

## EDITORIAL

At first glance, the contents of this issue of the journal may appear eclectic, if not scattered. It features articles on a Thai English language novelist written by a western teacher working in Thailand, the perception of a Chinese actor's masculinity in English and Chinese language films by a Thai writer and the beliefs of Thai and Chinese English teachers as seen by a Chinese writer. It also features a Burmese writer's representations of her culture in English and a Thai writer's story which has Japanese overtones in the ways it tells its business story for children in English. Finally, there is a review by an Australian of another Australian writer's novella about a famous Australian writer from that country's past.

But when we remember that ASEAN 2015 is just around the corner and that there will be challenges countries in the region will face in successfully implementing policies that further the integration of the Association with its partner nations and within itself, hopefully, a pattern will emerge in the selection of material for this issue of the journal.

As the flows of information and people across borders increases, so does the flow of the cultures of those people who will work in foreign social and cultural contexts. This is not an abstract theoretical possibility, but a fact that will only increase in importance. As people from this region communicate with each other, the main language they will use will be English. How the participants have learned that language will shape the ways they use it for inter-cultural communication in the real world. How they see, hear and talk to each other will create new possibilities for a local framework of communication to develop.

At present, there does not seem to be any one channel specifically focused on issues that may arise in this brave new world. Hopefully, this journal can adapt to the needs of those who live and work in this area to develop their voices and ideas so as to foster better communication between those who must communicate with each other in this region through the medium of English. How we see and think about each other on the ground, in the words we create, and in the ways we teach and research will only become more important over the next few years.

What we need are concrete local responses to the new realities, not difficult and abstract theories drawn from alien contexts that try to see this world through the prism of old ideas that bear little relevance to what we experience in our communication with each other here. The success of the ASEAN 2015 policy will largely be determined by what happens in the classrooms of the region. If teachers focus on how we actually communicate, not on how others say we do, and if they draw on examples of cultural work that are relevant to the students, then a dialogue may be developed which makes discussions of culture and society accessible to the students and teachers as well as the researchers. This need for dialogue may also offer new ideas to creative writers who use English to express their cultures and societies as they intermingle with each other.

ASEAN is in the process of redefining itself. If it tries to do this using the scaffolding of western ideas, it will probably fail; or at least fail to reach its full potential. What we need are new ideas and ways of writing that come out of the cultures and societies in this region. Hopefully, this journal will in future provide the space in which such new ideas can be countenanced and discussed.

We encourage all writers who are interested in writing about how people in this region use English for social and cultural communication to submit their work in future.

What we expect to see in future is that the English language in this region will develop its own characteristics and that this new language will be embodied in the creative work of those in the region as they focus on other Asian readers as their target audiences. The language we use needs to be studied from a sociolinguistic perspective as much as from a literary one. How we teach this language will play a large role in how our students use the language in their real lives. It is in this real world that the new shapes of ASEAN after 2015 will be determined; not in old theories of literature or in western terms. If the speakers and writers who live in the ASEAN community are to succeed in establishing their own specific identity and attitudes, they will need to have their own approaches to defining and communicating what they do.

Hopefully, this journal can provide space in which this communication can occur. In this way, we hope to maintain the relevance of the journal. As the social, cultural and literary contexts change, so, hopefully, will this journal be able to offer a forum for the discussion of *new* ideas and approaches.

We have also made some changes to the print size in order to increase the readability of the text and to highlight the words of those we quote in the journal. Too often, readers may skip the long quotes of others which are squashed into claustrophobic spaces that bury their voices.

Stephen Conlon  
Editor