

From the Guest Editors

Cindy Brantmeier
Washington University in St. Louis
United States

Keiko Koda
Carnegie Mellon University
United States

We are happy to edit a volume that focuses on second-language reading development in languages other than English. The increasing emphasis on reading across all languages and all levels of instruction in the United States has generated a demand for more theory- and data-driven evidence to support applications in the classroom.

The topic is timely because interest in cross-linguistic variations in language learning and processing is escalating sharply. Empirical investigations generally support the likelihood that qualitatively different processing skills evolve through experiential exposure to linguistic input in diverse languages. In the second-language reading literature, however, little information is available about such variations. We thus know little about how second-language learners cope with different demands and requirements in learning to read in a new language particularly when their two languages are typologically different.

Further, a growing number of school-age children in the United States and other industrialized nations struggle in learning to read in their second language without benefits of sufficient proficiency in that language. Given consistently high correlations between reading ability in first and second languages, prior literacy experience in the first language presumably provides substantial facilitation in learning to read in a new language. Systematic investigations of cross-linguistic relationships in reading sub-skills should yield significant insights into literacy development in a second language.

It is important to note, moreover, that major claims in the current second-language reading literature have been based on data obtained almost exclusively from learners of English as a second language. Thus, scant attention has been given to learners of other languages. As noted above, the requisites for learning to read vary across languages. There is no doubt that we need more research-based information on literacy acquisition in diverse languages other than English. In view of the research paucity, this volume represents a much-needed addition to the literature.

In this special-theme issue, Eugenia Kerek and Pekka Niemi detail the unique structure of Russian orthography in order to examine how it may affect the organization and acquisition of reading skills in Russian. They offer a detailed review of phonemic-graphemic correspondences

in order to highlight the difficulties beginning readers and writers may face. In the article they also study insights and viewpoints that are essential to present-day research and theory on reading. Christine E. Parsons and Fiona Lyddy provide an analysis of oral reading errors in order to examine reading strategies utilized by children studying English and Irish in different schools in Ireland. They specifically examine strategies the children use when they are faced with unfamiliar words. The detailed description of English and Irish orthographies is fundamental to the analysis, and the authors skillfully discuss findings in light of specific orthographic variations. Overall findings highlight the different strategies employed by children learning to read in English and Irish.

We would like to thank our long list of reviewers who made this special issue possible: Elizabeth Bernhardt, Heidi Byrnes, Nobuko Chikamatsu-Chandler, Pierre Cormier, Megumi Hamada, Margot Haynes, Jan H. Hulstijn, Yoshiko Mori, Leslie Reese, Robert Rueda, JoAnn Hammadou Sullivan, and Rose-Marie Weber. Their invaluable and insightful comments on the many submitted manuscripts will serve as a catalyst for more research on this topic. The reviewer's comments and suggestions were extremely valuable in the quality and final outcome of this special volume. We want to thank Richard Day and Thom Hudson for the invitation to edit this volume, and we hold enormous gratitude for the assistant editor of *RFL*, Zhijun (David) Wen, for his hard work and dedication.