

FOREWORD

Communication and communication education play an important role in this issue of the *ABAC Journal*. These topics have always been important, of course, but perhaps never so important as they are today, a time when an extraordinary number of messages are moving around the globe at every second of the day. In earlier times, most people mainly communicated with people in close proximity who were linguistically and culturally similar, but now communication is international and transcends language and culture. How could communication and language education not be a matter of great concern in an era when Facebook and Twitter have suddenly become major forces in much of the world?

We begin with another of a continuing series of articles by Dr. Ioan Voicu on international meetings, in this case a meeting of the UN General Assembly on the problems of youth. Here we find communication to be an important issue, not simply because that is the purpose of a meeting but also because the topic of the meeting was “Dialogue and Mutual Understanding”. In this conference, held in conjunction with the International Year of Youth (2010-2011), a degree of optimism was established as the active promotion of progress towards a new world order was found to be manifested by youth. In an Appendix, the outcome document for this meeting is presented in full for the reader’s edification.

Meng Tian investigates the communicative approach, which emphasizes natural language contexts of learning, in the form of Communication Strategies. Such taught strategies, the author argues, can enhance the effectiveness of the communicative method; the approach is thus less seen as a purely natural learning approach as much as one that can be learned. In any discussion of language learning, the importance of course materials will clearly play a major role. Md. Kamrul Hasan’s article, the proliferation of college level English language courses is seen as having led to an equal proliferation of course materials. Professor Hasan also favors the communicative approach and examines a book that he believes provides the proper mix of language skills and exercises. The final communications-oriented article, written by Malinee Phaiboonnugulkij and Dr. Kanchana Prapphal, considers the importance of language learning on a particular national industry. Clearly, competence in language is necessary for success in many positions of the tourist industry and the article considers web-based achievement tests in English in the Thai context. The author devises a four-stage test which should be very useful in this specific context.

Moving on from language, but also industry specific, is Dr. Xiaoyuan Pan and Dr. Leonie Hallo’s investigation of the Shanghai automobile industry. Looking at factors relating to market organization, that is a description of the contexts and nature of market transactions, the study seeks to establish the relationship between such organization and business performance. The authors had positive findings when subjective measures were used but mixed results with objective measures. As is often the case, the business factors are found to be quite complex.

In our review section, we return to the Communicative Approach to language learning, as pioneered by Michael Swan. In this approach, old methods of rote learning are replaced by considerations of natural communication contexts and how speakers actually function in such situations. In a very comprehensive review article, San Shwe Baw examines both the literature which supports the Communicative Approach and literature that is critical of it. In engaging in this review, the author clarifies the nature of this approach and argues for a teaching method that emphasizes a more integrated approach to language learning.

In a second review article of the issue, on the other hand, Dr. Nongnit Chancharat focuses research not on a specific industry but the larger sector of small and medium enterprises in Thailand. These businesses play an important role in the overall economy and their success has a significant impact on that economy. On the other hand, failure of such firms is frequent, often because of lack of access to institutional credit. Although the author finds that this topic is understudied in relation to its importance, he considers the general trends located in those studies that do exist.

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