

Preface to Per Linguam 26(2)

The second number of 2010 provides insights into language learning across the all levels of education levels: from primary to tertiary education, from developing literacy in a home language to learning a foreign language. This collection of articles all focus on the promotion of language *comprehension*, either in terms of reading or listening comprehension. It starts off with three articles that deal with language comprehension problems at higher education level. Van Dyk and Marais demonstrate the feasibility of including listening comprehension in a language placement test at Stellenbosch University and conclude that academic listening skills form an important part of academic literacy and that more systematic investigation and validation of assessment instruments are required.

Still at higher education level, Smit (from a Namibian perspective) discusses the way in which different conceptual metaphors influence comprehension. She compares two groups of students who read the same text but the central metaphor of ECONOMIC CRISIS = STORM is changed in one text to ECONOMIC CRISIS = AILING PERSON. The results show the influence of conceptual metaphor on comprehension and act as a warning to language educators not to overestimate students' ability to infer meaning from such metaphors. Bouazid and Le Roux would certainly agree with Smit's conclusions as they tackle the problem of how well students comprehend literature in foreign language teaching. These three contributions from South Africa, Namibia and Algeria give our readers a sense of the degree to which we all grapple with language comprehension across widely divergent African contexts.

Moving to primary school level, the contribution by Nomlomo shows how turn-taking practices and teaching strategies can interfere or inhibit understanding of primary school science, while the study by Kruizinga and Nathanson, in the context of South Africa's literacy crisis, show how the new policy for reading instruction is implemented in selected schools in the Western Cape (South Africa).

The final article by Le Cordeur is also concerned with reading comprehension at primary school level and appears in a section that we are proud to introduce: a new category of articles called *Language Learning Notes*. The articles that will be published in this category will differ from the mainstream research reports in that they will include shorter contributions (approximately 2500 words) that critically investigate existing sources on aspects of language learning (e.g. the implications of new educational policies), or contributions that offer well-argued and research-based advice to language teachers, or early reports on research in progress. We feel that this may provide information that is focused on classroom practice and may widen the readership of the journal. The contributions will go through a blind peer-review process and will therefore still qualify for subsidy from the National Education Department (for researchers at institutions of higher education in South Africa). Authors who

feel that their contributions are particularly suited to the notes section can indicate this when they submit. Reviewers will be given very specific guidelines when they evaluate articles for this section. However, the editors may also decide that certain submissions are more suited to the notes section, in which case authors may be asked to shorten their texts. Based on feedback from the editorial board we will test the feasibility of this new category until the end of 2011 and will then take a decision whether to make it a permanent feature of *Per Linguam*. Please let us know what you think of this idea!

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Call for contributions to a special issue of *Per Linguam*

In 2011 *Per Linguam* intends to publish a special-focus issue which brings together the latest knowledge on reading comprehension and instruction. The purpose of the issue is to contribute to best practices and to stimulate ongoing research in this critical area. All researchers, educators, students, literacy specialists working in this field are invited to submit articles by 2 May 2011. The guest editor for this edition will be Dr Renée Nathanson. Please contact her at rrn@sun.ac.za for more information.