INTRODUCTION

The Research Symposium and the ensuing refereed proceedings of contributions to the symposium have become an integral part of the annual TESL Ontario conference. The symposium during the 2015 TESL Ontario conference brought together researchers and language professionals who addressed one of the two topics that had been selected for inclusion. While some of the contributions included present data from individual researchers' recent studies, others summarize areas of activity in areas that have become topical in ESL learning and teaching. The contributors link theoretical insights with practical issues in pedagogy and consider the implications to classroom practice. Both themes addressed at the 2015 Research Symposium are represented in these proceedings. They are grouped according to theme and, within each theme, presented in alphabetical order of the presenters.

Theme 1: English in the Workplace

The theme of English in the Workplace explored three different workplace-related settings that ESL learners may encounter. The first paper, Tracey Dewing's The Three P's Of ESL In The Workplace: Proficiency, Pronunciation, & Pragmatics, discusses two studies that explored aspects of receptive and productive oral communication between immigrant and native English speaking employees. The material presented highlights challenges and successes of workplace programs and offers recommendations for future research. In Who Recommends the Higher Language Test Score for Workplace Readiness: Language Specialists or Employers? Andrea Strachan investigates the question of cut score standard setting for professionals' language requirements. In particular, the study explored whether cut-score recommendations differed between health professionals and language specialists, groups that acted as expert panellists in the standard-setting study. A key finding of the study is that while language specialists' participation clarified aspects of the language testing process for panellists, health professionals contributed workplace examples that helped the panel understand the language demands of the workplace. The third paper, Julia Williams and Maggie Heeney's Developing a Culturally Mindful Curriculum and Occupation-Specific Assessment for an Optometric Bridging Program, describes the development of an ESL curriculum and occupation-specific assessment for a specific optometric bridging program. The Optometric English Language Proficiency Assessment (OELPA), which assesses reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills in optometric contexts served to inform the curriculum developers on the impact of the curriculum on learning outcomes. The paper has relevance for curriculum development and workplace assessments in other professional contexts.

Theme 2: Formulaic language: a promising way to think about vocabulary building

This theme focused on research on formulaic language, multiword units with unitary meanings or functions. Examples of types of formulaic language include collocations, idioms, formulaic expressions, lexical bundles, and phrasal verbs. The three papers here report on pedagogically relevant research studies which address the acquisition and use of formulaic language.

Lina AlHassan's contribution, Learning all the Parts of the Puzzle: Focused Instruction of Formulaic Sequences Through the Lens of Activity Theory, reports on an innovative study in which English for academic purposes (EAP) learners were taught specific formulaic language through focused instruction. The writing produced by the learners was evaluated by a team of EAP teacher judges who also reflected on the efficacy of teaching formulaic language. Randy Appel's Formulaic Sequences in L2 English Academic Writing: Proficiency level differences reports on a study of formulaic language in the writing samples produced by EAP learners in proficiency test contexts. The results show some noteworthy differences in the use of formulaic language by learners of different proficiency levels. The third contribution is from Alisa Zavialova, whose study Explicit Instruction of Formulaic Expressions and Second Language Pragmatic Competence, focused on LINC learners who were taught formulaic sequences relevant to specific pragmatic speech acts. The learners were later tested on their use of the sequences, and reflected on the learning process and their evolving awareness of formulaic language and pragmatic competence.

As in the past, we enjoyed preparing this Special Research Symposium Issue for readers of Contact and wish to thank the contributors for submitting written versions of their papers. To grow, members of the TESL profession need to continue to investigate research and teaching practice; this continual striving for more sophisticated research questions and teaching techniques allows them to meet the challenges encountered in their classrooms. We hope that the stimulating contributions contained in this issue of the referred proceedings of the 2015 Research Symposium will inspire teachers to experiment with a new methodology or new techniques in their classrooms.

We regret to announce that this is the final Research Symposium and the final published proceedings. Due to funding priorities, TESL Ontario will not offer a Research Symposium for the foreseeable future.

Hedy McGarrell, David Wood Co-editors

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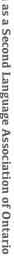
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