ELL Resource Building Camp

Teachers from over 50 secondary schools in Singapore spent two days on campus developing IT resources for English language teaching. The English Language Resource Building Camp, jointly organised by ELL and MOE, allowed teachers to plan, explore, organise, share, and present lessons effectively integrating IT into the English language curriculum. Teachers reflected on their current teaching methods and explored ways in which they could add value to their lessons through the use of IT tools such as Hot Potatoes, Inspiration and WebQuests. Lesson plans were written, resources developed, and friends made. The ELL facilitators were Phillip Towndrow, Michael Vallance, Christian Chia, Mark Wilkinson, Alvin Leong and Paul Doyle. Photographs may be viewed online at http://www.ell.nie.edu.sg/News/News.html <http://www.ell.nie.edu.sg/News/News.html>.

Camp participants involved in group discussions and presentations

Inside this issue:

- New Faculty 2
- Faculty Publications 4
- Brown Bag Lunch News 5
- New Doctor at ELL 6
- Photo Gallery 8/9
- Interview 10
- ELL Strategic Planning Meeting 12
New Faculty at ELL

♦ Heather Kay
PhD, U of Birmingham
MA, U of Birmingham
Dip. TEFLA (RSA) Dip. TESL (Lon)

Heather has worked as a teacher/lecturer, teacher educator and consultant at school, college, and university level, in Asia, Africa and Europe. Her MA and PhD research involved study and analysis of published written texts and their mediation and use in secondary school humanities classrooms.

♦ Cedric Leong
MA, NUS.
BA, NUS.
Dip-Ed, Institute of Ed, Singapore
DDM, NIE, Singapore

Cedric began his career as a teacher in Victoria School in 1988. Following his return in 1994 from a one-year teacher-exchange programme in Taiwan, he worked with the MOE’s Public Affairs Division until 1997. He was HOD at Northbrooks Secondary School before his secondment to the NIE.

♦ Lubna Alsagoff
PhD, Stanford University
MA, NUS
BA (Hons), NUS

Lubna first taught at NUS. She left her teaching position to venture into the business world. For the past five years, she has been working in the education and IT industry, helping schools and learning organizations develop their use of IT for education. Among other things, she has worked with schools, the MOE, as well as the IDA on a range of national ICT projects.

♦ Peter De Costa
M Ed, Harvard U
BA, NUS

Peter studied at Harvard university and then taught at Hwa Chong Junior College for 4 years. He has been seconded to NIE for a year.

♦ Joyce Evangeline James
PhD, Macquarie U
MA, U of Birmingham
BA (Hons), NUS
Dip Ed, NUS

Joyce had taught English and Literature in Secondary Schools, Junior College and Tertiary Institutions in Singapore, the UK and Australia. She joined the Language Proficiency Centre where she was involved in in-service teacher education programmes and later became the Deputy Director of the Centre. Prior to joining ELL early this year Joyce was the Head of the Specialists Department at the SEAMEO RELC. Her research interests include grammar, meaning and discourse, pedagogical evaluation.

♦ Jessie Png
MA, NTU
BA, U of Calgary
Dip-in-Phys Ed, NIE
RSA Dip TESS. Cert-in-ed, IE

Jessie was a secondary school teacher for 24 years. She taught in Yusof Ishak, Clementi Town and Tanglin Secondary Schools. After leaving the MOE in June 2002, she taught part-time at the NIE.

♦ Shila C. Fernandez
MA, U of Sussex
BA (Hons), NUS
Dip in Ed (Institute of Ed, Singapore

Shila has taught for over 20 years. On her return from the UK to complete her Masters, she joined Temasek Polytechnic. She moved on to being an adjunct with NUS, and running her language and training consultancy. Shila’s currently working on her doctorate thesis (critical literacy) with University of Western Australia.

♦ Alexius Chia
MA (NIE/NTU)
PGDE (Sec) (NIE/NTU)
BA (Hons) (Simon Fraser)

Alexius was HOD/EL & Lit at St Gabriel’s Sec and North Vista Sec. From 2000-’01, he delivered the Cambridge Cert in the Teaching of English Grammar at NIE. Alexius’s research areas include teaching methods and literacy.
The following articles and papers were published and/or presented by faculty since the previous newsletter (September 2002) [ed]

Adam Brown

Antonia Chandrasegaran
- (2002). Presented a paper at ERAS Conference 2002 in Singapore November 21. Essay Assist - Developing software for writing skills improvement in partnership with students [with Mary Ellis, & Gloria Poedjosoedarmo]

Phyllis G. L. Chew

Chua Seok Hong
- (2002). Presented a paper at 7th ESEA in Hong Kong, December 6: Generic expectations in narrative in language and literature teaching in Singapore’

David Deterding
- (2002). Presented a paper at 7th ESEA in Hong Kong, December 6. Miscommunication between Singaporean Speakers and a British Speaker.

Low Ee Ling

Thomas Farrell

Peter Gu
- (2002). Error patterns of vocabulary recognition for EFL learners in Beijing and Hong Kong. Asian Journal of English Language Teaching, 12, 121-141. [with Leung, C. B]

Hu Gwan Wei

Mick Randall
- (2002). It’s Social, but is it Constructive? An analysis of factors effecting small group interactions in Higher education. Proceedings 2nd Symposium on Teaching & Learning in Higher Education, NUS
- (2002). A Tale of Two Projects; The stimulus is there but where is the language? IT Links November 2002, 2, 1: http://www.it-links.org/
Continued from page 3

Anthony Seow


Jo-Ann Netto-Shek


Rita Silver


Kirsten Schaetzel


Phillip Towndrow


C. J. W.-L. Wee


♦ (2002). Presented a paper at Dokkyo International Forum on Performance Studies: Resistance, Mutation and Cultural Hybridities, Dokkyo University, Tokyo, Japan, 14-15 December. ‘Imagining a Metropolitan East Asian “Us”: Notes and Considerations’.

Wee Bee Geok


♦ (2002). Is there Grammatical Intra-cacy in the Classroom? The ACELT Journal, 6, 2, 47-55.


Lawrence J. Zhang


By Kirsten Schaetzel

The ELL Brown Bag presentations continued with a variety of speakers and topics.

The term started with a presentation in July on “Writing for Publication” by Sandra McKay of San Francisco State University. Professor McKay shared with the participants characteristics of journals in our field and tips for getting published culled from her work as TESOL Quarterly editor.

In August, Tom Farrell presented “The Methods Course & the Reality of the Classroom: What are we really achieving?” based on his research of the conceptual knowledge teachers gain from a methods course. After presenting this information, he led a discussion about how this conceptual knowledge might be translated into actual classroom teaching.

In September, Phillip Towndrow presented, “Adaptive and Maladaptive Motivational Patterns in On-line Learners,” in which he described the trialing of a set of English academic reading skills materials designed for Chinese students attending a tertiary-level institution overseas. He used data collected from both quantitative and qualitative sources and considered it within a framework that identified distinct patterns of behavior, classified either as adaptive or maladaptive, insofar as they affected the ways learners used their talents in the online language learning environment.

Finally, the term was rounded out in October by Alvin Leong’s talk “Pro-drop feature of CSE.” This talk explored the pro-drop feature of CSE using the theme-rheme framework of the Prague school. Many thanks to all our presenters for stimulating breaks from classes and teaching.

Brown Bag Lunches at ELL

By Chua Seok Hong

I accompanied some 15 students from our BA Year 3 programme to the UK in May 2002. The trip lasted about ten days. The places we visited included Bath, Abergavenny in Wales, Windsor, Stonehenge, Avebury, Llangollen, and had a good walk about Snowdonia National Park. We went to the Lake District and then drove up to Liverpool, home of the Beatles’ Museum. We also went to Edinburgh, where we saw a kilt and bagpipes. Then we headed South where we visited York and Hadrian’s Wall, Sherwood Forest (no men in tights unfortunately), Stratford-upon-Avon, Oxford University (which impressed the students tremendously), and London. London was good fun for all – the malls for the touristy types and the Tate and the Globe for other more seriously inclined participants. The students were well-behaved; we only had a slight mishap when three got back late from the disco and were almost left behind in Edinburgh.

Brown bag seminars for Term 2 2003 are scheduled as follows:

**January:** “BOLD fMRI and Language Processing: Promises and Pitfalls” by Mike Chee, Clinical Scientist and Principal Investigator of the Cognitive Neuroscience Lab, SingHealth-Singapore General Hospital (joint seminar with Policy and Management Studies)

**February:** “How is your lesson contour?” Video Data Analysis of Primary English Classes” by Robyn Cox

**March:** “Is there method in this madness?: Unravelling ‘Conversations’ in an electronic Discussion Forum” by Caroline Ho.

**April:** “So what is English about English Children’s Literature? An Examination of Czech and English Readings of Children’s Literature Texts” by Sandra Williams.

Literature Staff-Student Interaction

By Chua Seok Hong

where we visited York and Hadrian’s Wall, Sherwood Forest (no men in tights unfortunately), Stratford-upon-Avon, Oxford University (which impressed the students tremendously), and London. London was good fun for all – the malls for the touristy types and the Tate and the Globe for other more seriously inclined participants. The students were well-behaved; we only had a slight mishap when three got back late from the disco and were almost left behind in Edinburgh.
Online communication: A study of the construction of discourse and community in an electronic discussion forum

This study focuses on messages constructed by participants through asynchronous computer-mediated communication in an electronic discussion forum. The principal objective of this study is to account for the construction of electronic discourse and the community which emerges from the interaction through highlighting the linguistic features, discourse strategies and community dynamics which characterise online communication in the forum.

The research concerns raised in the study essentially revolve around construction in three areas; namely, participant interaction, topics which develop in and across messages, and the discourse community characterising participation in the forum. The findings provide insights into what it means to cohere not only at the individual message level but also at the community level involving participants who are able to maintain interactional coherence despite being removed in time and space from each other.

The study is largely influenced by conversation and discourse analyses against the background of computer-mediated communication in a multi-party set-up. Electronic messages are examined, using linguistic methods of analysis, to determine the impact of technology on interactional and topical coherence, and participants as a community. The study essentially falls within the framework of current research trends in the field of computer-mediated communication which focuses on electronic discourse as a dynamic form of multi-party online communication among participants.

The analysis of the nature and structuring of discourse determines how electronic messages are recognised linguistically to fulfil specific functional roles in the forum. Emphasis is placed on the mechanisms underlying the dynamics of participant interaction in the forum. Of particular interest is the way participants accommodate each other in terms of constructing and negotiating meaning through electronic communication without being physically present. Participants use linguistic resources as strategic devices in exerting influence over others and in manipulating the desired effects targeted through countering or showing support for views presented. The isolation and solitariness from where individual messages are composed engender a heightened sense of privacy to the extent of encouraging intensified forms of disagreement through the use of insults, sarcasm and hostile language to belittle or ridicule opponents. Qualitative differences are evident in discussions which show varying degrees of complexity in the construction of arguments.

The extent to which messages in the forum constitute coherent conversation is examined by focusing on the nature of topic maintenance, change and development across messages constructed. Topic continuity is largely sustained in the EDF with a higher degree of topical consistency maintained through lexical links across messages despite occasional topic intrusions, shifts and drifts. However, while participants show that they are able to keep “on topic” (Brown and Yule, 1983), they are not necessarily “speaking topically” in drawing upon earlier messages to ensure the “fit” of messages to the focus in previous messages in the thread. In investigating coherence at the community level, the focus centred on whether participants constitute an identifiable discourse community which regulates and establishes conventions in the forum. Attention is given to linguistic features evident in creative code-switching which reflect the extent to which participants choose to deliberately construct themselves as more or less “Singaporean” or “international” within formal and/or informal contexts.
**ELL Celebrates Deepavali, Hari Raya & Chinese New Year**

*(Organized by Mary, Maha, and Chris)*

**Deepavali**
Our Deepavali party was held on Wednesday, 6th November (from 3-5pm) in the Journal Room. Nirmala Seshadri, a native Singaporean and internationally acclaimed dancer, gave a lively dance-talk. She is actively involved in arts education in Singapore and serves on the Dance Resource Panel of the National Arts Council. She discussed the significance of Deepavali and answered questions on Indian dance. ELL colleagues and guests were treated to sweet and savory snacks from Little India.

**Hari Raya**
We celebrated Hari Raya on Wednesday, 11th December (from 3-5pm) in the ELL Journal Room. Famous local artist Mdm Som Said discussed the history of Malay dance in Singapore. Her dance troupe then performed and talked about Hari Raya customs. Sporting ELL staff got up and danced the Joget! Malay kueh and biscuits were served.

**Chinese New Year**
ELL also celebrated Chinese New Year in the ELL Journal Room on 14th Feb (from 2-5pm). A/P Agnes Chang (Psychological Studies) gave an entertaining talk on Chinese New Year customs in Singapore. Emmeline Payne was presented with a gift in honor of recently announced engagement. Light refreshments were served and a good time was had by all.

---

**AILA 2002, Singapore**

*By Christine Goh*

The 13th World Congress of Applied Linguistics (Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquée) was held at the Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre (Suntec City) from 16-21 December 2002. It was a key event in the calendar of all AILA members and other professionals working in applied linguistics worldwide. Staff members from the English Language & Literature Academic Group represented NIE at this prestigious event. Dr Low Ee Ling, Dr Alvin Leong, Dr Lim Beng Soon and Dr Phyllis Chew were on the organising committee. A number of ELL staff members presented papers and spoke in symposia and scientific commissions: Dr Adam Brown, Dr Robin Cox, Dr David Deterding, Dr Thomas Farrell, Dr Christine Goh, Dr Peter Gu, Dr Hua Guangwei, Dr Lim Beng Soon, Dr Low Ee Ling, Dr Mick Randall, Dr Vanitha Saravanan, Dr Oliver Seet, Dr Rita Silver, Dr Rita Skuja-Steele, Dr Maha Sripathy, and Dr Lawrence Zhang. The book “English Language Teaching in East Asia Today: Changing Policies and Practices” which Dr Ruth Wong co-edited with Dr Ho Wah Kam was also launched during the congress.
My name is HARII VALLANCE. I was born at 17:03 hrs on Sunday 08th December 2002. I weigh 8.8 lbs or 3.895 kg. My dad is Michael and my mum is Noriko. My dad had a good life before I came. Look at him now! I am enjoying this. But he can watch many late night football matches now because I wake him up at that time. I am a really helpful son!

Emmeline Payne celebrates her recent engagement

The Sleeping Beauty: Organizing this wedding really was exhausting!
What would ELL do without all our wonderful support staff!

Hari Raya celebrations at ELL

ELL Staff reflect on the Dance of Love at Deepavali

A/P Agnes Chang explaining Chinese New Year customs to ELL staff
Farrell: Phyllis, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule to allow me to interview you for the ELL News. Let me begin by asking you when you first started to teach at NIE?

Phyllis: I taught English Language and Music for 8 years in secondary school before I was seconded to NIE in April 1984 as a teacher-trainer. I taught in Crescent Girls School, Dunman Secondary School and Temasek Junior College.

Farrell: What were your early teaching experiences in the school system in Singapore? What were the schools like when you started to teach?

Phyllis: I enjoyed life as a teacher. Of course, I was a young teacher then, without administrative duties, so that may be the reason why I look back on it with nostalgia! I remember I used to take students out for excursions and also produced a number of plays and musical events, such as “talentimes” for the school. I remember being out-of-class, as I was usually the coordinator of the musical and dramatic events.

Farrell: What was NIE like in the early days?

Phyllis: In the Eighties, we were at the Bukit Timah Campus. There are basic principles and concepts that had to be taught to teachers all the time. Ways of referring to certain concepts, procedures etc. may have changed but frankly, basically teacher training is still teacher training. Fresh trainees from the Polytechnic or A-Levels has to be given a certain amount of basic teaching skills.

Farrell: What are the main changes you see in the education in Singapore since you started at NIE?

Phyllis: Not much actually as I have only been teaching for 25 years. That’s significantly much less than the span of the People’s Action Party which has made Singapore and its education system the unique system that it is today. I think the schools were pretty much the same as they are now. Exams were just as important then as they are now except that today they are much more “spread out”. That is, the exams are not just bunched up towards the end of term, but are spread out more evenly throughout the year. There are also many more task-based activities and projects where before it used to be basically closed-book examination. The most obvious changes are in the ages of the teachers: they are certainly getting younger than ever before and also, more and more teachers are graduates and better-trained. I must say, teachers are luckier now because they have a wonderful opportunity to upgrade their skills.

Farrell: Recently you took up the position of President of ELLTAS. Could you tell us something about ELLTAS?

Phyllis: ELLTAS is an association which gives teachers a chance to form affiliations with regional groups of teachers, and to find out what is happening regionally. There are also opportunities to attend school-based workshops and public talks FOC or at discounted prices. They get popular bi-annual bulletins which have a lot of helpful tear-out lesson plans. There is also a yearly seminar which we organize jointly with the STU. Last, but not least, we also have various SIGs with varying objectives and activities, e.g. our mentoring website is one such SIG where members can log in to share insights or ask questions on teaching practice.

Farrell: What is your vision for ELLTAS?

Phyllis: I hope to put ELLTAS on the regional map during my Presidency. In January 2003, we signed agreements with Thai TESOL, Korea TESOL and Taiwan TESOL. Later this year, we hope to sign agreements with JALT (Japan). Next year, we hope to have similar agreements with Russia and China. We are working hard on this and if this works out, it will mean that if the average teacher in Singapore wishes to tap the regional language teaching framework, he/she would definitely profit by joining ELLTAS. Oh yes, we are also founding members of the Asian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, a promising association due to be launched later this year.

Farrell: Don’t you think that there are a lot of language associations in Singapore already?

Phyllis: ELLTAS fills a special niche. It essentially focuses on teaching methodology and its main membership comes from teachers who are actually practitioners in primary, secondary schools and JCs. Singapore societies, such as the Society for Reading and Literacy, specialize more on reading and attracts both academic, teachers and the general public. On the other hand, the Singapore Association of Applied Linguistics is more university-based and its members are mostly members of tertiary institutions. Most countries in Asia have a specific English language Association and I think it is about time Singapore has one as well.

Farrell: What do you think is the most important thing in education?

Phyllis: I think that education should be concerned not just scientific and technical knowledge, but also, universal values such as trustworthiness, truthfulness and fairness. As educators, we must be careful not to be dogmatic while imparting knowledge. Singapore certainly has well-organized schools, a high standard of education, and a strong knowledge base in sciences and the arts. Perhaps more emphasis should be given to training in behavior and character.
By Mark Wilkinson

While waiting for class to begin, two students in the PRC Communication Skills Programme, working on a multimedia portfolio project, were discussing the relative merits of PowerPoint and HyperStudio. One student said that PowerPoint was overall more useful and easier to use. The other preferred HyperStudio, stating that it invited greater creativity. “It’s more like painting,” she noted.

The development of technological infrastructure at NIE has created opportunities for students in the PRC Communication Skills Programme to explore new ways of learning electronically. In particular, they have been developing their skills in using technology for academic communication in their Introduction to Computer Skills course.

In the middle of 2001 Michael Vallance and I sat down to discuss how we could introduce a wider variety of technological communication skills to the PRC students. Previously, Michael had taught polytechnic students to create HyperStudio e-portfolios and to present academic work on web sites on free servers. We decided to introduce these as projects for the PRC scholars, who as future engineering students in NTU would likely use a number of technological tools for academic communication.

For the web project (see photo of sample web pages above), students created a three-page website on the local Lycos Asia site. The content was tied to a previous project, a report on a survey they created. The students learned how to format clear, easy-to-read web pages containing brief biographical information, a synopsis of their survey findings, and their reflections on the learning experience. The emphasis of the project is on communicating academic information briefly and in language and design appropriate to their position as scholarship students. As an added bonus, students were encouraged to use their websites as a way to update family and friends in China on their achievements in the PRC Programme.

The HyperStudio project gave students the opportunity to develop a multimedia e-portfolio. In these e-portfolios they offered advice to the next group of scholars on how to adapt to life in Singapore. Topics the students came up with included tips for making good use of their time in the Communication Skills Programme, a guide to the food in the NIE canteen, and life in the residence halls. They used digital cameras to take pictures around campus to incorporate into their portfolios. The project concluded with a class open house in the iMac lab. The computer clusters in this lab were just the ticket to allow students and instructors to participate in hands-on demonstrations of the portfolios.

These projects had multiple benefits: the students acquired new technical skills, practiced English language communication skills, and gained familiarity with the kinds of tasks that might be expected of them in the course of their engineering studies. And, judging from informal conversations, they even gave rise to a discussion or two on the relative merits of various applications.
The ELL Strategic Planning Meeting was held at the Raffles Marina on 3 January 2003.

The theme of the meeting was Rethinking our Teaching Approach: Part 2, reflecting the fact that it followed up our January 2002 meeting at which time ELL staff discussed ways of incorporating Blackboard into their module delivery.

The January 2003 meeting aimed at initiating an AG dialogue to articulate more coherently our professional voice with regard to our own pedagogy and ways of achieving Quality Assurance in learning and teaching.

The three main objectives for the meeting were to:

♦ reflect on our current pedagogy in the context of the changes taking place in schools and/or our student intake.
♦ review our current assessment strengths and weaknesses, and
♦ integrate, for the Dip Ed and BA programmes, the coverage of CC and CS modules

During the course of the meeting:

1. Staff in groups identified the learning tasks most used in the modules they teach, and discussed whether there was enough variety in the learning opportunities offered to students. Various current approaches were highlighted i.e., task-based learning (Willis), experiential learning (Kolb), case-based learning (Silverman), problem-based learning, collaborative learning (Kagan), group investigation (Sharan), loop input (Woodward) and E-learning.

2. It was recognised that many modules rely on the lecture-plus-tutorial pattern. The groups considered whether there were alternatives that might be considered, especially in the E-learning context.

3. Current assessment practices were reviewed and aspects needing attention identified.
4. Concerns about the integration of BA and Dip Ed programme CS and CC modules were discussed as well as action plan possibilities.
5. Finally, there was a discussion of the collated student perceptions which had been gathered partway through the July 2002 semester in order to better understand student needs and expectations as well as their misconceptions. This information was reviewed and analysed in order to identify the 3 - 4 most urgent aspects to address in the student feedback.

The above discussion points were followed by group presentations on recommended innovations and adjustments to be made to the present AG practices.

Before breaking for lunch, A/P Cheah Horn Mun (Divisional Director, ACIS) briefed the AG on NIE ICT developments.