# IT's the way to go    Strategic Planning 2004

The ELL clan gathered at the Raffles Marina on the bright Saturday morning of 17 January for its third annual strategic planning session. The focus this time was to build on what was being done within the various courses to further infuse IT with a view to finding more common strands in pedagogic practices. The HOD, Dr Rita Skuja-Steele, outlined the need to review and reform current curricula as part of ELL's Quality Assurance drive. A/P Cheah Horn Mun updated the group on curriculum development initiatives at NIE level. Phillip Towndrow represented the ITELL committee to share details of its on-going work. Then it was off to their work stations for five groups to discuss and devise action plans to incorporate more IT into their respective programmes. Amidst the good cheer and morning tea came action plans. Representatives from each group then shared their plans.         *By P. Towndrow & M. Vallance*

**HOD Rita Skuja & Phillip Towndrow discuss IT strategies**

**TOP: Strategic planning is serious business for Primary team members**

**ELL Newsletter May '04 teams:**

- Editorial: Shila Fernandez, Adam Brown & Thomas Farrell
- IT support: Michael Vallance, Mark Chan, S.Saravana, Christopher Cahyadi, N.R. Sasi Kumar

http://www.ell.nie.edu.sg/news.html

# Some IT action plans

**Primary team**

VCD of staff demonstrating teaching strategies

Develop primary model classroom website

**MA in Applied Linguistics**

On-line delivery of some sessions

Accessing electronic Cobuild corpus

**Literature**

Webpage for introduction to study of Literature

Multi-media presentations integrated into lectures

**PGDE (Secondary)**

Professional sharing sessions on IT related topics

Introduction and evaluation of useful websites

**PRC programme**

Showcasing learners' work online

Encouraging autonomous learning

*(Top): A/P Cheah Horn Mun talks of major changes
Reflecting practitioners at the Strategic Planning 04*

## Learner is king with IT resources @ Self-Access Centre

In a bid to incorporate IT in our teaching, PRC students work in the Self-Access Centre (SAC) for an hour a week to improve their language skills. This weekly session is built into the curriculum so that all students have the opportunity to be exposed to independent learning. This is to encourage them to take an active role in their learning, as they are given full autonomy to decide on the activities they want to work on with the help of a facilitator. Unlike traditional self-access centres where worksheets usually form the core resource, the SAC at NIE taps Internet resources. Students are also encouraged to use VCDs and CDs, CD-Roms and books available at SAC to improve their English.

*By Christian Chia*

*Guides by the side:
Mark Wilkinson, Christian Chia, Lyn May, Kwah Poh Foong*

# Perspectives from Down Under

## Australian Prof Christie reviews primary programmes

**Prof Christie shares her expertise**

The Primary team played host to Prof Frances Christie, Emeritus Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Melbourne and Honorary Professor of Education at the University of Sydney. Her visit, from 20 Oct to 23 Oct last year was aimed at reviewing all three Primary programmes - Dip Ed, BA (Education) and PGDE (Pr).

Through intensive and rigorous rounds of consultations with coordinators and team members, the content, modes of delivery and assessments were evaluated and feedback given.

Prof Christie also gave a talk on Australian primary school education to NIE and MOE providing both an overview of trends and changing structures, and programmes in Melbourne and Sydney.

Prof Christie sat in on a PGDE class to observe four end-of-term micro-teaching presentations that included Shared Book Reading (SBR), Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) and the What I Know, What I Want to know, What I Learned (KWL).

The final stage of her visit included her sharing her nine-page report on her impressions, insights and recommendations with regard to the primary programmes. *By Caroline Ho*

# Welcome

**Arthur D. L. Lindley:** Arthur took up his appointment at NIE after 29 years in the English Department of the NUS. He has the distinction of starting the Film Studies programme there. He is mainly interested in medieval and Renaissance literature. He claims his primary intellectual interest, however, is the Boston Red Sox.

**Yee Siau Foon:** Siau Foon was teaching at Chung Cheng High School before she joined NIE. She gained valuable theatrical experience through a theatre studies course at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Her MA in English Studies thesis is on the work of David Hwang's M. Butterfly. She continues to investigate the use of drama in literature and language learning.

**Quek Yee Ser, Sharon:** Sharon started her teaching career as a primary and then secondary school teacher. She graduated from NIE with a BA degree and was awarded the Victor Neo Gold Medal Award for being the best Year Four English Language student of her cohort. Her research interests are spoken discourse, testing and critical literacy.

**Cynthia Macknish:** Cynthia has international experience teaching English in Canada and the Bahamas. She spent five years in Temasek Polytechnic coordinating an intensive ESL programme, and later developed a course on global issues. Currently she is pursuing a doctorate with an English university.

**Angelia Poon Mui Cheng:** Angelia taught English in Victoria JC and in Vietnam for the Singapore International Foundation. She completed her PhD in English and American Literature at the Brandeis University (USA). She then worked two years with the English Unit (MOE). She is still interested in Victorian literature, post-colonial studies and women's writing.

# Welcome

**Ang May Yin:** May Yin did her undergraduate and post-graduate studies at the National University of Singapore. As a teacher, she taught English Language, Literature and the General Paper. At the MOE, she was involved in the review and development of the English Language, Literature, General Paper, and Theatre Studies and Drama syllabuses.

**Fatima Pirbhai-Illich:** Fatima has been in the field of English language teaching for more than a decade. After her MA at the University of Surrey (UK), she is completing her PhD thesis. Her research topic is on the educational outcomes of ESL students. Her other areas of research include ESL reading and identity construction.

**Christine Parimala Pelly:** Christine began her career as a legal advisor. She then completed her MA at NUS. Her thesis was on the culture of the primary school English teacher in Singapore. Reflective teaching, perceptions of stakeholders in educational change and alternative modes continue to interest her as possible research topics.

**Sasi Kumar s/o N. Ramasamy:** Sasi started work life in 1996 in Radar Telecommunication with an electronic engineering background. He fell in love with Maya…3D Software, and is aiming to become a Certified Maya Trainer. He is happy working here with the IT guys. He feels life is just too short to worry.

# CelebrationS

Lunar New Year
Hari Raya Adil Fitri
Deepavali

Guangwei tells of New Year in China

L to R: Bee Geok, Mary, Cynthia & Chris await goodies

Mary invites Norhaida Aman (ALC) to
talk on Hari Raya customs

Deepavali lights shine on Beng Soon, Antonia & Chris

Bangra dancers get hearts thumping & feet tapping at the Deepavali do

Hussain demos *ketupat* making

# babies, brides, bouquets...

Peter Gu's daughter Shan Shan is perfectly content

Angelia Poon's son Luke looks on at mum
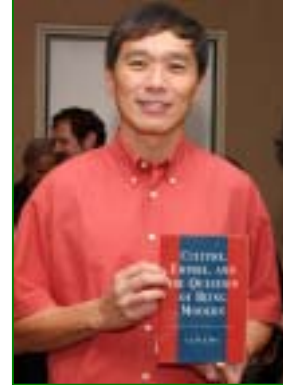
Sharon Quek is every bit the June bride

A big *thank-you* from boss Rita Skuja for Secretaries' Week to:
(seated L-R) Cindy, Kathy, Shirley, Faridah & (standing L-R) Christopher, Sasi, Mark, Saravana

# Book launches

*Culture, Empire, and the Question of Being Modern* by Dr Wee Wan-ling CJ, Lexington Books/Rowman & Littlefield. 2003

Launched on a rainy 6 February 2004, at at the LearningHub@LIBRIS, about 40 people turned up for this event. AIP Stephen Hazell from VPA was the Master of Ceremonies. Wan-ling's book explores the problematic formation of national culture within modern English society. Starting with the Victorian era, the work documents the complex relationship of concepts such as 'home' and 'frontier', and 'English' and 'colonial' through an analysis of key literary-cultural figures in their historical contexts: Rudyard Kipling, Charles Kingsley, T.S. Eliot and V.S. Naipaul.

At the launch, Professor S. Gopinathan and AIP Philip Holden from the NUS English Department,gave differing and illuminating 'takes' on the book. Professor Gopinathan looked at the book's argument in relation to the question of 'being modern' and modernisation in educational matters in postcolonial contexts. AIP Holden addressed the 'postcolonial Singaporean-ness' that framed the book's argument.
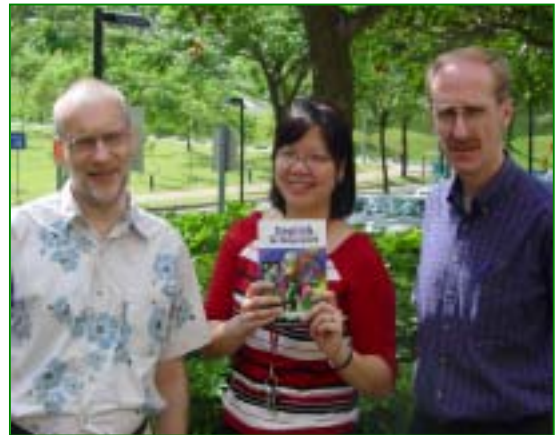


**Wan-ling talks of big things in his latest book**

*English in Singapore: Research on Grammar*
Edited by Dr David Deterding, Dr Low Ee Ling & Dr Adam Brown
McGraw Hill. 2003. Singapore

If you thought grammar was a dry subject, think again. It was standing room only in the ELL Journal Room on 14 July for the launch of *English in Singapore: Research on Grammar* edited by Dr David Deterding, Dr Low Ee Ling and Dr Adam Brown.

As well as ELL staff, the launch was attended by representatives from NUS, the RELC and the British Council. Ee Ling acted as the MC for the occasion. The proceedings were kindly opened by Prof Leo Tan, Director NIE, who highlighted the quality of the work carried out in ELL, and its relevance to national objectives such as the Speak Good English movement.

Adam gave an overview of the structure of the book and the content of each of the chapters. David rounded off the launch by playing and discussing some of the recorded data in the chapters.



**David, Ee Ling & Adam compile views on Singapore English**

# & review

*English in Singapore: Research on Grammar e*dited by Deterding, Low & Brown

This collection contains 16 articles ranging from descriptive research pieces, to those with a more pedagogical slant. As with their first collection, their book ends with a wonderfully comprehensive bibliography which in itself constitutes sufficient reason for any self-respecting student or researcher of Singapore English to buy the book.

For me, this book is a milestone in Grammar research on Singapore English because it brings together in a single volume, works that would not otherwise have had a collective audience. The editors have done a commendable job in selecting a range of articles that represents the diversity of approaches and interests of the Singapore English research community. The collection demonstrates a number of interesting contrasts in approaches.

This book does point to a certain need, however, to look at a more coherent framework and overview from which to understand Singapore English grammar.  The very specific and modular foci of this and past research on Singapore English make it difficult to appreciate the overall dynamics and structure of Singapore English. And hence, all the more difficult for educational researchers to apply the fruit of such research to pedagogy.

By Dr. Lubna Alsagoff



**Lubna reviews *English in Singapore***

# HONOURS STUDENT ROLL 03 - 04

| STUDENT | ACADEMIC EXERCISE TITLE | SUPERVISOR |
|---|---|---|
| Ang Elsa | What Constitutes 'Good' Student-written Stories?: A Study of Primary School Teachers' and Students' Perceptions | K. Schaetzel |
| Ang Hui Bing | A Stylistic Analysis of Minfong Ho's *Sing to the Dawn:* How it Constructs its Fictional World and Positions the Reader | A. Kramer-Dahl |
| Chiang Shiau Chuen | Writing Against the Grain: A Comparative Study of Gender Stereotyping Among Three Primary Schools in Singapore | P. Teo |
| Eu Lay Kim | The Potential Influence of American English on some Pronunciation Features of Young Educated Singaporeans: An Acoustic and Attitudinal Exploration | E. L. Low |
| Ho Li Jun Grace | A Study of Singaporean Preschoolers on their Ability to Use Decontextualised Oral Language | C. Goh |
| Kwa Kok Beng | Multiculturalism or Multiracialism? A Critical Analysis of the Portrayal of Race in Primary One English Textbooks in Singapore | M. Randall |
| Lim Siew Siew | An Acoustic and Perceptual Study of Triphthongs in Educated Singapore English | E. L. Low |
| Menon S. Monica | A Study of the Learning Support Programme (English) in Assisting Identified Students Cope with the Literacy Demands of Mainstream Curriculum: A Case Study of the ESP in a Neighbourhood School. | M. Sripathy |
| Ng Siew Peng | Perspectives on Streaming, EM3 Pupils and Literacy: Views of Participants | A. Kramer-Dahl |
| Ng Soo Cheng | More than just Teaching at a Different Pace: An Exploratory Study of Teachers' Ways of Speaking, Instructional Practices and Perceptions of Students in Different Streams | A. Kramer-Dahl |



**Honours students mull over a few points**

| Ong Po Keng | Rhythm: A Comparative Study of Indexes | D. Deterding |
|---|---|---|
| Quek Hwee Khim | Exploring the Teaching of Letter Writing in a Primary I Singapore Classroom | J. James |
| Rita Z. M. Nazeer | The Complexities beneath the Perfect Picture: A Postmodern Perspective of Three Malay-Muslim Bilingual Children's Home Practices | V. Saravanan |
| Singh Parwinder G. | Family Literacy Practices of Two Eight-Year-Old English-Punjabi Bilinguals: Perceptions of Cultural and Religious Identity | V. Saravanan |
| Tan Kah Keong | Vocalisation of Dark-I in Educated Singaporean English. | D. Deterding |
| Tan Kiat Kun | A Case Study of Three Primary School Teachers' Beliefs and Classroom Feedback Practices Regarding Singlish (Singapore English) | T.  Farrell |
| Tan Tse Ping | Teaching Writing Using the Text Type Approach: An Exploration of Primary School Teachers' Perceptions, Practices and Concerns. | P. Teo |
| Tang Kum Khuan | Indications of Audience Awareness in Academic Essay Introductions: An Exploratory Comparison of Expert Writers and Student Writers | A. Chandrasegaran |
| Yeo Young Muay | An Exploration of the Nature of the Discourse Negotiated between Nine Primary 5 Candidates and their Respective Examiners in the Picture Conversation Task: Production or Reproduction? | L. May |
| Yip Lai Ching | Errors in Past Tense Marking: A Study of Primary 5 Children in  Singapore | L. Alsagoff |



**An Honours student gets his point across**



**Time to think things over for these Honours students**



**The lecturer also has to work hard**

Bee Geok stresses the importance of grammatical metaphors

# Brown Bag Seminars
## Jan - April, 2004





Phillip (top) & Michael talk about the use of IT

This term we had four brown bag seminars. In January, **Maha Sripathy** presented "The Cultural Fit of ELT Pedagogies," a very interesting paper. In February, **Shila Fernandez** looked at trainees' perceptions of practicum in a paper entitled "Practicum: The best of times and the worst of times." Much interesting discussion ensued. In March, **Phillip Towndrow** and **Michael Vallance** presented "An Overview of ELL's IT Resources" and introduced us to the new ELL webpage as well as the new resources available. Finally, in April, **Wee Bee Geok** presented a paper on "Grammatical Metaphors and Writing in Secondary School." This paper contained much food for thought about the way writing is and is not taught in schools today.

*Compiled by Kirsten Schaetzel*

There's just so much your colleagues can share with you

# Staff contribute

## Books, book chapters

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Singapore: McGraw-Hill.

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Ng, Josephine & Farrell, Thomas (2003) Do teachers' beliefs of grammar teaching match their classroom practices?
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In Hayes, D. (ed) *Trainer Development: Principles and Practices from Language Teaching.* Melbourne: Language Australia.

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*Sourcebook for National Education Ideas and Strategies for Secondary Schools and Junior Colleges.* Singapore: Pearson.

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In Hung, D. & Towndrow, P. (eds) *Teaching and Learning,* volume 24, number 1.

Wee Bee Geok (2003) Connectors in primary school writing. In Deterding, Low & Brown (eds 2003).

# Staff contribute more

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# Spotlight

## A/P Anthony Seow pens his thoughts on …



### life before NIE …

I started as a non-graduate teacher in 1965 and taught in primary and secondary schools. With a scholarship from MOE, I pursued a degree at Lancaster University, UK. Later I did my MA in Sydney University, Australia. I taught and worked as a Specialist Inspector (English) at the MOE. I then went on to do my Ph.D in Monash University, Australia.

### working in NIE…

I began my career in NIE in 1993. The experience of teaching a number of modules across the board did widen my professional perspective of the various NIE programmes. My areas of responsibilities have also enlarged. Currently, I find satisfaction being an Assistant Head of ELL. I also continue to teach in the PGDE (Secondary) programme, the MA course in Applied Linguistics, and the DDM course for HODs (English/Secondary). I also have periodic MA thesis supervision. I do my fair share of Practicum supervision in order to maintain a good grasp of current developments in the schools.

### recent changes in the Singapore education system …

The years after 1997 brought about highly significant changes. There were, of course, the three national initiatives and their incorporation into the national curriculum: critical and creative thinking, National Education and Information Technology. Today, Thinking Schools, Learning Nation is more than just an educational slogan. In education, and curriculum development, great emphasis has been placed on thinking and learning processes, problem-based learning, life-long learning, and critical inquiry. All these form the basis of much of teaching and learning in schools today. Assessment methods have changed as a result of the most recent change-the Integrated programme (IP), a seamless Upper Secondary-JC Scheme, which dispenses with the "O"-Level exams, in some schools.

### the most important aspects of teacher education…

Teacher education naturally needs to be in step with how we have now conceptualized learning and assessment. This will require a mindset change and a new orientation to teacher education. It is important to develop, in the teacher, the wholesome spirit of inquiry and the right attitude to change.

### special interest areas of EL teaching…

Language acquisition, discourse analysis, curriculum development, and grammar. I have since developed interests in computer-assisted assessment (CAA), case studies, and instructional materials development. I see interest diversification as a natural way to broaden my professional outlook to remain effective and relevant.

### the future of NIE…

The road ahead is indeed very promising. The enterprising spirit of the staff augurs well for the future. We are already seeing a number of prestigious awards bestowed upon the Institute and its staff. I see NIE as continuing to stay ahead of competition vis-à-vis the universities, both local and abroad.