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Editorial: In Honour of Jack C. Richard's Six-decade Contribution to Language Teaching

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As I have discovered, a special issue covering the work of Jack Richards is a mammoth task. In the years that he has worked in language development, he has covered so many different aspects of the field, it is difficult to know where to start.

Perhaps the first time I was personally really aware of his work was with the now classic *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (1986) for which he collaborated with Theo Rodgers. I needed material on this topic for an assignment I was working on for a Diploma in ELT, and this book provided the bulk of what I needed at the time and also pointed to numerous other useful references. Although this book has been superseded by subsequent editions in the years since, I still have the 1986 original, and still occasionally refer to it for my own teacher trainees.

Another incredibly useful addition to the language teacher's and researcher's library was the *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (1992) with John and Heidi Platt. Although this has also now been replaced with updated editions, I have used this reference book many times when trying to clarify the meanings of various linguistic items, and always found it provides clear and practical explanations of often obscure terms.

And then there was one of my personal favourites, the 1996 article on teachers' maxims in *TESOL Quarterly*. Given that the world of language education had gone all learner-centred by this time, I found it somehow a great relief to have someone looking at how teachers felt and what they believed. It stimulated reflection (another developing theme of Jack's) and I remembered the

advice I was given back as a first year teacher, much of which was along the lines of “Don’t smile till Easter”. But my HOD had something quite different to say. He suggested “Your problems are over once they like you”. And I have tried to keep this maxim in mind ever since: it may not always be easy, but in the end it is the relationships that make or break a teacher.

In the years since, Jack has continued to contribute to what we might call the nuts and bolts of teaching (the curriculum, CLT, EMI, etc.) as well as producing extremely useful, practical and popular coursebooks. But for my money, his most valuable contribution to our field has been his ongoing work on teacher cognition and emotion, a still neglected area. Thanks at least partly to his work in this area, awareness seems to be currently growing that teachers are not machines: they are real human beings and they need to be treated as such to avoid burnout and serious issues with mental and emotional health. And this is important not only for the teachers themselves, but also for their students.

This special issue includes contributions by some who have had a close connection with Jack over a long period of time. Paul Nation got to know Jack when they were together as students at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, and they have kept in touch ever since. Paul, of course, has continued on to become one of the biggest “names” in the field of vocabulary, but he still acknowledges Jack’s contribution to vocabulary back in the 70s. Roger Barnard from Waikato University in Hamilton, New Zealand, has known Jack for 30 years. Roger’s tribute to Jack in this issue focuses on the several editions of *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. And Anne Burns from neighbouring Australia also pays tribute to Jack as “a giant in the field” as she talks about working with him over a quarter of a century.

In other contributions to this special issue, Chiuhui Wu narrates the personal journey from EFL teacher to EMI, a journey on which Jack has had “a profound impact”. Jack’s ideas for using technology in language learning inspired Mehmet Emre Altınbaş to conduct an experiment using movie clips, videos and games to teach target vocabulary, the results of which he describes in this chapter. Based on Jack’s work on teacher identity, Jenny Mendieta and Olivia Rütli-Joy conduct a reflective autoethnographic study to explore their evolving teacher identities “in an increasingly diversified and complex profession”. Jack’s work on teacher competence underpinned Zia Tajeddin and Maryam Bolouri’s case study on teacher decision making which concludes that improved teacher education programmes are needed. Based on Jack’s work on listening, Nabinur Rahman, Sharifa Chowdhury and Diana Mazgutova conducted a case study on the teaching of listening skills, while Izzettin Kök examined listening strategies in order to help learners “acquire their new language more quickly and accurately”.

Perhaps the thing that really stands out from this overview is not just what people have to say about Jack’s influence, but how he managed to be so influential in so many different areas. Even now, although officially “retired” and spending most of his time in his home in New Zealand, Jack continues to publish and contribute to language teacher events. How does he do it? Well, maybe the systematic review conducted by Mohebbi and Panahi might provide some insights. But perhaps we might ultimately just have to conclude that Jack Richards displays exceptional ability and devotion to his chosen profession which few others can match.

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