

Editorial

This supplement of e-FLT features selected papers from the Ninth Centre for Language Studies International Conference (CLaSIC 2022) and the Eighth Asia-Pacific Symposium on the Teaching of Asian Languages (APSTAL), held on December 1-3, 2022. Under the theme “Foreign Language Education in the 21st Century: Review, Re-conceptualise, and Re-align,” CLaSIC 2022 provided a platform for academics, researchers, and practitioners to examine the evolving landscape of foreign language education. Discussions explored critical topics such as the integration of 21st-century skills, the role of multilingualism, and the potential of disruptive pedagogies; the conference invited a re-thinking of traditional paradigms to align with contemporary global challenges. Together, these contributions reflect current developments in language education research and practice, offering insights into the challenges and opportunities of teaching and learning in a rapidly changing world.

CLaSIC, a biennial conference organised by the Centre for Language Studies at the National University of Singapore since 2004, has established itself as a cornerstone event in foreign language education. Over the years, it has hosted renowned scholars such as Anna Uhl Chamot, William Littlewood, Claire Kramsch, and Michael Byram. APSTAL, inaugurated in 2008 as a symposium within CLaSIC, focuses on advancing the teaching and research of Asian languages. Initially co-hosted with the Australian National University, it now includes prominent partners such as the University of Hawai’i, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and INALCO. These platforms underscore collaborative efforts to foster innovation and excellence in language education.

The supplement begins with an article by **Anthony J. Liddicoat**, titled “Developing a Critical Intercultural Perspective in Language Learning”, which argues that developing a critical intercultural perspective, characterised by reflexivity, is paramount in language learning. This perspective is essential for preparing learners to engage adeptly in their new language across cultures and to make meaning with and for others. Adopting such a perspective necessitates rethinking certain assumptions of language education. Drawing on two learners’ experiences, Liddicoat demonstrates how critical and reflective practices can emerge in language learning. Both learners encountered elements in the language and culture they were learning that challenged their initial assumptions about the world, identity, and self-representation. Through reflection and creating personal responses, they constructed new understandings for themselves and learned how to participate in diversity.

In the second article, “The English Language Rhetorical Techniques Employed by Japanese Activists” **Richard Miles** investigates the rhetorical techniques used by four Japanese activists, all non-native English speakers, demonstrating that both experienced and less experienced speakers frequently employ these communicative styles. More seasoned speakers used rhetorical questions, allusions, and repetition to engage audiences and reinforce messages, indicating a progression in rhetorical ability with experience. Researchers interested in language education may consider the findings relevant. The study offers pedagogical insights, suggesting that language learners and activists could enhance their public speaking by adopting such rhetorical techniques, improving communication effectiveness, and strengthening their impact on audiences.

Izumi Walker, Saeko Kitai, and Akiko Ito, in the third article, “Bridging the Gaps: Enhancing Learners’ Job Interview Performance Focusing on Clarification Questions”, examine differences in language teachers’ and recruiters’ evaluation criteria of the oral performance of Japanese language learners who participated in an intensive course to prepare for job interviews in Japanese conducted at a Singapore University. Previous studies have reported discrepancies between language teachers and business professionals regarding their focus on assessing Japanese language learners’ oral pro-

iciency. Therefore, the study aimed to develop suggestions for improving teaching methods to better prepare learners for the demands they will face in job interviews. The results of the study suggest that students had particular problems with the use of *Clarification Questions* (such as: “Could you repeat this, please?” or “What does ___ mean?”). In a brief analysis of widely used Japanese textbooks, the authors found that although Clarification Questions were addressed, their importance was not sufficiently emphasised and that many of those phrases covered did not meet learners' needs. Based on these observations, the authors develop recommendations for language teachers to handle clarification issues more efficiently and practically. In particular, the authors offer recommendations for language teachers, emphasising the importance of addressing clarification strategies early in the learning process. The article thus provides concrete and practical suggestions for dealing with the critical but often neglected topic of Clarification Questions.

In the fourth article, “Aligning Peer Tutoring System in Language Education: A Comparative Study of Face-to-Face and Online Delivery Modes” **Lee Siu-Lun** presents an action research study on the design and implementation of a peer tutoring system for Cantonese as a second language at a university in Hong Kong, with a particular focus on its development before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explores the transition from face-to-face peer tutoring to synchronous online sessions, highlighting the challenges and successes of this shift. Key findings emphasise the importance of tutor engagement, systematic training, and creating a virtual speech community for students to practice Cantonese outside the classroom. The research suggests that this peer tutoring model enhances language learning, promotes mutual support among students, and fosters internationalization and diversity at the university. The paper also discusses the potential for blended learning models, combining face-to-face and online peer tutoring, to create a more flexible and sustainable learning environment in the post-pandemic era. Future research will explore the impact of these systems on language proficiency and the development of hybrid learning models in language education.

Sunil Kumar Bhatt presents the fifth and final article titled “Hindi-Urdu through COVID-19: A Three-Year Account at UBC”. The author reflects on his experiences teaching Hindi-Urdu as a foreign language through the COVID-19 pandemic. He examines the pedagogical adaptations necessitated by transitioning to a fully online teaching environment and returning to in-person instruction under restrictive conditions. The discussion in the article highlights various technological tools utilized to facilitate these adjustments and their advantages and limitations. The author further offers a nuanced analysis of the benefits and limitations of online, in-person, and hybrid teaching modalities. The article provides valuable insights for language educators seeking to integrate lessons learned during the pandemic into post-COVID instructional practices.

This supplement reflects the diverse and evolving landscape of language education research and practice. The contributions from CLaSIC 2022 and APSTAL continue to advance our understanding of how languages are learned, taught, and adapted to meet the needs of a globalised and interconnected world. On behalf of the editorial team, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the authors, reviewers, and all those involved in bringing this publication to fruition. This supplement will serve as a source of inspiration and a catalyst for further exploration and innovation in language education.

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