

Mrs. Izumi Walker
Centre for Language Studies



Over the past few years the study of “non-mother tongue” languages has become an increasingly important part of the FASS curriculum, first through the area studies departments and now through the Centre for Language Studies. Lecturers in the field of foreign language face the challenge of generating interest in studying third languages among undergraduates who often have an aversion to them because of previous experience with language study at the primary and secondary levels. At the same time, language teachers must be constantly reworking and upgrading their modules and programmes in order to make them useful and relevant for the students. It is clear that Izumi Walker has been consistently successful in facing both of these challenges.

The Japanese language programme is the largest of those offered at CLS, and Mrs. Walker is currently convenor in charge of the programme. She has been heavily involved with curriculum and staff development and has taken numerous initiatives to strengthen and expand the programme, such as the “Project Work for Learning Authentic Japanese” described in her portfolio. The teaching materials make clear that the students are helped to go well beyond dabbling in the cultural base of J-pop, *manga* or *anime* to seriously engage with the language and to learn to use it with fluency and in socially and culturally appropriate ways.

At a personal level, Mrs. Walker is clearly a gifted teacher, as reflected in the quality of her materials and the strength of the student feedback. Her lessons are both pedagogically sound and innovative, exploring and explaining the complexities of the language while also making its study both interesting and relevant for the students. There is an excellent balance between learning to use the language in its “native” context in Japan and utilising it in the expatriate context of Japanese in Singapore.

Mrs. Walker has also been active in presenting and publishing papers on Japanese language pedagogy, and she is currently pursuing a PhD in this field, an accomplishment which will strengthen both her individual qualifications and the credentials of the NUS programme as a whole. Her commitment to excellent teaching and to the building and strengthening of a key programme at NUS has earned her the right to be nominated for an ATEA award.