Editorial

The second issue of Volume 13 covers a variety of papers on different issues of language learning and teaching. It begins with Andrew Sewell’s discussion of a vexed topic—Hong Kong English (HKE)—from a phonological perspective. Acknowledging variation in phonological features among HKE speakers, Sewell conducted an accent survey on 12 HKE accents. Acceptability ratings from 52 first-year undergraduates in Hong Kong indicated that only 5 out of the 12 tested phonological features, such as vowel modifications, were regarded as “errors,” thus implying that not all features were treated equal in severity and supporting the need to adopt a feature-based approach in examining HKE. Sewell further discusses the ratings in terms of variety status and identity, language forms and pedagogy and testing.

Yongyan Li addresses the issue of plagiarism in a university context in Hong Kong by focusing on nine undergraduates’ perception of plagiarism, their strategies in avoiding plagiarism, as well as four lecturers’ views on the students’ use of sources. Data were collected from multiple sources such as interviews, students’ process logs, and student-lecturer conference on Turnitin reports. Instances of patchwriting were revealed in students’ work, which was explained by their misunderstanding of plagiarism and the ease of navigation of web sources. Students’ experience and perception of learning and writing in their high schools and at the university were also considered to have an impact on such practice. Meanwhile, some instructors could be hesitant in exploring the full educational use of Turnitin. Li therefore ends her discussion by suggesting how anti-plagiarism policies at the university and English-for-academic-purposes (EAP)/subject-based instructions can help students to use source materials academically.

Ruby Yang examines gender representation in a commonly-used primary English textbook series in Hong Kong. By analysing all the reading passages in the textbook series with AntConc, a free concordance programme, Yang observed that the writer of the series seemed to have been aware of the importance of gender equality: females were no longer depicted as weak or delicate housewives; females could be engaged in different kinds of jobs such as doctors and physical education teachers; males and females could share household chores. Yang recommends that a more generalisable conclusion be warranted with more data from other parts of the textbook series and from different textbook series.

Phil Glenwright studies emailed pre-match bulletins of an amateur cricket team from a discourse perspective, marking the centenary year of the University of Hong Kong and its cricket club. Compiling a corpus of 13.9K words, Glenwright examines the data at both macro and micro levels. At the macro level, features concerning the genre, context, top-level structure, organisational structure, and motivational functions, were identified. At the micro level, referencing, substitution, ellipsis and lexical repetition were noted. In addition to these coherent and cohesive devices, occasional idiosyncratic patterns were found, reflecting a formal style, with a high register and a sober tone, of the texts.

Antonia Chandrasegaran investigates to what extent theory-based instructional material design can influence teachers’ orientation in the teaching of expository
writing. Four school teachers in Singapore were involved in the design of five sets of Grade 9 instructional materials, together with cues for classroom talk, and one of the their lessons where the materials were tried out was observed. They were also asked to complete a questionnaire and attend an interview. Data collected from these various sources suggested potential influence on teachers’ orientation towards a socio-cognitive model that guided material design. Several factors that seemed to contribute to such changes in orientation, such as collaborative leadership and teachers’ receptivity of the theoretical model, were also discussed.

The issue ends with Supakorn Phoocharoensil’s study on the acquisition of the English adverbial relativiser where and prepositional relatives by 60 Thai university English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners. These 60 learners fell into two groups: high-proficiency and low-proficiency. They were asked to complete an untimed sentence-combination task on English relative clauses. The performance of both proficiency groups revealed omission of an obligatory preposition in locative adverbial relative clauses, with the low-proficiency group scoring a much lower accuracy rate than the high-proficiency group. The high-proficiency group was also found to have acquired preposition stranding before pied-piping. Phoocharoensil accounts for the patterns from the two groups of learners in terms of overgeneralisation and artifacts of the research instrument.