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EDITORIAL

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Editorial – Neil Johnson

Welcome to the August, 2013 issue of the online Working Papers in Language Education and Research.

In this issue of Working Papers, four articles provide insight into the research and practice being explored by members of the ELI from late 2012 through towards the early part of 2013. These articles represent work presented in international forums and also ongoing research being conducted within the ELI at Kanda University of International Studies. The authors introduce a range of research and practice to hopefully inspire future work, collaboration, and classroom innovation. It is our hope that many of the pieces published in this forum will go on to stimulate discussion and collaboration and eventually develop into full research projects. The practice-driven papers in this second issue should be of interest to practitioners in the Japanese university context and beyond.

Peter Harrold's paper examines the issue of critical practice and its place in the Asian university classroom. Harrold problematizes easy and stereotypical notions about Asian students and the teaching of critical literacy. This paper attempts to explore what can be learnt from previous research on the impact that culture has specifically on Japanese students, within the context of three areas of tertiary study: oral participation, critical thinking and academic writing. It concludes with consideration of the philosophy of culturally responsive teaching.

Elizabeth Lammons' paper introduces and discusses two classroom activities that have been developed at KUIS, in an elective self-directed reading course, in which learners were able to choose authentic materials that they wanted to read. The activities were writing reading histories and examining how texts are read. These activities were implemented to assist learners in reflecting on their beliefs and experiences with reading in English. Lammons goes on to provide some preliminary evidence that learners were able to establish a learning community to foster and support each other in their self-directed reading goals.

Phil Murphy and Dirk MacKenzie report on a study based within the ELI, looking at factors related to the factors influencing student-computer use in class, but ultimately their work addresses much broader administrative issues and it became clear, through analyzing the data, that both Internet and technology access were also problematic in this context. Accordingly, data were collected via a teacher survey (N=68) with questions covering classroom design; Internet-connection speed; wireless Internet access across campus; mobile-learning technology; performance of classroom computers; sharing of student computers; projection systems; and support for existing technology and technological innovation. Faculty perspectives were gathered (a) in order to gain a greater understanding of the technology-related needs for the teaching/learning environments and (b) to help improve access to the Internet and technology across campus. Suggestions are made to improve practice.

Jo Mynard's paper begins with a brief review of the current literature in relation to computer mediated chat and digital literacies and the author argues that language educators have a responsibility to help students to understand the nature of this kind of interaction. Mynard then gives a brief overview of some of the benefits of incorporating chat activities into a language curriculum, along with some practical suggestions for implementation.

The Other Papers section of this issue is also important as it highlights the publication profile of the ELI. This section features abstracts of papers that have been funded for international conference presentation, and have subsequently been published in a variety of conference proceedings, as well as in national, and international forums.