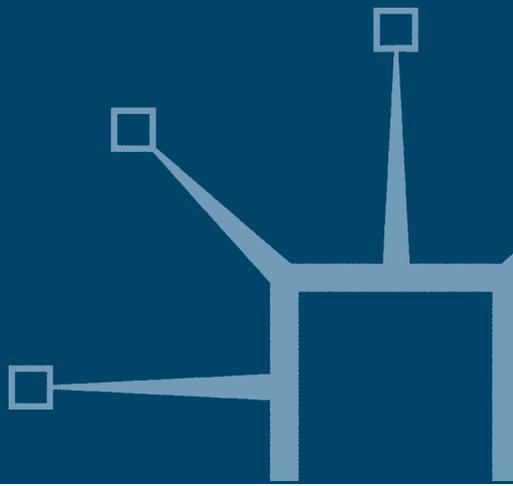


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Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia

Edited By

Theron Muller, Steven Herder,
John Adamson and Philip Shigeo Brown



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*For all the teachers and students who have touched our
lives and made the process of educating and being
educated so fulfilling.*

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Preface

The idea for this book was born in the summer of 2008, when one of the instructors on the Birmingham MA in TEFL/TESL, while in Hiroshima, asked a group of Japan-based students and tutors why, after so many years of research into English education, EFL as a context and teaching environment remained indistinct from ESL contexts, where students have more exposure to the language outside of the classroom. As we are based in Asia, we decided to answer this question, inviting expressions of interest from researchers and authors throughout the region. The group of us that went on to collaborate on this, as well as a number of other projects, we refer to as MASH Collaboration. If you are interested in what else we are doing in Japan and internationally, please visit MASHCollaboration.com.

While we don't feel the chapters in this book offer a definitive answer to the question of what is unique about EFL, we do feel we offer many ideas worth thinking about, and we hope these ideas further the discussion of what it means to teach and learn English in Asia. Our feeling is that the chapters in this book, contrary to research depicting Asia as relatively homogeneous, go a long way to demonstrate the diversity this region offers. We also hope that the different researches and projects described here demonstrate that rather than being dependent on theory originating elsewhere, Asia as a region is rich in ideas and theories based on local contexts, and these locally derived theories and solutions may prove more relevant to the Asian context than imported ideas.

English as a foreign language (EFL) versus English as an international language (EIL)

In the title and in these pages we use the term EFL to refer to teaching contexts where English isn't the dominant language of the local context; where English is taught as a foreign language because, in the schools where it is being taught, it *is* a foreign language. We treat this term as distinct from ESL, and while we recognize the growing popularity of English as an international language, we feel that EIL tends to refer to how English is used in communication, but not how it is taught. We certainly don't intend for our use of EFL to be inappropriate; all of the authors in this book, irrespective of their country of origin, are EIL

users, as coordinating an international book project with contributors from nine different countries inevitably requires international communication. Additionally, all of the authors here are self-described EFL teachers, working with students who tend to view English as a language that is, to them, foreign.

What this book can do for you

If you are based in Asia, then this book offers a glimpse of what other researchers in the region are doing to improve English language education in their respective contexts, and hopefully offers you tools that you could use in your own classroom. If you are outside of Asia in an “off-networked” (Swales, 1996: 45) context, then this book should offer you tools that have been applied in other, similar contexts where teaching and researching resources are perhaps difficult to obtain, and offers inspiration regarding how your EFL context is also unique. For program coordinators in “Inner Circle” (Kachru, 1996: 137) countries, we would argue that the time has come to acknowledge the students on your programs who come from outside your countries and who, in many cases, will be returning to their home countries to teach. International scholars such as Yeh (2005), who completed postdoctoral studies in the US with the intention of returning to Taiwan to teach, deserve programs that acknowledge the contexts they are from and will be returning to, rather than focusing instruction on those programs to Inner Circle contexts – particularly since, in at least some cases, the international students outnumber the domestic students (Yeh, 2005). Incorporating this book into your program is one potential solution to this issue, as we offer perspectives of teacher-researchers situated in Asia and of relevance to teacher-researchers in Asia and beyond.

Theron Muller and Steven Herder,
Japan, 2011

Acknowledgements

A work of this length and scope is always the result of a team effort, and the case of *Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia* is no exception. Working with dozens of people throughout Asia, most of whom we have never met in person, was a rewarding experience, and we would like to start there, by thanking all of the contributors for their patience and persistence in reviewing comments on and revising multiple drafts of papers over the course of the nearly two years it has taken to move this project toward publication. Along the same note, we would also like to thank the student and teacher participants whose cooperation was essential to successfully conducting the research presented here.

We would also like to thank Jeannette Littlemore, of the University of Birmingham CELS team, for putting us in contact with Palgrave Macmillan, and at Palgrave Macmillan, Priyanka Gibbons, who saw our proposal through the review process, the anonymous reviewer who encouraged us to work to bring this book to print, and Olivia Middleton and Melanie Blair, who oversaw the move to production of the final manuscript.

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Theron Muller and Steven Herder
Japan, January 2011

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List of abbreviations

activity based learning (ABL)
Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), India
ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations)
Assistant Language Teacher (ALT)
Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI)
Block Resource Persons (BRPs)
Central Ministry of Education of China (CMOEC)
Chinese Communist Party (CCP)
College English Test (CET) of China
Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)
communicative language teaching (CLT)
Cross-cultural Understanding Using Picture Books (CCUP)
English Action Research (EAR)
English as a foreign language (EFL)
English language teaching (ELT)
English as a lingua franca (ELF)
Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS)
High School English Curriculum Standard (HSECS) (of China)
intercultural awareness (ICA)
Iwate University (IU), Japan
“Let’s Speak English” (LSE)
Motivation and Attitudes toward Learning English Scale for Children (MALESC)
native English speaker (NES)
NU (Nahdlatul Ulama)
medical English vocabulary (MEV)
Multiple Intelligences Survey (MIS)
National University Entrance Examination (NUEE) (of China)

new English curriculum (NEC) (of China)
peer feedback (PF)
stimulated recall interviews (SRIs)
strategies-based instruction (SBI)
Strategy Inventory for Language Use (SILL)
Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)
task-based language learning and teaching (TBLT)
teacher feedback (TF)
total physical response (TPR)
Turkish Ministry of National Education (TMNE)
vernacular medium (VM)
vocabulary learning strategies (VLS)
Working with Picture Books Project (WPB)
zone of proximal development (ZPD)

Introduction: Mapping our Path to, and through, Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia

Theron Muller

Our intention in this book is to provide a snapshot of some of the efforts of teacher-researchers based in Asia in examining and analyzing EFL in their situated contexts. In order to do this, though, we needed to organize the voices of the 31 different contributors into ordered thematic sections. We approached this problem by dividing this book into five Parts. **Part A** sets the stage for EFL in Asia, offering a contextual snapshot of Chinese high school EFL (Fang, Chapter 1), EFL in religious schools in Indonesia (Palmer and Chodidjah, Chapter 3), and a Korean university (Finch, Chapter 4). These chapters are intended to give the reader an idea of the diversity of the Asian EFL context, and to start down the path of questioning some of the basic assumptions about Asia and Asian students that have dominated the literature to date. An excellent example is Finch (Chapter 4), who investigates directly whether the attitudes and opinions of his Korean students are really as stereotypical as they are often made out to be. Baker (Chapter 2) is even more direct in his call for increased cultural awareness in Asian ELT education.

Part B moves into exploration of how teachers and students in Asia perceive and represent themselves. These chapters use narrative inquiry as a tool to explore and examine beliefs and how they are formed in Asia. Murase (Chapter 5) considers how teachers and students in Asia see themselves; Raktham (Chapter 6) considers how, through a deeper understanding of Thai national culture, the motives behind student behavior can be better explained; Adamson (Chapter 7) examines teacher beliefs toward ELT qualifications in Japan; and Erlam and Gray (Chapter 8) explore how Malaysian pre-service teachers develop their identities as teachers during their course of training.

In **Part C** we begin to explore classroom methodology in more detail, examining specific classrooms where teachers have investigated how

they can improve their students' experience and outcomes in ELT. Lam (Chapter 9), discusses the explicit teaching of learning strategies in oral communication classes; Brown (Chapter 10) considers how a vocabulary learning strategies program evolved over the course of two school years, based on student feedback; Muller and de Boer (Chapter 11) show how discourse analysis reveals how scaffolding is used in student–student and teacher–student interaction through the lens of sociocultural theory; and Yang and Bernat (Chapter 12) examine how two different teachers in China approach the teaching of reading in the light of national educational reform.

Part D concerns itself exclusively with young learners in Asia, demographically the largest and most common group of students in the region, and a group that we feel is traditionally under-represented in the literature. Kırkgöz (Chapter 13) explores how teachers in Turkey are implementing the recent national curriculum reforms there, and Carreira (Chapter 14) investigates what factors contribute to Japanese elementary students' motivation to learn English. Hall, Yamazaki, Takahashi, and Ishigame (Chapter 15) describe an effort to introduce picture books as part of the elementary curriculum in Japan; and Anderson and Narayanan (Chapter 16) describe an effort to develop a reading curriculum and materials for disadvantaged students in India.

Part E turns to the teaching of the L2 writing skill in English, and considers how this skill is taught across Japan and China. In Chapter 17, Herder and Clements introduce extensive writing as a complement to and expansion of extensive reading; then Zhao (Chapter 18) explores how peer and teacher feedback are treated differently by students in the Chinese university classroom. Next, Hisaoka (Chapter 19) describes innovations in the assessment of EFL writing.

As we view this book as a call to action for teacher-researchers in Asia to take the initiative in exploring, defining, and representing what EFL means in our situated contexts, we felt this book wouldn't be complete without offering some tools to help interested teacher-researchers to initiate their own, similar projects. Thus Adamson and Muller (Chapter 20) finish the book by describing how we went about planning, organizing, and ultimately publishing this edited book.

Your path to and through *Innovating EFL teaching in Asia*

The way we have presented and organized this book led to a sequence and organization that makes sense to us as editors, but we would encourage you to chart your own path through these pages, and through your

own experience of EFL innovation. For example, if you are interested in curriculum reform, then there are examples of this in different sections, with Fang (Chapter 1) and Palmer and Chodidjah (Chapter 3) in Part A, Yang and Bernat (Chapter 12) in Part C, and Kırkgöz (Chapter 13) and Anderson and Narayanan (Chapter 16) in Part D. Similarly, articles exploring student motivation and voice are presented across sections, including Finch (Chapter 4), Murase (Chapter 5), Raktham (Chapter 6) and Carreira (Chapter 14). Thus we hope you find a path through this book that is of interest to you and makes the most sense to you.

A call to action

Once you finish reading, or when you find a study that strikes your interest, we would encourage you to consider a similar exploration of the issues raised there in your own context. We don't claim to have a monopoly on the representations of Asian voices in EFL, and would love to see a growing body of scholarship around how language teaching and learning should be understood in its situated context, rather than as general principles assumed to be context-, teacher-, and learner-independent. When we started this project our pretext was that learning and using English is rooted in the places where it is learned and used, and that understanding the process of SLA requires an understanding of those contexts. Our feeling was that this dimension of SLA has been lacking from much of the research available to date, and one way we could address this lack of sensitivity to context was to compile and publish this book. Yet if the importance of context for language learning is to take hold more widely, other teacher-researchers like you will need to take up this issue and pursue it independently.

And so, as you read, we hope you are inspired to further research and represent your own contexts.

Part A
Defining the Asian EFL Context

Introduction to Part A

Theron Muller and Philip Shigeo Brown

It has been more than a decade since Kachru (1996) divided the world into three different tiers of English use, and even longer since Hofstede's (1986) research into the cultural differences between different countries and regions of the world. Still, such attempts to summarize or characterize (some would say stereotype) countries in Asia relative to the rest of the world tend to remain popular in summaries of the region, obscuring the great diversity that exists here. Such summaries of Asia also tend to be written from the perspective of an outsider view. In many cases, even when scholars are from Asia, they tend to be based in Western countries and report their affiliations as such. Finally, summaries of the region tend to take as their starting point nation-states as units of analysis and comparison, ignoring the considerable diversity within countries, a shortcoming Hofstede (1991) acknowledges.

Thus when we approached presenting English language teaching in the Asian context for this book, we resolved to avoid making broad brush strokes about the region and have tried to ensure teacher-researchers living in Asia paint pictures of their context and experience, leaving it to the reader to draw comparisons and contrasts with their own circumstances and potential similarities across borders.

One of our motivations for taking such an approach is that Asia might best be defined by its outstanding diversity. It is home to the world's largest populations, including China, India, and Indonesia, as well as some of the smallest, such as The Republic of Palau. It has some of the wealthiest countries in the world, like Japan, and also some of the poorest, including Myanmar. Likewise, with regard to education, spending in both total investment per pupil and percentage of GDP varies considerably across countries (*The World Factbook*, 2010).