

Colloquium 2: Transforming ELT in Asia

Convenor: Dr. Joo-Kyung Park
Honam University, S. Korea

GENERAL ABSTRACT

The aim of the colloquium on transforming ELT in Asia is to highlight on how several nations have responded to the demand of narrowing the gap between the curriculum rhetoric and the classroom reality. The presenters will present ways in which their nations meet the challenges confronted by learners and teachers in teaching English. They will identify strengths and challenges in teaching English in their countries.

About the Convenor

Joo-Kyung Park received an MA in Linguistics from Seoul National University, Korea and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University, USA, specializing in ESL/EFL/Bilingual Ed. She has taught for over 20 years at the university level and since 1993 she has been involved with teacher education programs as program coordinator and teacher trainer. Her professional interests include teacher education, teaching pronunciation/speech, intercultural communication, World Englishes, critical pedagogy, and English immersion program development for Asian learners. She served as President of KOTESOL(1996-7) and Executive Director of Asia TEFL(2003-present). Currently, she is an associate professor at the Department of English Language and Literature, Honam University and serves as the vice president and the 2009 International Conference Chair of Global English Teachers Association (GETA) in Korea. *Email: english58@hanmail.net*

JAPAN: **ELT at the Primary Level: A New Challenge**

Yuko Takeshita
Toyo Eiwa University

ABSTRACT

Japan is not an advanced country in Asia as far as the English education is concerned. In 2011, English will formally be introduced as a compulsory subject for the 5th and 6th graders who will learn English for 45 minutes per week. Partially for this purpose, the Ministry of Education issued new guidelines in 2008 and is trying to accelerate its enforcement. As national consensus is often asked for in making a reform in Japan, the government has taken plenty of time to introduce English education in public elementary schools. "Developing a strategic plan to cultivate 'Japanese with English abilities'- Plan to boost English and Japanese abilities-" was made public in 2002, and the 5-year Action Plan to Cultivate "Japanese with English Abilities" followed. Thus, English is taught at the primary level at last with the overall objective of forming "the foundation of pupils' communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences..." The government defines English as a means of (international) communication. A challenge is yet to be met for primary school teachers to acquire the

communication and teaching skills so that the dependence on native speakers in classroom may be lessened, and that their pupils may become 'Japanese with English abilities' and actively use the language in various international situations.

About the Discussant

Yuko Takeshita received an M.A. in Education from the University of California at Davis, teaches English and organizes relevant courses for international communication and understanding. As a founding member of the Japanese Association for Asian Englishes, she has focused on intercultural communication between Thai and Japanese people. She has been an editor of *Asian Englishes*, has worked as a researcher for the Education Ministry and as the director of a municipal Board of Education. Currently, she is a professor in the Department of Social Sciences, Toyo Eiwa University, Japan. *Email: 2222@jcom.home.ne.jp*

PHILIPPINES

Resisting English: Code-Switching as a Pedagogical Tool in Teaching Math and Science in the Philippines

Isabel Pefianco Martin

Ateneo de Manila University

ABSTRACT

The 1974 Bilingual Education Policy (BEP) of the Philippine Department of Education requires that English be used in teaching math and science in schools. However, there is widespread perception that Filipino teachers and students code-switch freely. School administrators view this practice as undesirable and detrimental to the achievement of educational goals. This presentation proposes that code-switching in teaching math and science may actually be beneficial in developing both proficiency in the languages and mastery of the subject matter.

About the Discussant

Isabel Pefianco Martin is Associate Professor and Coordinator for Research at the School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University. She was Chair of the English Department from 1998 to 2004, President of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines (LSP) from 2006 to 2008, and Secretary of the American Studies Association of the Philippines (ASAP) in 2006. Since 2004, Dr. Martin has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the Philippine Social Science Council (PSSC), which she now serves as Treasurer. In 2006, she was appointed by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to the position of Part-time Commissioner of the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, representing the Philippine languages Kinaray-a and Hiligaynon. Her research interests include descriptions of English, world Englishes, Philippine English, and the politics and practice of language and literature education in the Philippines. *Email: mmartin@ateneo.edu*

TAIWAN

Teaching English to Children in Taiwan

Meei-Ling Liaw
National Taichung University

ABSTRACT

This talk will provide an overview on the current status of English education in Taiwan and specifically with a focus on how the language education policies are affecting elementary school and younger children. As English becomes *lingua franca*, the government of Taiwan, like many countries throughout the world, sees English as a basic educational requirement for all rather than simply as a desirable accomplishment for some. Efforts in reforming and liberalizing its education system have been ongoing and a significant aspect of the reform of education is extending English instruction to elementary schools. Challenges emerged when its implementation was launched. After nearly a decade of manoeuvring, some of the earlier concerns have subsided, yet many pedagogical issues still remain. While the effectiveness of elementary school English instruction await careful assessments, demands and pressure for teaching English to younger children arise. Whether the nation should embrace English instruction in kindergartens and after-school programs for younger children is now a heated debatable topic.

About the Discussant

Dr. Meei-Ling Liaw received an MA and a doctoral degree in Educational Curriculum and Instruction from Texas A&M University, USA, specializing in ESL/EFL/Bilingual Ed. She has taught for many years at the university level and has been involved in teacher education programs as director, department chair, and teacher trainer. Her professional interests include reading, children's literature, technology-assisted language learning, and intercultural learning. She received Fulbright senior research grants in 2001 and 2008 and conducted research at UC, Berkeley and UC, Irvine respectively. Currently, she is professor in the Department of English, National Taichung University and editorial board member of *Language Learning and Technology*. Email: meeilingliaw@gmail.com

THAILAND

Action Research in Schools in Thailand: Challenges and opportunities

Suchada Nimmannit
Chulalongkorn University Language Institute

ABSTRACT

Action research has gained its prominence in schools in Thailand since the Education Reform Act (2002) requires teachers to submit a research study to support their application for academic promotion. Action research has been recommended to school teachers due to its practicality, relevancy to classroom situation and most importantly, its merits in terms of improvement in quality of teaching and learning. In conducting action research, teachers are expected to engage in identifying problems from the data collected from their classroom. To solve those problems, they research and reflect on possibilities before selecting and implementing interventions. They analyze the effects of those interventions before starting another loop of study. Action research, therefore, not only frees teachers from passive acceptance of classroom problems and situations, but also encourages teachers to be critical of their own practices and identify creative ways to solve the problems. It facilitates

ongoing teacher development. How have Thai teachers in schools handle action research? The presenter summarizes the action research studies conducted by Thai teachers of English which are posted on the National Research Council website (http://www.riclib.nrct.go.th/index_e.html) in terms of language skills, topics and research designs studied as well as the challenges faced by the teachers.

About the Discussant

Suchada Nimmannit teaches communication, presentation and ELT methodologies at Chulalongkorn University. She worked for her graduate studies at Pennsylvania State University, USA and Macquarie University, Australia. Her works include English course books for Thai, "That's correct!", Handbook for content-based instructions, serving in national committees on English standard-based-curriculum and teacher professional development. Suchada was President of ThaiTESOL (2000-2003), during which Thai TESOL received the Worldaware British Council Award for English language training, AsiaTEFL Executive Committee (2003-2007), Director of TESOL Executive Board (2004-2007), TESOL-EFL-IS Newsletter Co-editor (2008-2009) and TESOL nominating committee (2009-2010). Her interests are in motivation and strategies used by students and the use of computer-mediated communication to promote English improvement. *Email:* suchada.n@chula.ac.th

RUSSIA

Transforming TEFL in Asia: Russia's Experience

Marina Rassokha

Far Eastern National University

ABSTRACT

The talk will offer some insights into the contemporary TEFL situation in Russia which is currently characterized by the English language learning boom. The demand for English in business, advertising, academic circles, tourism, etc. has encouraged the tendencies common to educational situations around the globe. The common and pronounced tendency is displayed in integrating processes targeted at making the country's educational system more internationally acceptable and competitive. The far-reaching changes are evident in the transition to a standard two-stage degree program (BA and MA) at tertiary level and the introduction of the Unified National Examination as a school-leaving exam aimed at standardization of training. Another distinct tendency is observed in increasing liberalization and decentralization of the English language education, especially at the university level. Since the universities are more open to a wider international collaboration, they introduce new specialized innovative curricula and enjoy a new-found freedom in developing and producing curriculum materials. The coexistence of these two seemingly opposing tendencies on the Russian educational scene can be regarded as a powerful shaping force transforming TEFL in Russia. Trying to find their own way of reforming the education system, Russian educators are currently in search for a didactic balance between international and national aspects of language education.

About the Discussant

Marina Rassokha, Associate Professor, teaches English in the Foreign Languages Institute,

Far Eastern National University, Vladivostok, Russia. She has a PhD in Linguistics from St. Petersburg University, Russia. Her main research interests are in the theory of cross-cultural studies, intercultural teaching, and Germanic Philology. She is currently vice-president of FEELTA and a regional representative of Asia TEFL. *Email: m rassokha@gmail.com*

SINGAPORE

The Status of English in Singapore: Implications and Issues

Chee Jan Foo

Language Teaching Institute, Singapore

ABSTRACT

English enjoys its current status as a lingua franca in Singapore because of the country's colonial past and the farsighted-ness of the Republic's founding fathers i e the government that delivered independence. In pre-independence days English was dominant as a language of economic and social superiority. It meant power and authority, and appeared exclusive to an elite. Efforts were made after independence to ensure an even spread of the use of the language the beneficiaries of which would be the school children. Non-English medium schools were given additional time on the curriculum to acquire the language to equip themselves for international communication. The foundation was then laid to build the industrialization programme that was anticipated as English is the key to Science and Technology. However, the enthusiasm to use the language by all and sundry led to the adulteration in the use of the language. Concerns for the decline in its standards necessitated measures such as the Speak Good English Movement. The phenomenon of Singlish evolved with less distinctive versions of the language in its train. English in Singapore is both an enviable and a unique tool of communication in a multi-lingual, a multi-racial and a multi-religious place.

About the Discussant

Foo Chee Jan, *Ph D, M Ed, LTCL, Dip TESL, Dip Mgmt Cons, Dip HRD*, is currently providing service as a consultant in English Language Education. He retired in 2006 as Head, Language Teaching Institute, SEAMEO Regional Language Centre after 13 years. He spent 36 years of the 48 years of working life in English language teaching and learning. He was a teacher, lecturer in English, English language teacher-trainer, Senior Manager (Administration and Human Resource) and Management Consultant. His experience in ELT covers managing courses for students, adults, professionals, government officials, diplomats, academics and military officials from China, Japan and South-east Asia. He has presented papers at international conferences in Japan, China, and Vietnam. In Korea, he has presented at international conferences hosted by Soongsil University, KATE, Youngnam English Teachers Association, and AsiaTEFL. He was awarded the Colombo Plan Scholarship (1969) and the Commonwealth Educational Fellowship (1975) to further specialized studies in ELT in Great Britain and New Zealand. His main interests in ELT are Oral Communication Skills and Pronunciation including Competence in Expression. *Email: cheejan@gmail.com*