

Golden Snake Year 2001

Year 2001 is the year of the Yin Metal Snake, the 18th of the Stem-Branch in the system. The Chinese use **the same Chinese character for Gold and Metal**, and as Gold sounds more valuable, the Chinese like to call year 2001 the Golden Snake rather than the Metal Snake. To find out more, check <http://www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/2001.htm>

Talks, trips & workshops

Visit to Nanyang Polytechnic on May 13, 2000

The visit to Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) was well coordinated and presented. The programme included the presentation of three computer-based packages on Power Dressing, Interview Skills and Writing of Minutes of Meetings as well as a tour of the campus. STETS members were impressed by the sharing of facilities at NYP and the way the resource department helped in the preparation of learning packages for self-access and independent work. The STETS/NYP representative and NYP staff who organised the visit were commended for their hospitality and effort in putting together a worthwhile visit.

Seminar on "Chinese Characteristics in ELT" by Dr Feng Anwei on July 22, 2000 at NUS

Dr Feng Anwei presented a talk on "Chinese Characteristics in ELT" at the National University of Singapore as part of the STETS seminar series. In his talk, Anwei shared with the audience his vast knowledge of the College English course structure in China, the teaching methodology predominantly used by teachers in China and the Chinese students' culture of learning. Attended by about 35 participants from the various STETS member institutions, the talk was found to be most informative and interesting, providing a better understanding of the Chinese students' learning strategies, attitude and expectations. (Report by Norhayati binte Mohd Ismail, NUS)

About the Speaker: Dr Feng Anwei obtained his MA in descriptive and applied linguistics from the University of Essex and his PhD in education from the University of Durham. He taught English language to students at different levels in China for ten years and in Hong Kong for four years. Currently, he is a lecturer in the Centre for English Language Communication at NUS. His research interests are mainly in the areas of intercultural communicative competence, sociolinguistics, and cultural dimensions of ELT in China.

Talk on "Language Rules in the Mind of the Multilingual Teenager" by Steve Adams on August

The talk was attended by 36 people. It was an excellent talk that included an extensive literature review and generated much discussion. The talk was also interesting to students of Singapore English.

Steve said, "I started my research as the result of frustration with my Singaporean students' apparent difficulty with the past simple. To my mind,

26, 2000 at NIE

mastering the rules of usage of this tense shouldn't be too challenging, but problems arose time and time again. So, I decided to take a closer look."

The investigation focussed on factors which could be expected to influence the acquisition of the rules of usage of the past simple structure and its production in a multilingual environment. A group of Singaporean Chinese English-educated pre-'O' Level students, who were studying at the British Council, was the source of information. This short paper looked at the following areas:

- some of the types of error that this group of learners produced under different conditions,
- the factors that could be expected to result in past simple errors, and
- some of the idiosyncratic rule systems that the members of the group applied as revealed in one-to-one interviews.

The findings had interesting implications for anyone involved in the language education of Singaporean students.

About the Speaker: Steve Adams is Senior Teacher Part-time Business English, General English Unit at The British Council.

Talk on "Language Learning: Natural Magic or Long, Long Haul" by Prof Jean M. Aitchison on September 30, 2000 at Singapore Polytechnic

About 50 people attended the talk by Prof Aitchison. It was a high point to the many participants who wanted to meet her. Her coverage was extensive and attempted to answer issues about how 'naturally' humans learnt language and how first language acquisition differed from second language learning. This talk looked at how biology interacts with learning, and also considered stages in vocabulary acquisition, which would continue throughout life.

About the Speaker: Jean Aitchison is the Rupert Murdoch Professor of Language And Communication at the University of Oxford. She was visiting NUS as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature. In her research she is concerned with language change, language origin, the mental lexicon, and the language of the media. She is the author of a number of books, including: Words in the mind (1994), The seeds of speech: Language origin and evolution (1996), The language web: The power and problem of words (1997), The articulate mammal (1998), and Language change: Progress or decay? (3rd edn in press). She gave the 1996 British Broadcasting Corporation Reith lectures.

Workshop on "Co-operative Learning" by George Jacobs on September 9, 2000 at NTU

During the workshop, George introduced concepts in Co-operative Learning, such as simultaneous interaction and individual accountability. Participants also tried out Co-operative Learning techniques such as the Three-Step Interview and the Rally-Robin. There was active participation from all the groups, and everyone enjoyed the interaction. It was an enjoyable session.

Some participants felt the workshop was timely. Others were so inspired that they used the techniques with their students the week after the workshop. Their verdict: The techniques are useful and easy to use. (Report by Lee Hwee Hoon, NTU)

About the Speaker: George Jacobs is a freelance educationist. Cooperative learning is his main area of academic work. He has published many articles,

taught many courses, and given many conference presentations and workshops related to cooperative learning. He is co-author of the book Learning cooperative learning via cooperative learning: A sourcebook of lesson plans for teacher education. George is on the Executive Board of the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education.

Trip to Chiang Mai University, Thailand from November 29 till December 3, 2000

Three members presented papers at Chiang Mai University:

- Steve Adams (The British Council) on "Rules in the Mind of the Singaporean Teenager",
- Judith Lindley (NUS), on "English Spoken Here", and
- Patrick Ng (NTU), on " Readers' Theatre".

It is planned to have these papers published in L&C Review.

The STETS party was very well received by the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and the Head and staff of the English Department. It was felt that the trip was useful as it paved the way for future visits and the exchange of ideas regarding academic matters. (Report by Manee Lugg)

Upcoming events

1. February 22, 2001: STETS Public Lecture on "Assessing the Script: How do Language Learners Recognise the Words They Read?" by Alexander Urquhart at RELC
2. February 23 – 24, 2001: STETS Workshop on "Tests of Reading and Grammar: Are They the Same Thing?" by Alexander Urquhart of College of St Mark and St John at RELC
3. April 14, 2001: Talk by Tom Farrell (NIE) at Singapore Polytechnic
4. April 25, 2001: STETS/BC/ELLTAS talk by Ron Carter on "Old and New Directions in the Description and Teaching of English Grammar" at The British Council
The session will cover recent theoretical and practical classroom developments in the teaching of grammar with a particular emphasis on differences in grammar choices between spoken and written English and according to different levels of formality and on the relationship between grammar and vocabulary choices. Issues to do with standard English, corpus-informed study and the teaching of context will be explored.
5. STETS AGM and Dinner

Look out for more details from your STETS representative.

L&C Review

The call for papers is on. Manuscripts for the next issue should be submitted by May 2001 to:

Lisa Meyer
Chief Editor, Language and Communication Review
c/o Centre for English Language Communication
National University of Singapore
10 Kent Ridge Crescent
Singapore 119260
Email: elcjem@nus.edu.sg

You can get details about the contributor's guidelines from your STETS representative.

Special interest groups

If you are interested in becoming a member of a STETS / SIG, please contact the respective co-ordinators below.

Computer Assisted Language Learning

Co-ordinator: Anil Pathak at asalpathak@ntu.edu.sg

Teacher Development

Co-ordinator: Patrick Gallo at pbgallo@relc.org.sg

Business English

Co-ordinators: Carol Binder at elccab@nus.edu.sg and Happy Goh at elcgohkp@nus.edu.sg

Co-ordinators wanted

If you would like to help out as co-ordinators for the Learner Independence, Research and Testing SIGs, please contact Manee at MANEE@sp.edu.sg

STETS membership

The STETS membership count in January 2001 is 224.

Inflation and rising interest rates may be hot news everyday, but the STETS membership fee is here to stay. It still costs only \$10.00 to become a STETS member for a year!

Membership is renewable either at the end of June or December. Ordinary membership is open to all full-time staff teaching in tertiary institutions in Singapore. Associate membership is open to anyone interested, both in and outside Singapore.

Potential speakers

If you know of anyone who is worth listening to -- in, outside or visiting Singapore, please let us know. You could even sign on as a STETS speaker.

All correspondence for STETS NEWS should be sent to Bina Bhattacharyya, Tel: 780-5723; Fax: 784-6144; E-mail: binab@tp.edu.sg

☺The STETS Committee