Christopher Brumfit Thesis Award

Christopher Brumfit Ph.D./Ed.D. Thesis Award 2013

The Editor and Board of *Language Teaching* are pleased to announce that the winner of the 2013 Christopher Brumfit thesis award is DR. ELLEN JOHNSON SERAFINI. The thesis was selected by an external panel of judges based on its significance to the field of second language acquisition, second or foreign language learning and teaching, originality and creativity and quality of presentation.

Dr. Serafini's Ph.D. thesis was entitled *Cognitive and psychosocial factors in the long-term development of implicit and explicit second language knowledge in adult learners of Spanish at increasing proficiency*. This study examined the trajectory of L2 development in adult learners of Spanish at three levels of proficiency during and after a semester of instruction. A fundamental goal was to identify both cognitive and psychosocial individual differences that may explain the high variability associated with L2 learning in adults over time and to clarify whether such factors play a unique role in learners at varying skill levels. The study also sought to advance a line of research aiming to improve the validity and reliability of tests designed to measure knowledge OF (implicit) and ABOUT (explicit) L2 grammar. Results promise to provide teachers with research-based evidence about how their students differ from one another and how this knowledge can be used to make more effective decisions in the L2 classroom.

The external referees praised the thesis as 'original and indeed ground breaking research since no other study to our knowledge has investigated the contributions of cognitive and psychosocial variables to implicit and explicit L2 knowledge in the same study nor examined the extent to which their contribution changes over time. This research is also innovative by incorporating methodological and statistical elements for examining speed and efficiency of implicit L2 development. By taking a comprehensive and rigorous approach, this study has great potential to contribute to SLA theory. We know of very few studies that have been so ambitious in attempting to address such a wide range of linguistic and learner internal variables while at the same time seeking to inform classroom instruction'.

Dr. Serafini completed her thesis at Georgetown University, USA, under the supervision of Professor Cristina Sanz.

This year's runner-up was DR. ALASTAIR HENRY with a thesis entitled *L3 motivation*, defended at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden and supervised by Professor Christina Cliffordson and Dr. Britt Marie Apelgren. The thesis investigates the unexplored phenomenon of motivation to learn an additional foreign language (L3) with particular focus on the impact of the L2. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data from school students in Sweden, L3 motivational trajectories are mapped across six school grades and compared

with similar trajectories for L2 English, with declining trajectories for L3s emerging. L2 English was seen to have a negative impact on motivation to learn L3 French, German and Spanish. Light is shed on the cognitive processes in situations where language speaking/using self-concepts come into contact and how L3 self-concepts are appraised in relation to L2 counterparts.

The examiners remarked that this 'very important thesis builds on recent developments in research on motivation in language learning, applying these to L3 acquisition. It makes a particularly valuable contribution to our understanding of the relationship between L2 and L3 acquisition and opens up a number of interesting avenues for further exploration, not least with respect to gender differences and the role of the ideal self. The research is well conceived, methodologically rigorous, analytically convincing and persuasively argued. Its relevance extends far beyond Sweden, and the proposals for further research hold out excellent prospects for further deepening our understanding in this important area'.

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Aim To recognise doctoral thesis research that makes a significant and original contribution to the field of SLA and/or foreign/second language teaching and learning.

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Eligibility To be considered for the award:

- The candidate's institution must have accepted the thesis for the Ph.D./Ed.D. NO MORE THAN TWO YEARS BEFORE the date of the award application.
- The research must have been completed as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree or its equivalent at a university.
- Although the thesis under consideration must be in English, the research may be related to work concerning any second language.
- Candidates should not have applied for the award on a previous occasion.

Application Process In the first instance, applicants must submit the following:

- **Two files**: ONE MS WORD FILE CONTAINING A SUMMARY OF THE THESIS, not to exceed 17 double-spaced pages including references, font size 12, AND A SEPARATE MS WORD FILE CONTAINING A 150-WORD ABSTRACT of the thesis. Both files should be clearly labelled with the candidate's name, and neither file should exceed 2 MB.
  Preparing your summary Care should be taken in drafting the summary so that the referees are provided with as detailed a report as possible on the work undertaken.