

Editorial

Just a few weeks before the publication of this issue of *e-FLT* (Vol. 8, No. 1), Quacquarelli Symonds Limited, commonly referred to as QS, released a ranking of the top 105 universities in the world for Modern Languages. This marks the first time QS has ranked universities so finely, according to individual subjects, and represents perhaps the first attempt at a global ranking of higher educational institutions for Modern Languages. While we need to be mindful that such rankings are often the subject of much controversy, as assessment criteria are seldom truly objective, the QS rankings have come to be taken seriously by academic institutions, administrators, professors, students and the media worldwide. By now, those who are aware of the first-ever global ranking for Modern Languages would have noted that Harvard University has been ranked first in the world, while the National University of Singapore is the highest placed in Asia in this category.

We are pleased to announce that, as of March 2011, *e-FLT* has been accepted for inclusion in the Scopus citation index. Currently, *e-FLT* is already being indexed and abstracted by The MLA International Bibliography, Directory of Open Access Journals, EBSCOhost and Ulrich's Periodicals Directory.

Seven articles and two reviews comprise the first issue of 2011. As in previous issues of *e-FLT*, these articles cover a wide spectrum of research areas in foreign language education, ranging from first and second language reading and spelling skills, Chinese characters teaching, and learner autonomy to language learning beliefs. The authors of these articles and reviews are from an equally diverse range of academic contexts in Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States.

The first article of this issue, by Rhonda Joy, investigates the development of reading and spelling skills in Grade 1 French Immersion students in Canada over the period of a school year. Joy ascertained that both French and English reading and spelling skills improved over this period, albeit at faster rate for French than for English. Moreover, it appears that not all skills developed at the same rate and that some of the English language skills developed at a slower pace for the French Immersion students when compared to English-only students.

In the second article, Ruth Ming Har Wong reports on a longitudinal study conducted in Hong Kong, in which language education researchers were paired with language teachers with the aim of improving the latter's teaching practice. Wong came to the conclusion that the project helped increase the teachers' understanding of the concepts of language knowledge and language use. The findings also indicate that the teachers were better able to balance the teaching of language knowledge and language use in the classroom as a result of this collaborative effort between researchers and practitioners.

The third article, contributed by Maite Correa, focused on the relationship between second language learners' metalinguistic knowledge and subjunctive accuracy. Findings from the analysis of the data collected from second, third and fourth year Spanish learners at a university in the US reveal a positive and significant correlation between explicit, verbalisable grammar knowledge and accuracy in the use of the subjunctive in Spanish.

In the fourth article, Ho Cheong Lam provides a review of the various approaches that have been proposed to teach Chinese characters to learners of Chinese. In doing so, he also discusses the linguistic and methodological assumptions that form the theoretical bases of these approaches. Lam concludes that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the teaching of Chinese characters and recommends that teachers of Chinese as a foreign language should familiarize themselves and their learners with various approaches, both meaning-centred and character-centred, to be applied flexibly according to their teaching/learning needs as well as the learners' stage of learning.

Steve T. Fukuda, Hiroshi Sakata and Mitsue Takeuchi, in the fifth article, report on the effects of an English course based on a guided autonomy syllabus and employing self-reflective journals on the learning motivation of students at a Japanese university. Through their study, they ascertained that there was an increase in intrinsic motivation among the students as their autonomy skills improve as a result of increased teacher-student communication.

In the sixth article, Takayoshi Fujiwara conducted a factor analysis of over 500 Thai university students' responses to the BALLI Questionnaire developed by Horwitz to identify learners' language learning beliefs. Though he uncovered five factors in the students' responses, these did not fully match the five original conceptual categories proposed by Horwitz for the BALLI Questionnaire. The results of the study could thus only verify the BALLI item groupings based on these categories to a limited extent.

In the seventh and last full article of this issue, Peter Tze-Ming Chou presents a study conducted in Taiwan which examined the effect of vocabulary knowledge and background knowledge on EFL learners' reading comprehension. The results of his study reveal that vocabulary knowledge had a significantly more positive impact on reading comprehension performance than background knowledge, prompting a discussion of the need for vocabulary building for college EFL learners in Taiwan.

In the first review article of this issue, Shonu Nangia describes and assesses an online learning object which provides self-correcting exercises based on a multitude of French songs for the development of listening and spelling skills in the French language. He also presents some suggestions for the use of this web-based learning resource for self-paced, independent learning as well as for various classroom instructional situations.

Chiung Yao Lin, in the second review article, looks at the first volume of "New Chinese Practical Reader," a widely-used textbook for Chinese as a foreign language learners. The review focuses in particular on the objectives and design of the book, the manner in which it systematically teaches Chinese characters, and the accompanying multimedia components. What sets Lin's article apart from conventional book reviews is its evaluation of the book's applicability in a specific geographical context, drawing on her own experience in teaching this book at a university in Singapore.

As *e*-FLT moves into its eighth year of existence, the Editorial Board is most conscious of and highly thankful for the contribution of its external peer reviewers whose tireless efforts are indispensable in the production of a quality refereed journal. As a tribute to their vital services, we have included a list of our reviewers in the last two years in this issue. Our sincere thanks go to them as well as the members of our International Advisory Board, and our many authors and readers for contributing to *e*-FLT's success.

Wai Meng Chan
Editor