawi fall under this rubrick. The paper by Bahia is a review of the literature related to this area, revealing how this new ‘lens’ can create an original synthesis of the literature. Finally, the paper by Rishel is a ‘meta-paper’ on the research process itself which discusses, in the words of the students engaged in the process of graduate student research, the cognitive and emotional “ups and downs” they experienced during the various stages of the research process they went through as they carried out the ‘sense of progress’ studies.

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These papers give an idea of the kinds of practical hands-on research that can be done in graduate classes in language teaching and learning, much of it in close collaboration with teachers (who, in a number of cases, also collaborated in the presentation of the results given at local and international conferences). The goal, ultimately, is to encourage graduates who have a strong sense of the importance of qualitatively researching their own practice and the ability to do so.

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