Editor's Note

Lessons Learned Through LEiA

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About nine years ago, I was working on a textbook project with a colleague when he asked me to proofread a few papers as a favor. I proofread them from a standpoint of ignorance on the topics (as I sometimes still do) and returned them with comments and questions scribbled in the margins. To my surprise, he then asked me to look at more papers, and so started an unexpected phase in my life, leaving the textbook long unfinished. That colleague was Richmond Stroupe, who at the time was the editor-in-chief of *CamTESOL Selected Papers* and who then became the first editor-in-chief of this publication. In the years since, the last four of them as editor-in-chief, I have learned many lessons through my work with LEiA. Here are just a few.

I have learned that every paper published in our peer-reviewed journal truly requires a community of volunteer editors and others willing to devote the necessary time and effort to support it to publication. We have been the grateful recipients of many fine and interesting papers, but have yet to come across what I think of as a “unicorn” paper—one that has been unanimously deemed “publishable as is” by all of its review editors. (For new authors worried about competition from more established authors, our review editors, who receive blinded papers—with the author’s name and other identifying information removed—treat all papers impartially, as do the editors who do see the authors’ names.) However, even that paper and its author would need this community. The community, which has never failed to come together to support “our” authors as professional peers, does not consist of only the review editors who provide feedback for submissions. Before the review editors, there is the editor-in-chief, the editorial assistant, and editors who assist in screening. If the paper successfully passes the screening and review stages, there is the senior review editor who manages the revision process, the copy editor, and again, the editor-in-chief and the editorial assistant. Finally, there is the publication assistant who puts the paper and its links on the website. Importantly, our supporting organization, IDP Education Cambodia, provides us with our part-time editorial assistant and makes the formation of this community possible.

A powerful lesson I have learned is that an author who has perseverance may be more likely to see her paper published than one who has an initially stronger paper but does not have the same commitment. I realize that some authors may assume that once submitted, papers can be put safely out of their minds; they may find revisiting and revising their papers tedious. I also realize that it can be difficult not to take feedback personally, even if it is constructive: each submission represents a great deal of work by the author, and the feedback may seem like criticism of the author’s research, critical thinking, language skills, writing skills, and / or even of the author himself. However, each author should know that when we request revisions, we see our work as supportively guiding that author in preparing the paper for public viewing—where the work can be held up to the reader’s eyes with all seams securely sewn, no rips in the fabric,

and no buttons left unbuttoned. Yet there are times when papers “disappear” without notification at some point in the publication process. There are of course many good reasons why an author does not or cannot continue. What I hope authors realize even before submission is that at each stage in the LEiA publication process, a considerable amount of time and effort is dedicated to every paper, all at no monetary cost to the author. From my experience, it would not be unusual for a paper that reaches publication with us to have had fifty to one hundred hours or more of work put in it by our generous community. Our dedication is rendered fruitless when an author decides not to continue pursuing publication with us. I encourage authors to persevere, to expect that there will be requests for revisions, to keep an open mind about revising their work, and to take the initiative to communicate with us if they encounter any problems. If, for example, an author does not know how to address certain points in the feedback, we are here to explain; if more time is absolutely necessary to revise, we will try to make allowances as far as our publication schedule and our own schedules permit. In these cases, papers may ultimately be published in the next issue.

Another important lesson I have learned is that papers come in all shapes and sizes, that is, they are all unique, and all have something to offer. Papers on a wide range of ELT practice and research in Asia are submitted to us by every March 8th, reflecting different voices, ideas, perspectives, and insights. This variety adds an element of excitement and the feeling of discovery to our work. Whether submissions finally appear in LEiA or not, they are valuable in their own ways; I know my own practice has been informed by the hundreds of papers that I have read. It has been difficult to turn away submissions and wonder if the value they contain will ever be shared in published form; this is one major reason why John Middlecamp and Alan Klein established the Peer Reader Program described in the Editor’s Note in Issue 1. We hope to see published papers from authors participating in the program in the coming years, whether in LEiA or other journals. I also encourage authors who have not been able to publish to seek supportive colleagues or mentors and learn from each submission so that they can hone their craft and begin to contribute on a wider platform.

I have been reflecting on what I have learned from my experience with LEiA because I will be soon leaving this position to start a new phase in my life, which may even include a textbook or two. While I am looking toward the future, I know that I will more than occasionally look back at my time with LEiA with appreciation and some amazement. It has been a great privilege to work with so many authors and editors as they contribute to the field. I hope that I have in some small way supported the thoughtful and informed development of English language teaching and research in the Asian region, particularly in the ASEAN region, for the betterment of students’ learning and lives.

In the meantime, we have been very busy: two new LEiA books will be launched at the 2017 CamTESOL Conference.

The first is *Asian-Focused ELT Research and Practice: Voices from the Far Edge*. I was very fortunate to co-edit this book with John Middlecamp. John also contributed an eloquent introductory chapter on a topic of vital importance to LEiA: “The Developing Research Community of NNEST Scholars Serving Asia and the World.” The rest of the chapters, which are drawn from Volumes 4 and 5, are by (in the order of placement in the book) Yilin Sun; Richmond Stroupe; Linda Mary Hanington; Huong Quynh Tran; Chun-Chun Yeh; Asako Takaesu; Luna Jing Cai; Virak Chan; Sathya Chea and Lee Shumow; Dittthayanan Punyaratabandhu, Edward Rush, Michael J. Kleindl and Paul Wadden; Brian Paltridge; and Greg Rouault. While there were other interesting articles in these two volumes, making the selection difficult, John and I selected those articles which together showcase a variety of

contexts and research in the region and those which offer perspectives on language education and practical guidance on research and publication.

The second is a monograph, *Developing Classroom English Competence: Learning from the Vietnam Experience*, co-edited by Donald Freeman and Laura Le Dréan. Donald Freeman, Anne Burns, and Anne Katz, along with Apiwan Nuangpolmak, Le Duc Manh, Hoa Thi Mai Nguyen, and Pham Thi Hong Nhung, contributed chapters. The monograph is centered around an innovative online professional development program, *English-for-Teaching*.

Turning to Volume 7, Issue 2, we offer four research articles. To begin, Blagoja Dimoski, Yuri Jody Yujobo, and Mitsuko Imai, from the first center for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Japan, use an ELF-informed framework to investigate whether explicitly teaching communication strategies using pro-active listening activities improves university EFL learners' communication. In pro-active listening activities, listeners have the opportunity to ask the speakers to perform actions such as repeating or clarifying what they have said, letting both participate in constructing meaning. Robert Sheridan, Kathryn M. Tanaka, and Nicholas Hogg, also in Japan, report on the effectiveness of culturally familiar contexts in texts on university EFL learners' recall of vocabulary and understanding of content. They compare the performance of two classes on pretests and posttests on news articles with either culturally familiar or unfamiliar contexts and find that culturally familiar contexts may positively influence learning. Next, in Vietnam, from a conversation analysis perspective, Huong Quynh Tran examines university students' construction of responsive turns to achieve topic extension in discussion tasks in English. The analysis showed that the conversations of the participants, who were at the pre-intermediate level of English, displayed four turn construction features: repeating words or grammatical structures, giving reasons for answers, looking away from the interlocutor when trying to think of a word in English, and using the L1 to think of a word in English. Last, Koki Tomita and Maho Sano investigate the views of Japanese university EFL learners at two proficiency levels on learner autonomy through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Based on their findings, they suggest some practices suitable for each of the two proficiency levels that teachers can implement to enhance their students' learner autonomy.

In closing, I would like to thank the authors of these four papers for their patient perseverance in bringing their papers to publication. My thanks also go to the hardworking editorial team – the senior review editors and copy editors who supported these and other papers, and the editorial assistants, Sokhom Leang and Panha Nov, who were both involved in work for this issue. I am also grateful for the valuable feedback on papers from the review editors on the Editorial Board and the continued support LEiA receives from the Advisory Board, IDP Education Cambodia, and UECA: University English Centres Australia. Thanks also go to all of the authors who submitted papers for Volume 7; I expect to see some of the papers that did not appear in this volume in Volume 8.

Lastly, I thank our readers and hope they find this issue of interest.