Guest Editors' Introduction

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The need for a special issue on the status of English language research in the Middle East and North African region (MENA) has long been needed and awaited. The output of research in English language teaching and learning in the MENA context is relatively small especially when compared to other regions in the world where numerous issues related to the topic have received a great deal of empirical attention. It is our belief that MENA-based researchers' interests and orientations have not been clearly defined nor have they been given their due importance, and it is with this special issue that we hope to rectify this in albeit a small but meaningful way.

In recent years, there has been a growing number of scholars researching and writing about English language teaching and learning practices in the region. Their work, however, tends to be scattered across international journals or included in general edited collections. In response, it is our motivation to provide an issue of the *Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics* that is totally focused on research

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coming out of the MENA region. It is also our intention to provide an opportunity for doctoral students to showcase their excellent research contributions in this special issue on Graduate Student Research.

This issue contains three research-based articles originating from such diverse locations as Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Egypt. The authors have addressed a myriad of broad research areas employing a variety of different methodological frameworks and data collection techniques.

The first paper by Abdesslem and Costello is a key document to guide researchers to publish their work in internationally-recognized, high-quality journals. A major strength of this article is its deep grounding in the literature on genre analysis/research articles. The authors argue for using a Swalesian model of CARS, by comparing traditional grammars' long history and Swales' rhetorical model of the Research Papers Introductions model. This was done with the aim of analysing the different moves of the Research Articles Introductions. Results of this interesting study showed that the research operating in the Saudi context employed different rhetorical patterns from the Swalesian ones, hence the difficulty of getting researchers' work published in international high-impact factor journals. This divergence might put at stake the acceptance of their work in international journals and the effectiveness and visibility of these local journals. The study put forward implications the most important of which is the necessity to get similar research articles published in well-established international journals.

In the second paper by Rezoug and Vincent, the authors investigated the use of lexical bundles in an engineering corpus of MA theses written by students majoring in four ESP programs, power engineering, computer engineering, telecommunication engineering and control engineering in Algeria. Using Hyland's framework (2008) of functional classifications of lexical bundles to comprehensively analyse these MA theses, after excluding the abstract, acknowledgements, table of contents and references, the authors found that, in this corpus of 594,599 words, the kind of bundles found in the study are corresponding to those of previous studies, such as Hyland (2008). The study called for pedagogical implications that could be used in class for teachers and students alike. This implication is also congruent with previous studies, in that such findings and implications can be considered for curriculum design.

The basic premise for Sorour'spaper is that proficiency in a second language (L2) has traditionally been linked to grammatical competence. In her view, however, this limited view of L2 proficiency disregards the fact that communicative competence constitutes an integral part of linguistic competence. This study compares the pragmatic awareness of Egyptian students in an English-medium university to their grammatical awareness in an attempt to determine whether or not there is, in fact, a need for ESL instruction to focus more on developing ESL learners' pragmatic awareness. The study had implications for improving and consolidating L2 pragmatic ability.

Over the course of putting this issue together, all the articles underwent a rigorous peer review and selection process. The articles presented in this issue highlight some of the well-developed and diverse empirical work that is being done in the MENA region. It is therefore hoped that this issue will be of use to English language educators and linguists in the region, in addition to being of interest to a wide range of readers from around the world.