

From the Editor-in-Chief March 2014

Welcome to Volume 1, Issue 1 of the Journal of Asia TEFL. In this issue, two articles look at the teaching of writing, one at developing critical reading skills, one at the influence of EMI programmes on the English speaking ability of students, and one on the extent to which teachers' beliefs shape their classroom practices.

In a study which explored the beliefs and practices of eleven Vietnamese high school English teachers regarding task-based language teaching, Nguyen Gia Viet showed how these teachers displayed a strong inclination to form-based teaching, believing that each lesson should be built around specific language structures. Despite, therefore, the new curriculum in Vietnam being task-based and focused more on meaning, the study showed that teachers remained more concerned with the teaching of form, both in their beliefs and practices, thereby underlining just how difficult it can be to alter teacher's beliefs and practices. The author concludes that the best way of achieving such changes is to ensure that the teachers themselves are engaged in the process and design of any innovation.

Jeong-Yeon Kim investigates how and, if so, to what extent, studying English in universities that have adopted English as a medium of instruction policies influences students' motivation and achievement. She surveyed 88 first year students at a large research-oriented university in South Korea. She found a wide range of motivational orientations and no correlation between achievement and motivation, although, generally speaking, the students were positive about the EMI policy and the presence of

foreign (native speaking) language teachers. She concludes, however, that an EMI policy on its own will not lead to better English speaking levels among students.

Three researchers from Taiwan Chen, Wu and Chern, studied the efficacy of allowing junior college students to work in mixed-proficiency groups when discussing short stories they had read. The findings indicate that students developed as independent readers who helped each other extend their thinking and to critically analyse the readings. They were able to construct cognitively challenging questions and were also able to develop an aesthetic appreciation of the stories they read, often with reference to their own personal experiences. The authors conclude that peer-led discussions help students go beyond mere comprehension of the facts of a story. Such discussions help develop critical thinking skills and aesthetic appreciation.

Li Zhang, Yue Sheng and Lan Li evaluated an academic writing course that made use of technology to aid students' process writing skills and thus develop their writing skills in general. The various digital technologies and strategies employed on the course included online workshops, uploading drafts onto Moodle for peer and teacher feedback and specific, specialist websites. They found that the improvement in students' writing abilities in the course post-test proved statistically significant, indicating that combining technologies as part of an academic writing course had benefited the students.

The study conducted by Shin and Kim investigated and compared the influence on the writing performance of adolescents of integrated tasks, which required the students to read relevant materials before writing, and independent tasks,

which simply asked students to write. The findings show that when students read a relevant passage before writing, their writing improves in terms of such linguistic features as lexical diversity, cohesion and syntactic complexity, but, perhaps not surprisingly, these features were moderated by the language proficiency level of the students.

We hope that our readers enjoy these articles and find them stimulating and informative. We would like to encourage our readers to consider submitting articles for consideration for publication in these pages.

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Andy Kirkpatrick
Editor-in-Chief