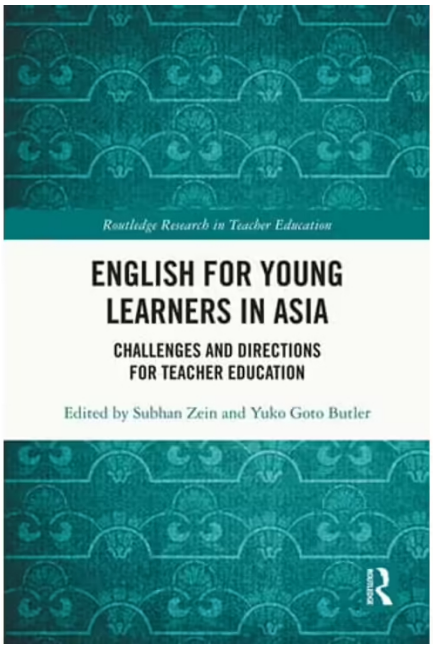
Book Review



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This book emerges from concerns of the editors Subhan Zein and Yuko Goto Butler (2023) about inadequate documentation and practice of teacher education central to English for young learners (EYL) in Asia for over 20 years. This book, therefore, calls for increasingly constructive research to fill these voids surrounding Asian contexts. Accordingly, a chief purpose of the book is to stimulate the practice of EYL. To meet its aims, the editors offer a compilation of various challenges and plausible solutions in association with EYL that amount to nine research articles by 14 authors from eight Asian countries. Notably, the editors purposefully selected those countries by considering their shortage of documented teacher education in the EYL domain. Since the book is a collection of challenges, future directions, and complexities surrounding teacher education for EYL in Asia, it stands out as a unique contribution. The following sections discuss potential readers, present three key strengths, and conclude with my recommendation about the book.

To start, this part explains the book's readership catering to those stakeholders who stand to gain the most advantages from its context. Broadly, Chapters 1 to 10 are worthwhile for prospective EYL teachers and teacher educators in primary and secondary schools. Foreign teachers who prepare for teaching EYL in Asian countries can also benefit from the ten Chapters. Specifically, the book is suitable for in-service teachers who seek strategies for professional development (PD), such as an integration between local and international teaching approaches (Chapter 7) and a series of practical workshops (Chapters 9 and 10). Additionally, developers of language policy can gain the most benefits from Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 9 while

developers of language testing process can find the book beneficial by paying attention to Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 9.

The followings are discussions of the book's three major strengths, which include interconnected organization, practical and applicable methodologies, as well as influential contexts. Firstly, its interrelated organization enhances the readers' comprehension of the difficulties, future directions, and complexities of teacher education for EYL. In Chapter 1, the editors address the circumstances of English as the global language in Asia, its influences on education policymaking, English proficiency, and PD programs amongst EYL teachers, to name a few, in several Asian surroundings. This essential information gears readers to the subsequent Chapters effectively. Without these introductory pieces, the readers, especially novice teachers, may lack understanding of teacher education related to EYL around Asian countries in recent years. Further, the well-planned structures from Chapters 2 to 10 underpin seven themes: classroom discourse, knowledge base, needs analysis, practicum, policy on teacher education, program evaluation, and program innovation, according to Zein and Butler (2023). To elaborate, each academic research in the nine Chapters comprises a summary of study's significance, methodologies, major discussions, plausible solutions, and limitations within the examined contexts of each author. To me, despite the informative contents and sociocultural complexities, those studies provide the visual aids (e.g., tables, figures, lists of numbers, and appendixes) that accommodate the readers to comprehend both key points and concepts in specific contexts efficiently.

The second strength of the book is its focus on practical and applicable methodologies within selected contexts. While nine methodologies are demonstrated, they can loosely be divided into two categories: innovative approaches (Chapters 3 and 10) and alternative ones (Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9). Some exemplars include practices of reflective experiences (Chapter 6), contextualized knowledge bases of teaching (Chapter 8), and localized PD workshops (Chapters 9 and 10). After exploring this book, I realize that a process of selecting methodologies is not only a matter of purposes, but also contexts. Based on the nine context-bound methodologies, the following specifics give evidence of my increasing consciousness that may also be helpful for teacher educators in search of PD strategies. In the first example, Yasemin Kirkgöz (2023) offers an innovative methodology in Chapter 3 by successfully adapting Baldauf and Kaplan (2005)'s model for language-in-education policy to Turkish EYL classes. The adjusted model emphasizes a real-life problem-based approach from actual class practices among pre-service teachers and real young learner classes. The teachers sometimes communicate with young learners in Turkish to facilitate their understanding of English lessons. In the second instance, Prithvi Shrestha (2023) presents the language teacher identity (LTI) model, in Chapter 7, that is an alternative methodology for evaluating EYL classroom practices in Bangladesh. The study's outcomes yield five identities of EYL teachers: authority, implementor, conformist, resister, and power struggler. Their overall identity signifies the *need for changes* in EYL teaching approaches, such as the development of local language and local pedagogies integrated with

innovative approaches (e.g., communicative language teaching) for more practical methods tailored to the specificities of Bangladesh. On this point, I view that the research methodologies in Chapters 3 and 7 illustrate significance of contextual dependence, such as mother-tongue languages, in enhancing teachers' PD within the EYL program. Hence, it is crucial to thoroughly examine and adapt both models, Baldauf and Kaplan (2005) and LTI, as the methodologies to evaluate the practicality of implementing EYL approaches or consider modification for specific English classes in Asia. Evidently, if contextualization were neglected in methodologies, the approaches implemented in real classroom settings would most likely impact English language acquisition of young learners–one of the primary stakeholders in EYL teacher education.

The third strength found in the book is influential contexts that can affect young learners' English proficiency development, including age and sociocultural and socioeconomic aspects. The first context relates the readers to the ages of young learners. Referring to Zein and Butler (2023), young learners in Asia start learning English approximately from 6 to 12 years old, while their admissions to EYL classes are varied, ranging from grades 1 to 5 depending on each country. Unlike in the U.S. system, young learners can be defined as school-age children ranging from 5 to 13 years old (Wolf and Butler, 2017). An implication from these slightly different pieces of data is that ages of EYL are very contextual while their admitted grades tentatively depend on their ages. To elaborate this point within Asian contexts, the three authors of Chapter 4 agree that EYL's age is one of the challenges in practice surrounding primary schools in Kazakhstan. Misalignment between the national curriculum and actual ages impedes the young learners from developing their English proficiency in Kazakhstan, since textbooks in English are too complicated for their age appropriateness. The complexity becomes more pressurizing amongst the early-aged students when English is enforced in classes as a third language, in addition to two compulsory languages: Russian and Kazakh. In other words, teacher education of EYL is challenged by trilingual education policy in this specificity. Another example is offered in Chapter 2 regarding the contextual complexity that exists in South Korea where a sociocultural conflict occurs between native and non-Korean teachers teaching EYL. This difficulty in multicultural cooperation limits the foreign teachers from having teaching opportunities equal to the Korean teachers. Then, the author of Chapter 2 suggests that the sensitive disparity at the educational workplace needs supports from language policymakers for clear EYL guidelines, particularly between native and international teachers. The last instance from Chapter 9 illustrates unequal access to PD programs between urban and rural parts in China that results in socioeconomic disparities. In my opinion, the last two cases need continuing support from language policymakers for teacher education equality; otherwise, the unequal opportunities tend to immensely impact English proficiency enhancement of young learners.

The final part addresses my recommendation on the book that may help expand its stakeholders' voices. Although the authors endeavor to cover needs of most participants surrounding young learners, an involvement of children's voices remains a challenge. Thus, *parents* can potentially serve as voices for their

children's needs, especially from remote areas in various contexts. The book would have been more inclusive if a theme of parental support were added. Accordingly, central to young learners, future research revolving around teacher education should deal with how parents are involved with their children for English proficiency development.

To conclude, the review can be summarized according to three major aspects: the book's potential readers, its overall strengths, and my suggestion. In the first aspect, the book is beneficial for a range of stakeholders in the EYL domain across Asia, from local to foreign teachers and from language policy developers to teacher educators. In the second aspect, the ten interwoven Chapters serve the book's purpose for promoting documentation and practice amongst the potential readers. The editors and authors successfully illustrate the connectedness between methodologies and contextual specificities around educational stakeholders. Both connected methodologies and contexts offer invaluable insights into Asia's EYL teacher education that the challenges and directions should be understood from a heterogeneous perspective, not a monolithic one. Nevertheless, the book's limitation exists; despite the authors' endeavors to cover the needs of most stakeholders, the involvement of children's voices remains challenging. Therefore, in the last aspect, I recommend that the book would have been more inclusive if the theme of parental support were added to potentially elevate children's voices, particularly those from rural circumstances in Asia. Emphatically, the alarming threats, such as sociocultural and economic disparities, in Chapters 2, 4, and 9, should urgently be alleviated from the academic domains, as they most likely obstruct both young learners and teachers from enhancing their English proficiency. Ultimately, by bringing together the targeted readers, strengths, and suggestion, *English for young learners in Asia: Challenges and directions for teacher education* is worth being referenced and collected in libraries from communal to national scales and beyond.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the reviewer.

About the Reviewer

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