

## Editorial

David Gardner

*The Centre for Applied English Studies, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong*

Welcome to a new issue of *The Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics*.

### This issue

In this issue we have six papers and two book reviews. Two of the papers describe studies relating to secondary school students whereas the other four are about university students. We also have geographical diversity within the papers which represent China, Hong Kong, Iran and Japan. Unusually, although not uniquely, all of the papers are written by single authors.

We begin with a paper by Cameron Smart who conducts a careful analysis of spoken discourse from peer group interactions which constitute part of a public speaking examination in Hong Kong. As well as providing interesting insights into the discourse, Smart uses the study to successfully further validate his Linear Unit Discourse analysis model. This is a model which seems destined for a great deal of future mileage given the pedigree on which it is based (John Sinclair and associates).

Yu Hang Kwan then takes a detailed look at the approaches to teaching additive connectives used in the most popular grammar textbooks within the context of Hong Kong secondary schools. His focus is on the books aimed at senior secondary students. He compares the complex realities of using additive connectives in authentic language with the largely simplistic approach of the textbooks and concludes that the textbooks' failings may be a contributory factor in students' weaknesses in this area. Kwan goes on to suggest three areas in which textbook writers could strengthen their contribution to students' understanding.

Then, shifting to Japan, David P. Shea describes an action research project conducted with university students which was designed to inspire students to interact more in class. The unwillingness of Japanese students to speak in class is well documented and is also seen in other parts of Asia. Through a sensitive but insistent approach to pushing students to interact, and careful documentation of his intervention and its effects, Shea was able to bring about a change in his students' behaviour and, perhaps more importantly, in their attitude.

Reporting on a study he conducted in China, Siping Lui next explores the potential for integrating critical thinking into the centralised EFL curriculum of colleges in China. He proposes this as a solution to the common obstacles within EFL contexts caused by a lack of suitable teachers, an over-emphasis on standardised tests and the reluctance of students within monolingual groups to use their English with each other. He shows how teaching critical thinking within an EFL course gives students an authentic purpose for using English with the group and allows them to develop English as a lingua franca

rather than adhering excessively to any particular form of English and its accompanying idiomatic usage. He suggests that incorporating the teaching of critical thinking into College English in China would be consistent with a recent shift of focus in the latter from learning to *use* English to learning *through* English.

Staying in the context of China, Zhe Zhang investigates the impact on EFL university students of the evaluative feedback received during English debate competitions. Taking a process-focused perspective he followed four tertiary level EFL students in China through two English debating competitions. He observed their performance in the debates and the feedback they were given in the following adjudication sessions, he also interviewed them about their experiences. While the debating process and its use as a language teaching tool have been previously documented, there is little literature on how students respond to the evaluative feedback they receive. This study, while small in scale, moves the literature forward with its careful analysis of the data. Zhang discovers inconsistencies in the feedback given and also finds that while students can sometimes recycle the feedback to improve their performance, they sometimes ignore it due to lack of comprehension or, worse, may enact erroneous changes due to misunderstanding the feedback.

Finally, turning to an Iranian context, Mohammad Forouzani discusses the use of literature in EFL reading comprehension classes in an Iranian university setting. He reminds readers that literature is widely used across the EFL world in reading comprehension to teach language from an efferent perspective (i.e. for students to understand the language of the reading) but that little attention has been paid to the potential for literature to be used from an aesthetic perspective (i.e. for students to live the reading experience). He argues that by reading literature to see how language creates different realities, the reader engages in meaning-making by linking their own past experiences with the text and hypothesising to order their understanding. By using literature in different ways with experimental and control groups (totalling 240 students), and through careful documentation and analysis of their responses, Forouzani is able to test the relationship between reading comprehension of literary texts and the aesthetic transaction experience, and to determine whether such an approach contributes to improving reading comprehension.

In addition to the papers mentioned above we have two reviews of books which are likely to be of interest to readers of this journal. First, Janet Y. M. Zhang reviews *English as a Global Language in China: Deconstructing the ideological discourses of English in language education* written by Lin Pan (Springer, 2015). By ably highlighting the strengths of the book, Janet encourages us all to read this slim volume (169 pages). Second, Peter Wingrove reviews Agnes Lam's book *Becoming Poets: The Asian English Experience* (Peter Lang, 2014). Again, our reviewer points up the potential interest of this book for readers of this journal by focusing on its relevance to areas related to English in the context of Asian applied linguistics. Peter also reminds readers, perhaps with a hint of sadness, that the book contains no poems.

### The future

Looking forwards, I want to remind readers that the March 2018 issue of the *Asian Journal of Applied Linguistics* will be dedicated to papers emerging from the second, and equally successful, Faces of English conference held in Hong Kong in June 2017. Presenters of the best papers at the



conference with themes related to those of this journal have agreed to prepare an article for publication and submissions have already started. It promises to be an excellent issue.

### **A note of thanks**

Finally, as always, I would like to offer my heart-felt gratitude to all colleagues who have acted as reviewers of papers submitted to the journal. Your contribution is very much appreciated by me of course because without it the journal could not function. But your feedback is also appreciated by many of the authors who have written to tell me how helpful that feedback is. Sadly, your hard work remains unrewarded and although it is scant compensation I would, at least, like to recognise your contribution by recording your names here with my thanks:

### **Submissions Reviewers**

Timothy Birkett	Joanna C.Y. Lee
Rocio Blasco Garcia	Tim S. O. Lee
Jill Boggs	Cynthia Lee
Juan Castillo	Miranda Legg
Louisa Chan	Patrick Leung
Keith Chau	Amanda Ma
Keith Ka Fai Chau	Elaine Martyn
Xiao Cheng	Carly Ng
Lisa Cheung	Karen Ngeow
Simon Cheung Scanlon	Kevin Pat
Daya Datwani	Yufang Qian
Glenn M. Davis	Michelle Raquel
Aaron Doyle	Phillip Smyth
Umar Fauzan	Jane Stokes
Natalie Fong	Colin Tait
Christoph Hafner	Ming-I Lydia Tseng
Deyuan He	Laura Wakeland
Jon S.Y. Hui	Clarence Wang
Simon Humphries	Phalangchok Wanphet
Tiffany Ip	Heidy Wong
Vivian Kwan	Parco Man-Tat Wong
Eleanor Kwan	Chiu-Hui Wu
Grace Lai	Greg Chung-Hsien Wu
Yue Sum Sharon Lai	Michael Yeldham
Ken Lau	Kevin Yung
Ellie Law	Kun Zhang
	Olizia Zhang