



A tribute to Richard (Dick) Schmidt With aloha and appreciation

LLT Staff

It is with great sadness that we announce that Dr. Richard (Dick) Schmidt passed away on Wednesday, March 15, 2017. In addition to being an internationally-renowned applied linguist, Dick was a central figure in the founding and success of *Language Learning & Technology*. He worked collaboratively to make *LLT* what it is today.

Dick's career spanned three fields: international service, linguistics, and second language acquisition. After receiving his BA in Social Relations at Harvard University in 1963, he worked as a US Foreign Service officer and director of the J. F. Kennedy Cultural Center & Library in Beirut from 1965 to 1969. He then returned to Brown University where he received MA (1971) and PhD (1974) degrees in linguistics, focusing on the sociolinguistics of Arabic. In 1976, he took a faculty position in the Department of English as a Second Language (since renamed Second Language Studies) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where he remained until 2011.



Dick made seminal contributions to scholarship on the cognitive and affective factors in adult second and foreign language learning. He was especially well known for his contribution of the noticing hypothesis (1990), which stated that learners' noticing of features in their linguistic input is crucial to their acquiring them. His 1990 article on the topic in *Applied Linguistics*, "The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning," has been cited nearly 5000 times. He later turned his attention to the topic of motivation in second language learning, co-editing an important volume on the topic as well as an influential article in *Language Learning*. He had voluminous knowledge of the field of applied linguistics as reflected in his most recent book, the widely-read *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (2010).

Dick played a critical role in the growth and development of the field of applied linguistics. He served as chair of the University of Hawai'i ESL Department from 1985 to 1990, years in which it gained national prominence and helped set an example of rigorous research in second language learning. During his chairship, the Department started its PhD program in Second Language Acquisition, which soon rose to prominence as the top program of its kind in the world. He served as Director of the UH National Foreign Language Resource Center (NFLRC) from 1995 to 2011, a period of time when the NFLRC also played a leading national role, especially on topics related to less commonly taught languages and technology-mediated learning. Under his leadership, the NFLRC hosted national symposia on the Internet and language learning in 1995 and 1996, critical early events in this new area of teaching and inquiry. He was chair of the Language Resource Center Council of Directors for two years, President of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) from 2003 to 2004, and was the 2009 recipient of the AAAL Distinguished Service and Scholarship Award. In 2013, the NFLRC published a festschrift in his honor: *Noticing and second language acquisition: Studies in honor of Richard Schmidt*, where an international array of researchers spoke of the impact of his noticing hypothesis on their research over the years and into the future.

True to his early days in the Foreign Service, Dick also remained an internationalist and global scholar throughout his life. He spent much of his career engaged in the training of second- and foreign-language teachers, including teacher-training projects in Japan, Thailand, Spain, Egypt, and Brazil—the latter in a year as a Fulbright scholar in Rio de Janeiro in 1983.

In 1996, Dick and his colleague, Susan Gass of Michigan State University, as part of their renewal grants for their Language Resource Centers—the NFLRC at UH and the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR) at MSU—included a proposal for a new journal, *Language Learning & Technology*. The grants were awarded, and the NFLRC and CLEAR have supported *LLT* ever since. Both Dick and Susan provided invaluable guidance to the journal as it grew to become one of the leading journals in the world in linguistics, education, and computer-assisted learning, and a model for high-quality peer reviewed open access publishing. On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of *LLT*, Dick and Susan were interviewed, and the videos of their interviews can be found [here](#). All of the editors of the journal, past and present, can attest to Dick's unwavering support for the journal and its staff, and for the inspiration to retain its open access status, despite interest from different commercial publishers. Dick, Susan, and founding editor Mark Warschauer proved prescient in demonstrating how wide reaching an open access journal can be.

Those of us who had the good fortune of having worked with Dick will always remember him fondly as a mentor, a colleague, and a warm and caring human being. He devoted great attention to his teaching and mentorship, bringing both expertise and steady guidance. His hard work, visionary thinking, open-mindedness, and powerful sense of humanity made him an invaluable leader in all the organizations he served. The annual get-togethers he hosted in his home in Hawai'i Kai helped build camaraderie and friendship among the Second Language Studies students and faculty, the vast majority of whom were from other places.

Dick will be sorely missed. We join with thousands around the world in remembering his kindness and indelible contributions.

References

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