

From the editor

A very warm welcome to the inaugural issue of The Journal of Literature in Language Teaching, the publication of the JALT Special Interest Group (SIG) Literature in Language Teaching (LiLT). This is a peer-reviewed Journal.

We formed this group at the end of 2011 to bring like minds together to promote the effective use of literature in the language classroom. Already we are an active group, growing quickly, co-sponsoring and arranging lectures and events, and now bringing some of our members' ideas to you in this journal.

We very much welcome member contributions. If you have some ideas you would like to share, please do get in touch.

In getting this inaugural issue ready, I would like to extend my thanks to the contributors for joining us in this venture, including Wendy Jones Nakanishi (Membership Chair) and Jane Nakagawa (Publicity Chair) for their help in editing and proofreading. Thank you!

Simon Bibby

Editor and SIG Coordinator

In this issue

Articles

There is a varied selection of articles in our journal. In the first article, Simon Bibby provides an introduction to using literature in the language classroom, discussing what literature 'is', moving on to consider why language teachers may like to consider using literature in the language classroom, and finally offering a set of criteria for teachers to use when choosing literature suitable for their students. In the second piece, Patrick B Judge posits that the best television drama series are fine examples for students of contemporary literature, noting that of work considered canonical, much was written to be performed (Shakespeare being an obvious example) and/or serialized (Dickens, Swift). Judge argues that the contemporary TV series *Battlestar Galactica* very much qualifies as 'literature' and provides an ideal vehicle for language study for university students. In the third article, Jane Nakagawa discusses the value of poetry in the language classroom, the importance of considering gender and other factors when selecting literary works for students, and offers some brief ideas concerning how poetry can be taught in the language classroom and materials that may be useful. Her English language article is followed by Japanese language transcript of a speech she gave in Japanese for a comparative literature conference where she discussed feminism in poetry and the teaching of poetry.

Interviews

Three teachers, each with many years of experience teaching English in Japan, offer their views on using literature in the language classroom in the three interviews. Firstly Wendy Jones Nakanishi explains the extra possibilities afforded by using authentic literature, even among students who might be relatively low level,

particularly when compared with the excessively basic fare to be found within the typical ELT text. Jones Nakanishi explains the types of texts used, and the types of activities she uses with her university students. The second interview is with Jane Joritz-Nakagawa who talks about the variety of genres she uses with her students, notably poetry, which she then has her students write. She further discusses language problems that may arise and assessment. Our final interview is with Kayo Ozawa, who shares her experience using literature in the high school classroom. Ozawa firstly seeks to provide a definition of the elusive in answer to the question “What is ‘literature’?”, then moves on to describe her teaching-learning situation, the short stories she selects for her students, who are a mix of returnee and regular high school students and movies that she uses to support students’ understanding of topics raised within texts. She closes with a recommendation of a poem that has been particularly popular and effective with her students.

Recent presentations

Donna Tatsuki and Lori Zenuk-Nishide summarise presentations they recently gave at JALT Osaka Chapter’s Back to School event held April 22, 2012. Colleagues at Kobe City Foreign Language University, they are currently engaged in a four-year research project into how literature is integrated into curricula in European and Asian countries. Firstly, they discuss theoretical issues and commonly-held misconceptions about literature and language teaching, before moving on to discuss specific examples of the extent to which literature is integrated in language teaching in Belgium and the Netherlands. In the second of the two pieces, Tatsuki and Zenuk-Nishide note changes in ideas since the 1950s, how the guidelines of the Japanese education ministry (MEXT) affect what happens in the language classroom, and the extent to which literature is used therein.