Editorial

This issue of the Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics (Volume 14, Issue 1) addresses a number of topics of particular relevance to language learning and teaching in Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. We begin with Yan Wang and Mark Evan Nelson’s contrastive analysis of Chinese scholars and internationally published scholars in their textual construction of authorial voice. Seventeen book reviews written by a group of Chinese scholars for an English literacy course in Singapore were compared with 20 reviews published in international journals. The quantitative and qualitative textual analysis, together with interview responses, has revealed both similarities and differences between the two groups of writers in the use of various linguistic features such as hedges and self-mentions. Acknowledging the intricate nature of book reviews, Wang and Nelson discuss some possible factors mediating the writing style of the Chinese writers, ranging from language proficiency to socio-cultural ideologies, with the intention of shedding light on the learning and teaching of academic writing.

The next paper, which also has a contrastive nature, explores the effect of two styles of listening on listening development and vocabulary acquisition among a group of part-time university students in Taiwan: extensive listening and intensive listening. Drawing on the research on extensive reading, Anna Chang looks at whether and how extensive listening can constitute more useful aural input than intensive listening for this group of learners of English and enhance their listening competence. The learners, falling into two groups, studied some audio recordings of graded readers in two different listening styles in 26 weeks and were assessed in terms of their listening comprehension and vocabulary level. The extensive-listening group was found to have performed better than the intensive-listening group in the listening comprehension test but not in the vocabulary level test. Chang attributes the results of the vocabulary level test to the weekly dictation given to the intensive-listening group, but highlights the possibility of enhancing learners’ listening competence without formal instruction from teachers.

Aiping Zhao and Ying Guo continue the discussion of vocabulary acquisition by examining the interactive effects of four vocabulary enhancement techniques on receptive and productive vocabulary gain and retention: glosses, dictionary use, a reading comprehension exercise, and a reading comprehension exercise plus a fill-in-blank vocabulary task. Eighty-two learners of English in a university in China were asked to read two passages and then work on an immediate vocabulary test and a delayed test a month later. While the enhancement techniques seemed not to facilitate vocabulary retention, an interactive effect of the techniques was found to be significant on receptive vocabulary gain. The group under the condition of glosses and a reading comprehension exercise plus a fill-in-blank vocabulary task gained the most receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge, as compared with the groups under the other conditions. In light of the findings, Zhao and Guo suggest more frequent reinforcement reading activities so that enhancement techniques can contribute further to both vocabulary gain and retention.

After the first three articles on different aspects of language learning, the next two papers draw our attention to test administration and language teaching behaviour.
Yi-ching Pan and Tim Newfields again take us to Taiwan, this time to report on the views of 18 administrators in 14 tertiary institutions on the exit examination policy as advocated by the Taiwanese government. Among these institutions, nine implemented the policy for non-English-major students while the remaining five did not follow the policy at all. The majority of the administrators implementing the policy believed that the exit requirement would result in more resources allocated to the English education and therefore help improve students’ English. Meanwhile, the administrators at those non-exit institutions, while expressing their concerns about their students’ low proficiency level and the teachers’ ability to teach the students, reported that they would comply with the policy in the coming years. Pan and Newfields conclude that most administrators interviewed are likely to fulfil the requirements of the government policy in one way or the other.

Finally, Florence Ma brings us back to Hong Kong by looking at the perceived differences in the teaching behavior of non-native-English-speaking teachers and native-English-speaking teachers. The participants of the study were 53 non-native-English-speaking teachers who were asked to complete a questionnaire on the potential differences in the teaching of non-native-English-speaking teachers and their native counterparts. The non-native-English-speaking English teachers were perceived to know more about the students’ learning needs and difficulties, as compared with the native English teachers, who were regarded as more knowledgeable as a result of their English learning experience, English language proficiency and cultural backgrounds. The non-native-English-speaking English teachers were also considered to be in a better position to help students with their examinations. The paper ends with some implications for teacher education.