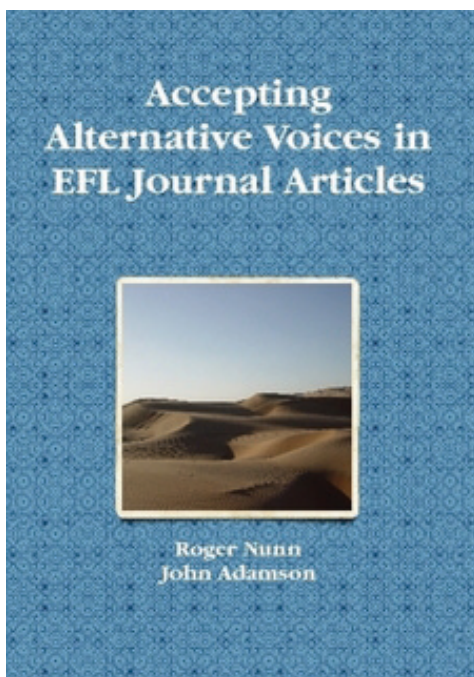


## BOOK REVIEWS



**Title:** Accepting Alternative Voices in EFL Journal Articles,

**Editors:** Roger Nunn, John Adamson

**Publisher:** Asian EFL Journal Press, Busan, Korea (2009)

**Number of pages:** 236 pp

**Price:** \$20.75,

**ISBN:** 1738-1460

**Reviewer:** Theron Muller, Noah Learning Center, Japan

*Accepting Alternative Voices in EFL Journal Articles* is a collection of papers edited by senior editors from the *Asian EFL Journal*, which explains the reasons behind the journal's acceptance of articles written in non-standard voices. The book represents a welcome addition

to the literature concerning the inclusion of “off-network” (Swales, 1987, p. 43) scholars' voices in the discourse of the field and offers a nice complement, in terms of coverage of reviewer comments, to Belcher's (2007) presentation of reviewer feedback. The book is divided into two parts. The first section includes four chapters which explain the importance of including alternative voices in the discourse of the profession. The second section, consisting of seven chapters, presents examples of alternative voices from articles published in the *Asian EFL Journal*.

In the first paper, Nunn and Adamson share the process for developing standards for alternative submissions to the journal. They detail how standardized evaluation forms failed to provide space for experience-based, non-research articles on teaching techniques and strategies. The next chapter, by Nunn, explores the use of the first person pronouns *I* and *we* in one issue of the *Asian EFL Journal*, and concludes that there is indeed an apparently healthy variation in the use of both *I* and *we* throughout that issue. Next, Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam builds on Nunn's investigation by offering theoretical underpinnings to support the view that an alternative first person voice is essential for the health of the field. Sivasubramaniam explains how an explanation of learning as processes within the brain is incomplete, as it fails to take into account the social nature of the classroom. The chapter concludes that one way to address shortcomings in second language acquisition research is to include the personal pronoun *I* in research articles. The final chapter in the first part of the book, by Nunn and Adamson, lays out a rationale for creating an

alternative review procedure for articles which exhibit alternative voices in the hopes of promoting “a broad 'community of practice’” (p. 71). This alternative review option promotes inclusiveness by basing reviews of alternative submissions on “the author's own organization and agenda” (p. 72).

The introduction to part 2 of the book offers a glimpse into the editorial review process, sharing reviewer comments from several articles with explanation as to why these voices were ultimately considered legitimate contributions to the field. In the first chapter in this section, Barbara Spilchuk shares the narrative story of Shila, a teacher of English in a primary school in Singapore. In exploring Shila's story, many of the conclusions Shila reaches regarding her practice of teaching dovetail nicely with literature on good practice in the primary classroom; this indicates teachers may not be as naive or uninformed regarding effective classroom methodology as some policy makers appear to think. Next, Daniela Nikolova offers a review of a Japanese government survey of students', teachers', and parents' attitudes toward learning English. She intersperses her presentation of the survey data with the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology's interpretation and her own interpretation of the research results. Nikolova points out that some of the objectives of English education in Japan could be rethought, as teacher and parent understanding of student attitudes may not be accurate. Next, Greta J. Gorsuch describes her experience of teaching in Vietnam as part of a Fulbright visiting lecturer program. She offers an insider's view of the entire process, from planning her curriculum and selecting materials in the US, to arriving in Vietnam and dealing with unexpected delays in shipments and occasionally inadequate facilities. The following paper, by Pisarn (Bee) Chamcharatsri, shares autoethnographies from five international students living and studying at a university in the US. Chamcharatsri suggests autoethnography as a writing genre should be included in writing classes because it allows students to link their writing to their own experience and empowers student voice. Shaun O'Dwyer then offers a criticism of constructivist theories of language learning, pointing out that critical examination of the theories leaves teachers and students in a bind as to what exactly should be studied in the language classroom. He asserts there is an objective language students and teachers should orient toward, rather than a subjective language that is different for each individual. Next, Hui-chin Yeh presents an EFL teacher's view of graduate and postgraduate work in the US. She explains how she and a group of fellow graduate and postgraduate students from Asia formed a peer support group to help one another interpret the themes of their studies based on the contexts they had come from and would be returning to. She demonstrates how the need for instruction centering on EFL contexts, despite EFL practitioners making up the majority of students in her program, went unmet by the institution she was studying at. Finally, Tim Murphey, Joseph Falou, James Elwood, and Michael Hood argue for encouraging expression of student voice in the classroom. They reference literature that demonstrates how, throughout Asia, there is evidence that students want to share their thoughts in English in the classroom, but that prevalent teaching methodologies repress such expression. They demonstrate

how students express various opinions about their English language learning experience through narratives about their English studies.

*Accepting Alternative Voices in EFL Journal Articles* is a welcome addition to the literature on academic publishing and the discussion of voice in academic discourse. The editors and authors convincingly demonstrate how narrative descriptions of teacher and learner experience are an essential part of the dialog of the profession.

The book is relevant to writers and researchers interested in academic discourse and also teacher-researchers interested in examining their own narratives and classroom experience in their academic writing.

Overall, I found the volume well laid-out and well written. All of the chapters are approachable and should have resonance with teachers' own classroom experiences. I would recommend this volume to MA students who will be teaching in Asia, researchers of teacher development in the Asian context, and researchers investigating how academic voice is constructed and represented.

## References

- Belcher, D. (2007). Seeking acceptance in an English-only research world. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16(1), 1-22.
- Swales, J. (1987). Utilizing the literatures in teaching the research paper. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21(1), 41-68.

## About the reviewer:

**Theron Muller** is a co-owner of Noah Learning Center. He is a teacher and researcher based in Nagano, Japan. His publications include exploration of TBL and academic publishing. He is active as an editor with *The Language Teacher* and the *Asian ESP Journal*. He is also part of the University of Birmingham CELS Open Distance Learning team.  
Email: [theronmuller@gmail.com](mailto:theronmuller@gmail.com)