This is the first of the three issues of Prospect for 2009. It is the first of two general issues, which will bring together articles on a wide variety of topics. In the third and last issue for 2009, the focus will be on language learning in the digital age, with articles from invited authors. Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) practitioners and researchers continue to express a strong need to explore various aspects of research, theory and teaching practice, and, as co-editors, we welcome the opportunity to promote debate and discussion on this important topic.

This issue starts the year off with a number of interesting papers, some focusing on classroom methodologies and others examining broader aspects of the field including assessment, TESOL teacher training and teacher beliefs about the use of first language in the second language classroom.

The first article, by Stephen Moore and Marian Hargreaves, explores issues relating to the development of an Assessment Task Bank for the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in Australia. The Assessment Task Bank was developed to support a criterion-referenced national curriculum, and the paper outlines the processes involved in gathering, trialling, moderating and modifying assessment tasks. The paper looks at the significant ongoing challenges facing the Assessment Task Bank and some possible strategies for maintaining this resource.

The second article, by Jill Murray, also focuses on the Australian context and highlights the impact of competency-based training on TESOL teacher training courses. This paper critiques competency-based training and outlines the limitations of specifying outcomes for teacher training in a post-method era of second language teaching. Murray argues against the narrowness of competency-based training and argues for a viable alternative approach to the accreditation of TESOL teacher-training courses.

In the first of two articles in this issue that bring English-language teaching in China into focus, Yanan Song investigates teacher beliefs about the use of first language (L1) in the second language classroom. Starting with a survey of 61 teachers of English in a single university, the author explored teachers’ general attitudes towards the use of L1 and how they believed it affected learners. She also asked them to consider the use of L1 in relation to various aspects of language learning, including grammar, vocabulary and translation. From the survey, two teachers who were positive towards the use of L1 and two other teachers who were negative about its use were identified. These teachers were observed in their classrooms over six lessons to see if there was consistency or inconsistency between stated beliefs and actual practice.

The final two articles in this issue focus more directly on classroom methodology. Seyyed-Abdollhamid Mirhosseini promotes the use of Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) as a way of providing diverse learning opportunities and teaching benefits in the English as a Foreign Language writing classroom. The paper reviews other writing approaches and shows how the aims of these different approaches can be achieved through DJW, while at the same time providing opportunities for writing communication that is socially and personally meaningful.

Through a close study of three learners, Li Jingyan examines the popular Chinese methodology of Crazy English. The paper outlines the concepts, values and pedagogical practices of the method and explores how it builds and supports the learners’ motivation to learn English. Through a warm-hearted exploration of the learners’ narratives, this paper challenges many preconceptions about methodology and the role of the classroom.

This issue of Prospect concludes with two book reviews. The first, by Stephanie Claire, provides an overview of a book by J. C. Wells entitled English intonation: An introduction. John Gaudin then describes and evaluates one of the increasing number of books on multimodality, J. A. Bateman’s Multimodality and genre: A foundation for the systematic analysis of multimodal documents.

As usual, we hope readers will enjoy reading the articles in this issue and we welcome feedback and comments.

Anne Burns
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Editors
Notes on contributors

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**Stephanie Claire** has worked in ESL for more than 30 years in a range of roles including classroom teacher, materials designer, teacher trainer and researcher. She has lectured in phonology at several Australian universities and is co-author with Anne Burns of *Clearly speaking: Pronunciation in action for teachers*, a video resource kit on teaching pronunciation published by the AMEP Research Centre.

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**Dr John Gaudin** has degrees in history and law. He taught history at Macquarie University, and as a lawyer has provided legal and policy advice with an emphasis on information and privacy law. In 2007 he co-authored a school text on visual studies, *Interpreting the visual*, published by Phoenix Education. He is currently studying the development and description of visual style.

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