

INTRODUCTION

The *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* at 40: Looking Back and Moving Ahead

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Abstract

It is a privilege to be Editor-in-Chief of the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* in 2020 as it celebrates its 40th year. This is my fifth issue as Editor. I will begin this short introduction by paying tribute, with the help of Bill Grabe (Northern Arizona University), to the founding editor of the journal, Robert Kaplan (1929–2020). Without Robert Kaplan, none of us would be reading these pages. We will then turn to some comments from each of the previous editors on a few of the highlights of their time editing the journal, along with words for the future. After this, I will describe some recent updates, go through a few of the historical successes of the journal, and then turn to the contents of the exciting current issue, “Looking back and moving ahead.”

Cancellation of AAAL 2020 due to COVID-19

Shortly before this volume went to press, the AAAL executive committee and current President, Kendall King, made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 AAAL conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In their cancellation message they thanked the “hundreds of individuals and volunteers who gave their time and worked so hard to make AAAL 2020 (nearly) happen” and explained their sadness that so many productive scholarly conversations were not able to take place. This volume of *ARAL* contains papers from four of the invited speakers. Two of the short pieces (by Carol Chappelle and Nancy Hornberger) reflect their planned contributions to the invited colloquium celebrating *ARAL* at 40. One full-length paper is by invited plenary Onowa McIvor and a second short paper is by plenary Suhanthie Motha. We are pleased to be able to share the important work of these scholars, while regretting the cancellation of the conference.

Robert B. Kaplan

Robert B. Kaplan was educated at Willamette University, A.B. (1952) and did his graduate work at the University of Southern California, where he earned his M.A. (1957) and Ph.D. (1963). His long association with USC included positions as Department Chair, Associate Dean, and President of the Senate, among others. He was a prolific and respected scholar, publishing hundreds of books, articles, and reports. He edited

the classic text the *Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, which was one of the first of what has since become a proliferation of handbooks in the field. His work inspired generations of scholars, some of whom contributed to a collection of papers in his honor, *Directions in Applied Linguistics: Essays in Honor of Robert B. Kaplan*, edited by Paul Bruthiaux, Dwight Atkinson, and William Eggington (2005), all previous doctoral scholars of Kaplan's who went on to have highly successful careers in their own right. In this book, the editors, along with a number of important scholars, write movingly of his influence on their thinking and careers, broadly focusing on language education, English for Academic Purposes, contrastive rhetoric, and language planning. Kaplan's knowledge and shaping of the field of applied linguistics was broad and deep. His service to the field was similarly wide-ranging. He served as President of NAFA (1983–84), TESOL (1989–90), and AAAL (1993–94).

Robert Kaplan also started not one but two successful journals. In addition to *ARAL*, he was a founding co-editor (with Richard Baldauf) of *Current Issues in Language Planning*. What follows now is Bill Grabe's (Northern Arizona University) recollections of the origins of *ARAL* and Robert Kaplan's work:

"In 1980, Bob approached Rupert Ingram of Newbury House with this idea and Rupert said fine. Bob produced the first eight volumes pretty much on his own with suggestions from the first group of Editorial Directors (and with the assistance of Audrey Kaplan, his wife, a very accurate typist). The publisher produced the volumes direct from Bob and Audrey Kaplan's typing to the printed page. The first four volumes were printed by Newbury House. Cambridge University Press then took over the annual journal in 1985 with the publication of Volume 5. Volumes 5–8 were printed directly from typed pages to printed volume by Cambridge.

Bob formed a board of Editorial Directors at the outset in 1981: Alison d'Anglejan, Dick Tucker, Henry Widdowson, Charles Ferguson, and Braj Kachru. In 1989, the Editorial Directors changed with Alison d'Anglejan and Braj Kachru rotating off, and Janice Yalden and me (Bill Grabe) joining. Volume 9 was also the first edition that had an Advisory Board with ten members. And with Volume 9, Cambridge established the typeset format that was used for many of the following volumes.

Bob remained Editor-in-Chief and Editor through Volume 10 (1990). I became editor in 1991 with Volume 11. We kept Bob's formal title of Editor-in-Chief for my first volume.

Volumes 11 through 20 were my volumes. Through all of the first 20 volumes, first Bob, then I, selected the authors (with advice and suggestions from the Editorial Board and Advisory Board), gave guidance to authors, reviewed the papers for appropriacy of content, revised copy for appropriate style, copy edited the printed proof versions, and sent them on to Cambridge for production. It was definitely a low-budget enterprise.

Bob rotated off the Editorial Directors group after Volume 20 in 2000. In 2000, with Bob's agreement, I approached Cambridge to see if they wanted *ARAL* to become an official journal of AAAL. They did, and so the formal association between *ARAL* and AAAL of the journal begun by Bob Kaplan in 1980 began then." (Bill Grabe, personal communication, February 2020)

ARAL at 20 and at 40

Writing in the introduction of the 20th anniversary issue of the journal, Grabe and Kaplan's words are just as relevant today as they were in 2000:

The *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* is celebrating its 20th anniversary, and we are happy to report that applied linguistics is still with us. We also believe that the field of applied linguistics is here to stay, much as psychology and English literature are disciplinary fixtures after having developed in the early 20th century. The development of a disciplinary field, however, is a messy undertaking, typically driven by needs and purposes that extend beyond individual goals or planned group purposes. In the case of applied linguistics, its continued development can only be channeled and planned indirectly. Moreover, full disciplinary acceptance will only occur to the extent that applied linguistics responds to wider societal needs and its expertise is valued by people beyond the professional field. Applied linguistics, as an inter-disciplinary field, faces the additional challenge of trying to cohere around a set of central notions with which a diverse group of practitioners can identify. (Kaplan & Grabe, 2000, p. 3)

Their article can easily be accessed by clicking on the following [link](#), which has been made Open Access for this anniversary issue.

After Bob Kaplan and Bill Grabe came Mary McGroarty and Charlene Polio. What follows are Mary McGroarty's reflections on her time as Editor of *ARAL*:

"I became the editor of *ARAL* following Bill Grabe and was fortunate to be able to draw on his foundational work and, of course, the extraordinary accomplishments of Bob Kaplan, *ARAL*'s originator. During my tenure, I followed the traditions established by my predecessors of working with the Editorial Board to invite scholars and researchers to contribute invited reviews to thematic volumes (with themes selected in consultation with the Board). We published volumes related to language pedagogy regularly and surveys of applied linguistics every five years (or so). These latter foci were inspired by the disciplinary roots of many applied linguists in language teaching and by the sense that, because applied linguistics was (still) a relatively new field, it was vital to demonstrate its academic bona fides regularly. While I was editor, *ARAL* became "an official journal of AAAL," largely because of groundwork done by the first two editors.

The most enjoyable aspects of editing the journal included conferring with the editorial directors and additional members of the board as volumes took shape; considering possible contributors; working with authors as their manuscripts moved through the preparation process; realizing that *ARAL* continued to become ever better established as a valued resource for applied linguists and other scholars around the world. Throughout my editorship, all those in advisory board roles energetically sought to identify not only recognized scholars outside North America, Australia, and Europe who could contribute articles but also newer scholars, particularly in regions of the world like parts of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America, where different university systems, academic conventions, and economic constraints affected access to and participation in publishing *ARAL*.

The end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries were dynamic and 'interesting times' with respect to the technologies of manuscript

preparation and printing; camera-ready manuscripts and then floppy disks gave way to electronic submission of manuscripts and then CDs. With respect to formatting, I implemented a shift from a distinctive, individualized manuscript format to the use of the style sheet of the American Psychological Association, or APA, more widely used in North American psychology and social science journals. APA is still the house style of *ARAL* today.

I have been gratified to see that, while many new journals have emerged in the last 25–30 years, *ARAL* has maintained a commitment to publishing reviews by established scholars and, moreover, become an important vehicle for other types of articles. May this greater diversity of content flourish, along with greater representation of all scholars and researchers who find a congenial disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) intellectual base in applied linguistics.” (Mary McGroarty, personal communication, February 2020)

After Mary McGroarty, Charlene Polio became the editor and served a four-year term, handing over to me for the 2015 volume. Here are Charlene Polio’s reflections on her time as Editor of *ARAL*:

“What I enjoyed most about being *ARAL* editor was the opportunity to see the field of applied linguistics from a broad perspective. Putting together issues on topics that moved beyond the boundaries of my comfort zone was enlightening. It was possible only because I had the help of a talented editorial board with a depth and breadth of knowledge that one person alone could not possess.

To mention just a few, Tim McNamara, for example, who I thought of as a “testing person,” was one of the most widely read (and helpful) people I have met. And with one particularly challenging volume issue, I remember being particularly grateful to Merrill Swain for long Skype meetings. Other members of the board including people like Patsy Duff, Kendall King, and Silvina Montrul contributed excellent ideas too, and the previous editor, Mary McGroarty, was a wealth of information as I took over the editorship.

Other highlights included the board meeting dinners at AAAL (including at my favorite Boston restaurant, Haru). These events were something to look forward to as both a reward to the board for their work, and an opportunity to discuss future plans.

My favorite issue was Volume 32, *Topics in Formulaic Language*. I am most proud of this issue as it brought exciting new perspectives on a topic of high interest. What I also remember about this issue was that I emailed Alison Wray, a U.K.-based scholar with whom I had had not prior contact other than reading her work, and I asked her if she would contribute, and if she had any suggestions for authors. She responded immediately with a number of excellent suggestions that helped form the issue. I still often go back and refer to many of those articles, as I trust and hope many people will do with the articles in the current issue marking *ARAL*’s 40th anniversary. The journal, and its connections with AAAL are a unique part of the field of applied linguistics.” (Charlene Polio, personal communication, February 2020)

Historical and Recent Highlights

The journal went from strength to strength thanks to Bob Kaplan and the previous editors. Historical highlights, for example, include the fact that Elaine Horwitz’s 2001 article, “Language anxiety and achievement,” has been cited over 1,600 times according

to Google Scholar, included in two news stories, and is one of three *ARAL* articles that have made it to the top 25% of all research outputs on Altmetric (Cambridge University Press' article metrics company). The Altmetric score for Horwitz's paper was 300. Barbara Seidlhofer's 2004 article, "Research perspectives on teaching English as a Lingua Franca," has also been cited more than 1,600 times, according to Google Scholar (Altmetric score of 296). Dick Schmidt's paper "Awareness and second language acquisition" (1992) advancing his important claims about noticing and attention has been cited almost 1,500 times on Google Scholar (Altmetric score of 221). Metrics are obviously dependent on a number of factors, and it is hard to predict how (or where) recent articles will be cited and have impact in the future, but recent examples include Tony McEnery, Vaclav Brezina, Dana Gablasova, and Jayanti Banerjee's article, "Corpus linguistics, learner corpora, and SLA: Employing technology to analyze language use" (2019), which, although published less than a year ago, has reached the top 5% of Cambridge's research outputs and was seen by more than 100,000 Twitter users. Michael H. Long's 2016 article, "In defense of tasks and TBLT: Nonissues and real issues," is another recent publication that reached the top 25% tier of research outputs (and has been cited almost 100 times on Google Scholar). In other measures of quality, papers published in the 2016 and 2018 volumes won major awards in the field. Ron Darwin and Bonny Norton's "Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics" (2015; already cited 419 times according to Google Scholar) and Andrea Révész and Laura Gurzynski-Weiss's "Teachers' perspectives on second language task difficulty: Insights from think-alouds and eye tracking" (2016) won the TESOL Distinguished Research Award.

Returning to metrics, in terms of Impact Factor over the last decade, after six years of ranging between 35th and 81st of around 150 journals in Linguistics, *ARAL* rose in 2016 to 12th of 181 journals, in 2017 to the top position (1st of 181 journals in Linguistics), and then returned to 12th position of 185 journals for 2018. However Impact Factor is calculated (and criticized), *ARAL* is succeeding on multiple measures. Across the board, *ARAL* readership has been actively engaging with our content on academic social media, with seven of the most-read articles, in the first months of 2020, reaching hundreds of thousands on Twitter.

Additionally, over the last five years, we have made a number of important changes to the journal. The cover, size, and format were updated in a redesign by Cambridge University Press to give a fresh, modern look and feel to the journal. As I noted in 2016, that year's issue included, for the first time, not only the traditional review articles that provide state-of-the-art overviews of the field, but also a range of other types of articles, including position pieces, empirical papers showcasing new data, methodologically focused work, and meta-analyses/syntheses (Mackey, 2016). The following year we added shorter 2,000-word pieces and the year after that, in light of discussions with the Editorial Board about expanding content, reach, and diversity, we included a dedicated slot for papers by those who are junior scholars at the time of publication. As we put it in the 2019 volume introduction (Heift et al., 2019), from that issue onward *ARAL* would include the usual "work by senior scholars who have a long history of contributions in this area" together with "work by junior scholars and graduate students, which underscores the variety of viewpoints represented" (p. 1).

ARAL has also embraced Open Science, beginning in 2016 by requiring Open Materials (and awarding badges for them), and moving this year to recommending Open Data. Our goal, as always, following Kaplan's guidance, is to publish on topics of high interest and importance for the field. The Open Science movement in the

field is a trend that we hope will continue blossoming. Interested readers can go to the [Center for Open Science](#) where the rationale for ‘showing your work, sharing your work, and advancing science’ is explained in full.

The Current Issue

The current issue includes papers that point the way forward for the field, together with papers that review the contribution of previous work. In this 2020 anniversary issue, *ARAL* is, for the first time, publishing two articles with Open Data. For the last five years, *ARAL* has supported the uploading of materials to open-access repositories, such as the IRIS database (Mackey & Marsden, 2016). With the current issue, we are now moving to active promotion of Open Data where readers can download the dataset for themselves, re-run the analyses, and look inside how the results were created.

The first article is “Developing, analyzing and sharing multivariate and multifactorial datasets for Open Science: Individual differences in the dynamic system of L2 speech learning revisited” by Saito, Macmillan, Mai, Suzukida, Sun, Magne, Ilkan, and Murakami. Contextualized in trends within psychology emerging in L2 research, they explain how developing, analyzing, and sharing datasets can help us answer controversial and complex questions in applied linguistics. Tackling a common and interesting question, they ask about individual differences in postpuberty L2 learning. Their dataset consists of spontaneous speech samples from 110 late L2 speakers in the UK with diverse linguistic, experiential, and sociopsychological backgrounds. They also move forward with another likely forward-looking trend in applied linguistics, the use of Bayesian statistical methods in analyzing multivariate, multifactorial data. In their words, “In keeping with recommendations for increasing openness of the field, we invite readers to rethink and redo our analyses and interpretations from multiple angles by making our dataset and coding publicly available as part of our 40th anniversary *ARAL* article” (p. 9).

“Outliers in L2 research: A synthesis and data re-analysis from self-paced reading” by Nicklin and Plonsky follows. Nicklin and Plonsky’s data comes from their research into self-paced reading (SPR) tasks investigating how outliers can be handled, for example, by use of trimming or data transformation. They report little meaningful difference between trimming and limiting extreme values, implying that blindly removing data from certain analyses might be unnecessary. They conclude with important suggestions for the field in terms of handling of outliers in applied linguistics and invite readers to examine their data set and redo their analyses.

In another forward-looking, experimental direction, the next paper is “Neurostimulation and pupillometry: New directions for learning and research in applied linguistics” by Pandža, Karuzis, Phillips, O’Rourke, and Kuchinsky. Neurostimulation is a novel approach for the field of applied linguistics, and Pandža et al.’s implementation of transcutaneous vagal nerve stimulation (tVNS) to promote Mandarin tone word learning is an exciting new move. Pupillometry is used as an indicator of effort. Schmidtke (2018) pointed out “it has been known since at least the 1960s that small changes in pupil diameter in response to a mental task are indicative of processing effort associated with this task” (p. 529). Pandža et al.’s study uses current eye-trackers to measure the pupil diameter. Results show tVNS was associated with reaction time advantages across a variety of task types.

Next, we move to another critical topic for the field of applied linguistics, namely a paper on “Indigenous language revitalization and applied linguistics: Paralleled histories, shared futures?” by McIvor. She points out that the damages done to Indigenous languages by colonial forces, some of which continue to this day, mean

that efforts to revive them should involve more than Indigenous peoples alone. She describes the aims of Indigenous language revitalization work and discusses the roots and connections of this area of study with mainstream SLA, concluding with a call for consideration of commonalities, differences, and current and future interests.

This is followed by another critical, full-length paper, “African Americans in world language study: The forged path and future directions” by Anya. In her paper, she examines a highly significant but so far under-researched area in applied linguistics: race, as illustrated by her review of the history of African Americans in the academic study of world languages. She describes experiences reported by black students in language education including study abroad, providing critical discussion of the objectives, policies, instructional priorities and strategies, conditions, and materials. She concludes by suggesting future directions for investigations into this topic, which hopefully will help to stimulate further research in the area.

Two shorter format papers then follow, with the theme of “Reflect, revisit and reimagine.” This theme was selected by ARAL board members, Margaret Malone and Shondel Nero, for a special invited colloquium at the AAAL 2020 conference that would have celebrated the 40th anniversary of the journal. First, “Reflect, revisit: reimagine: Language assessment and ARAL” by Chapelle looks back at articles in ARAL that cover language testing and assessment along with connections to applied linguistics. She details developments in language assessment as they have appeared in ARAL over the past 40 years, focusing on constructs used for score interpretation, assessment methods, and the social consequences of assessment use. The forward-looking part of her review suggests that much work remains in this expanding area of research and practice.

A second short paper, following the same theme, “Reflect, revisit, reimagine: Ethnography of language policy and planning” by Hornberger, examines the areas of language policy and planning from its early origins to today’s ethnographically-focused research. Hornberger explains how a policy-practice gap “is given nuance through exploration of the dynamics of top-down/bottom-up activities, monoglossic/heteroglossic ideologies, potential/actual (in)equalities, and critical/transformativ research paradigms” (p. 119).

We are happy to be able to include another short piece by Motha, on the topic of her plenary at the sadly cancelled AAAL 2020 conference. This powerful article asks “Is an anti-racist and decolonizing applied linguistics possible?” and raises critically important questions that, once read, cannot be forgotten or overlooked. Motha concludes “it is not the natural progression of our profession. It is not inevitable. But it is possible” (p. 132). We plan to return to a discussion of these themes in more detail in the 2022 issue of ARAL.

The issue concludes with another position piece, “On the foundations of knowledge in applied linguistics research: Sampling bias and the problem of generalizability” by Andringa and Godfroid. Examining applied linguistics as a whole, they look at the ability of applied linguists “to serve language learners of all shades and grades” (p. 134). They describe and explain bias in sampling in applied linguistics and how this bias is likely skewing our developing understanding of second language learning and teaching. As they note, “our conclusions are often framed as universally applying, even though the samples that have given rise to them are highly specific and Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010)” (p. 134). Their paper, the last of the 2020 issue ends, fittingly, with a call for research and replication in more diverse contexts and with more diverse samples to promote progress in the field of Applied Linguistics as ARAL celebrates its 40th anniversary.

I would like to conclude this introduction to what I believe is a very fitting issue to celebrate 40 years of *ARAL* by thanking the authors, the current Editorial Board (Nelson Flores, Pauline Foster, Susan Gass, Meg Malone, Rosa Manchón, Elizabeth R, Miller, Shondel Nero, Aneta Pavlenko, Rob Podesva, Andrea Révész, Sheena Shah, Bryan Smith, Nicole Ziegler), all previous editorial and advisory board members, the Editorial Assistants for the current issue (Erin Fell, Amber Hall, Derek Reagan, Rachel Thorson Hernández), the Cambridge University Press publishers, Amy Laurent, Kayla Riddleberger, and Ed Barnas, along with Laura Collins and Kendall King, the current and incoming Presidents of AAAL, who have provided invaluable help and support as we've worked this year to consolidate and strengthen the ties between *ARAL* and AAAL, the former editors, Bill Grabe, Mary McGroarty, and Charlene Polio, and the founding editor, Bob Kaplan, to whom this issue is dedicated. Finally, I thank all the anonymous reviewers who worked speedily and thoroughly, and who are the backbone of any journal pursuing excellence.

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Cite this article: Mackey, A. (2020). The *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* at 40: Looking Back and Moving Ahead. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 40, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190520000082>