Retiring Colleagues Shared their Knowledge and Experiences

Two of our academic colleagues at the CAES - Elizabeth Samson and Elaine Martyn - retired last year after serving at the Centre for 36 years and 24 years respectively. In an exclusive interview, they spoke about their responsibilities and achievements, and also gave personal advice to new members of staff joining our Centre.

Elizabeth Samson

Q How would you describe your work as a member of the Programmes Coordinators’ Committee?

A I was on the Committee for six years. But during the years when the Centre had to prepare for the ‘new curriculum’, the PhD work became a much more pressing and time-consuming task. It required a lot of hard work and preparation.

Q How did you divide your time between teaching and administrative work?

A We were all teaching fewer hours at the time and the balance for me was tilted very much towards administrative work. We were working fast and always coming up with new things such as the assessment policy and the new credit bearing policy. It was challenging because we were trying to find our own experience in teaching but trying to fit into a highly administrative setup.

Q What advice would you give to our new academic staff about building professional relationships?

A The Centre has always had a very friendly atmosphere from the time I joined. We have always had a Social Committee and there is always a chance to talk to people. This helps because if you have a conflict of approach or values, the social gatherings give people a chance to talk and smooth things out, and that’s always been a strength of our Centre.

PhD Successes

Congratulations to our recent PhD graduates

Dr. Althea Ho (supervised by Prof. Kim Hyland and Dr. Yves Hoong)
Dr. DiLin Huang (supervised by Prof. Kim Hyland)
Dr. Michael Zhang (supervised by Dr. Cynthia Liu and Dr. Angela Chan)

Outstanding Teaching Award of 2014

Miranda Legg

Miranda Legg received the Outstanding Teaching Award in 2014. The award recognizes her commitment to excellence in teaching through her leadership in the design, development and implementation of the CUE course over the past seven years. In an interview, Miranda shared some of her thoughts on teaching.

Q What are the most valuable qualities of a good teacher?

A The most important thing is to be flexible. I think a good teacher does that, in order to be effective, you have to seek out feedback from your students. It’s very important to get a sense from them about what they want and what they need. Not all students always know what’s good for them, what students want is not necessarily in their best interest. We are the professionals, so we should know better what is good for them and what they need. Also, as course developers, we should be well aware of the development of the curriculum in the university. One thing that my teaching award was focused on was trying to match what we do in the Centre to what the students are doing in their curriculum. In the process of designing and developing the CUE course, I was trying to link it to the common core curriculum, and to talk up with the students needs. Also, you cannot just assume that students can see for themselves what the link is. We need to explain it to them,
From the Director

This has been another busy year for CAES as we have finally completed our work on the old campus and seen the end of the 2016-2017 academic year. The curriculum reform, which saw the elimination of some courses for fourth-year students while adding a significant number of new courses for all teachers. This is particularly so for those of us in need of new English teaching materials. Finally, with almost all our English-for-professionals (EF) courses now being offered and our CAES students’ broader educational background having completed its third year, we feel our contribution to the improvement of English teaching is well established.

Because English is the official medium of instruction at HKU, the emphasis on English education has been greatly increased. The number of students who are proficient in English is at the heart of our students’ experiences here. Undergraduate students are increasingly finding themselves in English-speaking contexts, which are in CEE and six in the ESF. Most of the 3,000 students who enter the University each year take courses designed to help them bridge the gap between the level of English they are familiar with and the level they will need to navigate their learning in their disciplines.

In the past, CAES has always been focused on English education, but we have expanded its range to include a wider variety of courses. Today, CAES has a diverse range of courses from English language and culture courses to courses in Chinese literature and culture. The courses are designed to help students develop their skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. In addition, CAES offers a number of courses in Chinese language and culture, which are designed to help students develop their skills in understanding and appreciating Chinese culture.

The CAES director, Professor Kim Hyun, is responsible for the overall direction of the program. He is a specialist in English literature and has published extensively on the subject. His research interests include the history of English literature, the role of the university in society, and the influence of literature on politics.

CAES International Conference

CAES organized and held a successful International Conference with the theme “English as a Language of Education, Practice and Pedagogy” from 11-13 June, 2015 at the Centennial Campus of HKU. It highlighted the rising influence of English as an international language and the range of contexts in which it is taught and used across the globe. The conference brought together 600 academics, researchers, practitioners, and research students from 40 countries around the world to explore various dimensions of English in a variety of social contexts, including at work and in virtual and hybrid environments, and to share their research on various topics, such as learning and teaching of English.

Funded by the UGC Language-related Collaborative Research Fund, the project will produce an online resource for the use of Hong Kong secondary-level students in improving their English speaking skills. The project will be published online, and the resources will be available to students and teachers. The project will provide a range of learning materials, including video clips, audio recordings, and text-based resources, to help students improve their speaking skills. The project will be evaluated through a series of online quizzes, and students will be able to track their progress.

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Research and Publications

CAES has contributed to a significant increase in the academic community by producing high quality research outputs. Publications continue to make numerous presentations at local and international conferences and to write articles for a range of well-known journals such as Asia Pacific Evaluation and Innovation Education. Journal of Second Language Writing and TESL Quarterly. Especially pleasing is to see that a number of our PhD students have already made their mark as early career international and impact, and it is also very exciting to see that they are also starting to publish their research articles in peer-reviewed research articles that focus on the teaching, learning and use of English in Asia and by Asians. Further information about the journal can be found on its website: http://caes.hku.hk/.

Knowledge Exchange

Funded by the UGC Knowledge Exchange: EIE Fund, ProfWebK, a free and interactive website, has been developed to enhance the professional writing skills of business executives and the general public. It was officially launched in early May and has attracted more than 1,000 users in less than three months. A second round of KE funding has been secured to conduct the evaluation of the impact of ProfWebK.
Teaching and Learning
Online Project for the Improvement of University Speaking (OPTIMUS)

A HKU-6m collaborative project led by CAES, HKU in collaboration with ELT City, and ELT PolyU, Principal Investigators: David Gardner and Ken Lau

Funded by the UGC-related Language Collaborative Research Fund

The project will produce an online resource for the use of Hong Kong tertiary level students to improve their English speaking skills. The heart of the resource will be a corpus of authentic video examples of real interactions between students and expert speakers (e.g., has host as guest speaker) and best quality student speakers. Users will be helped to learn from and emulate the experts by the use of a support materials. The resource will be open to all students of tertiary institutes in Hong Kong who will be able to take the course online or in the form of a booklet. For example, students will be able to find presentations on topics or relevance to them delivered by recipients of teaching excellence awards. Equally, they will find presentations made by best emerging minds. After viewing the presentations, students can use the associated materials to understand the structure and language used, or can present to their peers on their own performance. As the corpus expands, so will the range of topics and speaking types. It will provide support for Hong Kong students in all academic disciplines as a preparation for different kinds of skills expected in their academic careers.

Research and Publications

CAES has contributed to a significant increase to the academic community by producing high quality research output. Colleagues continue to make numerous presentations at local and international conferences and to write articles for a range of well-known journals such as Asia Journal of Evaluations and Evaluation in Higher Education, Journal of Second Language Writing and TESOL Quarterly. Especially pleasing is to see that a number of our PhD students have made their presentation at international conferences. Among the current team, David Gardner, Ken Lau, Professor Szeto Wah and Professor Peter Lee have all successfully hosted or co-hosted conferences and are well recognized internationally. Four of our team have also recently secured substantial funding. Leading in collaboration with colleagues from HKU, UGC, and the HKPF, this project will enable us to participate in our professional development programmes. The project will meet these new challenges with the same enthusiasm and attention to detail as in the previously-mentioned research-led, education-focused activities of the research team.

Knowledge Exchange

Funded by the UGC Knowledge Exchange (KE) Fund, ProWritr, a free and interactive website, has been developed to enhance the professional writing skills of business executives and the general public. It was officially launched in early May and has attracted more than 1,000 users in less than three months. A second round of KE funding has been secured to conduct the evaluation of the impact of ProWritr.

CAES organised and held a highly successful International Conference with the theme ‘Faces of English: Theory, Practice and Pedagogy’ from 11-13 June, 2015 at the Centennial Campus of HKU. It highlighted the rich diversity of approaches to understanding English and the range of contexts in which it is taught and used across the globe. The conference brought together 600 academics, researchers, practitioners and research students from 40 countries around the world to explore various dimensions of English in a variety of social, political, historical, and virtual contexts, and to share different perspectives on the uses, analysis, description and teaching of English.

Five world-renowned experts in the field of English language education and application linguistics were invited as keynote speakers: Professors Rod Ellis, Ken Hyland, Jenny Norton, David Nunan and Ken Graedel. These distinguished scholars not only gave keynote speeches but also ran five very popular post-conference workshops.

Along with the stimulating and intellectually-rewarding academic programmes, various aspects of Hong Kong’s cultural lifestyle were woven into the conference programmes. There were memorable performances given by local artists such as an lion dance, Chinese acrobats and martial arts, a Chinese streetband and a dragon group during the opening and closing ceremonies and the welcome reception. Participants also enjoyed the local restaurants, museums, shopping malls and traditional markets along the walking tour.

Many participants commented that it was an excellent conference which was very well-organized and reported that they enjoyed an enriching, inspiring and fulfilling time, contributing to rich discussions around the themes, developing professional knowledge, insights and collaborations,
Teaching and Learning
Online Project for the Improvement of University Speaking (OPTIMUS)

A HKU-Em collaborative project led by CAES. HKU in collaboration with EFL, CityU, and EFL, PolyU.
Principal Investigators: David Gardner and Ken Lau
Funded by the UGC Language-related Collaboration Fund

The project will produce an online resource for the use of Hong Kong tertiary level students to improve their English speaking skills. The heart of the resource will be a corpus of authentic video examples of students' speaking in their own classes and video extracts from expert speakers (e.g., hosts, class guests, and guest speakers) and best quality student speakers. Users will be helped to learn from and emulate the experts by a set of support materials. The resource will be open to all students of tertiary institutions in Hong Kong who will be logged into the system using their student ID. For example, students will be able to find presentations on topics related to them delivered by recipients of teaching excellence awards, equally, they will find presentations made by best learning-disabled students. After watching the presentations, students can use the associated materials to understand the structure and language of topics, or can watch their peers' communicative on their own performances. As the corpus expands, so will the range of topics and speaking topics, it will provide support for Hong Kong students in all disciplines in areas they are studying for the different kinds of speaking in English.

Research and Publications

CAES has contributed to a significant increase to the academic community by producing high quality research output. Collaborations continue to make numerous presentations at local and international conferences and to write articles for a range of well-known journals such as Asia-Pacific Journal of Education, Journal of Second Language Writing, and TESOL Quarterly. Especially pleasing is to see that a number of our PhD students have also made their mark at international conferences in particular at those conferences in Hong Kong. It is also pleasing to see the Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics which is a major publication for quality peer-reviewed research articles that focus on the teaching, learning and use of English in Asia and beyond. Further information about the journal can be found on its website: http://caes.bham.ac.uk/

Knowledge Exchange

Funded by the UGC Knowledge Exchange Scheme. PolyU has been chosen as a finalist in the competition, which is sponsored by the Hong Kong Knowledge Exchange Scheme. The project aims to develop a professional website which will be used to promote the knowledge and expertise of business executives and the general public. It was officially launched in early May and has attracted more than 1,000 users in less than three months. The conference was one of the second round of KE funding has been secured for the continuation of the project. William K

From the Director

This has been another busy year for CAES as we have finally completed our work on the old campus and are now on the lookout for the end of the 2013-14 academic year. The curriculum reform, which saw the introduction of new courses in the fourth and fifth years, has been a great success for all teachers. This is particularly so for those of us who are teaching for undergraduate students. With almost all our English-in-use (ELI) courses now being taught and our ELI courses having completed their third year, we feel our contribution to the field has now been well established.

Because English is the official medium of instruction at HKU, the role played by CAES in supporting students is crucial. The heart of students' experience here, undergraduate students are more receptive to the English medium, which is in AUD and in the family of AUD. Most of the 2,000 students who enter the University each year take English as their only subject. It is designed to help them develop a facility in the language, so they can read and understand English in the future. However, the students take an English course which requires them to engage with the literary and non-literary aspects of the language. This is not an easy task. As a result, CAES has become the main contributor to a great degree. Although our research interests have also been demonstrated through our professional activities and publication, we have been involved in the successful training of several staff in securing research and teaching development grants. Almost all of our 50 teachers attend international conferences, seminars, workshops, or keynotes presentations, and many publish their research in peer-reviewed journals and in books, with titles appearing with Oxford University Press, Routledge, and Bloomsbury.

The 2015-2016 academic year promises to be another challenging and productive year as we continue to work with our students and expand our well-established teaching and research outputs. We have brought three English Teaching Associates to CAES for doctoral research. Their research and to help promote English teaching in the region. Our language The project aims to develop a website which is used to promote the knowledge and expertise of business executives and the general public. It was officially launched in early May and has attracted more than 1,000 users in less than three months. The conference was one of the second round of KE funding has been secured for the continuation of the project. William K

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Five world-renowned experts in the field of English language education and applied linguistics were invited as keynote speakers: Professors Rod Ellis, Ken Haydon, Bonnie Norton, David Nunan, and Ken Graustein. These distinguished scholars not only gave keynote speeches but also ran five very popular post-conference workshops.

Along with the stimulating and intellectually rewarding academic programmes, various aspects of Hong Kong’s cultural landscape were woven into the conference programme. There were memorable performances given by local artists such as Alan Dance, Chinese acrobats and martial arts, a Chinese stilt-walker and a dance troupe during the opening and closing ceremonies and the welcome reception. Participants also enjoyed the local attractions of its history, enjoying snapshots of Chinese art, traditional music and walking the local streets of Hong Kong.

Many participants commented that it was an excellent conference which was very well-organised and reported that they enjoyed an enriching, inspiring and fulfilling time, contributing to rich discussions around the themes, developing professional knowledge, insights and collaborations.
Retiring Colleagues Shared their Knowledge and Experiences

Two of our academic colleagues at the CAES - Elizabeth Samson and Elaine Martyn - retired last year after serving at the Centre for 26 years and 24 years respectively. In an exclusive interview, they speak about their responsibilities and achievements, and also give personal advice to new members of staff joining our Centre.

Elizabeth Samson

Q How would you describe your work as a member of the Programme Coordinators’ Committee?
A My role on the Committee for six years, but during the years when the Centre had to prepare for the QF (Quality Focusing) new curriculum, the PhD and master degree programmes, new assessment policies and procedures, it required a lot of hard work and preparation.

Q How did you divide your time between teaching and administrative work?
A We were all teaching four hours at the time and the balance for me shifted very much towards administrative work, and we were working fast and always coming up with new things such as the assessment policy and the new credit bearing policy. It was challenging because we were relying on our own experience in teaching but trying to fit into a highly administratively driven environment.

Q What advice would you give to our new academic staff about building professional relationships?
A The Centre has always had a very friendly atmosphere from the time I joined. We have always had a Social Committee and there is always a chance to talk to people. This helps because if you have a conflict of approach or value, the social gatherings give people a chance to talk and smooth things out, and that’s always been a strength of our Centre.

Elaine Martyn

Q What is your teaching philosophy?
A The learner always comes first. A learner-centred curriculum that puts more emphasis on the learners and their needs, and what their targets are in terms of their studies or work, is most effective.

Q What a accomplishment have you given the most satisfaction?
A I am particularly proud of the professional communication courses, particularly those in the arts because they were highly experimental. When you are helping students write their CVs and cover letters, it’s very realistic. The role of the teacher then changes from that of a lecturer to a supervisor.

Q What is your view on working at the Centre?
A It’s a really great place here. The Centre is quite unique in that you can teach for 28 years and in your 20 you can teach how courses in departments you have never taught before, third of courses, we have great colleagues and wonderful students!

Outstanding Teaching Award of 2014

Miranda Legg

Miranda Legg received the Outstanding Teaching Award in 2014. The award recognises her commitment to excellence in teaching through her leadership in the design, development and implementation of the CUE course over the past eleven years. In an interview, Miranda shares some of her thoughts on teaching.

Q What are the most valuable qualities of a good teacher?
A The most important thing is to be approachable. I think a good teacher does that. In order to be approachable, you have to seek out feedback from your students. It’s very important to get a sense from them about what they want and what they need. Not all students always know what’s good for them. What students want is not necessarily in their best interests. We are the professionals, so we should always know better what is good for them and what they need. Also, as course developers, we should be well aware of the development of the curriculum in the University. One thing that my teaching award was founded on was trying to match what I do in the Centre to what the students are doing in their curriculum. In the process of designing and developing the CUE course, I was trying to match it to the common core curriculum and to link it up with the students’ needs. Also, you cannot just assume that students can see for themselves what the link is. We need to explain it to them.
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Elizabeth Samson

Q: How would you describe your role as a member of the Programme Coordinators’ Committee?
A: I was on the Committee for six years. But during the years when the Centre had two Programme Directors, the Coordinators’ Committee was a place where the Programme Directors and Coordinators’ Committee met to discuss academic matters, rules and regulations. It required a lot of hard work and preparation.

Q: How did you divide your time between teaching and administrative work?
A: We were teaching for 20 hours a week at the time and the balance for me shifted very much towards administrative work. We were working less and always coming up with new things such as the assessment policy and the new credit-bearing policy. It was challenging because we were relying on our own experience in teaching but trying to fit into a basically administrative system.

Q: What advice would you give to our new academic staff about building professional relationships?
A: The Centre has always had a very friendly atmosphere and there has always been a Social Committee and there is always a chance to talk to people. This helps because if you have a conflict of approach or values, the social gatherings give people a chance to talk and smooth things out, and that’s always been a strength of our Centre.

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Q: What is your teaching philosophy?
A: The learner always comes first. A learner-centred curriculum that puts more attention on learners and their needs, and what their targets are in terms of their studies or work is most effective.

Q: What accomplishments have you given the most satisfaction?
A: I am particularly proud of the professional communication courses, particularly those in the arts because they were highly experimental. When you are helping students write their CVs and cover letters, it’s very realistic. The role of the teacher then changes from that of a bookish tutor to being a support person.

What is your view on change at the Centre?
A: What is really positive here is that you can teach for 36 years and in your 20 you can teach new courses in departments you have never taught before. And of course, we have great colleagues and wonderful students!

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Q: What are the most valuable qualities of a good teacher?
A: The most important thing is to be inclusive. I think a good teacher does that. In order to be effective, you have to seek out feedback from your students. It’s very important to get a sense of how they feel about what they are learning and what they need. Not all students always know what’s good for them. What students want is not necessarily in their best interests. We are the professionals, so we should know better what is good for them and what they need. Also, as course developers, we should be well aware of the development of the curriculum in the university. One thing that my teaching award was founded on was to try to match what we do in the Centre to what the students are doing in their curriculum. In the process of designing and developing the CUE course, I have tried to maintain it to be relevant and current and to link it up with the students’ needs. Also, you cannot just assume that students can see for themselves what the link is. We need to explain it to them.