

From the Editor-in-chief

The establishment of Asia TEFL constitutes a major step in moving responsibility for the teaching of English from what Kachru (1983, 1986) succinctly named the core countries (where knowledge of English was, until recent large-scale immigration, involuntary) to those countries where, for more than a century, there have been concentrated efforts to learn what has become a global language. While many countries have local organizations of English teachers, some purely local and others in the firm grip of exported native speakers, the international field has for the past 38 years been the more or less unchallenged domain of two nominally international associations, one based in Kent and the other in Virginia. The very existence of Asia TEFL asserts that there are regional as well as national concerns, and that English no longer belongs to England and the United States (or even Australia). Just as there is growing recognition of World Englishes (Brutt-Griffler, 2002), so there is room and a need for professional associations of English teachers that will deal with these regional needs.

Of course, Asia TEFL does not intend to replace TESOL International or IATEFL, just as it does not plan to compete with JACET or KATE or ETAI or any national association. What it hopes to do is “to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons concerned with the teaching and learning of English in Asia.” What this means has so far been illustrated by the first international conference, which took place in Busan, South Korea, in November 2003, and by the development of a growing international organization which already has firm plans for conferences in 2004 in Seoul and 2005 in Shanghai.

The Journal, of which this is the first issue, is intended to contribute to the Association’s goal by provided a medium for recording and disseminating the

best of scholarship produced by its members. The papers printed in this issue are the result of extensive and scrupulous academic winnowing. They were first scrutinized when they were submitted as proposals to the Conference Committee and selected for presentation in Busan. Revised by their writers in the light of audience reactions, they next underwent a process of conscientious anonymous peer review – the three reviewers for each paper, selected from the many countries represented in the Association, did not know the name or institution of the author of the paper, and the authors in turn do not know who read their papers. These reviews and the recommendation of the associate editor responsible, all of which were later read by the Journal Editor, Professor Jin-Wan Kim and by me, were scrupulous and responsibly critical, not hesitating to suggest revisions needed to raise the paper to the high standards expected of an international journal. The papers in this volume represent therefore the culmination of a great deal of work not just by the authors but also by members of the editorial team. The results are open to you to judge.

It is this openness to scrutiny by academic peers that is the basis for the critical weight that our academic institutions assign to published research. In our own closed classrooms, it is not too hard to convince our captive students of our wisdom and knowledge; when we publish a book or an article, we need to be able to withstand much more severe judgment. That is why a professional, peer-reviewed journal is normally required of an association such as Asia TEFL.

When I agreed to share in editorial responsibility, I was not fully aware of what to expect. I was promised (and this has been fully realized) that all the hard organizational work would be carried out by the Editor (to whom especial thanks are due for handling these tasks while away from his home institution on sabbatical). But what, I wondered, could be specifically “Asian” about the Journal? And how could it maintain claims to a high standard of international scholarship while dealing with local issues?

The answer, shown in these papers, is clear. Applied linguistics (perhaps a misnomer but we have to live with it) is a field that is concerned with

language-related social problems. It takes problems that occur in the real world, like how to teach a specific language in a specific situation, and looks for principled solutions (the phrase is Henry Widdowson's) by reference to current theory and research. The context provides authenticity and relevance; the theory and research provide the state of the art knowledge that permits more than ad hoc solutions. Thus, while most of the papers deal with issues relevant to current concerns in one of more Asian countries, all make a contribution to the advancement of our field of study.

Tempted though I may be, I will not take up precious space by detailing or commenting on individual papers. True, I don't agree with all they write (nor do they all agree with each other). But this is a vital point of scholarly publication: provided the writer makes clear her or his evidence or method of argument, he or she is entitled to present a case. The papers in this first issue meet these standards, and provide strong support for the vision of all those who are working for the development of Asia TEFL.

THE AUTHOR

Born and educated in New Zealand, Bernard Spolsky was a founding editor (with Henry Widdowson and Patrick Allen) of *Applied Linguistics* (published by Oxford University Press), and more recently (with Elana Shohamy) of *Language Policy* (published by Kluwer Academic Press). A past president of International TESOL, he has published books and articles on language testing, educational and applied linguistics, sociolinguistics and language policy. He is professor emeritus at Bar-Ilan University in Israel.

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Managing Editor's Note

Thanks to the forward-looking contributions of the authors and the excellent work of reviewers, this first issue contains stimulating papers on teaching and learning English in Asia, providing an important steppingstone to the future development of Asia TEFL. I would like to express my appreciation to all of the Associate Editors for their all-around judgements on behalf of the journal and to the members of the Editorial Board and the guest readers who contributed their time and expertise in reviewing manuscripts.

The articles in this issue address eight different areas of the profession: English as an International Language (Sandra L. McKay and Peter Grundy), language testing (Hiroshi Shimatani et al. and Yumei Zhou), language literacy (Richard R. Day, Mi-Lim Ryoo, and Su-Jen Lai), teacher training (George Mann and Le Van Canh), classroom discourse (Keith Johnson, Jimmy Tong, and Xuehui Liu et al.), discourse analysis (Kumiko Murata and Shiauping Tian et al.), language and technology (Shen Shu and Ryoichi Yamamoto), and language teaching (Toshihiko Uemura et al. and Sabiha Mansoor). In this issue, three Forum articles are also included: ageism (Bill Templer), communicative approach (Dan Lu), and language planning (Hyun-Ju Kim et al.).

The papers in this issue were generally revised from papers given at the first annual meeting of the Association. As the Journal develops, we will be happy to find space for other contributions too.

Jin-Wan Kim, Managing Editor