

Research and Teaching: The Value of a Level Playing Field

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While the absence of a rich intersection between language instructors and researchers in second language acquisition is unfortunate, it is, perhaps, not surprising. Despite well intentioned individuals, the parameters and day-to-day expectations for both sets of professionals are meaningfully different; and increasingly, the challenging climate in higher education makes it even more difficult for those who actively want to engage across the two fields to find the time to do so.

In this talk, I offer a perspective on the challenges in order to offer constructive suggestions about what can be done to develop a richer intersection between researchers and practitioners. I argue that a useful starting point would be a change in mindset, within both groups. I offer this view based on my own mindset which was responsible for a number of attempts that fell short, as I tried to bridge the gap between theory and practice. My suggestions for ways forward are based on years of working with practitioners as the head of large language departments in the UK and Hong Kong, doing so from the perspective of generative second language acquisition, which is my academic inclination by training. I set out how a level playing field provides a more sound basis for a constructive intersection between practitioners and researchers in a way that holds the potential for benefit to both groups, ultimately increasing both potential and efficacy in research and in teaching.

About the speaker:

Professor Melinda Whong has a PhD in Second Language Acquisition from the University of Durham. She is an Associate Professor of Language Education at the [Hong Kong University of Science and Technology](#), with responsibility as Director of the [Centre for Language Education](#) and Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Science. With more than 30 years of teaching experience across four continents and at every level of education, she brings a global perspective to her work on language learning and teaching. Her research is driven by a commitment to bridging theory and practice.

Alongside her academic leadership, Melinda has been actively involved in facilitating scholarship of teaching and learning amongst language educators in higher education. She has established networks for the exchange of knowledge and delivered training and workshops for English language teachers internationally. Her most recent project has been to found an online journal by and for language practitioners called STiLE, [Scholarship of Teaching in Language Education](#), which serves as a platform for practitioners to share their expertise both with each other, and with researchers who may have an interest in addressing language education needs as perceived by those actively engaged in language teaching.