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Volume Introduction: Special Issue in Honour of James Dean Brown's Five- Decade Contribution to Language Testing and Assessment

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Introduction

It is not every day, year, or even decade that a journal dedicates an entire issue to honour the contributions of an individual scholar in the field. The purpose of this Special Issue of *Language Teaching Research Quarterly* is to celebrate the work of James Dean Brown, a scholar who has made an enormous impact on the field of language testing and assessment. Following his retirement from the field, this Special Issue was created in JD's honour and is dedicated to him and his many contributions to the field.

One of the remarkable aspects of JD Brown's contribution to the fields of language assessment and applied linguistics is his broad range of research interests; his work has been both consistently influential and formidable in scale over a long period of time. Another unique aspect of this body of academic work is that it is also resoundingly practical in nature, either directly (through pertaining to aspects of language pedagogy, for example) or indirectly (such as empirical work that clearly informs assessment practices).

In order to reflect this link between the practical and the empirical, this Special Issue is structured to begin with the more directly practice-oriented papers. These include those articles that consider the influence of JD's work on aspects of classroom learning in particular - including both classroom assessment and feedback practices. The subsequent papers move

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through the impact of JD's statistical teachings on a wide range of issues, to his work round cloze tests and pragmatic competence. The lasting influence of the work on contemporary assessment practices is evident in several more forward-looking chapters (on computational psychometrics, Generalizability theory, diagnostic classification models and programme evaluation). What is evident in the papers is the different forms this influence has taken, from advice on statistics to 'golden rules' on classroom assessment, or inspiring researchers to experiment with the modification of cloze procedures. We hope - through the articles selected and their structure - to have captured this breadth and depth of influence in this Special Issue.

Articles Included in the Special Issue

The issue begins with a systematic review covering JD's 50 year influence on language testing (and beyond), including a detailed breakdown by Panahi and Mohebbi of the themes and topics he has addressed within that period, and concluding with a reflection on the review by JD Brown himself. Phakiti and Steinhoff then outline their five 'Golden Rules' (derived from JD's work on classroom assessment and their own experiences as principles for assessing student learning), bringing together classical test theory, the application of rubrics and formative feedback. Feedback at primary and secondary school level for ESL classes is addressed in the next article (Lopez), with a view to operationalizing Brown's assertion that feedback must be both 'efficient and effective' to assist language development. Härmälä then considers formative and summative assessment practices in the Finnish context, looking at what kinds of evidence are gathered to support decisions made around final grading. Moving on to JD's influence beyond the language classroom, the next paper (by Thom Hudson) reflects on his column on statistical advice in the Shiken: JALT Testing & Evaluation SIG Newsletter. Some of the many topics covered (from 1997 – 2019) in 'Statistics Corner' are revisited, further highlighting his commitment to help others through practical, sound recommendations.

The next paper (Weideman & van Dyk) is more technical in nature, describing their adaptation of an existing cloze procedure (effectively mutilating a selected text using a systematic approach). The purpose of doing so is to move towards greater technical economy of measurement in regard to language ability. Jonathan Trace's article - also on the topic of cloze procedures - follows, with particular attention to passage cohesion and its relationship with item difficulty. Three articles considering JD's work through a contemporary lens around technology or recent developments in our understanding of spoken communicative competence are included in the subsequent section, addressing JD's influence on computational psychometrics (Geranpayeh), fluency in speaking as a dynamic construct (de Jong) and on an AI generated test of pragmatic competence (O'Grady). Each of these papers highlight the lasting impact of his earlier work, and how new research builds on the earlier theoretical ground that provides a solid basis for developing assessment and learning practices through the introduction of new technology or approaches.

Hirschi and Kang then look at raters and L2 speech perception, using G studies and D studies to investigate the number of required raters to assess constructs such as comprehensibility, accentedness, and intelligibility of extemporaneous speech. Following this, Jang et al. collate IELTS reading skill profiles to evaluate test score users' perspectives on what scores actually mean in practice, in terms of candidates' English language proficiency and

skills. Looking at the most commonly used IELTS cut scores for admission, the paper also outlines the kinds of challenges that students might face as part of their subsequent studies. Yi's penultimate paper then considers the viability of cognitive diagnostic assessment as part of the construct validation procedure, synthesising earlier research on the topic. The final article in the volume (Jansenn et al.) explores programme evaluation and curriculum development, building on tools to develop and refine a course of study first documented by JD Brown in his two 'cornerstone' works in this area (1995, 2001).

In bringing this Special Issue of LTRQ to fruition, we are indebted to the many friends and colleagues past and present of JD Brown who have generously shared their reflections on working with him in different contexts and at different times during his long career in English language teaching, learning and assessment and the impact that his scholarship has had on their careers. Of course, doing justice to the many achievements, research and publication record of an academic and scholar like JD Brown over his long and distinguished professional career is not an easy task. It is hoped that all the contributors to this volume will provide a sense of the considerable range and impact he has had on them and the profession as a whole.

It is incumbent on those of us that he has had an impact on to continue to build on the scholarship that JD has contributed to the knowledge base of language testing and assessment in the years to come.

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