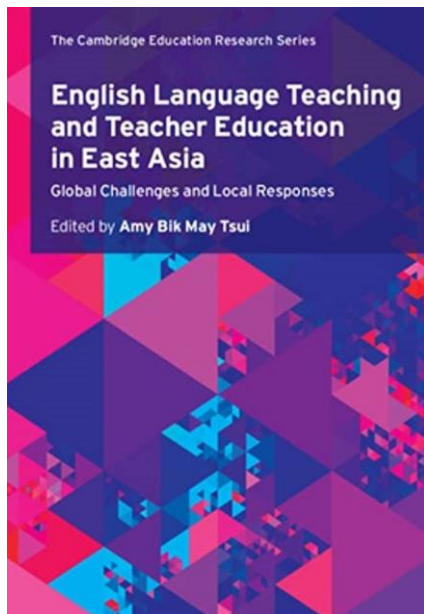




## Book Review



**English Language Teaching and Teacher Education in East Asia: Global Challenges and Local Responses**, by Amy Bik May Tsui (Ed.), Cambridge University Press, 2021, 238 pp., ISBN: 978-1-108-47971-4

With this volume, A.B.M. Tsui brings us an updated sourcebook looking at the state of English education in Asia. Although there have been other books published somewhat recently on this topic (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2016; Spolsky & Moon, 2012), what this book adds to the literature is a critical discussion of how various ideologies associated with globalization have influenced the policy and practice of English language teaching (ELT) and teacher education in the region in recent decades.

Perhaps the biggest contribution of the book comes from Tsui's opening chapter, which revisits the concept of globalization by explaining how it has been interpreted and how it has influenced English education policy and teaching practices in Asia. She begins by explaining two views of globalization, those of *glocalization* and *grobalization*, respectively. Glocalization refers to how the forces of globalization are adapted locally, whereas grobalization is a neologism used to emphasize how the hegemony of English tends to overshadow and homogenize local cultures (Ritzer, 2007). This spectrum of globalization is evident when one examines English education in Asia, and it is reflected in the hegemony of English in respect to foreign/second language education, for example, in its dominance in the former colonies and on the emphasis on learning English as a matter of national importance elsewhere. Thus, Tsui writes, the positioning of English within Asian education systems has become "a political balancing act" (p.10). English education has been widely commodified in the region, something resulting from the ineffectiveness of public education systems of meeting their own lofty aims. What she concludes is that grobalization has been the norm in Asia. However, the problem with the grobalization of English is that language policy and teaching practices, whether "externally imposed or uncritically adopted by teachers and teacher educators" (p.28), potentially undermines their ability to apply their own "professional judgment with regard to what works best in their own context" (p. 28).

What follows are contributions that explore these and other global challenges and local responses across ten countries in the East Asia region, adding incrementally to what has already been published and discussed over recent decades. The contributors are all distinguished scholars and credible sources for discussing language-in-education policies as all of them work or have done extensive work on ELT and teacher education in their respective countries.

As for the countries in question, the book explores East Asia broadly defined. It includes most of East Asia (i.e., China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea), but not all (i.e., it excludes Mongolia and



North Korea), and some of the ASEAN member states (i.e., Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam), but not all. Although not stated, I imagine that this scope of the book is resultant of pragmatic considerations; after all, an editor is limited to the availability of contributors to fit a timeline. Thus, it is unfortunate that other South East Asian countries are not also included in the volume, such as Indonesia, which has by far the largest population among ASEAN members.

That being said, the book has something to offer researchers and policy makers in Asia, and I believe that it will be of interest to many readers of *The Journal of Asia TEFL*. It is a book written by scholars for scholars, so it would be a good sourcebook to have in many English education departments, particularly for those in each of the ten places discussed in the volume. Although the chapters do not offer comprehensive reviews of research—for instance, I noticed that the chapters about China, Taiwan, and South Korea do not refer to the recent large-scale surveys of language teaching research undertaken in those contexts (i.e., Chen & Tsai, 2012; Gao et al., 2014; Moodie & Nam, 2016)—it is a useful, updated secondary sourcebook of English education policy in Asia. The authors offer comments and criticism of policy and share their suggestions for how some of the challenges associated with globalism can be addressed. As such, it will be of interest to researchers who are interested in the background information of ELT policy in the region but may not necessarily require the details offered by primary sources, such as policy documents or empirical research articles. Although it has similarities with other relatively recent books on the same topic (i.e., Kirkpatrick, 2016; Spolsky & Moon, 2012), this book differentiates itself from Kirkpatrick's volume by focusing on the ideologies associated with globalization, and it differentiates from Spolsky and Moon's volume by considering English education and teacher education in primary and secondary school contexts, whereas Spolsky and Moon specifically focused on primary school English education in Asia.

In summary, the book presents an updated and critical view of the status and practices of English education in East Asia. It should be a welcome addition to the English education departments and university libraries across the region.

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