

Editorial

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I am extremely pleased to write this editorial for Issue 2 of Volume 4 of *TESOL Communications*. This issue contains three articles submitted under the previous editorship, along with three of the first papers accepted under my role as Chief Editor. It also marks the first issue published under the guidance of the newly established Advisory Board. One of the main duties of this board is to review and provide feedback on unsolicited proposals for special issues. I am very grateful to the members of the Advisory Board for their willingness to contribute to the development of the journal and for generously giving their time. Several very interesting proposals have already been received, and many are slated for publication in Volumes 5 or 6.

A recent update to the journal was the establishment of clear guidelines on the use of GenAI, which can be viewed on the Ethics Statement page: https://www.tesolcommunications.com/ethics_statements/. I also wish to thank the various Associate Editors who have joined the journal to assist with overseeing the review process for multiple sections. I continue to oversee all processes and directly manage submissions to the Research Articles section.

This issue includes six papers: four empirical research studies and two research syntheses. As I reread these articles, I find a thread running through all of them: the exploration of innovative approaches to language learning, with several studies focusing particularly on the role of technology, AI, and digital tools in enhancing learner engagement, motivation, and collaboration. Below, I provide a summary of each paper and highlight its significance for the field of TESOL.

In the first article, Pino Cutrone's "*EFL Speaking in the Japanese University Context: A Comparison of Task-Based and Presentation–Practice–Production Pedagogical Approaches*" examined how Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Presentation–Practice–Production (PPP) differentially affected the oral proficiency of Japanese university EFL learners. Drawing on action research with 66 first-year students in listening and speaking courses, the study compared the two instructional approaches over a 15-week semester using pre- and post-treatment dyadic conversation tests. The analysis, which measured fluency, syntactic complexity, accuracy, and lexical complexity, showed that both groups improved, but TBLT consistently outperformed PPP, particularly in temporal and hesitation fluency, syntactic complexity, and lexical development. Accuracy improved for both groups, with TBLT showing slightly stronger gains. These findings reinforced previous research supporting TBLT's effectiveness for fostering communicative competence, authentic language use, and vocabulary growth. For TESOL practitioners, this study highlights the value of incorporating task-based approaches into Japanese university EFL classrooms, even where PPP remains the dominant tradition. It also provides practical insights into syllabus design, the role of task complexity, and the pedagogical trade-offs between explicit form-focused instruction and communicative, task-driven learning.

The second article, “*Unraveling Learning Motivation in AI-Mediated Learning Environments: A Systematic Review of Research (2014-2024)*,” by Zihang Guo and Chili Li, examined learning motivation in AI-mediated learning environments through a systematic review of 108 studies published from 2014–2024. Using Web of Science–indexed peer-reviewed articles, the authors mapped research trends, learner attitudes, and pedagogical applications. Their review showed a steady growth of publications, three distinct developmental phases in motivation research, and generally positive learner perceptions. They also identified strong links between AI integration and improvements in writing instruction and teaching practices. For TESOL practitioners, this study highlights the growing importance of student-centered, game-based, and VR-supported learning designs and points to AI-enhanced motivation as an emerging area with substantial pedagogical promise.

In the third article by Fengchao Zhen, Neil Murray, Anthony J. Liddicoat, and Penelope Mosavian titled “*Teachers’ Cognition in Changing Practice: Implementing Group Discussion in EFL Classes in Universities in South-western China*,” they investigated how university EFL teachers in under-resourced Yunnan Province, China, implemented group discussion tasks following professional development. Drawing on classroom observations and teacher interviews, the study examined how pedagogical knowledge and reasoning shaped classroom practice. Although teachers recognized the value of group discussion for communicative competence and curriculum alignment, many struggled to apply the necessary pedagogical strategies or respond to institutional challenges. The findings underscored the need for deeper pedagogical preparation and sustained support. For TESOL, the study reinforces that effective adoption of communicative tasks depends not only on teacher cognition but also on developing the pedagogical knowledge and reasoning required to enact them in contextually constrained settings.

The fourth article titled “*The Use of Digital Role-Play for Speaking Practice: A Systematic Literature Review*,” by Rustam Shadiev, Abdrashev Arlen, Suleimanova Asem, Tursynbek Almas, Urazakova Darya, and Zhanargul Beisembayeva, reported on a systematic review (2015–2024) of digital role-play for speaking development. The review classified technologies and synthesized evidence on role-play types, language features, methodological frameworks, collaboration, applications, and challenges. Across studies, digital role-play supported gains in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, confidence, and anxiety reduction, with applications extending to professional communication such as negotiation and presentation. Ethical considerations, particularly privacy and inclusivity, emerged as critical. For TESOL, these findings position digital role-play as a powerful, engaging approach to spoken language practice that requires thoughtful design and ethical implementation.

The fifth article, titled “*Artificial Intelligence Tool Use and Learners’ Attitudes toward EFL Learning*” by Amani Bouzayenne and Riadh Harizi, explored how AI tool use related to secondary school learners’ attitudes toward EFL learning through a mixed-methods study involving 70 Tunisian pupils and interviews with three EFL teachers. Likert-scale questionnaire data indicated positive correlations between AI use and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attitudes, with the strongest link in the emotional domain. Teacher interviews revealed both enablers and barriers in classroom AI use. The study concluded that targeted AI training for teachers and students was urgently needed. For TESOL practitioners, the findings underscore that AI tools can enhance learner engagement but require equitable access and professional development to be used effectively.

Finally, the sixth article titled “*Exploring EAP Students’ Perceptions Toward Using Google Apps for Multimodal Collaborative Writing*,” by Zhengjie Li, Patrick Mannion, and Imelda Bangun, investigated EAP students’ perceptions of multimodal collaborative writing with Google apps through a modified survey grounded in sociocultural theory and the cognitive theory of multimedia learning. Results indicated no clear relationship between students’ attitudes and their writing performance, though advanced writing students showed significantly higher motivation than those in academic writing. Students from East Asia reported greater willingness to collaborate than peers from Arabic countries. The findings suggest that Google Apps can better support academic writing when integrated into project-based, discipline-specific instruction. For TESOL, this study highlights the importance of considering class type, cultural–linguistic background, and students’ prior technological experience when integrating collaborative digital tools.

I hope readers will enjoy these papers and find inspiration for their teaching or future research endeavors. I also encourage you to contribute to the journal or to propose a special issue that would be of interest to the TESOL community.