



Editorial

Dear *JALDA* reader,

The editor's notes in our Journal have been so far a site for the clarification of the Journal's policy and the task still continues. With an inclination towards solving our real world problems in language teaching (and literary studies, which I will discuss in the next issue of the Journal), we would like to take that the introduction of the concept of "life-world" to Social Sciences (by Husserl, 1970; Schutz, 1967; Habermas, 1987, for instance) can be a ground-breaking movement to open up new horizons for researchers. "Life-world" is a concept to defy any sort of research based on a worldview that attributes priority to mind over body, the trend Rene Decartes, the French philosopher of the Enlightenment, considered the right path to truth. It is generally agreed that rationalists under the Cartesian flag have had the leading role in the western science and civilisation. In the linguistic research, for instance, the influential Noam Chomsky (1957) has been the most outstanding realization of the Cartesian view of our times. Chomsky's idealization of the speaking-hearing subject set free from social and political constraints turns the study of language into a mere rationalist endeavour disregarding the 'life-world' surrounding language. 'Competence' becomes the researcher's only objective while 'performance' is totally dispensed with. The mechanical view of the nature of the worldly phenomena in Cartesian philosophy does not leave room for exceptions. Researchers in second language acquisition, before and after the emergence of 'applied linguistics' in the late fifties/early sixties, have regarded themselves as 'scientists' interested in discovering the universal mechanisms of second language acquisition on the basis/within the framework of theories they have borrowed from both linguistics and psychology.

The claim that SLA research as a large portion of applied linguistics is a 'science' leads to epistemological and methodological characteristics in the discipline that would not be approved by the proponents of 'life-world.' An objective pose taken by the researcher for 'scientific' purposes usually leads in some research methods to the numerical coding of the subjects of the study, for instance, whose behaviours would eventually be tested for understanding the connection between variables according to the concept of cause-and-effect relationship. The disapproval of such SLA research has ontological reasons. From a traditional scientific perspective, there is a measurable reality out there that awaits our scientific experimental approach to it to be disclosed. This view of the researcher's relation to the researched, the former armed with mathematical tools standing apart and above the latter to measure it and to get to know it with certainty, receives serious criticisms from "a wide variety of scholars who often are seriously at odds with one another but who share a general rejection of the blend of scientism, foundationalist epistemology, instrumental reasoning, and the philosophical anthropology of disengagement that has marked 'mainstream' social science" (Schwandt 2000, p. 190).

With regard to the attempts to cause innovation in research methods in applied linguistics (see *Applied Linguistics*, Special Issue, 2016, for instance), existential research methods, an alternative to the experimental methods, can emerge from the concept of 'life-world.' A need for this results from the rejection of the possibility of the concept of 'objectivity' in science. The argument goes that "How is it possible to be basically objective when we speak different languages?" To have an objective view of issues the researcher should have a transcendental standpoint for observation. But from a sociocultural perspective, such a standpoint is non-existent and out of reach. I wonder how a native English-speaking researcher of SLA should define a construct, say, fluency or accuracy, when English is no longer regarded as a possession of the British and the Americans. According to Bolton (2004, p. 380), such an issue can be traced back even to the 1960s when Halliday, MacIntash and Strevens argued that

English is no longer the possession of the British, or even the British and the Americans, but an international language which increasing numbers of people adopt for at least some of their purposes . . . In West Africa, in the West Indies, and in Pakistan and India . . . it is no longer accepted by the majority that the English of England, with RP as its accent, are [sic] the only possible models of English to be set before the young.

Such an attitude towards SLA is, to some extent, in line with the 'life-world' philosophy, the replacement of some abstract ideal thing, so to speak, which is English with RP and all the prestige it might enjoy, with a language that is much more useful for communicative purposes in real life contexts. Strevens quoted by Bolton (2004, p. 380) argues thus:

in ESL areas where local L2 forms have developed and where they command public approval it is these forms which constitute the most suitable models for use in schools, certainly more suitable than a British or American L1 model. . . the native speaker of English must accept that English is no longer his possession alone: it belongs to the world, and new forms of English, born of new countries with new communicative needs, should be accepted into the marvelously flexible and adaptable galaxy of "Englishes" which constitute the English language.

That "English" is the dominant language in today's world is not a natural phenomenon but a reality that has its roots in the history of the modern world. Hence, there is a tendency among more recent applied linguists to regard "English" as a lingua franca (see Seidlhofer, 2011, for instance), which stems from the very idea that English is no one's possession. It is this view that causes the flexibility and adaptability Strevens introduces to be extended to different areas of English language teaching. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2018, p.83) take the concept of adaptability to the field of materials development for language learning and argue that their answer to the question "How significant is adaptation of the materials?" has always been "Very significant" but they now need to rephrase their response as "phenomenally significant."

In our critical review of the up-to-date literature on adaptation and teacher use of materials, we have found overwhelming evidence to support the fact that adaptation has become a necessity rather than an option in most cases, whether the coursebooks are commercially produced or are nationally/institutionally tailored. (p. 83)

Having stated that one major reason for the adaptability has been the paradigm shift of the ownership of 'English,' Tomlinson and Masuhara provide several examples of materials adaptations from all over the world. They (p. 82) report Ottley, for instance, who started a new job in Iraqi-Kurdistan and wanted to know what might interest his class of students consisting of Muslims and Christians, Sunnis and Shi'ites, Kurds from Iraq, Iran and Syria, and Arabs. So he invited a representative sample of students to come to an informal forum meeting. Based on the discussion, he added, replaced and supplemented the commercial EAP coursebook by a major international publisher that he was expected to use.

I see Fulcher and Davidson's *Language Testing and Assessment: An Advanced Resource Book* as a work that is compatible with "life-world." The authors claim at the very beginning of the book (p. xix) that their discussion is set within a new approach, at the heart of which is the concept of *effect-driven testing* and hence is highly pragmatic. Their emphasis is on the outcome of testing activities. "Since the 1980s," they claim (p. 21), "validity inquiry has moved away from positivistic trait theory to include not only context but the utility of tests for the particular purpose for which they are designed." For Fulcher and Davidson (p. 15), the traditional concept of validity is now accounted for by means of 'usefulness,' a concept introduced by Bachman and Palmer (1996). Tests are not created just to test what they should test; tests are created to have real world effects in the contexts they are used. From such a life-world perspective, the difficult question about constructs is raised then; are constructs human creations, or are they 'true' in the sense that they have a separate existence in the real world? (pp. 21-22). (See my interview with Glenn Fulcher in this issue of the Journal for more interesting points from his perspective.)

Leo van Lier's (2004) sociocultural approach to language teaching and learning is an interesting attempt in the direction of understanding the complex role of the concept of 'life-world' in language education. The tendency towards the contextualization of language education takes van Lier towards a transdisciplinary approach to the study of language education which is labelled *educational linguistics* and is approached from an ecological perspective. Van Lier's main objective is to challenge the standard scientific models in social sciences and he finds ecological approaches to language education suitable in this regard; they can be used to overcome the reductionism common to scientific works.

Van Lier's approach to language education can be regarded as a good example for a life-world approach to the topic for several reasons. One of them is his attempt to set language education research free from the influence of physical sciences, which is usually materialized in the need for numerical precision in scientific enquiry. The epistemological challenging of the solely numerical

approaches to research by van Lier leads to assigning priority to ecology so that he can come to the conclusion that

Ecology is the study of organisms and their relations with one another and their environment. Since it is contextual study, it rejects the usual scientific reductions or idealizations of context, data, and complexity. This means that different, non-traditional research methodologies have to be developed for doing ecological research. Requirements include ecological validity, intervention studies and other kinds of action research, case study, narrative and discursive research. This does not rule out regular quantitative or statistical models of various kinds, but these have to be motivated within specific contextual frameworks. (p. 21)

One important consequence of the introduction of ecology and context to language studies must be a turn to language relativity, which has its own rich literature. Studies by Kramersch (2004) show that there has been a social and cultural turn in SLA in the last few years, which has made the language relativity principle more relevant in applied linguistics. “The seeds are now there to deal with individual, social, and cultural variation within SLA research” (p. 251). Individual, social and cultural variation within SLA research in this sense is what interests us in this Journal. We would like to hold that people live in different worlds and that they may have different solutions for their different problems; our view is that the colourful picture of SLA research should lead to a more efficient handling of English language teaching and learning.

This issue of *JALDA* features an interview, seven research papers of national and international scope on various dimensions of language and literature studies and a book review. The interview is with Professor Glenn Fulcher, the distinguished British researcher and applied linguist working in the field of language testing and assessment. His philosophically-oriented approach to language testing leads to an outstanding realization of the concept of the role of the real world in language education. The first paper by Behrooz Azabdaftari is a tribute to Professor Henry Widdowson on his visit to Azarbaijan Shahid Madani University in 2018. The paper reviews Professor Widdowson’s thoughts and contributions to applied linguistics and language teaching in passing. Cosmas Rai Amenorvi draws on the theory of cohesion to show how both linguistic and aesthetic effects are achieved in Malcolm X’s ‘The Ballot or the Bullet’. The paper by Elham Sarvandy and Jane Ekstam focuses on English as Lingua Franca (ELF) with some attention to English language teaching in the Iranian context. “Ta’ziyeh and declamation in Shia tradition: discourse in focus” by Amin Karimnia and Marrayam Sabbaghi is a study of Ta’ziyeh and its discourse with an emphasis on how language varieties might help frame a culturee’s perception of religion. The next paper by Firouzeh Ameri is an example of applied literature. The author believes in the potentials of literature to empower and transform individuals. Hence, she applies New Jungian findings to the reading of *Sweetness in the Belly*, by Camilla Gibb, to show how applied literature can lead to healing. The paper by Naser Abbasi and Simin Khosrowshahi explores the role of experience in EFL

teachers' satisfaction of the in-service teacher education programs in Iran, and Somaye Ashrafi and Parviz Ajideh explore culture-related content in English textbook, focusing on the advanced series of Iran Language Institute in the following paper. And, finally, Jane Ekstam has reviewed *Loving Literature. A Cultural History*, by Deirde Shauna Lynch for us.

I would like to express my gratitude to the authors that have contributed to this issue of our young Journal as well as to those who did in the past and those who will in the future.

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