Introduction

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This 12th volume of the *Hawaii Pacific University TESOL Working Paper Series* covers several important topics in second language teaching and learning, including conversational skills, reading skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, authenticity, and sociocultural awareness.

Megan Hanlon, Hanh Nguyen, and Aya Terazawa's analysis of a listener's responses in storytelling at the workplace not only reveals interesting patterns of social interaction in this context but also bears important implications for the teaching of English. Their paper demonstrates that much language awareness can be gained by recording naturally occurring conversations and performing a fine-grained analysis. This awareness can be the first step toward the development of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Continuing with a focus on developing students' communicative competence but with a highlight on the linguistic competence component, Jamie Lesley investigated pronunciation errors and their possible sources by Japanese learners of English. Lesley's paper also shows that recording and close analysis of learners' actual production can be very revealing. While Lesley's study focuses on language samples in isolation for a focused examination of phonetic details, Trung Dao's paper on the three amplifiers *absolutely, completely,* and *totally* carefully examines them in actual usage in large collections of authentic texts (corpora). Dao's findings on the distribution frequency and the syntactic and semantic collocations shed light on the nuances of meaning that may distinguish these near-synonymous modifiers in English. The strength of Dao's paper is that it does not stop at research findings but also takes the findings to teaching materials.

This practical approach is also evident in the next two papers on developing reading skills. Aya Oyamada's paper concentrates on technological tools to improve learners' reading speed. After detailing a reading speed training program that can be used in many teaching contexts, Oyamada reported on a case study of one particular learner's experience with the training program. This learner's experience can be very helpful to teachers in the employment of the reading speech training tools. Also focusing on reading but turning the attention to extensive reading, Trung Dao's second paper provides the resources and teaching steps for a semester-long extensive reading program that can be implemented in most EFL contexts.

The last two papers in this volume consider two important themes in language teaching. Myra Rafalovich's paper critically reviews the notion of authentic materials and brings together practical and reasonable suggestions for classroom teachers. Sara Fowler's paper takes the case of Catalan in Spain as a starting point to reflect on the larger historical, social, cultural, and political factors that may impact language policies around the world. These policies and factors are important for second language teachers to keep in mind, as the language classroom does not exist in a void but is embedded in the fabric of the local context.

Reference
Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, *1*(1), 1–47.