

## Christopher Brumfit Ph.D./Ed.D. Thesis Award 2009

### Sponsored by Cambridge University Press and promoted by *Language Teaching*

The Editor and Board of *Language Teaching* are pleased to announce that the recipient of the 2009 Christopher Brumfit thesis award is Dr OKIM KANG.

Dr Kang's Ph.D. thesis, entitled *Ratings of L2 oral performance in English: Relative impact of rater characteristics and acoustic measures of accentedness*, 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. The study develops and illustrates an innovative approach to assessing rater characteristics that are likely to be biasing factors in the assessment of L2 oral proficiency and compares their impact with the impact of measurable features of pronunciation that are legitimate components of 'true score' variance.

The external referees remarked that the findings 'have important implications for the recruitment of raters, the elaboration of speech assessment criteria, the treatment of prosodic features of speech in ESL programmes, and the recruitment of international teaching assistants' and that the thesis was 'a highly original piece of research in its use of random coefficient mixed modelling [yielding] very practical findings which are useful both for teaching practices and for performance assessment'.

Dr Kang completed her dissertation at the University of Georgia, USA, under the supervision of Dr Donald Rubin.

There were two runners-up this year. Dr WEN ZHISHENG and Dr JULIE A. FOSS. Dr Wen Zhisheng's Ph.D. thesis, *Effects of working memory capacity on L2 task-based speech planning and performance*, was presented at the Chinese University of Hong Kong under the supervision of Dr Peter Skehan. The study investigates the effects of working memory capacity, both independently and in interaction with pre-task planning and task structure, on different aspects of L2 spoken performance. It was singled out for praise as being 'very solid and impressive in its implementation' and for the fact that the study 'makes a genuine contribution to knowledge in an area which is currently attracting considerable interest but is still under-researched, namely the role of working memory in SLA'.

Dr Foss's Ph.D. thesis, *Individual differences and text genre in L2 French reading comprehension*, was presented at Michigan State University under the supervision of Dr Anne Violin-Wigent and Dr Diana Pulido. The study investigated reader-based individual differences and the text-based variable of genre in L2 reading comprehension among adult beginning, intermediate and advanced learners of French. The examiners commented that the thesis was 'well-informed, well-designed and well-executed. Its application of structural equation modelling to the study of reading comprehension has made a substantial contribution to knowledge in

the field, especially in terms of the factors that contribute to the two main determinants of comprehension, L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency’.

Applications for this year’s award can be made up to 30 November 2010. Details of the application procedure can be found in the July 2010 issue of the journal (*Language Teaching* 43.3) and online at <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displaySpecialPage?pageId=1940>.