Editorial

I introduce this issue with a sincere expression of thanks and appreciation to Gillian Wigglesworth who is relinquishing editorship of *Prospect* as she takes on new directions in her work. Over the four years that we have co-edited *Prospect* together, she has brought to the journal that professionalism and insight for which she is known both nationally and internationally. Her breadth of knowledge in our field and steadfast commitment to the high standards set by our predecessors, Jill Burton and Anne Burns, have been invaluable. Her sharp editorial eye will also be sorely missed. I wish her all the best in her future work, and look forward to her continued association with *Prospect* as Book Review Editor.

The first two articles in this issue address an area of central importance to our field: teacher education. The first, by Erica Garvey and Denise Murray, explores the crucial but controversial area of the multilingual teacher of English for whom English is not a first language. The article extends previous research on the training of such teachers by examining the attitudes and behaviours of six multilingual teacher trainees and their mentor teachers during their practicum experience as part of a postgraduate certificate in TESOL. Their findings suggest that, although language proficiency was perceived as a major challenge for these teachers, their potential to act as motivating role models for learners, and the fact that they could draw on their own rich experiences as language learners, were clear advantages.

The second article, by Jeremy Jones, argues for the importance of including the study of research methods as an essential part of postgraduate university courses for teachers. As readers of *Prospect* well know, research by teachers is of great value to teachers. However, Jones argues that it can be difficult to defend the presence of a serious research methods component at university level, as not all professionals in the field routinely carry out research, and the teachers themselves may not see the relevance of such courses for their work. In order to address this state of affairs, he offers an innovative approach to both introducing students on a postgraduate TESOL program to research methods and persuading them of their usefulness. His article offers an account of the transformation of students into researchers, and illustrates the relevance of their individual projects not only to their professional futures, but also to the EFL teachers (and sometimes the learners) with whom they came into contact as they pursued their inquiry.

The last three articles in this issue address the perennially hot topic of the use of information technology by teachers and learners. In his article, Tim Lever explores the changing information and technology environment
of teaching and learning in an AMEP centre through a spot survey of open self-access computer use, and documents the growing role of the Internet among AMEP clients. He argues that since the Internet has become the primary focus of computer use among clients, they have an urgent need to develop Internet skills. The article illustrates the practical forces driving the growing impact of web-based resource use, and builds upon the work of previous studies to critically examine recommendations for the teaching of Internet skills.

The issue of Internet skills is examined by the fourth article in this issue, by Jennifer Thurston, who focuses on ways in which learners can be helped to read homepages. Thurston suggests that homepages be considered a text type, and outlines some of the features that teachers can use as a starting point with learners. With a greater understanding of the structure and characteristics of this text type, she argues that teachers and students can approach the reading of homepages more efficiently and thus use the Web more effectively.

The final article in this issue, by Paul Gruba, has some practical suggestions for teachers who use networked computers for online collaborative language learning. Gruba first discusses the ways in which task design may relate to theories of learning, and then proposes a definition of an online collaborative task. He then outlines some practical guidelines for constructing collaborative tasks and illustrates these with a practical example, concluding with recommendations for future work in task research and design.

Finally, in this issue we have two reviews of books which address different areas of our field. Anne Burns reviews Doing second language research (2002) by Brown and Rodgers, which is designed to acquaint teachers and new researchers with different research approaches used in the language learning field, and Alison Kirkness reviews Using the board in the language classroom (2001) by Jeannine Dobbs, which offers the novice and practising teacher a wealth of ideas for using the board during classroom activities.

LYNDA YATES
Book Reviews

Doing second language research


Reviewed by Anne Burns

This publication is part of the reader-friendly Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers Series. The authors set out to demystify research and to provide an accessible introduction for teachers and particularly for student-teachers enrolled in graduate programs. They explain that what sets their book apart from similar publications is that they aim not only to outline research in second and foreign language teaching and learning, as well as the research methods for carrying it out, but also to put readers inside the research process.

The book is divided into two major parts, qualitative and quantitative research, prefaced by an introduction that gives an overview of the nature of research and completed by a conclusion that considers the way research types can be combined in course evaluation. The qualitative chapters (2–4) look at Case studies: developmental research; Introspection: verbal protocols; and Classroom research: interaction analysis. Descriptive statistics: survey analysis; Correlational research: language learning/teaching attitudes; and Quasi-experimental research: vocabulary learning techniques are included in the quantitative section. The organisation framework the authors have adopted for each chapter is:

1. Introducing the research type.
2. Experiencing the research type.
3. Compiling the data generated by the research type.
4. Analysing the data generated by the research type.
5. Designing the research type.
6. Interpreting the research type.
7. Commenting on the significance of the research type.
8. Reflecting on the research experience.

Chapters 2 and 8 also have sections on reporting the research results (p xiii).

As a framework for the various outlines and discussions this works extremely well. The authors adopt an inclusive, clear and reader-aware style.
They explain concepts in an accessible manner to readers, appreciating that they may be new to research, and lead them supportively through the numerous exercises, techniques and reflections on the processes. Unlike many other writers, the authors also provide comprehensive feedback through in-text commentary, appendices and answer keys to the tasks so that readers can check out and compare their insights and responses. Several of the strategies they employ to do this – for example providing responses to their own evaluation questionnaire on the book (Chapter 8) – are innovative and provide interesting insights into ways of collecting data. These aspects will undoubtedly be highly valued by both new and ‘old’ researchers, and are a bonus to teacher educators using the book for graduate courses. They are also the hallmark of skilled teaching and research and reflect the authors’ extensive experience on both counts.

Brown and Rodgers state that their goals for this book are threefold:

1. To familiarise readers with the basic types of research design used in second language studies.

2. To provide a feel for what research activities are like in second language studies by engaging the reader in several roles within a variety of mini-studies.

3. To offer an introduction to some of the classic research studies into second language learning and teaching by engaging readers in thinking about and discussing these studies, as well as participating as subjects in adapted versions of some of these studies (pp xi–xii).

Do they succeed in addressing these goals? Well, yes and no.

The outstanding strength of the book is the lengths to which the authors go to provide experiential opportunities for reader learning. Even without a context for discussion, a reader seriously undertaking the exercises for his or her own professional development would gain considerable knowledge of methodological options for conducting research and the nature of the decisions that researchers must take.

However, the question for me as I read the book was whether these opportunities were broad enough. While the authors discuss questions of research traditions, contextual factors and definitions in Chapter 1, novice researchers would not, in my view, come away with any clearer idea about the fundamentally different philosophies and epistemologies that underpin these two major approaches to research. From my own experience of doing research and teaching on research methods courses, I would say this understanding is essential to developing relevant methodologies. Additionally,
while the authors distinguish between qualitative and quantitative approaches, the perspectives and examples drawn on retain a strong experimental flavour and many of the studies they present are ‘well trodden’. Recent ‘classic’ qualitative studies that have drawn on sociolinguistic and ethnographic approaches (eg Canagarajah 1993; Peirce 1995; Toohey 1998) are not mentioned (the term *ethnography* is included neither in the glossary nor the index), while action research, an approach increasingly seen as attractive and feasible to many student-teachers and teacher-researchers, is covered in 11 lines with no references to recent publications in the second and foreign language field (eg Wallace 1998; Burns 1999; Edge 2001).

As a focused introduction to the research world of recognised second language acquisition studies, this book succeeds admirably. However, those seeking a more comprehensive coverage of the range of possibilities for carrying out research in this field will need to look elsewhere.

**REFERENCES**


Using the board in the language classroom.
Cambridge handbooks for language teachers

Reviewed by Alison Kirkness

Don't be misled by the title of this book into assuming it is for beginner teachers learning to divide the board into appropriate sections and write in lower case. On the contrary, this is a collection of interesting ideas for language work, firmly grounded in board techniques. The author has developed the art of using the board to maximise learning and to stimulate the class with lively, spontaneous sketches. She offers a refreshing approach to classroom language learning that values use of the board to ‘explain, clarify, illustrate, emphasise, organise, drill and list information’ (p 5).

The introduction Teacher use of the board and Student use of the board presents a strong case for board use, the basics of which are revised in the chapter Using the board efficiently and effectively. This is followed by activities that are divided into two sections: language-based activities in section A and content-based activities in section B. The range in section A extends across reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, as well as reviewing and assessing. In section B the author selects three themes for content-based work:

1 getting acquainted and building community;
2 setting agendas and sharing information; and
3 feelings and opinions.

These activities are followed by two brief appendices. The first discusses the electronic whiteboard, and hints at a new future for language teaching where a class may be communicating on the whiteboard via their computer. The second focuses on the other end of the technology spectrum, offering practical suggestions for providing alternative public writing spaces.

The introduction should be compulsory reading for all teachers and will provide food for thought for many who photocopy class sets all too readily. Teachers can use the board not only to manage classes and record student input, but also for a variety of teaching techniques. The author promotes using the board over distributing handouts as it allows students to process information more gradually. When students write the information down, they engage with the material in order to complete the task. Dobbs argues that this offers deeper level learning. Students, too, can use the board. All students are encouraged to offer contributions (signed) on the board.
prompting peer communication and stimulating language discussion, as well as fun teamwork. (The latter, of course, assumes manageable class sizes rather than the larger numbers many teachers have to contend with in poorly resourced areas.) If a teacher encourages public writing on the board, she or he can promote a classroom atmosphere more conducive to learning and develop a better understanding of student ability. With its focus on the board over all other teaching aids or language learning technologies, this book offers a rich source of sound teaching activities to teachers in poorly resourced areas. But it also offers computer-literate teachers a reminder that learning is often at its best with just chalk and talk. Dobbs comments less on the cost-saving benefits of the board but instead demonstrates all its other advantages: flexibility, spontaneity, creativity, interactive learning and collaborative teamwork.

Dobbs is at ease sketching on the board and clearly has a rich background of experience in this area. She provides examples of her own work as well as advice to teachers who find drawing a challenge. Her explanation of -ing and -ed Participial adjectives with a sketch of a person’s belly for ‘internal’ words, as compared to words that illustrate an external source of the feeling, could well ensure correct use by any hesitant learner of the belly words. Another picture, Train of thought, will save many teachers a thousand words about Anglo-Saxon writing conventions. One reading exercise Read, illustrate and retell shows how language and meaning can be supported by visual prompts. These are just a few of the many examples where Dobbs shows how the use of the board for illustrations can enliven and clarify language learning in a myriad of ways.

While details about level and class size are not included with every activity, some do come with suggestions for adaptation for small and large classes. There is also a clear understanding of different learning contexts with suggestions for use at a variety of levels. Throughout all the activities the teacher records information from or for the students and anchors it on the board. Language is not just elicited and left to the struggling listeners to transcribe.

In the chapter on vocabulary, the board is exploited as an ideal medium for prompting students to reconstruct language from memory (Co-occurrence), to categorise words (Putting things away) and to reduce complexity (Sentence reduction). Lively illustrations drawn on the board can also clarify meaning as well as help memory work (What’s the weather like?). In the chapter on pronunciation I particularly liked the team work used to practise discriminating between sounds (Numbers ending in -teen and those ending in -ty). Grammar work, too, is enhanced by appropriate sketches, especially for tenses. Activities
focus more on language practice than communicative use although some of the vocabulary exercises would lend themselves to more contextualisation.

In the writing chapter the author's graphic techniques make explicit all the talk we do about essay writing (The writing process and The linear structure). In addition, there are activities that would be helpful both to language and content teachers: Preparing for research paper writing, Paraphrasing, Citing, Improving writing style.

Section A is longer and stronger than Section B, which essentially adopts the same techniques. After reading this work, my feeling is that family trees and 'find-someone-who' exercises can perhaps be run more effectively and efficiently without worksheets. The clear layout and ongoing clarification of board work may well eliminate a lot of time spent by the teacher holding up ready-made worksheets and pointing to miniscule print to try to clarify instructions to students. The activities on cultural concepts could be used at any time both in language and content classes to develop intercultural understanding and promise interesting class discussion.

Somewhere between the world of the board, and the futuristic world presented in Appendix A of students communicating from their PCs to a common screen, there seems to be a lot left unsaid. Dobbs is good at promoting board use, but does not discuss its advantages over other technologies. In the activity Giving and getting directions she cautions that her suggested map may take time so teachers should either draw it before class or keep students busy with some other activity while they draw it on the board. Funding apart, what is the rationale for taking up class time to write material up on the board instead of presenting it ready made on an overhead transparency (OHT)? Reading the suggested activities I found myself longing for an OHT to project on to the board to save time and effort, in fact repeated effort, especially with complicated grids or forms. A discussion about how to marry different techniques effectively would have been useful, as well as some ideas for what techniques are best suited to which medium. The reader would also benefit from an evaluation of the board in comparison to other media.

Teachers at all levels will find some activities in this teacher handbook to suit their class, and will relish the fact that these can be implemented without undue time and preparation. Its step-by-step technique promoting firmly grounded teaching skills is the main strength of Using the board in the language classroom, and makes it a worthwhile addition to this excellent series.
Notes on contributors

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Alison Kirkness has taught ESOL in New Zealand and Germany and has specialised in language teacher education at certificate and diploma level. She is currently employed as a staff developer at the Auckland University of Technology with a particular focus on academic literacies and responsibility for supporting mainstream tertiary teachers in multicultural classrooms.

Tim Lever taught with AMES, TAFE and acl through the 1990s and has been involved with educational technology issues in a variety of roles during the past three years. Research for the article on self-access computer use was conducted during a stint as Multimedia Centre Teacher at acl’s Bankstown centre. Now employed as an Educational Designer at Charles Sturt University, Tim gratefully acknowledges the support and encouragement of acl and the university in bringing the article to completion.

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