

## CLaSIC 2012: Considering Culture in Language Learning



A discussion session following the presentation at the *CLaSIC 2008* convened by A/P Chan Wai-Meng, Director of Centre for Language Studies

The Centre's International Language Conference, better known as *CLaSIC*, was initiated in 2004. Ever since the first gathering, participants of *CLaSIC* have continued to gain insights into advances in foreign language education at each biennial meeting. Indeed, *CLaSIC* has become the flagship event of the Centre for Language Studies (CLS), providing a platform for an international gathering of experts to share innovative ideas on foreign language learning and teaching.

*CLaSIC 2012* is slated to convene from 6-8 Dec. 2012 at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House, National University of Singapore. Adopting the theme *Culture in Foreign Language Teaching*, participants of this coming event will be exposed to new ideas on the role of culture in foreign language pedagogy. A broad range of relevant topics and issues will be covered, including: culture awareness in language learning; instructional approaches for culture teaching; culture, identity and motivation; heritage language education; assessment and evaluation in the teaching of culture; ethnographic approaches to language teaching; study abroad and language contact; sociolinguistics and foreign language teaching.

Similar to the previous *CLaSIC* conferences which featured specialists in language education and applied linguistics, three distinguished academics have been invited to deliver keynote speeches, with Michael Byram (Durham University) speaking on the implications of culture in foreign language learning for teachers and teaching, Claire Kramsch (University of California, Berkeley) deliberating on the culture component of foreign languages in the era of globalization, and Kimi Kondo-Brown (University of Hawai'i at Manoa) sharing on language use, acculturation and identity.

Since 2008, the Asia-Pacific Symposium for the Teaching of Asian Languages has been an added highlight at *CLaSIC*. This year's symposium will host a panel of international ex-

perts, who will share their research findings on selected cultural issues related to various Asian languages. Among others, the panelists include: Erlin Barnard and Ellen Rafferty (University of Wisconsin, Madison); Peter Friedlander (La Trobe University); Wei-Ping Wu and Siu-Lun Lee (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Nobuo Tomimori and Hiroki Nomoto (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies). The speakers will share the floor with CLS' faculty members, namely Tittima Suthiwan, Izumi Walker, Sunil Kumar Bhatt, Johanna Istanto Wulansari, Indrianti and Gia Anh Le Ho.

Participants of *CLaSIC 2012* will be able to choose from more than 100 papers in numerous parallel sessions of and 20 interesting posters in two posters sessions. Additionally, there will also be an excursion with a visit to Gardens by the Bay as its highlight. The tour also includes visits to century-old places of worship in Singapore.

## NUS-CLS Ranked in the Top 10 of the World University Ranking for Modern Languages

For the first time in its history, in 2012, NUS-CLS has been ranked in the Top 10 of the QS World University Ranking for Modern Languages, after having been placed 18th last year. This excellent achievement meant that NUS-CLS was placed above such established and prestigious universities as Stanford University (11th), Columbia University (13th), UCLA (14th), University of Hong Kong (15th), and The Australian National University (18th). The Centre's success can be attributed to commitment of its faculty members to excellence in research and practice in foreign language education.

## CLS Language Immersions

### Japanese LIP in Tokyo

NUS students from the Japanese Language Programme took part in a language immersion programme at Tamagawa University in Tokyo for the first time from 30th May to 20th June, 2012. The programme's goal was for students to utilise their knowledge of the language in real life situations in Japan, and to polish their language skills progressively.



*Students having  
Okonomiyaki: Japanese  
pancake*



*Japanese calligraphy:  
Shodo*

For three weeks, fifteen CLS students participated in various activities, including Japanese language classes, project work, class audit at Tamagawa University, homestays, Japanese cooking, Japanese cultural experiences (kabuki, calligraphy and tea ceremony), and visits to a local primary school, the Fuji TV Company and central Tokyo.

A unique aspect of this programme was that NUS students benefited from lots of support from local students. For example, local students guided participants by assisting them when auditing lectures and seminars on Japanese linguistics, Japanese literature, and English language and grammar. According to the participants' feedback, the experience helped them greatly in understanding the lesson contents. Another noteworthy feature of this programme was that all the participants stayed in a house on campus and shared all the household chores among themselves such as cooking and cleaning! The highlight of the programme was indeed the homestay.

The programme was a great success and has motivated all the CLS participants to put their learning of Japanese studies into useful practise.

### Korean LIP in Seoul



*Homestay  
Activities*

The Korean immersion programme was carried out at our partner university, Yonsei University, Seoul. The university is well-known for its global and well-established Korean language courses and is a very good choice for our students to gain exposure to the Korean language and authentic university life in Korea.

The immersion programme consists of Korean language classes and cultural events. During the three-week duration of the programme, there were four hours of language classes every morning, followed by cultural classes or events once a week. The immersion also included excursions to several Korean cities and places of interest as well as a homestay programme for students to experience the Korean life style.

The homestay programme has become a very popular activity among our students. Through the immersion programme, the students had many opportunities to apply the Korean language in real life contexts which in turn enabled the students to become more confident in Korean.



*Group Photo from Korean LIP Classroom*

## Joint Venture: German Language Programme & IRO

The German Language Programme (GLP) has been supporting the International Relations Office (IRO) under the Language Preparation Programme (LPP) to prepare students linguistically prior to their exchange semester in German speaking countries. Yearly, 26 LPP students receive the Language Immersion Award (LIA) after completion of LAG2201 German 2. They will attend a four-week language immersion in Germany, including an intensive language course, cultural activities, excursions and a homestay, conducted at the University of Stuttgart in the state of Baden-Württemberg and the Technological University of Darmstadt in Hessen. The quota set for these two universities are 20 and 6 each.



The Baden-Württemberg Ministry for Science, Research and the Arts (MSRA) has been sponsoring 20 students from NUS for the Stuttgart programme, while the costs for the 6 students in Darmstadt are borne by NUS and the University of Darmstadt. After evaluating the collaboration with these universities and reviewing the programmes' curricula, GLP now aims to look for another partner university in Baden-Württemberg which is able to provide a more customised and meaningful curriculum to meet the needs of NUS LIA awardees. As the Baden-Wuerttemberg MSRA was re-organized after the state elections in 2011, Ms Goh Fang Wei from IRO and Ing Ru took the opportunity in May 2012 to visit MSRA, as well as our two partner universities and other selected universities in Mannheim, Heidelberg and Freiburg. Some follow-up actions have been taken after the trip. IRO and GLP will submit a joint proposal to MSRA to change the host university for LIA.

## Thai Concert at NUS



*Youth Orchestra Concert at NUS*

On September 8, 2102, the Thai language programme and the Royal Thai embassy hosted a Yala Municipality Youth Orchestra concert, at Lecture Theatre 13. The event was well attended by foreign diplomats and NUS community. This youth orchestra was founded in 2006 by Mr. Pongsak Yingchoncharoen, Mayor of Yala Municipality, who wished to use music as an instrument of peace to bring young people of different faiths in southern Thailand closer and spend time fruitfully together. The concert performed at NUS was sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand.

## CLS Language Prizes

In 2012, the CLS continued to honour high-achieving language students in various language programmes. The winners of the CLS Language Prizes 2012 were:

CLS Chinese Language Prize – Ploy Thampipattanakul

CLS German Language Prize – Liu Tong

CLS Prize for Best FASS Student in Japanese Language – Yong Shi Yun Estee

CLS Japanese Language Prize – Goh Jing Ying

CLS Korean Language Prize – Chua Minqi

CLS Tamil Language Prize – Lim Ka Woon

CLS Thai Language Prize – Mok Wei Wu



*Mok Wei Wu, a prize winner, receiving the award from Prof Chan Wai Meng, CLS Director*

"First and foremost, I must say I am deeply honoured to receive this prize. Learning Thai has always been enjoyable to me – yes, even when the homework was demanding, the speaking classes got confusing, the writing lessons tiring, and the presentations intimidating. I enjoyed the time with my tutors, who were always so passionate with their language and culture, and so patient with us students. It was enjoyable because of the teachers and also my fellow comrades in the Battle of Understanding Thai. The process was memorable as well. In a way, I 'repeated' the process of language learning and acquisition all over again, and as a future Chinese Language teacher, this process is an invaluable experience. I thank CLS for awarding this prize to me, on top of a far more fabulous prize which has already been awarded to all: A fantastic time of learning in the Centre." CLS Thai Language Prize – Mok Wei Wu



## We are proud of our Staff: Service Awards 2012

Ms Annie Cheng and Ms Yuen Sau Yoong from the CLS administrative team have won the FASS Service Award 2012. This award acknowledges good quality service in administrative duties.

Ms Annie Cheng is the Centre's Secretary, while Ms Yuen Sau Yoong is an Management Assistant Officer. Both of them will be receiving their awards on 2 November 2012, at the Faculty Meeting.

Mdm Ng Chu Tee has been awarded the Long Service Medal 2012 by the President of the Republic of Singapore in recognition of her long service under the National Day Awards.



Ms Annie Cheng



Ms Yuen Sau Yoong



Mdm Ng Chu Tee

## Welcome our New Staff



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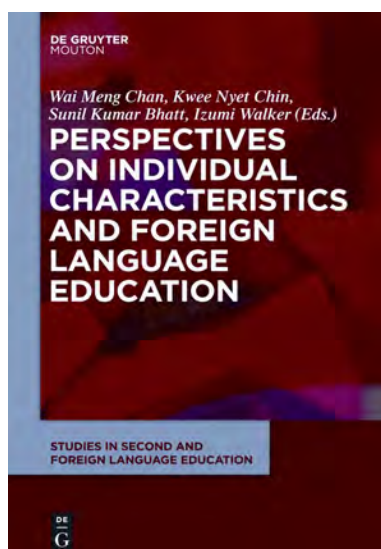
Mrs. Runnapa Kitiarsa joined the Thai Language Programme in January 2005 as a part-time teacher. She obtained her M.A. in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) at the University of Washington, where she taught Thai to American students. Prior to joining CLS, she taught English as a foreign language at Suranaree University of Technology in Thailand.



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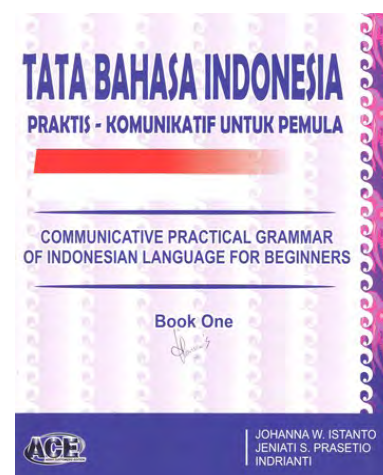
Ms Hofmann joined the German Language Programme in August 2012 as an instructor. She obtained her M.A. in German and Japanese studies as well as a diploma for "German as a foreign language" at Universität Trier, Germany, in December 2011. Prior to joining the CLS as full time staff, she completed an internship at the CLS German Language Programme from February to April 2012.

## Staff Publication



*Perspectives on Individual Characteristics and Foreign Language Education*, Wai Meng Chan, Kwee Nyet Chin, Sunil Kumar Bhatt, Izumi Walker (Eds.), 2012, Germany De-Gruyter Mouton, 342 pp.

The 16 chapters in this book present current research insights into a broad range of individual characteristics, including language aptitude, awareness, working memory, language learning strategies, learner language, beliefs and assumptions, identity, motivation, and anxiety.



*Tata Bahasa Indonesia: Praktis-Komunikatif Untuk Pemula*, Johanna W. Istanto, Jeniati S. Prasetyo, Indrianti, 2012, Singapore McGraw Hill, 110 pp.

This is the first textbook for Bahasa Indonesia Programme at CLS. The book enhances communicative competence for beginners with practical grammar components and vocabulary accompanying various formats of language exercises.

## In our next issue:

- ◆ Highlights from *CLaSIC 2012*
- ◆ Staff development news