



Amy Chi graduated in Applied Linguistics from Exeter University, and works as Instructor at the Language Centre of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Her most recent publication is a critical user-oriented review of the Collins Cobuild Dictionary. She specialises in pedagogical lexicography, dictionary use, and teacher and learner training, and is currently reading for her doctorate at Macquarie University, with a thesis on pedagogical lexicography.

It was the wish of Dr. Gregory James, Director of the Language Centre of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, to hold a conference of lexicography in Asia. The dream was realised with a grant from the Japanese government and full support from scholars in the field. A conference entitled "Dictionaries in Asia: research and pedagogical implications", which was organised by the Centre, was held in Hong Kong from March 26 to 29, 1997.

Papers were arranged according to four themes, one for each day:

- The Dictionary-Making Process
- Using Dictionaries in Language Teaching
- Bilingual Lexicography
- Lexicography in Asia.

The aims of the Conference were threefold. First, it aimed to bring together prominent speakers in the field of lexicography to share their expertise and help promote the development of dictionaries in Asian regions. Second, it was to be a rendezvous for lexicographers, publishers and language teachers (English and Chinese) to discuss the making of various dictionaries and their use in language learning. Third, the Conference was also being held with a view to forming an Asian Association for Lexicography (ASIALEX).

To achieve the first goal, we started by inviting distinguished scholars in the field from various Asian countries to be plenary speakers. Since no connection of any kind had existed, we went

Dictionaries in Asia and ASIALEX

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through quite a difficult stage to locate the whereabouts of potential speakers. After much search, we got hold of their addresses and started writing to them. Since we were not sure whether the information obtained was up-to-date, and in some parts of Asia the postal service is still not very well developed, it was a long and anxious wait. Every reply was received with excitement. Altogether we invited eight prominent figures from countries in the region: Jordan, PR China, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, and India.

Since the Conference was targeted at promoting lexicography in the region, besides featuring well-established speakers in the field, we attempted to include potential 'stars' of the future. We were very lucky to receive a total of HK\$168,000 from the Japan Foundation Asia Center and Siemens (HK), to provide scholarships for twelve postgraduate students from various Asian countries to present papers at the Conference. The sponsorship was awarded purely on merit and by open competition.

One of the innovative features of the Conference was its focus on the pedagogical implications of dictionaries. I believe there is a triangular relationship among lexicographers, teachers and language students. In this 'lexicographic triangle', with lexicographers and students in two corners, language teachers play an important role in bridging the gap between the sophisticated scholars and the unskilled learners. Hence, it was only natural to make the conference a meeting-place for all those concerned.

On the second day of the Conference, presenters from all over the world discussed research data and experience in using

various dictionaries to teach language. The kinds of dictionaries involved ranged from monolingual English or Chinese printed copies to electronic bilingual ones.

Moreover, there were dictionary workshops given on that day by Oxford University Press, Longman Asia and Commercial Press (HK), with the theme "How to use dictionaries to learn reading and writing". Local secondary school teachers of English and Chinese were invited to join workshops as well as the Conference. Over 250 teachers came.

The third goal of the Conference was to form an Asian Association of Lexicography (ASIALEX), which will act as a catalyst for future cooperative research. In Europe, Australia, Africa and North America, pan-continental associations of lexicography already exist - EURALEX, AUSTRALEX, AFRILEX and DSNA respectively. It was hoped that ASIALEX would act as a focus for lexicographic development in Asia, as well as a clearing-house for research and development information and regional cooperation, and with the prospect of attracting grant funding for disbursement.

A Preparatory Committee of ASIALEX was set up four months before the Conference to make all the necessary arrangements. Its members included scholars from Hong Kong and PR China. Moreover, representatives from AFRILEX, AUSTRALEX and EURALEX, namely, Prof D. Prinsloo, Dr. C. Yallop and Dr. R.R.K. Hartmann respectively, were invited as consultants for both the Conference and the Preparatory Committee.

On the last day of the conference the first AGM of ASIALEX was held. Over seventy participants joined in the proceedings. The