

From the Editor-in-Chief

A recent front-page story in *The New York Times* dealt with the phenomenon of the “Wild Geese”, Korean families who send their children with their mother to live in an English speaking country in order to learn English better, while the father stays home to make enough money to pay for the process. I also read recently a doctoral dissertation studying the English achievements of pupils in a village school in an Asian country. Not surprisingly, it found a major socioeconomic difference between high achievers and low. The high achievers came from wealthier homes with high values for English and education, and were partially at least exposed to the language. Neither of these stories will surprise readers. It is widely recognized that school success is dependent in large measure on the socioeconomic status of the home. And it is also understood that parents who can afford it will provide a richer sociolinguistic environment for their children.

A related issue is the report of a continued survey of English teaching in Asia reported by Yeon Hee Choi (editor-in-chief of Asia TEFL Books) and Hyo Woong Lee (President of Asia TEFL) in the distinction they find between Asian countries where English is a second language and a medium of instruction, those where it is clearly a foreign language, and those countries where historically it is a foreign language but its use as a medium of instruction in school is moving it towards second language status. Just as the “Wild geese” are sending their children to an environment where they will be more completely immersed in English, so there are countries that look for ways to increase exposure beyond the few weekly hours that can be allocated to language classes. The challenge (as described in the article by Eun-Ju Kim on English medium lecturers at universities, is to guarantee access to universities which increasingly assume English language proficiency

as a requirement.

There remain of course systems, as Ali S.M. Al-Issa describes, whose teacher training programs are committed to traditional textbooks and methods of teaching that will not develop the kinds of English proficiencies that students and their parents believe are needed. Still locked in formal instruction, they are not ready for the results of the studies described by Masoud Rahim Domakani in one country and Juliana Othman and Lilliati Ismail in another supporting those who argue for the need to accompany communicative teaching with focus on form.

One more paper in the issue is by Lei Lei (a name chosen perhaps by parents who recognized the problem editors have in international publications in deciding which is the family name) which shows that the C-Test is useful for testing Chinese students in English. The issue concludes with a review by Myong Hee Ko of a textbook commonly used in Korea.

Once again, thanks to the contributors (from Korea, Iran, Oman, Malaysia, China and USA) and the editorial team for keeping up the standards of the Journal.

Editor-in-chief
Bernard Spolsky