Volume 11, Number 2: March 2009

Articles
Gender and written academic discourse: Hedges and boosters in education conference papers
Richard Holmes
Topichood and the acquisition of matrix-embedded null subjects in L2 Chinese
Stano Kong
The Theory of Planned Behavior and Chinese English teachers’ intention to implement communicative activities in the classroom
Jiuhua Huang and Gary J. Conti
English grammar: An investigation of Hong Kong ESL books
Jackie F. K. Lee and Peter Collins

Book Reviews
Discourse and identity
Ashatackoo
Linguistic variation yearbook, Vol. 6
Sibansu Mukhopadhyay

Abstract
Gender and Written Academic Discourse: Hedges and Boosters in Education Conference Papers
Richard Holmes
Asian Centre for Research in University Learning and Teaching
Universiti Teknologi MARA

Abstract
The paper seeks to extend research on gender differences in spoken discourse into the domain of written academic discourse. A corpus of 78 conference papers written by education researchers for a conference in Australia in 2001 was examined to determine whether there were significant differences in the use of hedges and boosters. It was found that male authors were more likely to use boosters although there was no significant difference in the frequency of hedges. It was noted, however, that men were more likely to use the less common and women the more common hedges. Collaboration and first author effects were also observed.

Topichood and the Acquisition of Matrix-embedded Null Subjects in L2 Chinese
Stano Kong
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
Tung Hai University

Abstract
This study reports on an asymmetrical pattern observed when English speakers interpret null matrix and embedded subjects in L2 Chinese and sets out to explain the native non-native divergence in relation to parameter-resetting in SLA within the framework of Principles and Parameters.

Findings in the current study show that second language speakers’ use of null arguments increases with proficiency. They also suggest that null embedded subjects are persistently more difficult to acquire than null matrix subjects. The results support the claim made by Hawkins and Chan (1997) that parameter values associated with functional categories are inaccessible to L2 learners after the critical period.
The Theory of Planned Behavior and Chinese English Teachers’ Intention to Implement Communicative Activities in the Classroom

Jiuhan Huang
Regent University, USA

Gary J. Conti
Oklahoma State University, USA

Abstract
This study utilized the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as a tool to understand Chinese English teachers’ intentions to implement communicative activities in teaching. A Behavioral Intention Questionnaire was developed, based on the guidelines prescribed by the originators of TPB and was used to measure the intentions of 101 Chinese middle school English teachers who participated in a communicative activities workshop, which was designed and conducted by the first author of the article. Pretest and posttest results showed that the workshop increased the participants’ intentions to implement the communicative activities, and regression analyses revealed that all the variables of TPB (attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control) contributed to teachers’ intention. Specific beliefs in each of the three variables emerged, which could be considered to be significant indicators for each variable. Recommendations for teacher training in China are made.

English Grammar: An Investigation of Hong Kong ESL Books

Jackie F. K. Lee
Department of English
The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Collins
Linguistics Department
The University of New South Wales

Abstract
Over the past decade the need for explicit grammar teaching in ESL curricula has been quite widely accepted. However, how well are learners served by the presentation of English grammar in ESL materials? This study of 41 current textbooks and grammar books published and used in Hong Kong suggests that while textbook writers have incorporated meaningful tasks for learners, many grammar book writers are reluctant to engage with the task-based approach recommended by the Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council. The findings also suggest that both textbook and grammar book writers need to pay more heed to the insights presented in the influential and authoritative descriptive grammars of recent years. Teachers and textbook writers are encouraged to become more aware of the problems identified in the study—which we assume are not limited to Hong Kong—and to find ways to address them.