



Editorial

After kicking off the year with the Supplement on the Teaching and Learning of Asian Languages in April 2007, *e-FLT* now returns with the June issue, officially the first issue of the year (Issue No. 1 of Volume 4). We are highly encouraged by the fact that twice the number of submissions have been received thus far this year than at the same time last year. We are grateful to all our contributors and readers for their tremendous support and interest and would like to renew our call for manuscripts for the next three issues of our journal, scheduled to appear in December 2007, March/April 2008 (Asian Languages Supplement) and June 2008.

This issue of *e-FLT* opens with an article by Christopher W. Storey, who looks at the EFL curriculum development processes at a national, a prefectural and a municipal university in Japan against the backdrop of the country's action plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities.' The analysis of the qualitative data collected by the author shows that all three universities had adopted vastly different approaches to curriculum development and had carried out developmental activities at vastly different levels of intensity. Interestingly, the Japanese Ministry of Education's action plan had apparently little influence on curriculum development at these universities.

The second article of this issue, by Ming-Yueh Shen and Yueh-Kuey Huang, reports on a collaborative action research project carried out at a technical university in Taiwan designed to address EFL learners' motivational problems in reading class and their poor reading proficiency. Shen and Huang give an account of the project's objectives, instructional programme, and data collection and analysis processes. They conclude by discussing its impact on the teacher-researcher's teaching practice as well as students' reading strategy use and attitudes toward learning.

In the third article, Jack Jinghui Liu investigates the placement of the thesis statement in argumentative essays by American and Chinese high school students in their respective first languages, i.e. English and Chinese. He presents findings which indicate that the argumentative writing of contemporary Chinese students may be – despite Kaplan's long-standing assertion that different cultures display different rhetorical styles – closer to the Anglo-American rhetorical style than previously assumed.

Following this, in the fourth article, Udo Ohm examines the role which digital media can play in fostering autonomous learning. Drawing upon not just the well-established learner autonomy research, but also Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophy, he urges language teachers to use digital media to devise activities which will allow learners to "assimilate the object of learning" (p. 144 of this issue) and to exploit the potential of the Internet in providing learning experiences which constitute at the same time "real social practice" to learners (p. 146).

The concept of authenticity has long been a topic of much discussion and controversy in foreign language learning. In this issue's last article, Nematullah Shomoossi and Saeed Ketabi, in reviewing the extensive literature on authenticity, makes a case for a context-based view of this concept. They argue that authenticity is not an absolute quality, but is largely dependent on the contextual factors, including the specific context of the language classroom, the appropriateness of the learning materials, activities, tasks and language, and learners' level of proficiency. They attribute a key role to the teacher who has to consider all these contextual factors in creating and ensuring a measure of authenticity in the classroom.

In addition to the full articles summarized above, this issue further carries two review articles. In the first of these articles, Weiping Wu reviews the "The NFLC Guide for Basic Chinese Language Programs" which can serve as a useful reference for practitioners in the field of Chinese as a Foreign Language around the world.

As podcasting catches on among information providers and users of the Internet, language teachers too are beginning to explore means of harnessing this technological innovation for teaching and learning purposes. Readers may thus find Martin G. Döpel's review of two popular sound-editing programmes, "Audacity" and "Propaganda," with view to their suitability for the creation of podcasts, to be both timely and of relevance.

Wai Meng Chan
Editor