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## **Linguistics in your inbox: a review of listservs for second language research**

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## Review article

# Linguistics in your inbox: a review of listservs for second language research

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The purpose of this review is to give a comparative overview of current listservs for applied linguistics researchers, with particular focus on their relevance to research on second language acquisition and use. Six listservs, based in different locations and targeted at different general audiences were selected and monitored for a six-month period. This review describes each, with particular attention to the volume of messages, the level of interaction among list users, the topics commonly discussed and the quality of information in each. This review is intended to serve both as a comparison of different listservs and as an introduction to the use of listservs for researchers and students who may not currently use them. It is not intended to present an exhaustive list of the many local and international listservs.

## I Introduction

Traditionally, second language research has been conducted in locations spread throughout the world. While North America and Western Europe have long been centers of second language research, well-established research and educational institutions with a focus on second language research have flourished worldwide. There are benefits, therefore, of electronic communication both for strengthening local

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research communities and for bringing the wider second language community closer together, allowing for the exchange of information in the field and discussion of current and on-going second language research. This has happened through the proliferation of university, organizational, and personal webpages dedicated to second language research (for a very extensive review of these see Gottwald, 2002), as well as through the use of listservs that allow researchers from around the world to communicate on matters relating to second language research.

Listservs are email lists that allow groups of users to communicate with each other via group emails. Often sponsored by an institution or organization, listservs are maintained by an owner who monitors and manages the communication, ensuring that inappropriate content (such as commercial solicitations or email viruses) are not passed through the listserv. Many listservs are maintained within academic institutions for communication among faculty or students; others are public listservs intended to provide an opportunity for communication throughout the research community. Most listservs are free, and can be subscribed to by sending an email to the listserv Webmaster.

While linguistics listservs can be a valuable tool for researchers in North America and Europe, they can also be particularly important for researchers working in smaller research communities, both to build local communities and to give access to communication with other researchers in the field. The purpose of this review article is to examine selected listservs that focus on second language research, considering which may be most relevant to second language researchers, and which promote an active exchange of ideas in second language research.

## **II Selection criteria**

The listservs selected for this review met several criteria. One of the interesting features of listservs is that they allow for interaction among researchers. Thus, weblists, which are organizational lists used to mail information to users, were not included. For example, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), a Washington DC-based non-profit research

center that focuses on issues related to language learning and teaching, and the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), a University of Minnesota-based research organization, each maintain influential weblists. However, the focus in the current review is on the use of electronic communication by individual researchers, rather than organizations, and for interaction, rather than solely for the dissemination of information. Second, the listservs included in this study all have a primary focus on second language research, rather than second language teaching. This excluded very active listservs such as *TESL-L* that primarily function as a means for teachers to elicit and exchange ideas and lesson plans. For similar reasons, primarily technical weblists like *LLTI (Language Learning and Technology Information)* were not included. While highly valuable, such listservs are less relevant to many second language researchers, and are not considered here.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that many listservs include information useful to both teachers and researchers, and that the distinction between pedagogical and research listservs should most likely be viewed as a continuum, rather than a binary distinction. While the listservs included in the current review differ in the exclusiveness of the focus on research, only listservs with a primary focus on research are considered here.

Additionally, listservs conducted in languages other than English were not considered in this review, as many may not be accessible to the readers of *Second Language Research*. Finally, listservs that are primarily directed at the applied linguistics community were preferred to those directed at a more general audience. However, the *LINGUISTList* was included, because, as the largest linguistics listserv, a large volume of applied linguistics information is communicated on the list. Following these criteria, six listservs were selected for review. These were *American Association of Applied Linguists List (Aaal-l)*, *Australian Linguistics List (Australian-linguistics-l)*, *English as an Additional Language-Bilingual List (EAL-bilingual-l)*, *Language Use List (Languse-l)*, *Linguist List (LINGUISTList)*, and *Language Testing List (LTEST-l)*. It should be noted

<sup>1</sup>*LLTI*, while clearly of value to second language researchers, primarily deals with discussion of computer systems and software. After monitoring the list for four weeks and finding only one message discussing the use of technology in second language learning (as opposed to the technical requirements of programs or software recommendations to teachers), it was decided to exclude the listserv.

that other listservs that fit these criteria were not included in the current review; rather, attempts were made to gather information on a representative sample of the available lists. Each list was monitored for a period of six months, between October 2004 and April 2005.

### III Description of listservs

During this period, the listservs were monitored both for the topics included in discussions and for the purposes of the postings. Topics were defined through reading the emails received from listserv users, and topics were added throughout the monitoring period. Topics found in the emails sent to the listservs are summarized in Table 1. While

**Table 1** Topics of contributions

Topic	Description
Second language acquisition (SLA)	Research on second language learning processes
Second language pedagogy (SLP)	Language teaching and classroom language learning
Computer assisted language learning (CALL)	Language teaching and learning technology
Corpus linguistics	Use of corpus for research and teaching in theoretical or applied linguistics
Language assessment	Issues in the design of use of assessment
Language teacher education (LTE)	Research and practice in teacher education
Bilingualism	Bilingualism and multilingualism, bilingual education
Translation	Translation and interpretation, translator qualification
Applied linguistics	Any applied linguistic topic not intrinsically related to second language learning or use, including first language acquisition, psycholinguistics, and neurolinguistics
Language studies	Research in a particular language, including formal aspects, language use, and learning
Sociolinguistics	Issues related to language variation and social contexts of language use
Computational linguistics	Natural language processing, machine translation, and all other computational applications
Theoretical linguistics	Formal linguistics (including phonology, syntax, semantics, morphology, etc.) from a variety of perspectives
General linguistics	Other linguistic topics, including language typology, anthropological linguistics, and endangered languages

many of these categories are overlapping or related, for the sake of simplicity each email contribution was categorized to only one topic, based on the most salient topic of discussion. Email contributions were categorized to help form a picture of the scope and focus of each listserv.

The emails were also categorized according to the purpose of the contribution, to help characterize the functions the listserv plays in building the research community. Some email contributions provide information about events or resources, others are requests for help or responses to previous postings. The contributions to the listservs reviewed here functioned as described in Table 2. Contributions to the listservs were categorized according to function to give an idea of the types of discourse found in the listservs, as well as the level of interactive

**Table 2** Purpose of contributions

Purpose	Description
Conferences/institutes	Providing information (and calls for proposals) for conferences and special topic institutes
Conference information	Providing further details (e.g. location, dates, reminders about registration) for conference participants
Publications	Information about new publications (print and electronic; books and journals) and calls for submissions to publications
Reviews	Reviews of recent publications
Grants/fellowships	Information for applicants for external grants and postgraduate support
Postgraduate	Information on (new) postgraduate programs in linguistics
Jobs	Listings of academic and other jobs, post-doctoral positions
Media	Drawing attention to news reports citing linguistic research
Activism	Information on social issues of concern to linguistic minority communities
Linguist finder	Seeking contact information for other researchers
References	Seeking previous research literature on a research topic
Resources	Seeking information on resources for linguistics research
Seeking input	Seeking others' input on research plans and data analysis
Responses	Responses to previous requests or comments
Recognition	Announce awards and achievements of prominent linguists, obituary notices
Schools/curriculum	Information on educational policies relevant to second language research

discussion, as opposed to general announcements, in each listserv. Again, some emails had multiple purposes, but all were categorized in one category only, according to the primary purpose of the contribution.

Each contribution to each listserv from the six-month monitoring period was categorized according to topic and purpose. This information is summarized in Tables 3 and 4 to allow for contrast of the six listservs reviewed here. Both the number of contributions in each topic and the percentage of the total contributions for each listserv are included. Contributions dealing with non-linguistic topics (e.g. jokes, virus warnings, hoax debunkings) are not included here. As can be seen, the lists differ substantially in common topics of discussion, ranging from a primary focus on theoretical linguistics topics (*LINGUISTList*) to primarily teaching and classroom second language acquisition (SLA) topics (*EAL-bilingual-l*). It is also clear that some lists are much more active than others, a point born out in Table 4, which displays the purpose of contributions to the listservs.

**Table 3** Topics of listserv contributions: number of contributions in each topic (percentage of total contribution for each listserv in brackets)

Topics	Aaal-l	Australian-linguistics-l	EAL-bilingual-l	Langue-l	LINGUIST-List	LTEST-l
SLA	9 (12%)	1 (5%)	2 (1%)	1 (2%)	71 (4%)	2 (1%)
SLP	11 (14%)		49 (34%)	2 (4%)	73 (5%)	24 (13%)
CALL	1 (1%)		15 (10%)	1 (2%)	7 (0.4%)	2 (1%)
Corpus linguistics					55 (3%)	6 (3%)
Language assessment	3 (4%)		8 (6%)		3 (0.2%)	*
LTE	8 (11%)		16 (11%)		5 (0.3%)	1 (0.5%)
Bilingualism	4 (5%)	14 (74%)	49 (34%)		26 (2%)	1 (0.5%)
Translation					42 (3%)	
Applied linguistics	12 (16%)	2 (10%)	1 (1%)	17 (32%)	129 (8%)	1 (0.5%)
Language studies	9 (12%)				135 (8%)	22 (12%)
Socio-linguistics	7 (9%)	1 (5%)		30 (56%)	200 (12%)	
Computational linguistics					140 (9%)	
Theoretical linguistics	3 (4%)				585 (36%)	
General linguistics	1 (1%)			3 (6%)	135 (8%)	

*Note:* \*All contributions to *LTest-l* were primarily focused on language assessment, so it was not meaningful to categorize them in this way. Topics indicated here are secondary topics addressed in these contributions.

**Table 4** Purpose of listserv contributions: number of contributions in each topic (percentage of total contribution for each listserv in brackets)

Purpose	Aaal-l	Australian- linguistics-l	EAL- bilingual-l	Languse-l	LINGUIST- List	LTEST-l
Conferences/ Institutes	33 (43%)	2 (11%)	12 (8%)	17 (31%)	504 (31%)	13 (7%)
Conference Information	1 (1%)				1 (< 0.1%)	11 (6%)
Publications	9 (12%)	3 (16%)	2 (1%)	4 (7%)	430 (27%)	7 (4%)
Reviews					89 (6%)	
Grants/ fellowships	3 (4%)				29 (2%)	2 (1%)
Postgraduate	1 (1%)		4 (3%)		8 (1%)	1 (0.5%)
Jobs	6 (8%)	3 (16%)	4 (3%)	1 (2%)	248 (15%)	19 (10%)
Media		4 (21%)	9 (6%)		35 (2%)	
Activism	1 (1%)		2 (1%)		2 (>0.1%)	
Linguist finder	4 (5%)		2 (1%)		3 (>0.1%)	3 (2%)
References	5 (7%)	2 (11%)	1 (1%)	1 (2%)	58 (4%)	7 (4%)
Resources					47 (3%)	6 (3%)
Seeking input	3 (4%)	3 (16%)	9 (6%)	13 (24%)	80 (5%)	12 (6%)
Responses	4 (5%)	1 (5%)	84 (59%)	17 (31%)	59 (4%)	102 (55%)
Recognition	1 (1%)	1 (5%)			9 (1%)	1 (1%)
Schools/ curriculum			13 (9%)			

For all the listservs except *EAL-bilingual-l* and *LTEST-l*, the most common types of contributions are informational in purpose, giving information on conferences and institutes, new publications, and jobs openings in linguistics. *EAL-bilingual-l*, *LTEST-l*, and *Languse-l* differ from the remaining listservs in having a large proportion of postings as responses to previous contributions. These listservs overall were much more interactive, and in each one extended discussion was created and maintained on topics of interest. These differences are discussed below, as each listserv is discussed in turn.

### *I American Association of Applied Linguistics List (Aaal-l)*

The *Aaal-l* is sponsored by the American Association of Applied Linguistics, and is intended to connect applied linguists across North America. Users can receive the emails individually, or in a daily digest, which summarizes the messages for each day. Extensive archives are available for this list, dating back to July 1997. The archives contain the full listserv content, and are not searchable, but are browsable by subject, author, and date or in a full-month digest. The list is relatively quiet;

during the six months of monitoring, only 76 messages were sent among members of the list. There were postings from both Europe and North America to the list; however, the vast majority of messages sent to the list were from North America. While relatively few messages were sent, the almost all of those sent were relevant to applied linguists, and covered a variety of research areas, including generative approaches, cognitive linguistics, and second language discourse. Messages relating to second language teaching, language teacher education, socio-linguistics, and the acquisition of various languages were also frequent.

Many of these messages were informational in nature; more than 40% of the messages were calls for participation in conferences or research institutes. Other common informational purposes included job listings and announcements of new publications. A much smaller proportion of the messages called for responses. It should be noted that there was no response on the list for most of these messages. For example, requests for information on specific topics in applied linguistics research, including language testing, interpretation, and language pedagogy evoked no responses to the general list. While it is likely that some responses were sent to individuals rather than the entire list, this did limit the amount of discussion on the list. Occasionally, responses were posted to the list. For example, one list-user asked for leads on research on the acquisition of tense and aspect of L1 Mandarin or Cantonese learners of English. The second posting of this request elicited one response suggesting a study that might be of interest. In no instance were multiple responses from different users posted to the list. The list is a good source of information on events in applied linguistics, and the relatively low volume of messages makes the information very manageable. For spreading information on conferences, publications, and jobs this listserv is a very helpful resource for second language researchers. However, for generating discussion in the field or for seeking input on research, it does not seem to be as useful.

## 2 *Australian Linguistics List (Australian-linguistics-l)*

The *Australian-linguistics-l* is an Australian-based list which was launched to provide a means of communication among linguists in Australia. The list is affiliated with the Australian Linguistics Society

and is owned by the Australian National University. The archives for this list, while not searchable, can be browsed by month, with monthly full-text archives dating back to April 1997. Although the list is not specific to second language research, all posting to the list during the six months it was monitored were relevant to applied linguistics.<sup>2</sup> This list is additionally of interest because it was not based in the relatively more populated North American and European linguistics communities. If one of the purposes of listservs is to increase communication among linguists over geographic areas, lists based in more isolated areas may be particularly important for second language researchers. As mentioned in the introduction to this review, one of the purposes of this review was to evaluate the benefits of local listservs in specific research communities.

The *Australian-linguistics-l* is the least active of the listservs reviewed here, with only 19 messages in the six-month period. The bulk of the messages dealt with issues relating to bilingualism and biculturalism, particularly with respect to indigenous language minority groups in Australia and Austral-Asia. The majority of postings to the list came from Australia, with very few contributions from New Zealand and other Pacific nations. The messages to the list were quite evenly split among messages alerting members to media items of interest, information on publications, and information on academic job postings. While many of the postings were informational, there were several requests for assistance with finding academic literature and for others' input on research projects. During the monitoring period, only one message mailed to the list contained a response to a previous request, in this case a request for leads on corpora for native Australian languages. Again, it is possible that responses to more issues were sent to individuals, rather than to the entire list, but this leaves little opportunity for group discussion. While not very interactive in nature, this list would be very useful to anyone interested in issues particular to applied linguistics in Australia. The list differs from others in this review in the narrowness of the focus. Most listservs include a much wider range of topics. While such listservs clearly are helpful for a wider audience, the narrow focus

<sup>2</sup>The Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) has since the beginning of writing this article re-organized their listserv (*APPLIX*), which had previously been defunct for a number of years.

here (and to a lesser degree in the *LTEST-l*) may be more effective for spreading information to a targeted community without the overwhelming volume of messages disseminated in more expansive listservs.

### *3 English as an Additional Language-Bilingual List (EAL-bilingual-l)*

*EAL-bilingual-l* is dedicated to research and practice in the acquisition of English as a second language and bilingualism. Based in the United Kingdom, its purpose is to allow researchers and teachers to discuss issues related to language learning and teaching, particularly among language minority communities. *EAL-bilingual-l* was moderately active, with 143 messages during the six months the list was monitored. The contributors to the site were almost entirely British, and the majority of the topics covered were relevant to second language learners and second language users in British schools. Close to a third of the communication dealt with language learning and teaching in British schools. Another third dealt with issues relating to bilingual and multilingual minority communities in the UK. This list was also the most active of those included in this review in the discussion of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and language teacher education (LTE). Of the second language research listservs reviewed here, this list had the most substantial proportion of second language teaching information.

The nature of the communication on this list is strikingly different to those reviewed previously. Close to 60% of the messages sent to listserv users were responses to previous postings. Overall, there was a high level of interaction on this listserv. Requests for information and insights to research were rarely disregarded, and several prompted extended exchanges among list users. For example, an extended multi-day discussion was prompted by one contributor questioning the use of the coined word 'languaging' by a speaker at a recent conference. Five different list users commented on this, exchanging views on their interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning, other ways that this meaning had previously been discussed, and the importance of the idea it represented for second language learning. Similarly, a message expressing concern that a language education policy document was not posted on a central website lead first to an explanation of where to find the document, and then

a further multi-email exchange from other users explaining where further information on the policy could be found. Quite a substantial portion of the postings on the list dealt with the treatment of language learning and language minority groups in the media, and such postings often sparked reactions among the listserv members. For instance, an email seeking web-based resources for teaching about tolerance and diversity in multicultural educational settings received seven responses suggesting websites and materials. Incidentally, this list is the only one reviewed here that is used to spread information about specific educational policies and curricular resources. While the list is primarily of interest to those involved in second language teaching in the UK, much of the information would be useful to language researchers with interests in language minority communities and bilingual education. While the contributions to the listserv primarily relate to the UK context, the density of information on multilingual communities in the UK provides a level of detail that would allow for comparison to other contexts.

#### *4 Language Use List (Languse-l)*

The *Languse-l* list is sponsored by Temple University and is available in both regular (individual messages) or digest form. Its focus is on the study of discourse (both first and second language), with additional focus on the social contexts of second language learning and use. Archives for this listserv, dating back to May 1999, can be browsed by date, subject, author, or thread. With only 54 postings over a six-month period, *Languse-l* was not a particularly active listserv. However, the contributions to this list come from all over the world; the 54 postings included in this review included emails from researchers located throughout North and South America, as well as Asian nations including Thailand and China, Australia, and several European nations. Despite the relatively low level of activity on *Languse-l*, it was one of the most international lists surveyed here. Most of the postings dealt with discourse analysis, either of first or second language use, or the social contexts of language use. While both first and second language use were featured, first language data featured more prominently than second language data. However, many of the discussions would be relevant to second language researchers as well.

The messages sent to the listserv served mainly to announce conferences, seek input on research, and respond to research. This listserv had the highest proportion of requests for input on research. For the most part, these took the form of contributors sharing some data or describing a phenomenon and asking for help with the analysis, suggestions of underlying causes, or insights from other research contexts to help explain the data. For example, in one exchange that involved multiple emails by two researchers, the analysis of gesture as part of communication was discussed. The original email began as a request for help in finding sources that criticized conversation analysis for not dealing adequately with the role of gesture; in further emails, what might actually constitute 'adequate treatment' of gesture was questioned and developed. While starting with a simple request for finding sources, this interchange allowed for a useful refinement of the constructs involved. Most requests received only one response; however, very few requests did not receive responses. The level of interaction among list members was not as high as on *EAL-bilingual-1*, but the listserv did still seem to provide a forum where researchers gave input into each other's research. The listserv does not provide an overwhelming number of emails, but the information posted is generally quite useful and the discussions very insightful. In one instance, a researcher asked for suggestions on the origin and use of a particular discourse item in which a change in the phonological form is used to intensify the meaning. In the ensuing discussion, list users mentioned similar uses of phonological modifications and suggested possible origins of the usage. In a summary of the information he received, the researcher who began the discussion gave credit to list users for giving him suggestions that lead him to further data, allowing him to more fully analyse the usage. In this case, the interactive nature of the list was particularly helpful in increasing understanding of the research topic. While much of the information on this list is not specific to second language research, it is a valuable resource for anyone interested in second language use and the connections between second language use and society.

### 5 *The Linguist List (LINGUISTList)*

*LINGUISTList* is sponsored by the Linguistic Society of America and is co-managed by linguists from Wayne State University and Eastern

Michigan University. While not a specific second language research site, the *LINGUISTList* is by far the most active listserv in linguistics, and provides a greater amount of information on second language research than any of the other listservs reviewed here. The listserv is available in either a regular or digest form; because of the large volume of messages (over 1600 in the six-month period reviewed here) the digest form is strongly recommended. Full-text archives dating back to December 1990 are also available. The non-searchable archives are grouped by week from June 1991 on; prior to that they were grouped by month. The *LINGUISTList* provides a meeting ground for linguists across disciplines and across geographic areas. There is active participation from linguists in North America and Western Europe, with significant participation from linguists in Asia and Latin America.

While postings on all topics related to linguistics are encouraged, the majority of the information deals with theoretical topics such as syntax, semantics, and phonology and sociolinguistic topics, particularly linguistic variation. This is the only listserv with a sizable contribution from computational linguists; while little of this is directed at second language research, linguists interested in computational models of language learning would find much of use here. The *LINGUISTList* also includes the largest proportion of information on translation. There is an almost equal incidence of messages related to second language learning and teaching as to other applied linguistics topics. Non-SLA applied linguistics topics are mainly focused on psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and language policy. While many of these contributions are not specifically on second language learning and use, many would still be relevant to second language researchers. Contributions on second language acquisition and teaching were relatively infrequent in the list. The majority of these were announcements of job openings in academic and research institutions.

Like the other lists, the messages were designed to inform readers about events and opportunities, to announce new publications, and to support research. However, the purposes of postings were much more varied here than on the other listservs in this review. While a similar proportion of messages announcing conferences and issuing calls for proposals were found on *LINGUISTList* and other lists reviewed here, *LINGUISTList* is unique in the volume of informational messages about institutes and summer

seminars in linguistic topics advertised through the listserv. This list also had an unusually high volume of informational messages that announced job openings for second language researchers and teachers. The *LINGUISTList* is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking employment in fields relevant to second language studies. Other informational emails on this list included frequent announcements about grant funding opportunities. Informational postings comprised more than half of the 71 SLA-related posts examined for this review.

There was a relatively higher proportion of emails were directed at advertising new publications on *LINGUISTList* compared to other listservs reviewed here. There were frequent postings to announce the publication of new books as well as to publicize the tables of contents of current journal issues from a range of topics in linguistics, including many publications relevant to second language studies. The listserv is also used as a means of announcing the publication of new dissertation research, much of which is of interest to second language researchers. Additionally, this was the only listserv to sponsor book reviews of new publications in linguistics. During the six months that the listserv was monitored for this review, reviews of applied linguistics publications were frequent. Messages that promoted new publications in any of these manners made up slightly less than half of the SLA postings during the period this list was monitored.

The third major purpose of *LINGUISTList* messages was fostering communication among researchers. While a relatively small proportion of the business on this listserv involves interaction among linguists, the *LINGUISTList* fosters discourse on linguistics in several ways. Users can post questions to the list (often seeking references or input on the analysis of linguistic data) or can pose more general questions to start a discussion. Responses can be sent to individuals or to the list as a whole, but users are encouraged to post summaries of the responses they received to their questions, so the whole list benefits from the ideas exchanged. These resources are largely untapped by applied linguists. While the listserv was monitored for this review, no second language data questions or summaries were posted, and only one discussion topic relevant to applied linguistics was posed. No responses to this topic were sent to the list, although they may have been sent to the individual list user who posted the topic. Because it is not directed at second language

researchers, the *LINGUISTList* may not be the best forum for exchanging ideas among the second language research community; however, it is a helpful resource for keeping abreast of conferences and publications in applied linguistics. Greater use of the listserv to discuss research and theories in second language acquisition could increase its utility for fostering discussion among second language researchers worldwide.

### *6 Language testing list (LTEST-l)*

The Language Testing list is sponsored by Penn State University. It functions as a meeting point for linguists and teachers interested in second language testing research and practice. *LTEST-l* is one of the busier listservs included here: there were 187 messages sent in the time that the list was monitored (not including a rather large volume of emails addressing problems on the list with viruses and virus hoaxes). It was also one of the most international, with contributions from researchers in North America, Europe, and the Pacific quite common. While virtually all of the emails sent to the list focused specifically on language testing, there were also a number of messages focused on language teaching, and particularly the relationship between language teaching practice and language testing. In terms of topics overall, however, this was the most homogenous list included here.

The narrow definition of scope on this list seemed to have two effects. First, there were few emails that were irrelevant to the majority of the listserv users and, second, there was a very high degree of interaction and sense of community among the list users. Indeed, this was the only listserv with a very international audience to have a high proportion of messages sent as responses to others' requests for help in locating research literature and resources as well as to solicitations for input to research projects. Multiple messages sent from different researchers in response to a question or request were not uncommon on this list, giving the sense of a close, approachable internet community. In one instance, a list user posted a message seeking information on second language proficiency tests in Spanish. Over the following few days, 10 responses were received. The first two responses supplied names and information on the tests and, following this, the thread evolved into a discussion of the procedures involved in validating one

of those tests, including questions about the peer review process and the implementation effect of reporting test validation in English rather than Spanish. While list users presented opposing arguments and viewpoints, they carefully did so in a respectful manner that encouraged further discussion. There was a similar sense of community in the announcements for conferences. Beyond the initial calls for conference papers there were several messages including information about social events at conferences and reminders of conference fee deadlines. *LTEST-I* was unique in the listservs reviewed here in terms of the type of discourse generated. Finally, the list was also commonly used to advertise conferences and publications on second language testing as well as to inform users of job opportunities in language testing.

#### IV Conclusions

All of the listservs reviewed here fill an important role in the dissemination of information in second language research, particularly with respect to publicizing conferences and new publications. The relevance of this information to individual researchers depends of course on research interests. Hopefully, this review has introduced readers to some new resources and given them information to help determine which is more relevant to them.

In terms of stimulating and fostering discussion among second language researchers, smaller, more focused listservs may provide a better forum for extended dialogue and debate. Such listservs may also better serve as a resource for soliciting and receiving help in research projects. Both listservs that are focused in terms of geographic area and those that are focused in terms of topic area are more likely to foster an exchange of ideas. While subscribing to larger listservs like the LINGUISTList may be the most efficient means of gaining information on events and publications, smaller, more narrowly focuses listservs may be a better medium for engaging in discussion.

#### V Reference

Gottwald, S. 2002: Websites for second language research. *Second Language Research* 18, 83–94.