Open Accessible Summaries in Language Studies (OASIS)

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Language teachers report having limited direct contact with research and research findings despite generally having positive perceptions of research (Borg, 2009). In the UK, Marsden & Kasprowicz\* (2017) found that while foreign language educators do have some indirect exposure to research through professional organisations, they have very little direct contact with language learning and teaching research. Similarly, in a study with teachers in Canada and Turkey, Nassaji (2012) found that 48% percent of language teachers rarely or never read research articles, even though 79% strongly agreed that knowing about SLA research improves second language teaching.

The main reasons teachers give for having limited interaction with research even if they view it positively are 1) practical limitations – lack of time and access, and 2) conceptual constraints – academic papers can be difficult to read (see also Plavén-Sigray et al., 2017). OASIS therefore aims to make research into language learning, language teaching, and multilingualism both physically and conceptually available to a wide audience.

How does OASIS work?

OASIS is a publicly available database (oasis-database.org) of accessible summaries of research articles in the fields of language learning, language teaching, and multilingualism. OASIS summaries are a single page only and are written in non-technical language. The summaries have a standard format agreed on by journal editors present at the editors’ meeting at AAAL in 2018. Each summary provides information about what the study was about, why it is important, what the researcher(s) did, and what the study found. Crucially, summaries written by the OASIS team are sent to the author(s) of the original article for their comments or edits, which we believe this makes the initiative stronger. Going forward, the intention is that the majority of summaries will be written by authors themselves.

How is OASIS doing?

The database currently holds close to 300 summaries on a wide variety of topics, including vocabulary learning, heritage languages, and the use of CALL to support classroom teaching, to name a few. The bulk of our summaries focus on recent material, but summaries of some classic papers suggested by journals, team members, and experts are available too. The number of OASIS users has been climbing steadily to roughly 1250 unique users per month (so far).

*Journal involvement and sustainability*

14 journals were involved in establishing OASIS. Currently, a number of these are suggesting or encouraging authors of newly accepted papers to write an accessible summary of their work. Importantly, Language Learning, TESOL Quarterly, and the Modern Language Journal are requiring all authors of accepted papers to write an OASIS summary. The support of three of the top journals in language learning and teaching means that we have a steady stream of new summaries, up-to-date content for our users, and a sustainable, author and journal driven practice.

*Professional associations*

We are also pleased to have the support of professional language teaching associations, such as the Association for Language Learning (ALL) in the UK and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in the US. In addition to helping us secure funding, these collaborations are enabling us to reach a wide audience, that is they help us to ensure OASIS summaries reach the users they are intended for.

*Using OASIS summaries*

OASIS summaries are being used National Centre for Excellence in Language Pedagogy (NCELP) in CPD with teachers in a network of secondary schools. Accessible summaries have also been used in workshops with teachers and teacher educators in the UK, the Netherlands, and Austria. In addition, we are developing a collaboration with the National Framework for Languages in Scotland.

*Contributing OASIS summaries*

The summaries currently available on our website have been elicited by participating journals or written by the OASIS team. However, anyone can send in OASIS summaries of their peer-reviewed articles published in SSCI indexed journals. If you have published work that is particularly relevant for teachers, teacher educators, parents, policy makers, or other interested parties outside of academia, please consider writing your own OASIS summary. OASIS guidelines and summary writing tips are available on our help page. We are always happy to answer any questions you may have. Contact us at oasis@oasis-database.org.

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