Reviews

The Developing Teacher. **Duncan Foord. Peaslake, Surrey, UK: Delta, 2009. 96 pp.**

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The Developing Teacher is the second book in Delta Publishing's teacher development series. It consists of a large number of activities designed to help teachers reflect on and improve their professional practice. The activities come from a combination of the author's conversations with other teachers and his own lengthy experience, as well as having been informed by writing from inside and outside the field of TESOL. Foord attempts to make the activities universal and appropriate for all, regardless of teaching experience or long-term commitment to the profession. The book is divided into three main parts. The first defines development and explains why it is important, detailing the rationale behind the book as a whole. Teacher development is identified as consisting of both "becoming better at what we do in the classroom" and developing "our career in teaching in the broadest sense." In development, teachers "reflect on what has happened, . . . make new things happen and . . . react to changes around [them]" (p. 8). The second part consists of the activities for professional development themselves. Foord separates the activities into five "circles of development," proceeding from those which can be done alone to activities which require the teacher to develop in the context of the profession as a whole. Though the majority of activities in the five sections are short, the final part of the book contains suggestions for three long-term projects.

Each section on the five circles of development is organized in the same way. It begins with an introduction, the first part of which is a checklist on which readers can rate from 0 to 5 things they have or have not done. For in-

stance, the first checklist includes "worked on my time management skills" and "kept a teaching diary" (p. 20). Readers can then identify those things they would like to do. The introduction then links the particular section to RISE (Recognition, Imposition, Self-improvement, Enjoyment), which Foord claims are the main motivations teachers have for taking part in development. For example, the section of the book dedicated to "You and Your Students" focuses on S and E, as teachers try to improve themselves as well as gain more enjoyment from the job. The end of each section's introduction consists of a summary of key activities and a rationale for each. After the introduction, the activities are laid out in an easy-to-understand format including a rationale, key steps in the activity itself, and a template where necessary. Each section contains between 11 and 20 activities. The activities are written in an accessible style, with frequent humor, such as Step One asking readers to make a cup of tea, get two biscuits, and sit down on their sofa before beginning Step Two.

The first circle is "You." All of the activities require only reflection or self-observation. Some, such as "Tea and Two Biscuits" (p. 31) mentioned above, comprise self-reflection on particular classes, sources of stress, or bigger questions such as "Why did I become a teacher?" Other activities asking the reader to self-observe at work and reflect do not require much preparation or materials beyond a piece of paper. For instance, in "RISE and Shine" (p. 22), readers are asked to assign motivation to instances in their careers, such as having done a diploma course partly out of a desire for recognition (R in RISE). Readers are to return to their observations in 3 months' time and assess if their motivation has changed. This is typical of many of the activities in the book; though the concept presented is simple, actually doing the activity can be surprisingly revealing as following the steps compels one to focus on particular areas of development.

The second circle is "You and Your Students," where the activities require interaction between the reader and students. Many of these activities seek to bridge the gap between teacher and learners, and introduce ways in which a teacher can involve learners in his or her teacher development. An example is "Face Down, Face Up" (p. 41). To get over the problem of students being unwilling to offer criticism or provide feedback on the approaches taken by their teachers, they are provided with a collection of possible comments, such as "I wish the teacher would correct my mistakes more." Students only need to agree or disagree; this is followed by a discussion and feedback stage. Activities in this section allow the teacher to elicit comments on something new they may have tried in the classroom, such as a new method of teaching,

a different attitude to classroom roles, or simply a different arrangement of seating.

The third circle, "You and Your Colleagues," asks the reader to interact with colleagues to either assist them or be assisted by them in development. Some activities are geared towards improving communication between teachers, while others require a colleague to team-teach a class or observe one's teaching. These activities are generally short-term, but two are about mentoring new teachers for a period of weeks or months.

"You and Your School," the fourth circle, consists of activities about the work environment. These range from the micro, such as small annoyances with classroom design, to the macro, such as the curriculum, materials, or exams set by the school administration. The activities frequently require the reader to reflect on new ways to approach interactions between school and colleagues. One example is "Six Ways of Talking" (p. 69). Teachers role-play typical inter-staff conversations, such as the director of studies meeting with a teacher to discuss student complaints, and reflect on how they communicated.

The fifth and final section is "You and Your Profession." Here the reader is encouraged to interact across the field as a whole in various ways. At the simplest level, this might consist of attending a conference or posting on a blog, but builds up to ways for teachers to get involved in publishing both in academic journals and as contributors to classroom texts.

In the course of reviewing the book, I tried out a number of the activities, both on my own and in my classes. In much the same way that different ways of learning appeal to different people, I found that some activities suited me well, whereas others did not, such as "What Colour of Teacher are you?" (p. 29). However, the wide variety of activities means it is possible to find some that look interesting and rewarding, such as "First Things First" (p. 24) which helped me a great deal with my prioritizing of tasks. As the majority of activities can be completed in 20 or 30 minutes, it is easy to make time for them. Indeed, there is even an activity to improve time management for this very reason. In short, *The Developing Teacher* is an accessible, clearly written, and entertaining text. I would recommend it to all teachers, regardless of their experience, motivations, or professional goals.

Can Do Statements in Language Education in Japan and Beyond: Applications of the CEFR. Maria Gabriela Schmidt, Naoyuki Naganuma, Fergus O'Dwyer, Alexander Imig, and Kazumi Sakai (Eds.). Tokyo: Asahi Press, 2010. x + 315 pp.

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Those of us with experience in the European language industry as educators, course designers, examiners, or trainers will surely have encountered the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Developed by the Council of Europe (COE) through extensive research and consultation in the 1990s, the CEFR represents an action-orientated model of progressive language competency and the COE's vision for a communicative-focused *plurilingual* society. Accompanying the six common reference levels (A1—C2; denoting Basic, Independent, and Proficient users), the CEFR is supported by *can do statements*, positive descriptors of learners' practical competences at each stage (see 1.1 Imig & O'Dwyer, p. 3 for details on how these statements were developed). The framework itself has been translated into 38 languages, with a further two in translation (COE, n.d.), demonstrating its continuing rise in popularity and increasing circle of influence beyond Europe. The concept that led to the creation of *Can Do Statements in Language Education in Japan and Beyond: Applications of the CEFR* was Schmidt's (p. iii) proposal at the JALT2009 conference that a collection of can do-related texts be compiled. For better or worse, an assemblage of similarly themed papers is what this book is.

The CEFR and the can do statements, originally devised for European languages and now available in multiple languages, will be better known to teachers of languages other than English. It is perhaps because of this, as well as to embody the concept of plurilingualism, that the editors decided to include papers in English, Japanese, and German. This choice, while understandable, nevertheless makes the volume, in part, inaccessible to most readers. While the preface appears written in all three languages, this equality is not maintained. Most papers in the collection, including those written in Japanese or German, have an English abstract provided. Only one of the papers written in Japanese (2.3 Majima) is accompanied by a full English version which, much like the rest, would have benefited from consistent

editing. Lack of consistency is the most noticeable issue. It would have been preferable to have all the abstracts provided in each language and for the papers to all follow the same outlining structure.

The introductory chapter historically situates the CEFR, European Language Portfolio (ELP), and can do statements, giving those readers unfamiliar with the CEFR family an overview of the associated influences and issues, as well as references for further reading. Both papers are concise and informative; the continued defining of the CEFR in Chapter 2 "The CEFR and Can Do Statements" is redundant. That said, the papers included in this and subsequent chapters do cover a broad range of can do applications and research. This certainly fulfils the collection's aim of overcoming the lack of awareness perceived by the editors to exist among educators on how to utilise the CEFR and can do statements.

The CEFR has been described as possibly being "the most relevant and controversial document in the [language education] field in the twenty-first century . . ." (Figueras, 2012, p. 477). In their paper, "1.2 An Overview of the International Influences of the CEFR," Parmenter and Byram give an introduction to the criticisms levelled at the CEFR, highlighting its *foreignness* outside of Europe. However, it falls to later papers to explain these shortcomings. Green ("2.2 Conflicting Purposes in the Use of Can Do Statements in Language Education") explores the friction sometimes created by the behavioural and proficiency objectives at the heart of the CEFR scales. This conflict grounds some of the Japan-centric issues voiced in later chapters: those of assessing the communicative ability (the capacity to carry out a language task) or mastery of the language necessary for *proficiency* to be evident. Horiguchi, Harada, Imoto, and Atobe ("3.5 The Implementation of a Japanese Version of the 'ELP-Junior Version' in Keio"), echo this issue, documenting the resistance of some teachers to adopting what they discern as a purely communicative approach assessment. The study also highlights the pedagogical limitations of a can do or task-based approach to language learning in a context with little opportunity for interaction beyond the classroom. In the classroom, textbooks and functional approaches to instruction, such as those described in "3.2 *Kannbeschreibungen im Deutschunterricht an Japanischen Universitäten?*" (outlining the creation of a conversational German textbook) and "3.3 Using German Can Do Statements as a Model for Other Languages Such as Russian and Chinese: A Special Project" (looking at the use of chunking as an approach to language instruction), support the notion of the CEFR's foreignness but also offer insight into its effectiveness once this initial unfamiliarity is overcome.

Although the miscellany of papers can be difficult to navigate, and the plethora of voices can be grating, the variety is also a great strength of the collection. By including a range of contexts, practitioners, and researchers, the editors have succeeded in offering models for research or application in almost every Japanese institution or context. Small-scale action research such as Sato's 1-year survey of three freshman classes' reaction to the use of can do statements, "4.3 Using Can Do Statements to Promote Reflective Learning," is comprehensible and described in enough detail to be replicated. Collett and Sullivan's project, "4.2 Considering the Use of Can Do Statements to Develop Learners' Self-Regulative and Metacognitive Strategies," is broader in scale, but still furnishes the reader with a model for similar studies. Collett and Sullivan give more insight into the theories of learner autonomy and learning strategies, linking these to the can do statements before synthesising them into the *Study Progress Sheets* used in the project. Papers like theirs not only give credibility to the use of can do statements from an academic standpoint, but demonstrate how, through practitioner-led action research, effective learner resources can be developed. Larger scale studies, such as Horiguchi et al. ("3.5 The Implementation of a Japanese Version of the 'ELP-Junior version' in Keio") and Sargent and Winward-Stuart ("4.7 Implementation of a Can Do Based Syllabus in an *eikaiwa*"), are two of the strongest papers in this collection. Horiguchi et al. describe an institution-wide attempt to implement the ELP and delineate the obstacles encountered, including the general foreignness of the instrument and learners' lack of experience with self-assessment. The 7-year project undertaken by Sargent and Winward-Stuart at an *eikaiwa* is by far the largest described in this collection. It explores the complexities of the Japanese education context in terms of stakeholder expectations, the examination or assessment-centric nature of language learning, language learning beliefs, and the business framework in the private conversation and language schools. Their project shows a commendable focus on learner needs and the necessity for change both for the precarious eikaiwa industry and language education as a whole.

The Sargent and Winward-Stuart paper picks up on another sub-theme of the collection, that of the CEFR's relationship with examinations, clearly a vital quality in the Japanese context. Those readers already familiar with the CEFR will undoubtedly know its parallels with Europe-based exams (e.g., Cambridge Suite, BULATS, IELTS). However, for the sample of eikaiwa students in Sargent and Winward-Stuart's study, the correlations found between the CEFR-based levels and those of the largely Japan-based *Eiken* test were very interesting.

As a published volume, *Can Do Statements in Language Education in Japan and Beyond: Applications of the CEFR* can be unwieldy. As an assembly of papers, the sub-themes and unexpected insights contained could have been better presented if the book had followed a more consistent format. As a platform for research, however, the book is an amazing showcase of the contexts of language teaching in Japan and of the many talented practitioners and researchers working in the field. Like the can do statements themselves, this book needs to be adapted by the reader to suit his or her own needs. The Framework's ideological derivations and commentary on the evolution of language teaching are increasingly relevant in the glocalised environment, making these papers timely and insightful. The collection certainly contributes to the literature on and the debate surrounding the CEFR.

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English in Japan in the Era of Globalization. Philip Seargeant (Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. x + 208 pp.

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At first glance, the average EFL teacher in Japan might not think that *English in Japan in the Era of Globalization* (hereinafter *EJEG*) is the most useful or relevant book for them. Although the first half of *EJEG* does explore various facets of English in the Japanese educational context, the book is not explicitly about ELT like a coursebook or teacher's manual, but is instead a collection of critical anthropological studies of English as it exists here. However, for reflective English teachers in Japan who have wondered about the historical and political forces which allow us to automatically become professional educators in another country, and which prize our linguistic birthright while never seeming to fully take it to heart, then *EJEG* is a welcome discovery. Although the book is replete with scholarship on how glo-

balizing forces have shaped how English is taught, learnt, manifested, and manipulated in Japan, it is quite engaging and easy to read, and would be useful for the native English-speaking educator trying to situate his or her identity and role in the ambiguous spaces of Japanese schools, institutions, and society in general.

EJEG begins with an Introduction by editor Philip Seargeant, followed by nine articles organized into two parts, entitled "English in the Education System" and "English in Society and Culture." The Introduction alone is worth half the price; it gives the broad historical outlines of how English has come to hold its puzzling position in Japan, with a depiction of the contested and contradictory sociopolitical discourse that surrounds it today. Seargeant's stated intent with *EJEG* is to examine English in Japan in terms of its relation to Japanese identity, the image and reality of the language itself, and the globalizing processes that promote and permeate how English is taught and used in Japan. This organization echoes Appadurai's (1990) depiction of cultural products in the contested landscape of globalization, a notion that rings true to English speakers or teachers in Japan.

The five articles in Part I give impressions of English in Japanese education from various angles, from policymakers to teachers and students, as well as the average Japanese person in the street. The first essay, by Yamagami and Tollefson, tackles the discourse of English in education, especially the tension between *English-as-opportunity* and *English-as-threat*, which is engendered by opposing globalizing educational and nationalizing political forces. Next, Matsuda's examination of student and teacher perceptions of English as global lingua franca is closest to research that JALT members may have read in its publications or heard at conferences, but goes further by asking and answering important questions about what English really means to Japanese people studying it. Stewart and Miyahara follow this with a look at the opposition of administrative reality and the globalization goals for a student-oriented curriculum in a Japanese university, which will resonate with anyone frustrated at teaching in higher education here. Fourth, Breckenridge and Erling discuss the essentialist yet alienating "native teacher ideal" of the JET Programme through three ALT narratives. This article looks at the alienation of ALTs from the teaching profession and how ALTs might be drawn toward and engaged in professional teaching associations. Rounding out the section, Kubota offers personalized narratives and policy views of the privileged status of English education and how this denies the experiences of other-language immigrants here. With one like me, who started as an ALT on the JET Programme, moved through various EFL positions, and

climbed my way into teaching at a university while doing my doctoral studies here in Japan, all these articles resonate and add a deeper understanding of the larger forces shaping the experiences I have had.

Part II presents four articles that step outside of the classroom to look at how English manifests itself in Japanese society at large. Starting off, Yano examines how "native-speaker syndrome" prevents the emergence of an indigenous Japanese tradition of English such as the ones in Singapore or the Philippines, instead leaving a heavy English footprint on the Japanese language. Next, Kamada uses analysis of discourse from mixed-parentage girls to depict how they form their own identity. Following that, Moody and Matsumoto examine how both behavioral characteristics as well as linguistic skills are expected of the idealized Japanese speaker of English in NHK "language entertainment" TV programs. Finally, Seargeant wraps the section up with a semiotic analysis of English used in signage in Japan, especially its various and sometimes opposing functional roles for foreigners and status symbolism for Japanese. The diverse topics covered in this section especially testify to the dual role of English in Japan in what Fairclough (2006) terms "globalization from above" and "globalization from below" (p. 37).

This book will likely be of particular value to those pursuing graduate degrees. Truthfully, some of the articles in *EJEG* are more qualitative than some readers might prefer, relating personal experiences as data, although this is mostly made up for by the depth of background research the writers of each article have done. Additionally, in true academic form, *EJEG* asks more questions than it answers, which educators used to teachers' guides and texts with concrete steps and solutions may find less than satisfying. However, the book is thought-provoking and enlightening reading for English speakers and teachers who live in Japan, and I would recommend it to any fellow language teacher in Japan or anywhere else in Asia for that matter.

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Thinking About Language Teaching: Selected Articles 1982-2011. Michael Swan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. xi + 230 pp.

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Michael Swan is well known among language teachers for his reference works, which are compulsory reading on the majority of TESOL certificate and diploma courses and usually essential for a few years afterwards. However, in the academic TESOL community he is at least as well known for his influential and sometimes provocative and contrarian articles about ELT methodology and practice. This book collects some of his more famous writings of this sort in the first 18 chapters, complete with some perspective-adding forewords from the author, as well as including a number of satirical pieces about the world of ELT in the final chapters (19-25).

Students of TESOL and applied linguistics will more than likely be aware of Swan's 1982 critique of the communicative approach, which appeared in *Applied Linguistics,* and led to a heated exchange between Swan and Henry Widdowson. Swan opined against the prevailing belief of the ELT community that the communicative approach was the most effective ELT methodology, arguing that the claimed benefits of function over form were weakly supported by theory and risked turning classrooms into places where students merely "did things" with language, rather than actually learn it. His two articles on the subject, along with this exchange, are reproduced in Chapters 1 and 2 of this book, and are contextualized with a foreword by Swan and some concluding thoughts from Widdowson. These articles provide an entertaining opening to the book and establish not only Swan's character (the closest thing to an *angry everyman* that the world of ELT has to offer), but also one of the recurring themes in Swan's writing, the "new toy" effect, which he first describes on page 7.

Swan argues that in the same way children only want to play with their new toy, discarding all the old ones, so too do teachers become overly enamoured of new methods and often dismiss older approaches as "discredited," regardless of how useful they may actually be. He has remained critical of what he sees as evidence-free trends in methodology, a position which can best be summed up with a quote from the book in which he states that "like

eighteenth-century doctors, we work largely by hunch, concealing our igno-
rance under a screen of pseudo-science and jargon" (p. 26). He returns to
this theme when he discusses task-based learning in Chapter 8, *chunks* in
Chapter 9, and methods in general in Chapter 16 (with other gentle sprin-
klings of cynicism found throughout the collection). It is easy to sympathise
with Swan's position, but towards the end of the collection, readers may
start to feel that the point has been sufficiently, if eloquently, made.

Inherent to all these criticisms is Swan's suspicion of communicative ap-
proaches, in which students "notice" gaps in their L2 knowledge and "dis-
cover" language (rather than being told about or taught it by a teacher). In
particular, he argues that these approaches focus too heavily on the L2, and
not enough on the L1. This point receives the greatest attention in Chapter 7,
during which he discusses the connection between vocabulary acquisition
and the influence of the student's L1 and is brought up again in Chapter 13,
where he defends contrastive analysis as a useful resource for teachers in
identifying learner problems.

It may seem as if Swan's approach is more critical than constructive, but
this is not in fact the case. Alongside his critiques, he offers insights into
how TESOL courses can best be organized (Chapter 5), and into the extent
to, and manner in which, grammar can be effectively taught (Chapter 11).
However, Swan's chief contribution, as evident in this collection, appears to
be in the realm of clarifying ideas. He notes in Chapter 2 that the terminol-
ogy and concepts of TESOL can be confusing and complex, and in response
to this a number of articles included in this collection seek to make these
ideas comprehensible. This is most evident in Chapter 12, in which he of-
fers a summary of how language courses can best be constructed, and in
Chapter 14, which contains an informative discussion on how grammatical
structures can be more useful to students than the teaching of pragmatic
rules. In the next chapter, he writes at some length about learning strategies,
critically evaluating common reading strategies (such as guessing meaning
from context) and makes suggestions about which ones are most likely to be
effective. These, together with a few other articles in the book (see Chapters
5, 7, 15, and 17), offer informative views on ELT methods and practice, but
are perhaps less memorable than the more sceptical pieces alongside which
they appear.

Towards the end of the book, we are shown some of Swan's satirical
writing about TESOL and the ELT industry. The first is a discussion of the
benefits of teaching through "sensory deprivation," poking fun at faddish
methodologies of the 1970s and 80s such as the Silent Way. These satirical

essays are amusing and diverting, but hidden beneath each is a veiled criticism of some aspect of ELT, be it the nebulous expansion of ELT terminology and theorizing (Chapter 24) or the pretentiousness of a great deal of ELT research (Chapter 20). Of most interest to those concerned with teaching in Japan is Swan's discussion in Chapter 25 ("Learning the Piano in Fantasia"), in which he discusses the problems facing the planet Fantasia, which is seeking to make all its children proficient in the piano as a means of interplanetary communication (having been adopted as an intergalactic lingua franca). To resolve this problem, he makes a number of suggestions, such as reducing the amount of music in the syllabuses, reducing the focus on music exams as the end of the course, and making sure that the high school piano tutors are actually able to play the piano themselves. This is, of course, an obvious parody of the problematic situation in contexts such as Japan. Swan's recommendations for how to tackle these problems are sensible, realistic, and practical, and as such have been proposed many times before and are unlikely to provide any new insights to those familiar with the field. The article does, however, collect and focus the criticisms of the Japanese language education system into four easily digestible pages and may help to raise awareness among teachers and ELT professionals.

Overall, this is a book that contains insights into teaching and methodology which are useful, but which may be overshadowed by the more famous and contrarian articles reproduced alongside them. Swan argues against much of the prevailing wisdom in ELT methodology, attempts to make it more comprehensible and generally applicable to ELT practitioners, and offers some of his own advice and solutions to the problems raised. Despite these practical applications, the book is perhaps best read as an assembly of the recollections, views, and thoughts of an influential figure in the world of TESOL. It does not provide a deep focus on any aspect of methodology or practice, nor does it seek to outline a teaching philosophy or overarching pedagogical system. It does, however, provide a number of well-written, entertaining, and sceptical insights into the world of ELT and some historical perspective on how the world of TESOL has come to be as it is.

Towards an Understanding of Language Learner Self-Concept. Sarah Mercer. Springer, 2011. xii + 220 pp.

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In recent decades, there has been a surge of interest in researching self-related constructs, motivated by the widely acknowledged belief amongst psychology and applied linguistics researchers that self-beliefs can heavily influence how a learner approaches a learning task. However, studies in second language acquisition that explicitly focus on self-concept are conspicuously absent. Hence, *Towards an Understanding of Language Learner Self-Concept* is an especially insightful and timely contribution.

Using a strong, interdisciplinary approach that builds on reflections from current research in both psychology and applied linguistics, Mercer focuses on how learners form their English as a foreign language (EFL) self-concept. The nonpositivist, domain-specific exploration of the construct is particularly welcome and represents a far cry from earlier quantitative investigations. Using a grounded theory approach, Mercer describes and reports on a 2-year, in-depth, longitudinal case study undertaken with an advanced level Austrian female student learning English as a foreign language. The study is supported by several other data sources and aims to provide some valuable insight into the complexity of self-concept and the kinds of dynamic processes involved in foreign language self-concept formation.

The book comprises seven chapters that examine the theoretical nature of the EFL self-concept and the principal factors that influence its development. Chapter 1 describes the research context of the study and provides an overview of the various chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical nature and structure of the self-concept. This is followed in Chapter 3 by a thorough analysis of both the case study and other data sources to ascertain how the EFL self-concept may function within a specific context. The next three chapters focus on various factors that may affect the formation of a learner's self-concept. Chapter 4 investigates the extent to which the self-concept may be dynamic, as well as the role of demographic factors, past achievements, feedback from significant others, and social comparisons. The influential Internal/External (I/E) frame of reference model (Marsh, 1986) is also described. A modified form of this model is subsequently used in Chapters 5 and 6 as a frame of reference for understanding some of the internal and external factors that

seem to influence the EFL self-concepts of the learners in Mercer's study. The final chapter discusses the findings of the study, considers some pedagogical applications, and suggests areas for further research.

As part of the *Educational Linguistics* book series, which promotes work that is transdisciplinary, contextualised, and innovative, Mercer's study certainly fills the bill. Of particular interest in Chapter 3 is her hypothesis concerning the theoretical nature of the self-concept construct. She proposes that although self-concept seems to be multifaceted, it is highly unlikely that it is hierarchically structured, as originally claimed in an influential self-concept model developed by Marsh and Shavelson (1985). On the contrary, Mercer's qualitative data suggests a complex interconnected set of relations among various self-concepts, which indicates the potential for variation, depending on the context and the individual. Mercer introduces an innovative 3D model of self-concept, which she claims can more accurately account for individual variation. The model consists of a molecular structure with differently sized spheres and connecting lines of various thicknesses. According to Mercer, this model successfully illustrates the interrelatedness of the self-concept network and indicates which self-concept is dominant for an individual at a particular time or in a particular context. She also highlights the model's flexibility and suggests that it can easily be adapted to accommodate different individuals in specific contexts.

Mercer should also be applauded for her discussion of the factors that may affect the formation of a learner's EFL self-concept. Using an adapted form of Marsh's (1986) I/E frame of reference model ensures a sound theoretical framework, while presenting the I/E factors in separate chapters makes logical sense and reduces the potential for ambiguity in the text. Of particular interest is her discussion of several internal factors, such as the types of internal comparisons that learners make across subjects, languages, skills, and even specific tasks. Her study indicates that comparisons of this type could effectively result in a student developing an increasingly positive self-concept in one foreign language, or language skill, to the detriment of another language or skill.

Another welcome aspect of the book is Mercer's examination of belief systems about language learning in general and beliefs about each specific language when learners evaluate their own self-concepts. Language learning beliefs have been shown to heavily influence strategy use, autonomy, and motivation levels. This factor was not included in Marsh's (1986) original I/E model and its addition by Mercer is a positive development. In Chapter 5, she interestingly suggests that a learner's EFL self-concept seems to be

influenced by general foreign language learning-related domain-specific sets of beliefs, rather than by language-specific learning beliefs. Several epistemological beliefs emerged from the data, as well as beliefs about the importance of experience in learning a language and the value of a stay abroad. On a slightly critical note, the role of authority in the classroom merited greater discussion in Chapter 6 given the prominent role that teachers play in learners' lives and the influence they can have on learners' attitudes, motivation, and the types of learning strategies they use. Nevertheless, this certainly does not detract from what is a successful attempt at investigating the various factors that affect self-concept formation.

Mercer repeatedly states throughout the book that her study is exploratory and is not intended to provide an all-encompassing comprehensive description of EFL self-concept. She does not deny that there may be other factors that affect self-concept formation and does not openly state any advantage of selecting internal or external frames of reference. She is simply interested in examining the dynamic nature of the EFL self-concept and exploring the way individual learners vary both in terms of the frames of reference they select when developing their EFL self-concept and how those factors interrelate in a specific context. In this respect, she has achieved her objective and has provided substantial food for thought for researchers in the field, particularly those who are intent on developing abstract, generalised models of self-concept. From a pedagogical perspective, the recommendations Mercer makes in Chapter 7 to help improve our learners' self-concepts are a step in the right direction. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to query how feasible it is for under-pressure educators to realistically undertake the types of in-depth exploratory studies on individual learners that are suggested by Mercer.

In conclusion, I would have no hesitation in highly recommending this book to language teachers and others who are interested in self-concept or any self-related constructs. Its far-reaching conclusions and regular suggestions of areas for future research should ensure that self-concept remains an intriguing construct for further exploration.

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Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia. Theron Muller, Steven Herder, John Adamson, and Philip Shigeo Brown (Eds.). Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. xxiv + 301 pp.

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As stated in the Preface, *Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia* was created to serve several purposes, such as to provide a forum for Asia-based teachers to explain their context and how it affects their teaching and to provide further documentation of language teaching in an Asian EFL context. Indeed, it is the opinion of contributors to *Innovating* that context determines much of what is done in the EFL language classroom. Bringing together studies from nine different countries, the book contains 20 chapters. These chapters are organized into five areas, each prefaced with an introduction that explains how the chapters within the section contribute to an understanding of teaching in an Asian EFL context.

Part A consists of chapters from China, Thailand, Indonesia, and Korea. The purpose of this part is to help define what the Asian EFL teaching context is. For example, in Chapter 1, Xi Fang uses participant observation to chart the implications of the Chinese education ministry's implementation of communicative language teaching in one high school in southeast China. Based on ethnographic data, Fang is able to illustrate how changes to language education policy are perceived and dealt with by teachers expected to carry out those changes in the classroom. Gillian Palmer and Itje Chodidjah's chapter is on a teacher training and materials creation joint project between the British Council and the Nahdlatul Ulama Pesantren Islamic Boarding Schools (NUPIBS) in Indonesia. Taking a cascade approach to teacher training and materials creation, the authors outline successes and problems that arise in trying to create materials appropriate for both relatively rich urban schools and poor rural schools with few resources. In terms of teacher training, issues include how to deal with a lack of funds, differences in language proficiency among teachers and students, and how open teachers are to changing their teaching practices from traditional grammar translation methodology to more communicative teaching approaches approved by NUPIBS. Both of these chapters provide a perspective that is clearly outlined in practice.

In Part B, the authors focus on the Asian EFL teaching context by comparing teachers' and students' views of teaching, considering factors that can impact such views. For example, in Fumiko Murase's chapter, what university teachers think about their students' attitude towards learning is compared to what students think. Murase concludes that teachers often make assumptions about their students' capacity for learner autonomy without even enquiring what students think. The sixth chapter, by Chutagarn Raktham, utilizes Holliday's (2005) distinction between "big culture" (i.e., commonly held assumptions about a group of people) and "small culture" (i.e., the behaviours observed within a particular group), to better understand the influence of national culture on student behaviour. Raktham's findings indicate that small culture dictates what students do much more than might be expected. Of particular importance in all four chapters in this section is how the authors uncover and report on new insights that run counter to stereotypical views regarding their respective EFL contexts.

In the preface for Part C, Theron Muller makes the argument that historically EFL teachers have been limited to being testers of theory generated by ESL practitioners. As a result, many EFL teachers have ended up teaching to a theory as opposed to meeting the pedagogic needs of their students. The four chapters that form this part all provide examples of how context shapes methodology and theory building. For example, Japan-based teacher-researchers Muller and Mark de Boer illustrate that a common problem among EFL practitioners is how large class sizes inhibit communication in the L2. By reinterpreting previously published studies, the authors suggest that large class sizes can work against language learning, while classes with fewer students per teacher can actually mimic more natural conversation conventions. Another interesting chapter in this section is written by Honzhi Yang and Eva Bernat, who used Activity Theory to better understand how ready teachers in China are for drastic education reforms. Using a qualitative case study approach, Yang and Bernat undertook in-depth analysis to understand the interaction among beliefs, classroom practices, and contextual factors. They used Activity Theory to label behavior according to different activity categories. The results are practical suggestions as to what can be done to make teachers more receptive to government language education policy changes, such as the recommendation that teachers initially team-teach, and a reconsideration that those educated in Western cultures might not come equipped with the necessary skills to immediately take on the classroom challenges in Asia. Including chapters from Philip Shigeo Brown

and Wendy Lam, Part C illustrates the versatility that EFL teaching requires of teachers and the necessity for teachers to adapt their methods and approaches to the demands of different students and environments.

Part D contains four chapters on an area that has seen more research recently—how to teach young learners. The authors of each chapter explore how changes taking place in their context are affecting how instructors teach young learners. For example, Yasemin Kirkgöz (Chapter 13) utilizes questionnaires, classroom observation, and interviews of teachers to better understand how the implementation of a new curriculum in primary education in Turkey is affecting teachers. Kirkgöz found that teachers require more support and training on how to teach using songs and games, as well as training on how to use technology in the classroom. In Chapter 15, Hall, Yamazaki, Takahashi, and Ishigame report on a collaborative picture book project between Iwate University and a local Japanese primary school. Working with elementary school teachers who have little or no English ability, this study highlights why top-down decision making is not sufficient to change a system; teachers need to be a part of how such changes are to be implemented if the changes are to be at all successful. All chapters in this section will be of interest to those who teach young learners.

The fifth and final section, Part E, has to do with the teaching of writing in Asia. It consists of three chapters from three different countries, plus an epilogue that outlines how *Innovating* was created. Steven Herder and Peter Clement's chapter focuses on a 2-year extensive writing course at an all-girls' high school in Japan, emphasizing that, in an EFL context, learners require more support to develop as writers. Huahui Zhao's chapter provides interesting insight into the different roles that peer and teacher feedback play in students using and understanding error correction at a university in China. This chapter makes a strong case for peer interaction when corrective feedback is provided on student writing. The final chapter, by Toshio Hisaoka, attempts to portray how research from systemic functional linguistics can be used in the writing classroom. All three chapters again emphasize the pivotal role that context plays in teaching.

Ultimately, *Innovating EFL Teaching in Asia* is about how teaching is conducted within a particular context. I enjoyed reading the stories of how EFL instructors teach in vastly different contexts. The variety of research methodologies also offer excellent references for instructors who teach on PRESET or INSET programs, especially for those teacher trainers based in Asia who are looking for research on teaching contexts that are more relevant to

their student-teachers. In closing, the book does not set out to define what the EFL teaching context of Asia is, but rather, why diversity in teaching in an Asian EFL context needs to be better understood.

Reference

Holliday, A. (2005). *The struggle to teach English as an international language.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.