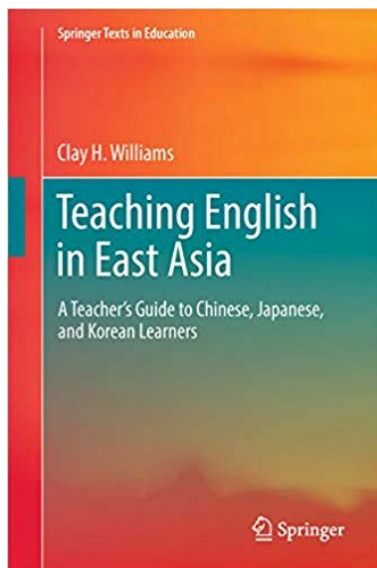


Book Review



Teaching English in East Asia: A Teacher's Guide to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Learners

Clay H. Williams. Springer. 2017. 184 pp. ISBN: 9789811038075

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Teaching English in East Asia: A Teacher's Guide to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Learners will be a welcome read as a practical and reassuring guide for those in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in East Asia. With its up-to-date insights and a detailed examination of prevalent pedagogical trends as well as information on English language employment, it provides clear, no-nonsense explanations of relevant underlying philosophies and the expectations of learners.

The book focuses predominately on providing teachers with pragmatic approaches to helping Chinese, Japanese and Korean students of all ages and at all academic levels attain confidence and success in EFL. Readers are provided with suggestions on how to implement strategies which utilise students' existing behaviour and educational backgrounds. By maximising these strategies, students will surely gain enhanced levels of understanding and linguistic success. This book will certainly be a confidence booster for less experienced teachers, and particularly for those new to the East Asian context. Aimed at both inexperienced and seasoned native English teachers, and with a particular emphasis on the context of East Asian classrooms, insight is given into pedagogical practices and Eastern culture, helpful for teachers to trial new and modify

existing activities that make full use of students' educational background and expectations.

In addition to its many practical suggestions, the book articulates the extraordinary changes that have occurred in the curriculum for English education throughout East Asia over recent decades, particularly regarding the goal of gaining communicative proficiency. The book also discusses the increasing number of Westerners travelling to the region for both tourism and employment as teachers; the implications that such larger numbers of tourists and teachers have on English teaching and government educational policy is aptly explained. As such, the book is highly recommended for all teachers of English currently employed in or considering moving to East Asia, regardless of their level of experience and qualifications.

The author has also considered local teachers, for whom the publication can no doubt provide a better understanding of differences in Western and Eastern educational practices, in turn enlightening them about the challenges Western teachers face. Moreover, the book elucidates societal and student expectations regarding the study of English as a foreign language, helping to dispel any misguided stereotypes less experienced teachers may have.

The book is comprehensive and broadly addresses regional differences within East Asia and the diversity of English-related employment prospects that are available. Helping teachers reflect on existing practices, it concisely details strategies for teaching all macro skills, the use of English outside the classroom, cultural considerations of English within society as well as describing the learners and their unique characteristics. Especially helpful are individual chapters on each macro skill, which concisely investigate typical problems encountered by students of the region and then succinctly provide ways to overcome such difficulties.

With its strong focus on practicalities, the book includes only a brief summary of theoretical models by way of background reading. To illustrate, a chapter on reading includes potential difficulties in transferring L1 skills to English literacy, with sentence, paragraph and text-level issues all duly addressed. A strength of the book is its provision of contrasting lesson plans which demonstrate and analyse the effectiveness of L2 acquisition in the East Asia context. Such analysis is convincingly demonstrated with suggestions of straightforward modifications to existing Western teaching practices.

No doubt drawing upon the author's PhD in second language acquisition and teaching, as well as his research interests in cross-script effects on L2 literacy development and adapting L2 teaching methodologies to East Asian classroom contexts, Williams skilfully illuminates reasons why traditional Western pedagogy has at times been met with resistance in the East Asian classroom context. He counterbalances this by providing techniques to combat such resistance.

Teaching English in East Asia: A Teacher's Guide to Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Learners contains a multitude of real-world ideas, avoids unnecessary specialised jargon, provides relevant insights into educational context and stimulates further discussion and study. The book is unashamedly written not as an academic text but as a hands-on guide for teachers. Consequently, it will undoubtedly be embraced as an easy and useful read by anyone with an interest in English teaching in East Asia.

About the reviewer

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