



## Editorial

It seems entirely in keeping with the times and its own mission that the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) would seek a partner in its multilingual, multicultural neighbour, Singapore, for publishing its *e-journal of Asian Languages*. It was ASAA's good fortune that at just that time, the Centre for the Study of Languages at the National University of Singapore was launching its own *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching* or *e-FLT*, under the editorship of Dr Wai Meng Chan. Discussions followed and the outcome is an annual supplementary issue of *e-FLT*, jointly produced by the *e-FLT* journal and ASAA, the first of which is presented here.

The ASAA Council and members are delighted to have established this collaboration and believe it will strengthen Australian and regional interest in scholarly work on the teaching and learning of Asian languages and cultures, and in the role of language studies in the development of disciplinary knowledge and understanding. This is of significance in itself, and only all the more so at a time when appreciation of a knowledge of Asian languages is once again on the rise in North America and Europe.

The annual supplementary issue of *e-FLT* co-published with ASAA will accept articles and reviews on topics related to the study of Asian languages. They may be written in English, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Malay, Thai, Tamil or Vietnamese and do not need to be associated with Australia. Submissions should be made to the *e-FLT* Journal following guidelines published on the website <http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg>

In our first article, *Japanese Signs as a Learning Resource*, Paul Black and Masumi Nakahara have taken advantage of modern digital photography to capture an abundance of multi-coded Japanese public signs and notices which they present as rich, authentic, challenging resources for teaching the Japanese writing system and introducing Japanese culture and daily life. Grounding their text analysis and pedagogical approach in contemporary literacy studies, the authors set out a possible line of practice for incorporating signs into language classes which is linked to their theoretical base. We are fortunate that reproduction in our own electronic format permits full appreciation of the vivid colours and contrasts of typology presented in the resources discussed.

Vocabulary learning is the main task of many university language students and tested methods that make this a less painful and more successful endeavour are a welcome contribution to the field. *Should the keyword method be introduced in tertiary foreign language classrooms?* asks Kazuyo Taguchi. Her research on the usefulness of the keyword method to facilitate vocabulary acquisition by tertiary learners of Japanese makes an original contribution, and should stimulate teachers who want to link everyday practice to theory driven teaching methods. The research makes use of a design which combines quantitative and qualitative evidence to establish its findings.

In our third article, *Hindustani Textbooks from the Raj*, Peter Friedlander traces two centuries of tussle over the choice of literary texts or everyday language for training British officers to work in India, a perennial problem in many academic language teaching departments to this day. The texts show an increasing British respect for the people and language of the subcontinent developing over the same period, made very evident in the language provided for interpersonal address and the topics to be discussed. In addition to its value as pedagogical history, the article illustrates well the role played by language in shaping and reflecting social history.

Developments in electronic technology have teased the field of education and training for more than a decade with the possibility of providing not just information at a distance, but of facilitating an ever greater range of interactivity between those involved. Discussion boards and emails have allowed some progress along that path, but the technical clumsiness, poor visual quality and in-

adequate audio-visual synchrony of videoconferencing tools to date have meant face-to-face learning in distance mode has not been viable. Yuping Wang reviews a recent product of this kind, NetMeeting, and judges it to have conquered earlier obstacles so as to offer a new phase in on-line learning.

In bringing this first issue to publication I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the valuable professional experience and warm support generously offered by Dr Wai Meng Chan, Editor of *e-FLT*, and the journal's Editorial Board.

The annual supplementary issue of the *e-FLT* Journal devoted to the teaching and learning of Asian languages in Australia and elsewhere, reflects the commitment of the ASAA Council to the study of language as a complementary part of Asian Studies. The Council and the Editor invite ASAA members and other readers to work with us to make our annual issue become a valued scholarly resource in its field.

Jane Orton  
Guest Editor