

Editorial

TESOL in the New Era: Introduction to the Special Column for the 2022 Global English Education China Assembly

Rining (Tony) Wei*

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

Barry Lee Reynolds

University of Macau, Macau SAR, China

Welcome to the *International Journal of TESOL Studies* (IJTS) special column for the 2022 Global English Education China Assembly (henceforth “the Assembly”). This is the first of the three special columns of the 2022 Assembly (see also the Call for Papers at the end of this volume). Organized by *China Daily* in partnership with Shanghai International Studies University, the Assembly is a high-level international English Language Teaching (ELT) event that is held annually in China. The 2022 Assembly held in July in Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province, China) brought together over 2,600 attendees, both on site and online. They were ELT practitioners, scholars and researchers in China and from abroad. On the platform offered by the Assembly, they exchanged experiences and opinions and shared research.

When the call for full paper submission ended, we had been working in a challenging period of time where one of the world’s largest disruptions to daily life was affecting every sphere of our life. Notwithstanding the stress everyone was facing during the Covid-19 pandemic, contributors to this special column still managed to be very productive. The column features three papers from TESOL experts and researchers from China and beyond. These empirical studies are followed by one interview with one internationally renowned scholar Professor Chuang Wang conducted by Ms. Peng Lun, Secretary-General of the Assembly and Editor-in-Chief of the Assembly Special Columns. As Guest Editors, we feel honoured and pleased to introduce the works of these six researchers (including the prestigious interviewee) that are showcased in this special column. Prior to our introduction, we would like to warmly congratulate these experts for their research completed successfully during the challenging Covid-19 period.

The first article, “Foreign Language Anxiety, Motivation and Intercultural Communication Competence of Chinese Top University Students” by Huameng Yang and Xia Wu, utilised a mixed-methods research design. Based on a sample of 223 undergraduates from one leading university in China, these authors collected quantitative data with a battery of questionnaires on their focal variables (e.g. anxiety and motivation) and qualitative information about the students’ opinions and experiences via semi-structured interviews. Major findings included (1) these students experienced a low-to-medium level of anxiety and a medium-to-high level of motivation; and (2) their English use anxiety negatively correlated with English learning motivation at a statistically significant level. Two dimensions of the students’ intercultural communication competence (viz. intercultural effectiveness and intercultural sensitivity) were also examined and discussed vis-à-vis their anxiety and motivation. In connection with data analysis, it is commendable that this first article reports measures (e.g. *r*) of effect size, which is

more important than the statistical significance level (viz. the p value) in inferential statistical procedures including correlation and ANOVA (Wei et al., 2019; Wei & Gao, 2022). However, it merits attention that the correlation analysis employed in this paper may have led to inflated effect sizes, as the authors rightfully acknowledged at the end of the paper; put differently, the strength of the associations between the focal variables might have been over-estimated. Results from bivariate analyses (e.g. correlation analysis and t -test) tend to generate inflated effect sizes compared with multivariate analyses (e.g. hierarchical regression) (Wei, Reynolds, Kong, & Liu, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Given the multivariate nature of L2 learning, multivariate analyses paint a much more accurate picture than bivariate analyses (Wei, Wang & Liu, 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

The second article, entitled “What Are ESL Students’ Academic Integrity Challenges and How Can Universities Help?”, authored by Jim Hu and Wenhan Yu, reported a qualitative study of English-for-academic-purpose (EAP) writing students at one Canadian university. These two researchers collected data from 20 students who had completed an advanced EAP writing course, some of whom came from so-called EFL countries including China, France, and Russia but still can be subsumed into the umbrella term of “ESL students” due to their student status in Canada. The EAP course extensively discussed academic integrity issues, plagiarism and use of APA 7th edition. One important finding was that the predominant cause of the participants’ challenges concerning academic integrity was their lack of experience with using citations before entering the university. Some measures to help students to avoid plagiarism were proposed, such as providing students with access to self-correction softwares (e.g. Turnitin and Grammarly Premium) and “simultaneous oral-written teacher feedback” (Hu, 2019). Notwithstanding the findings from previous and ongoing studies, in order for universities to provide assistance for student plagiarism prevention, more studies are needed to understand what ESL students consider to be their problems and challenges concerning academic integrity and what kinds of intuitional support they need (Packalen & Rowbotham, 2022). Hu and Yu’s paper represents a useful and timely addition to this line of studies.

The third paper, titled “A Corpus-Based Mechanical Engineering Academic Word List” by Le Chang, presented a corpus-based quantitative research design for developing a reliable academic word list for mechanical engineering students. The authors collected 120 academic articles from four internationally recognized journals to create a large and representative corpus of mechanical engineering texts, called Mechanical Engineering Academic Corpus (MEAC), which has 755,794 words. Using Coxhead’s word selection criteria and Range software programme for lexical analysis, the authors constructed a 398-word/289-word-family Mechanical Engineering Academic Word List (MEAWL), which covers about 13% of MEAC. The paper also compared MEAWL with other academic word lists and found that MEAWL is smaller but more suitable for mechanical engineering students than Coxhead’s Academic Word List (AWL). The paper concluded with some suggestions for using MEAWL in EAP teaching, as a discipline-specific word list can “provide a useful guide for teachers to help them decide which vocabulary to focus on” (Nation, 2013, p. 258).

In the fourth article, “From English Major to Statistics Expert and Language Education Researcher: An Interview with Chuang Wang” by Lun Peng, Professor Wang (Distinguished Professor of Quantitative Research Methods & Dean of Faculty of Education, University of Macau) begins with his story of how he became interested in his focal areas (e.g. Quantitative Research Methods). Initially, he chose English rather than mathematics (or statistics) as his major in college because he did not know what he could do with a degree in mathematics. It was only after his supervisor requested assistance on data analysis that his involvement in the world of statistics began. An assigned task given by his doctoral supervisor became a passion to him. Fuel was added to this passion when once again he was tasked with assisting his doctoral supervisor on a project related to self-regulated learning strategies in solving mathematics word problems. Through completion of this work, the opportunity to suggest his supervisor to explore self-regulated language learning strategies came upon him and things snowballed forward.

From his research findings, Professor Wang has been able to distill the following advice to English teachers: give ESL/EFL students meaningful language learning tasks that can build up their confidence in language learning. Professor Wang also offered up several pieces of advice for junior researchers to take note, including considering alternative methods for collecting data from young learners and strongly considering adopting existing instruments in lieu of instrument creation. Next, the interview took a personal turn when Professor Wang shared his experiences as an academic in the USA and in China. He explained how his leadership led to the formation of two doctorate programs in these two countries. Using the wisdom gained from his previous experiences, the interview moved on to him providing advice for novice faculty members in terms of research, teaching, and service. The interview ends with his thoughts on being a journal editor, cross-cultural experiences, and his future research trajectory. Regardless of the stage of their careers, readers of this interview will find the guidance and experience shared constructive.

The year of 2022 has been a very busy one for many of us. The peer-review process has taken longer than normal as we have given reviewers extra time due to the pandemic-related stress that everyone was facing, especially colleagues based in China when the drastic Covid-19 policy measures were introduced toward the end of 2022. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the reviewers and copy editors for their support of the IJTS special column. And we hope that readers will find the articles in this column relevant and useful.

Finally, we are looking forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the 2023 Assembly and reading your new TESOL research!

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Rining WEI (Tony), PhD, is a tenured Associate Professor in Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), China's largest Sino-foreign institution. He has supervised nearly 40 master's and PhD dissertations covering topics such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and individual differences in L2 learning. His areas of research include multilingualism, geronto-linguistics, and quantitative methodology. He has published in journals including *Bilingualism: Language & Cognition*, *English Today*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *Journalism, Linguistics and Education*, *System*, and *World Englishes*. He serves as (1) Associate Editor for *TESOL International Journal* (Scopus-indexed), and (2) Co-Editor-in-Chief of *International Journal of EAP: Research and Practice*.

Barry Lee Reynolds is Associate Professor of English Language Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Macau. His research interests include vocabulary learning, computer-assisted language learning, written corrective feedback, and language teacher education. In addition to having edited several journal special issues, his most recent edited volumes include *Vocabulary Learning in the Wild* (2023, Springer), *Innovative Approaches in Teaching English Writing to Chinese Speakers* (2021, De Gruyter Mouton) and *English Literacy Instruction for Chinese Speakers* (2019, Palgrave). He also serves as an editorial board member for several journals and is a Section Editor for *Open Linguistics* (De Gruyter Mouton).