

## **TEACHING ESL: THE COMPLEXITIES, THE POLICIES, AND THE POLITICS**

**English** as a second language (ESL), also known as English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), is a large, complex, and ever-growing field of language teaching and scholarship. The instructional side of the field examines methodology, pedagogy, and second language acquisition (SLA) theory. But, though not often thought of as such, there is also a policy side to ESL matters. This volume of the *NYS TESOL Journal* focuses on two areas highlighting the currently perceived pressing educational and policy issues. The first area is higher education, examining ESL placement policies and admissions of ESL students to higher education programs specifically at CUNY, the availability of ESL instruction, and the student's notion of identity. The second area is K–12 language education, examining the recently changed testing practices for English language learners (ELLs).

For this issue, the common thread in the first four contributions is the influence of policies and politics on ESL admissions, student placement, student success, and methodological choices in programs serving ESL students. The next two articles, by Brooks and Chen, and the Materials Review contribution by Scully concern the matters of pedagogical choices and language learning processes. Finally, the two reader responses point to the challenges in meeting the needs of linguistically diverse student populations in higher education writing and language classrooms.

A number of contributions in this volume may provide an incentive for all those readers teaching in higher education to pause and consider the political and educational aspects of their daily work. More importantly, though, the hope is to restart a conversation about the future of ESL instruction in higher education, both at local and national levels, as these New York (city and state) ESL trends are not isolated from the rest of the country, or the world (see Matsuda, 2013; Bygate, 2015 respectively). However, ours is a country of an ongoing influx of immigrants. Achieving language proficiency for immigrants is inextricably tied to their personal and professional success (and, by extension, the country's success). Providing and maintaining equal access to language education is a large part of achieving upward mobility and a better life for millions of this country's new citizens.

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### **References**

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- Matsuda, P. K., Tanita, S., & Accordi, S. (2013). Writing teachers' perceptions of the presence and needs of second language writers: An institutional case study. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 22*(1), 68–86.