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Young Learner English Language Policy and Implementation: International Perspectives



Edited by Janet Enever, Jayne Moon and Uma Raman



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This special online version of *Young Learner English Language Policy and Implementation: International Perspectives* has been produced to make those chapters with a more global perspective, **chapters 1, 2, 3 and 25**, available to a wider public, free of cost. The full version can be ordered through the **Garnet Education website**.

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Foreword

If you are one of the many ministries of education or professionals grappling with the issues of whether to or how to effectively introduce early foreign language learning, this collection of papers – the proceedings from the Bangalore conference on Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) – is essential reading.

The conference and these proceedings capture the insights of a truly international group of speakers at a crucial point in time, when early foreign language policies are just beginning to take effect and the success stories and problem areas are emerging. These insights offer us the opportunity to compare emerging results and identify areas for further research and evaluation. The summary of the conference themes by Jayne Moon and Janet Enever serves as an excellent introduction to the opportunities and challenges involved, challenges, which we know from our work with ministries across the world, are of prime importance to all countries looking at ways of preparing their children for life in a globalized world.

The conference was a successful and rewarding collaboration between IATEFL and the British Council and I would like to thank Jayne Moon, Janet Enever and the IATEFL Young Learners Special Interest Group for making it happen. Thanks are also due to all those participants who shared their experiences and helped to take forward our understanding of how early language learning policy can be effectively designed and implemented.

Barbara Hewitt, Director of Research and Consultancy, British Council

Introduction: The Way Forward: Learning from International Experience of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), Regional Institute of English, Bangalore, India, 3–6 January 2008

The papers included in this collection are a selection from those presented at the conference held in Bangalore, India, in January 2008. A first in the field of Primary ELT policy research, this conference was organized by the IATEFL Young Learners Special Interest Group, in partnership with the British Council, with the aim of providing a forum for discussion and debate on the process of policy design and implementation.

The Bangalore conference, 'The Way Forward: Learning from International Experience of TEYL', grew out of the organizers' concerns that there is often insufficient guidance available to decision-makers at Ministry level regarding the policy and practical implications of an early start. The last three to four decades have seen a huge expansion in TEYL programmes across the world, mainly in response to the impact of rapid globalization. This is allied to the perceived importance of English, which is beginning to have a significant impact on policy decisions, increasingly from pre-Primary upwards, with far-reaching implications for teachers, learners and resources.

It was felt that a conference targeted at experts and key decision-makers within the educational process would allow sharing and dissemination of experience in implementing English programmes for children in the state school sector internationally. This in turn, it was hoped, would widen perspectives and influence future policy. The conference was organized, therefore, around a series of case studies that presented a description and analysis of various aspects of policy and state school provision for TEYL in individual countries. This was complemented by presentations on specific innovations, experiments or projects (which were not nationally implemented) within the state or private sector with regard to teaching English to children.

The papers included in these proceedings were all presented at the conference. They represent the two foci mentioned above. The first section contains country case studies and the second section contains accounts of innovations, experiments or small-scale projects. In each section, papers are arranged alphabetically by author.

The two main sections are preceded by an article that draws on and summarizes some of the rich diversity of themes and issues arising out of many of the presentations at the conference. This article also includes a summary of recommendations for policy-makers that arose out of an online discussion held shortly after the conference.

The conference was truly international, with speakers representing 26 different countries from North and South America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. Unfortunately not all the presenters at the conference submitted written summaries, however

PowerPoint™ presentations for some of these, not included in this symposium, can be found on the conference website at <http://www.primaryeltconference.org>.

The conference title ‘Learning from International Experience’ is intended both to highlight the international nature of the trend towards teaching English earlier in schools and to indicate that a strong theme of the conference was to build on a number of initiatives in recent years. These include, for example, research and practitioner conferences in Europe; a newly established regional Primary project in South East Asia; an increase in the number of policy-makers at national level seeking guidance on how effectively to introduce an earlier start to the teaching of English in schools and the rapid growth in development of international research in this field.

As editors, we would like to thank members of IATEFL and the YL SIG committee who helped to make both the conference and this publication a reality. We would specially like to thank the British Council for their generous support and the Regional Institute for English in South India (RIESI), which so excellently hosted the event. We hope the papers included in this volume will both stimulate discussion and encourage much needed further research in this developing field.

Jayne Moon, Janet Enever and Uma Raman
September 2008

New global contexts for teaching Primary ELT: Change and challenge

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Almost unnoticed in the latter years of the twentieth century, English crept into the Primary school curriculum, steadily edging its way downward to a point where, in 2008, it is frequently to be found included at the very start of the compulsory school curriculum. Contexts vary, resulting in its introduction as a second, additional or sometimes distinctively *foreign* language to which school children need to become acclimatized and in which they need to gain fluency. However, despite the very rapid growth in the perceived importance of this language, we have yet to clarify the priorities for formulating effective language policies, for designing appropriate programmes of implementation and for meeting the very real challenge of ensuring that policy is effectively and sustainably implemented within the daily practice of classrooms.

In this paper, we identify three persistent themes that thread through many of the conference presentations, papers included in this symposium, and studies so far conducted in this area. They can be categorized into those that:

- consider the impact of specifically global factors on policy decisions and classroom practices;
- explore the challenges of policy and its implementation, including the need to ensure that age-appropriate and adequate provision is made for inclusive policies at national level;
- explore broader and more local language issues and their impact on policy.

In the final section of this paper, we include an appendix with a draft set of recommendations, based on an online discussion among some conference participants, which might provide a template for policy-makers in planning, shaping and refining their future national provision.

Impact of global processes on Teaching English to Young Learner (TEYL) policy and practice

In this section, we will consider a number of issues related to the impact of global processes on TEYL policy and practice – a theme prominent in many of the conference papers, to which this chapter provides an introduction.

First, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which a substantial shift of economic power from public to private, from the state to the market, can now be identified globally (Schugurensky and Davidson-Harden, 2003). This is a consequence of the continuing neo-liberalist strategy of the ‘free market’ global economy moving towards increased economic liberalization via corporations, governments and international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the World Bank (WB). In this process, new pan-regional groupings have emerged such as the Association of East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) and the European Union (EU), seeking to gain and maintain a viable economic position within an increasingly globalized economic space. This neo-liberalist tendency has led countries such as China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam to ‘open up’ to increased international interactions in the past few years. In turn, this has contributed to creating an increased demand for English as the language of choice for international communication, given its current status as a global language or lingua franca (Crystal, 1997, quoted in Nunan, 2003). National decisions to choose English as the language for international interaction may also be identified as politically motivated where English is increasingly seen as a generic skill, according to Graddol (2008), leading governments to lower the starting age with the aim of building strong English proficiency levels for human resource development.

The decision to lower the starting age in many of the countries represented at the Bangalore Young Learners policy conference seems to have been based on two main assumptions: that younger children are better at learning/find it easier (Nunan, 2003: 605) and that a longer period of learning leads to higher proficiency by the end of schooling. Some of these assumptions are still contested in academic circles (Singleton and Ryan, 2004: 227), while others are dangerously over-simplified in public rhetoric (Marinova-Todd, Marshall and Snow, 2001). Uncritical acceptance of the view that ‘early is better’ under all circumstances can lead to hasty policy decisions to begin early, with huge implications for national resources.

While there are strong downward international pressures on governments, at the same time there is also a strong upward pressure from parents nationally on governments for their children to learn English from an earlier age because of perceived social and economic benefits, for example, as a symbol of a better life, or as providing increased social mobility and enhanced status (as reported by Ghatage, Inal, Kapur and Lee, this volume). Gupta (2004: 268) reports that these benefits are increasingly perceived by the workforce as the impact of global influences trickles down through the economy to such contexts as call centres, modern shopping malls, international brand fast food outlets and trade fairs.

Another way in which we can increasingly see the impact of global processes on TEYL policy and practice is in school curricula and approaches to the teaching and learning adopted. The perceived need for a workforce that is more entrepreneurial, more flexible and capable of lifelong learning in the new, more global, technologized and post-industrial economies is leading governments to reform curricula in order to respond to these new challenges. Linguistic skills, knowledge of other languages, and the new literacy skills demanded by new technologies (Cameron, 2002; Block and Cameron, 2002; Street, 1999) are increasingly viewed as what Bourdieu (1997: 47) has identified as valuable ‘linguistic capital’. This is also having an impact on Primary education and the learning of other languages, as illustrated in the latest TEYL Primary curriculum, which represents something of a paradigm shift towards more learner-centred approaches, learner autonomy, critical thinking skills and communication skills (as reported by Al-Zedjali and Etherton, Inal, Kapur, and Lee and Wang, this volume). Some countries have also introduced Language 1 (L1) and Language 2 (L2) literacy skills simultaneously (e.g., Hong Kong, Oman, Malaysia and the Maldives).

Global vs local

Although a discussion about globalization often implies that there is a direct transmission of ideas in one direction, this is by no means the case in practice. Many writers point to the dynamic interplay between global and local issues (e.g., Butler, this volume; Block and Cameron, 2002; Pennycook, 2008; Robertson and Dale, 2002: 29). One area in which this can be seen in TEYL is with regard to communication skills. Due to the perceived need for communication skills in an increasingly globalized world economy, these skills, in particular, are now given greater prominence in YL curriculum (as reported by Wang, Lee, Inal and Kuchah, this volume). This focus on communication skills development has tended to lead to the adoption of various versions of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach in teaching – an approach originally devised for teaching adult EFL classes in commercially-oriented organizations in the UK, North America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (colloquially known as the BANA countries in EFL contexts) (Holliday, 1994). Cameron (2002: 81) suggests that this approach tends to give prominence to oral skills based on western-oriented and increasingly standardized norms of interaction and interpersonal communication that have become more prominent in the workplace with the rise of service industries worldwide. However, this model of communication is often not fully understood, particularly in its interpretation and relevance for the teaching of a foreign language to young children in state school classrooms. The consequence may be reinterpretation and adaptation to suit local conditions, which may lead to quite different learning outcomes (as reported by Butler, this volume) or realizations in ways which take account of local cultural norms and values (Phan Le Ha, 2004). Several of the contributors to this volume allude to the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing CLT approaches (e.g., Hoque, Inal, Mathew and Pani, and Wang, this volume) though none considered them insurmountable or questioned the relevance of the model. The increasing discussion in the professional literature of notions like ‘appropriate methodology’ (Holliday, 1994); ‘the

importance of social context' (Bax, 2003 and Coleman, 1996); calls for 'third way pedagogies' (Pennycook, 2008); and for 'cultural mediation' (Ellis, 1996) suggest that local responses have influenced global academic discussions about CLT.

The notion of the interplay between the local and the global may also lead to different outcomes in different places. This is well illustrated by Butler (this volume) with regard to the challenge, faced by many countries, of the need to have Primary teachers proficient in English. In comparing the responses of Japan, Korea and Taiwan to this challenge, she notes that Japan has sought out native speaker (NS) teachers, while Korea and Taiwan have provided intensive language training and overseas courses for their teachers, though Taiwan is now beginning to make use of NS teachers and Korea is beginning to employ non-native speaker (NNS) teachers from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Russia and the Philippines (Scott Marchant, 2008: 4). Countries also respond differently to the challenge of improving English language proficiency in schools. Poland is introducing an official start (with a choice of English or German) from Grade 1; Croatia introduced an official start from Grade 1 in 2003 (with a choice of English, German, French or Italian – though English is overwhelmingly the first choice); China and Korea have mandated an official start from Grade 3 (with pilot projects from Grade 1 in urban centres such as Beijing and Shanghai (as reported by Wang et al., this volume); whereas Vietnam and Indonesia (as reported by Chodijah, 2008) have chosen to make English optional at Primary levels.

Finally, we consider the role of the private sector within this globalized education context and its impact on national policy and practice. Both the private language school sector and the private Primary/Secondary school sector have been quick to perceive market opportunities created by global events and influences and to respond to parental demand for English at Primary level (Mattheou, 1997: 5) and even pre-Primary levels (Bayyurt and Alptekin, 2000: 312), in many cases 'forcing' the state to introduce English at Primary level or to lower the starting age. In some reported cases, this has led to an 'overheating' of the private sector (as reported by Lee, this volume) and the costs to middle-class parents are now becoming a political issue (e.g., in Korea). In India, Bangladesh (Mathew and Pani, and Hoque, this volume) and other places, this challenging interplay between global and local forces is currently resulting in many English-medium schools contributing to furthering the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' of society. Their linguistic advantages are regarded as highly desirable yet unattainable by the vast majority because most are in the private sector and their affordability is beyond reach.

While issues in the private educational sector are clearly complex, in some cases they can be viewed as positive. In many situations, private schools are viewed as providing 'quality' education in contrast to underfunded mass education in the state sector with large classes and poorly qualified teachers (as reported by Mathew and Pani, Gimenez, Hoque this volume, and Chodijah, 2008), which may 'push' governments to take affirmative action and improve access and quality. Even the perception that private schools are out of the reach of poor parents may be changing, with many types of private school opening, such as in rural and urban areas of India where Kumar (quoted in LaDousa, 2007: 140) reports of 'poorer parents' willing to make sacrifices so that their children can hopefully get a slightly

better education. Kumar (quoted in LaDousa, 2007: 142) also makes the interesting point that paying for education, even if amounts are small, gives poorer parents some sense of control or say in their children's education. Despite these positive aspects, Kumar argues that there remain concerns about the role of the private sector, which is largely unregulated and by no means always of a high standard (also reported by Gimenez, this volume). Increasing inequalities of access may in turn place political pressure on state governments, leading to unprincipled and hasty decisions.

Challenges of implementing policy

The impact of the global processes outlined in the above section has introduced a very real challenge to the processes of policy implementation. This section reviews the evidence and explores the extent to which political will is reinforced by the provision of sufficient appropriate training and resources for effective implementation. Here, planning and programmes for implementation appear to differ greatly across the world, ranging from the official 'encouragement' for an early start enshrined in policy documents in Hungary, yet currently unsupported by national provision of additional training and resources (as reported by Nikolov, this volume), to the planned pilot phase introduction of English from Grade 1 in designated urban regions of China, supported by a comprehensive training programme and monitored by a research and evaluation team (as reported by Wang, this volume).

Evidently, the design of implementation programmes is likely always to be dependent on both political will and available national investment. However, the many different models reported in this volume appear more strongly to reflect both particular national histories of managing educational change and the multiplicity of new challenges implicit in introducing FL learning across a whole state system from an early age. Consistently, familiar themes arise in many countries – a consequence of continuing national and international uncertainties regarding effective programme design for this age group. The central themes include: optimal start age, language choices, teacher quality, class size, curriculum and assessment design, equity of provision, continuity across school phases and resource needs. A short summary of evidence for each of these themes is provided here, with reference to relevant papers in this collection.

Optimal start age

Several countries represented have mandated TEYL Primary programmes starting at mid-Primary level (often Grade 3 or 4), but allow regional and local authorities flexibility to begin earlier according to demand. This leads to a great deal of variation in provision and subsequent problems for transitions at the official grade of starting (any time between one and three years later) and Secondary level (as reported by Butler, Gimenez, Lee, Lefever, Mathew and Pani, Nikolov and Wang et al., this volume). In Europe the prevailing trend has been to introduce mandatory programmes from age 6–7 years, heavily promoted by a

‘strong recommendation’ from the EU policy group that the first foreign language should be introduced from the early Primary or pre-school phase (as reported by Enever et al., this volume). This earlier start policy may offer a stronger potential for equality of provision for all, providing adequate teacher professional development is also made available.

Teacher quality

A widely reported problem is the gap between the supply of qualified TEYL teachers and the demand for them as programmes expand (reported by Chodijah, 2008; Kgwadi, 2008; Enever et al., Gimenez, Kgwadi, Kuchah, Lee, Lefever, Mathew and Pani, and Wang, this volume). The lack of qualified teachers means that countries frequently have to rely on teachers who are not trained to teach TEYL, including Primary class teachers and others who might not have qualifications appropriate for teaching younger children, such as Secondary trained teachers, graduates, and teachers of other subjects. This clearly will have an impact on outcomes and suggests that countries have to be more realistic in their expectations of what can be achieved. Very few countries represented already had specialized pre-service TEYL training courses in place, but many were proposing to implement such courses in the future as awareness of the link between teacher quality and outcomes at Primary level is becoming more apparent. The wide gap between supply and demand suggests that expansion of TEYL has often not been adequately prepared for.

Class size

There is huge variation in class size across and within country contexts. Smaller class sizes generally are found in Europe. For example, both Poland and Hungary traditionally have divided classes for language learning, often resulting in teaching groups of no more than 15 learners. In contrast, much larger classes seem to be the norm in Asia and Africa. For example, in Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, India and Indonesia, class sizes of 50 or more are frequently to be found. Class size and classroom organization tends to affect the teacher’s willingness and ability to use more activity-based, interactive methods typically associated with the communicative approaches and YL methods and may have an impact on the level of proficiency that can be achieved in these contexts.

Curriculum and assessment design

In a number of countries, it appears that stated curriculum aims and guidelines are not necessarily being implemented as intended. Reportedly, in Bangladesh, Turkey, India and Hungary (see, respectively, Hoque, İnal, Kirköz, Mathew and Pani, and Nikolov, this volume) many teachers still use what are seen as more traditional formal grammar-focused approaches despite the fact that official curricula are promoting more communicative, activity-oriented approaches suitable for YL. Much of the difficulty experienced by teachers in introducing a strong oracy focus for early foreign language learners may be traced back to the effect of formal public exams at the end of Primary school within some school

systems. In a number of countries it appears that teachers, parents and children are collectively so focused on getting through the exam that it proves difficult to implement innovative new programmes successfully (as reported by Hoque, İnal and Samantray, this volume). The washback effect of an exam focus tends to trickle down into lower classes where teachers start to prepare children in advance so become less willing to spend time on more interactive spoken activities. There are a large number of additional issues related to local contextual factors and conditions for learning which clearly have a significant impact on implementation of TEYL programmes. Some are common to many countries, while others are unique to particular contexts. These are further elaborated in individual papers included in this volume.

Resource provision

Notable in a number of papers are the wide gaps in choices regarding resource needs for this rapidly developing area of Primary education. Decisions at national level are sometimes related to an individual country's wealth, but sometimes simply to centralized policy-making processes that aim to plan for the future in resource provision. Hence, a number of countries reported the use of technology and multimedia in TEYL as fairly standard practice, though this was by no means uniform across the countries represented. These countries included Taiwan, Korea, China and Malaysia (as reported, respectively, by Butler, Lee, Wang, Yaacob and Gardner, this volume). In some cases, it may be viewed as a way of compensating for underqualified teachers or those with low proficiency; it is also seen as a way of supporting and training them (Korea), while in China the use of CD-ROMs as a replacement for the course book is seen as a more effective visual aid when teaching larger classes. In contrast to the Chinese solution, England is now rapidly introducing interactive whiteboards (IWBs) to Primary schools as an essential teaching aid in the creation of a multimedia-based platform for learning. However, there are clearly dangers of the technology driving the teaching and reducing the teacher to a mere operative (as reported by Yaacob and Gardner, this volume) and of management underestimating the degree of training required. Kumar (quoted in LaDousa, 2007: 148) also raises the issue of how seductive computer software programmes are for children regardless of their educational quality, which may result in a tendency to downgrade the status and role of the teacher, particularly in contexts like India where there is a dearth of good quality textbooks and resources. Nevertheless, if programmes are well conceived, the use of technology can also be seen as a boon in large southern hemisphere countries such as Nigeria and India, with limited resources and where the use of interactive radio programmes for in-service training can transcend distance and provide a quality service for teachers (as reported by Moh and Dutt et al., this volume). The key question for the future evaluation of these new environments for learning will be an understanding of the extent to which they enhance the learning experience.

Equity of TEYL provision

Given the above-outlined difficulties experienced in the introduction of early foreign language learning in many state school systems, it is unsurprising to note also that countries are increasingly concerned about children's access to TEYL and the equity of provision, with frequent reports of large differences in access and in quality of provision between rural and urban areas, between geographical areas and between different urban schools. Particularly noted in papers by Butler, Kapur, Lee, Nikolov and Wang (this volume) and Chodijah (2008), this is corroborated by Nunan's survey data from countries in the Asia Pacific region in 2003. The demand for English is identified here as exacerbating the problem (Nunan, 2003: 605). It appears that some governments are beginning to take measures to try and increase provision, for example in Korea, through English camps and English villages (Lee, this volume); Taiwan, where young military recruits can do their service teaching English in remote areas (Butler, this volume); India, through lowering the starting age in many States (Kapur, this volume); India and Nigeria, with the development of interactive radio training for teachers (Dutt et al., Moh, this volume, respectively). Nevertheless, the challenges for public education are immense, leading to the gaps in provision increasingly being filled by the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Continuity across school phases

Linked to the above concerns about achieving equity of provision is the challenge of also ensuring continuity of provision as children transfer from one class to the next, or from Primary to Secondary school. The relatively recent introduction of Primary languages teaching is often not fully acknowledged by the Secondary school (or even the next class), resulting in insufficient recognition of prior learning and a tendency almost to 'start from the beginning' again (Edelenbos, Johnstone and Kubanek, 2006: 24). Few countries have yet established a cohesive curriculum outline in foreign languages, ensuring a cumulative programme of provision for each phase of schooling.

Dynamic interplay between top-down and bottom-up

Reports from different countries indicate that though the trend is for nationwide top-down policy-driven TEYL programmes (as reported by Lee, Al-Zedjali and Etherton, and Wang, this volume), there is also some evidence of a more grass-roots, bottom-up participation by civil society, for example in Cameroon where a local teachers' group (CAMELTA) has been active in supporting teachers (see Kuchah, this volume); in Bangladesh, where many NGOs are increasingly involved in basic education provision, including English (see Hoque, this volume); and in Taiwan, where teachers are involved as mentors in helping other teachers implement the new curriculum (see Chern, this volume). Evidence from the outcomes of policy implementation utilizing either a top-down or bottom-up model suggests that alone, neither is likely to be a recipe for success. Johnstone (this volume) argues convincingly that

implementation on a national scale is unlikely to be effective in the absence of a top-down strategy. However, the range of challenges outlined above seems to suggest that a combination of both top-down and bottom-up procedures is necessary if such a large-scale educational change is to become fully embedded within a national system.

Language issues and policy

This final section of the Introduction focuses on more locally based factors impacting specifically on the choices of languages to be taught and to language choice in classroom instruction. Here again, we consider the interplay between national and local perspectives and the additional layering of influence currently observable as an outcome of global pressures.

Use of Language 1 (L1) and English through English

Many countries report that TEYL teachers often use more L1 in TEYL classrooms than is desirable, suggesting either that teaching English through English is the desired norm or at least that conducting the greater part of the foreign language lesson in the L1 should be avoided. Studies mentioning this feature include those by Chern, Lee, Lefever and Nikolov (this volume). This seems to be a particular issue in foreign language contexts where education authorities sometimes stipulate that English should be taught through English in order presumably to increase exposure (as reported in Lee, this volume). In reality, many TEYL teachers make frequent use of L1, influenced by factors such as their own level of proficiency and confidence; their ability to adjust their language to the children's level and support children adequately; large class sizes; and their concern that children should understand. There seems to be insufficient understanding by policy-makers and educators of the complexity of language use in the YL classroom where the L1 can be viewed as an initial resource for children to draw on and where teachers need guidance if their use of language in the classroom is to be more principled and planned (Cameron, 2001: 213). The use of L1 may be viewed rather differently in multilingual contexts. For example, in India, official policy appears to support the use of L1 or other known languages in the classroom as a resource to help children acquire the new language (English) (as reported in Kapur, this volume) in the early stages. The danger, of course, with teachers of low proficiency is that the use of L1 becomes the preferred strategy.

English as threat vs English as bridge

Some concerns about the possible threat to national identity and language accompanying the move to an earlier start for English are evident. For example, Oman's reformed curriculum strongly emphasizes and promotes Omani culture and the Arabic language (as reported in Al-Zedjali and Etherton, this volume). Similarly, the Korean public is reportedly concerned about the effect on children's L1 if English starts earlier (as reported in Lee, this volume). Prabhu (this volume) warns of the possible danger to local languages if English

starts too early, and argues that English should be an addition to a child's repertoire of languages not a substitution for their L1/home language. However, in contrast Rajuan and Michael (this volume) report how English is seen as a neutral language in Israel, which may enable Palestinians and Jews to bridge the cultural divide. Such viewpoints echo the continuing debate regarding the current position of English globally and concerns expressed over perceived potential of a decline in the importance of or a lower status for other languages. As indicated by Graddol (2006), given the historical patterns of continuous shift and change in both the status and spread of local, national and supranational languages it is difficult to predict the likely future importance of English or any other language. Nonetheless, at local levels these concerns are influencing many policy decisions.

Dilemma of language choice in multilingual societies

Multilingual countries face many dilemmas in choosing the medium of instruction at Primary level, depending on whether they choose the child's mother tongue, which may not have wide currency outside local communities; a regional language with wider currency; or an international language such as English. In the choice of English it may well be that teachers lack proficiency, thus creating barriers to understanding subject content. One reported case is that of Cameroon, where English and French are the two main second languages with which Cameroonians affiliate, depending on whether they come from the area previously colonized by the British or French (see Kuchah, this volume). This has led to polarization along anglophone-francophone rather than ethnic lines. Recent legal and policy changes have given equal status to both languages and have also led to the teaching of French as a subject in anglophone schools and English in francophone schools, which in turn has led to more positive attitudes to each language. The context of South Africa presents a different linguistic history and thus a language policy with a strong social dimension enshrining a choice of 11 officially recognized languages (including English) with the aim of promoting respect for all languages; communication across ethnic lines; and in order to reflect multilingualism as a norm (as reported in Kgwadi, 2008). Policy also supports children being able to learn through their home/mother language as well as learning two additional languages. In practice, however, English is chosen as the preferred medium of instruction by parents in black areas even though local teachers do not have adequate English proficiency. Recent evidence (Chick 2002: 475) indicates that these children are doubly disadvantaged throughout their basic education. Like South Africa, India has also adopted a multilingual three language policy to address the challenges of their linguistic situation, involving learning through the mother tongue or a regional language, with English being chosen as a second or third language in most state schools. The majority of poorer children learn in state-run, regional-medium schools with English as a subject. As teachers in these schools tend to have the lowest levels of English proficiency among the four types of Indian school (as reported in Kapur, this volume), children may well be further disadvantaged over those in English-medium schools. The current increase in demand for learning English in India similarly may result in a limited application of the language policy, as reported in South Africa (Kgwadi, 2008).

Language choices

At whatever age a second or foreign language is introduced in schools, a contemporary theme of policy-makers across the world is the decision regarding which language to introduce first. For some, the priority is to choose the language that is currently perceived to give the greatest future economic advantage (e.g., English in China, Italy and Korea). For others, the priority is a language choice that will help to maintain social cohesion within the country (Cameroon and South Africa) or with neighbouring countries (e.g., English or German in Poland and Hungary). Other groupings have prioritized regional/national bilingualism (e.g., French and English in Cameroon; Spanish and Catalan in the Catalonian region of Spain at kindergarten level, with the addition of English from age six). The debate relating to economic advantage versus social cohesion is particularly strong in England where currently there is no obvious first choice of foreign language. The unpredictability of future language needs (for a country where English is predominantly the first language) has resulted in a decision to devolve language choices to the level of the individual school, allowing them to respond to local needs and preferences.

Conclusion

This Introduction has summarized many of the key challenges faced in the introduction of early foreign language learning in state school systems today. Driving policy forward is the view that by introducing a foreign languages early, future generations will be better equipped to communicate locally, regionally and globally. The real process of embedding such policies securely at national and local levels has perhaps only just begun and hence our knowledge of how this might be achieved is limited. Published research is also limited in the field of critical policy studies relevant to the first few years of foreign language learning in Primary education. Nevertheless, we would assert, albeit tentatively, that the studies published in this volume have shed much light on this area. Drawing on these findings we consider that it is now possible to identify some initial indicators of how effective policy has come to be designed and implemented.

First, we note that those projects which were reported as successful appeared to have a number of characteristics. Without exception, these included collaboration between different stakeholders such as the local education authorities, teachers, headteachers and local radio stations, as reported in both Nigeria and China (see Moh and Wang, this volume). In some cases support from an external agency (such as the British Council for the Nigerian teacher radio programme) was identified. In others, strong support for teachers proved to be a key factor, as reported in Argentina, China, Nigeria and Taiwan (see respectively, Corradi, Wang, Moh and Chern, this volume), or building on existing reforms, as in Oman (see Al-Zedjali and Etherton, this volume). Elsewhere, studies identified the importance of giving teachers tools to be more independent (see Dutt et al., Wang et al., this volume) and of investment in the training of teachers and trainers (see Chern, this volume).

Secondly, we can note reports of the wider outcomes of successful project implementation on the broader school curriculum. Such outcomes as the development of early positive attitudes to learning English are particularly identified in Croatia, China and Iceland (as reported in Enever et al., Wang, Lefever this volume). Evidence of high levels of language awareness is reported in Argentina (see Corradi, this volume). Increasing evidence of the wider knowledge of English even among adults is evident in the community in Maharashtra, India (see Ghatage, this volume). Improved L1 and L2 literacy is evident in Oman (see Al-Zedjali and Etherton, this volume). The positive impact of English learning on other subject learning is reported in China (see Wang, this volume).

Mostly, the studies of policy and practice reported on here relate to decisions made within the past ten years or so for the introduction of FL learning from the early phases of state Primary school systems. To achieve optimal frameworks for the effective implementation of policies will clearly take some time yet, but we hope this Introduction has provided some sense of how much has already been achieved and what still remains to be clarified. We hope that readers of the studies included in this volume will be encouraged to take up further research and evaluation opportunities to extend our understandings further.

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Appendix

Recommendations for policy development and implementation: Introducing English as a second/foreign language in Primary schools

1. ‘The earlier the better’ is not automatically true in all situations.
2. Evidence suggests that hastily implemented early start policies may be ineffective.
3. To ensure quality and sustainability over time, a planned and phased introduction is important.
4. The likelihood of sustainability is much increased if planning and implementation is both a top-down and a bottom-up process. For implementation to become effective, schools, parents and local communities need to be involved, together with national, regional and local project teams.
5. Key factors in achieving quality and sustainability include:
 - 5.1 Trained Primary teachers with pedagogical skills in teaching English as a second/foreign language to younger Primary-aged children.
 - 5.2 Teachers with a minimum competency level in English of B1 level (as described by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
 - 5.3 Age-appropriate and culturally appropriate teaching materials are vital.
 - 5.4 Substantial institutional support for the initiative is needed.
 - 5.5 Ongoing local workshops/training should be provided to support teachers in developing skills over time.
 - 5.6 A phased introduction may be more effective – starting with the upper Primary then gradually extending to the lower Primary years.
6. Initial regional piloting projects can provide important insights and understanding of the necessary conditions and offer opportunities to accumulate experience in teacher supply and training. Such experience will help to identify key issues for successful large scale implementation.
7. As one part of the implementation process, a research study to monitor and evaluate the process should be set up. Findings will enable the formulation of workable guidelines for sustainable implementation.

8. Communication networks should be established between Primary and Secondary schools and their related support services (local advisers, teacher education colleges, etc.). These cross-phase clusters should work together to ensure that continuity of learning is provided across the transition phase – a frequently identified point of weakness in learning programmes.
9. Primary teachers' workload responsibilities should be addressed to ensure that teachers have both the time and the space to reflect on their own practices and work collaboratively to solve new problems.
10. National policy-makers should make a clear and realistic appraisal of the role of English in the Primary curriculum in relation to the future needs of the workforce and to the contextual realities for current provision.
11. Given the length of time needed to develop proficiency and age-appropriate teaching skills, sufficient and continuing funding will be vital in achieving and maintaining quality of provision.
12. Education reform needs time. Quality cannot be achieved overnight.

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Teaching English to young learners: The influence of global and local factors

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Introduction

In recent years, there have been a number of global changes that have exerted an impact on language-in-education policies in various countries (Block and Cameron, 2002). One of the most notable examples has been the introduction of English as a foreign language at Primary schools (referred to as EFLPS hereafter) as English has spread as a means of wider communication. Case studies have revealed, however, that many nations have encountered a number of challenges in implementing EFLPS. Some challenges have been commonly observed across multiple countries, whereas others are specific to local contexts. Policy decisions in some cases have been made based on a series of ‘assumptions’, or by directly importing popular ideologies and methods from English-speaking countries but without giving sufficient attention to their own local factors. In such cases, we need to re-examine and reinterpret popular ideologies and methods in order to make sense of them in their respective local contexts.

In this paper, I draw from the experiences of various EFLPS implementations in East Asia to illustrate the complicated ways in which both global and local factors influence EFLPS implementations. This paper is based on the experiences of three East Asian countries that I have worked with closely, namely, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan. Among the various challenges that these countries have encountered with EFLPS, I focus on the following three to illustrate the interactions between global and local factors:

1. accounting for diversity while providing equal access;
2. hiring native English-speaking teachers versus training local teachers; and
3. the use of popular ELT methods and their adaptation to local contexts.

Challenge 1: Accounting for diversity while providing equal access

Globally, as the role of English as a communication tool has become increasingly important, acquiring a high level of communicative competency in English has become a major goal of English education worldwide. The varying degrees of the impact of globalization and increasing mobility have brought about diversity within and across nations. This in turn has driven a diversity of needs among learners based on their region, socioeconomic status (SES), linguistic background and so forth.

In East Asia, English serves a number of purposes. In addition to its use as a tool for communication, English has taken on another important role within various educational systems, namely, as a barometer of academic achievement. English has become a high stake academic subject; obtaining good scores on English tests has become a critically important means of advancing to higher education (e.g., Choi, 2007; Butler and Iino, 2005). As a result, parents, learners and local politicians are sensitive about any discrepancies in access to English education. Thus, FLPS implementations in East Asia have to be evaluated keeping these two important roles in mind. While policy-makers may attempt to provide equal access to English for all of the children in their respective educational systems, they also have to pay close attention to the increasingly diverse needs of their learners.

The three East Asian countries under consideration in this paper have taken different approaches towards dealing with this dilemma (Table 1 summarizes the EFLPS policies in each of the three countries). The Japanese government allowed local governments and individual schools to introduce English at their own choosing. The policy has been to introduce English as a non-academic foreign language that provides cultural exposure. The government has granted local governments and schools a tremendous amount of autonomy in this regard. In contrast to the Japanese government's approach, the Korean government opted for much stronger oversight and introduced English at Primary schools in a highly uniform way.

Regardless of the course set by the central government, all three countries have experienced a number of problems. In Japan, EFLPS have struggled to accommodate the diverse needs of learners, and tremendous differences in practice have raised serious concerns with respect to equal access to English language education (Butler, 2007a). In Korea and Taiwan, the official introduction of EFLPS appears to have escalated the household expenses associated with English lessons outside of schools. Teachers have already begun observing substantial achievement gaps among Primary school learners according to their parents' SES and by region due to the differing levels of private English lessons available to learners outside of their schools. The Korean government's effort to create English-only speaking spaces within the country (so-called 'English villages') was partially motivated by the desire to provide the opportunity to be exposed to English outside of school to all the learners regardless of socioeconomic background. However, the effect of such efforts has been questioned (Kim, 2006). The Taiwanese

	Korea	Taiwan	Japan
Government initiative	Strong central government initiative	General guidelines set by the central government but with some allowance for local choice	Based on local choice
Form of introduction	As an academic subject	As an academic subject	Can be introduced as part of a curriculum to facilitate international understanding
Date officially introduced	1997: nationwide	1998: selected areas 2001: nationwide	2002: introduced based on individual school choice; 2007: a proposal was accepted to mandate English education at the 5 th and 6 th grade levels (possibly starting from 2010)
Target grade levels (2007)	From 3 rd to 6 th	3 rd grade and up nationwide (from 1 st grade in select areas)	Varies from school to school
Number of lesson hours (2007)	3 rd and 4 th grades: 34 lessons per year 5 th and 6 th grades: 78 lessons per year (40 minutes per lesson)	72 lessons per year (40 minutes per lesson)	Varies from school to school
Curriculum	Detailed guidelines regarding when and what to teach under the 7 th National curriculum	Suggested guidelines regarding when and what to teach are recommended by the central government	No official guidelines
Textbooks and materials	One textbook for each grade approved by the government	Multiple textbooks approved by the government; teachers can choose from among these textbooks	No specifically approved textbooks; teachers can use books and materials that they feel are appropriate

English teachers	Primarily regular homeroom teachers	Various types of teachers are allowed to teach	Various types of teachers are allowed to teach
In-service professional development	Initially 120 hours of in-service training organized by the government was required/various training opportunities at the local level	Training programs organized by local boards of education and private institutions/MOE initiated professional development systems including Seeded Teachers (selected experienced teachers) and Instructional Consulting team	Short-term training is mainly offered by local governments and private institutions but is not mandatory
Native speakers (NSs) in public schools	Not many so far but increasing in number	Not many so far but increasing in number	Many NSs employed but their abilities and their recruitment processes vary

Table 1: Comparison of English language education at the elementary school level in Korea, Taiwan and Japan (2007)

Note: Adapted from Butler (2004: 248-249)

government imposed restrictions on English-only kindergartens as one way to mitigate such differences, but this does not appear to have stopped enthusiastic parents from finding other means to give their children a head-start in learning English before beginning formal English instruction at Primary schools.

In sum, EFLPS implementations such as those in Japan, Korea and Taiwan have found it challenging to provide equal access to English education for all of their students while still meeting their diverse needs. In this process, the private sector has had a tremendous influence over the students' English learning, and thus the impact of the private sector on such educational initiatives cannot be ignored.

Challenge 2: Hiring native English-speaking teachers versus training local teachers

In introducing English at Primary schools, one of the more pressing concerns is how best to secure teachers for English classes. Global trends have made people believe that communicative skills, and oral communicative skills in particular, are very important. High proficiency has been highlighted as a critical component of qualified teachers, and in turn native English speakers (NSs) are often preferred as English teachers by teachers, parents and administrators in many parts of the world (e.g., Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llorca, 2005). At

the local level in East Asia, public discourse has shown a very high degree of concern regarding the English proficiency among Primary school teachers. Indeed, local teachers do not appear to have enough confidence to conduct English lessons (Butler, 2004), and their low confidence also appears to be related to their reliance on NSs at Primary schools (Butler, 2007b). Young learners themselves wish to have teachers who are confident in their use of English (Butler, 2007c). Under such circumstances, policies have focused on two different strategies for securing teachers: one has been to recruit NSs, while the other has been to train local teachers.

The three East Asian countries cited herein have taken different approaches towards securing teachers. Both Korea and Taiwan, where English has been implemented as a mandatory academic subject, initially focused on training local teachers. In Japan, on the other hand, systematic training programs for local teachers have rarely been offered (at least up to January 2008) whereas many NSs have been recruited. While training local teachers is a pressing issue in each of the three countries, the limited time and resources available for training local teachers has often been an obstacle to doing so. Regional gaps in teacher quality are also a major concern. The governments have taken various strategies to overcome such limitations, including the Taiwanese government's policy of sending young Taiwanese males who have been educated in English-speaking countries to rural areas as a substitute for fulfilling their military service obligations (known as English Education Military Substitutes) (Wu, 2007).

Recruiting NSs has been a challenge for all three countries. On the one hand, there is substantial demand for NS teachers. On the other hand, there are only a limited number of potentially qualified NSs who are interested in teaching in East Asia. Since many countries have begun aggressively hiring NSs, the extent to which countries can secure qualified NSs increasingly depends on how much salary such countries can afford to pay them. This will eventually create an 'NS teacher divide' according to the economic power of each nation or region.

One of the challenges that comes up both in hiring NSs and in training local teachers appears to be our limited understanding of specifically what teacher qualifications are necessary to effectively teach English at Primary schools. The identification of such qualifications depends on a number of factors, including who is best qualified to teach English (homeroom teachers, local English teachers, or NSs), the goals of teaching English at Primary schools, the role of NSs in English teaching, financial availability and so forth.

Challenge 3: Importing popular ELT methods and adapting them to local contexts

According to Cameron (2002), as globalization progresses, what is considered to constitute 'good communication' is globally determined. This idealized good communication is not culturally neutral; a particular style of speaking is favored and thus has been adopted in various English teaching practices. Thus, certain types of ELT methodologies have gained popularity worldwide, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), task-based

instruction and so forth. Moreover, teachers have been asked to adopt various related concepts, including learner-centered teaching, the use of authentic materials, activities and so forth, by their respective educational policies. However, if these methods are employed locally, reinterpretation and adaptation are usually indispensable if teachers also wish to account for the influence of various local factors.

In an earlier cross-national study (Butler, 2005), teachers in each of the three countries discussed herein mentioned that while they employed suggested 'communicative activities' such as games, songs, role-playing activities and so forth, they were unsure of the purpose and effectiveness of these activities. By employing a multivocal method (Tobin, Wu and Davidson, 1989) in which multiple observers were invited to interpret such practices across each of the three countries, it became clear that teachers struggled to adapt such activities in light of the goals and expectations of EFLPS and their respective teaching environments. The teachers often had different motives for employing the same suggested activities. Even if the learners exhibit similar observable behaviors in a given activity, according to Activity Theory (e.g., Lantolf, 2000), they are considered to be engaging in qualitatively different 'activities'. This may eventually lead to different outcomes as far as learning is concerned. In other words, employing a suggested communicative activity itself does not necessarily mean that the same learning takes place.

The difficulties that teachers in the study faced appeared to arise in part as a result of our limited understanding of what 'communicative abilities' means to non-native speakers. Accordingly, what constitutes 'teaching for communicative purposes' in a foreign language for young learners has yet to be clearly understood. A number of concepts related to 'teaching for communicative purposes' such as learner-centered teaching, the use of authentic materials, and information-gaps have gained in popularity among teachers and policy-makers in East Asia, and yet this has happened without the meaning of such concepts being fully examined in the light of local contexts and without such concepts having been fully explained to teachers.

Conclusion

This paper illustrated how global and local factors influence the implementation of English at the Primary school level. I provided three examples of the types of challenges that have arisen across Korea, Taiwan and Japan. Both global and local factors influence policy decisions and their implementation in very complex ways. While the education policies in the three countries discussed herein faced certain common challenges, they also entailed different views towards EFLPS and frequently incorporated different approaches within their respective local contexts. Directly importing popular ELT methodologies does not seem to work well without making major adjustments to account for the local educational contexts. Indeed, successful implementations do not appear to be possible without giving serious consideration to local factors.

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An early start: What are the key conditions for generalized success?

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The Bangalore conference provided an opportunity to meet colleagues from different continents, reflecting a rich diversity of backgrounds and first languages but all with a common interest in the early learning of additional languages. For most of those attending the conference, the main additional language with which they are professionally concerned is English. However, my talk was not intended to focus on English alone but rather on the early learning of additional languages in general. The present article is not intended as a direct account of my talk, since I elaborate somewhat on a number of points that were made only briefly during the talk. In addition, having sat in on many other excellent presentations, I thought it right that my article should be influenced by insights and issues that had arisen during the conference, some of which were indicated in my concluding remarks as the conference came to its end.

The title of my talk asks the question: ‘What are the key conditions for generalized success?’, so I should begin by saying a brief word about ‘generalized’, ‘conditions’ and ‘key’.

‘Generalized’, ‘conditions’ and ‘key’

The notion of ‘generalized success’ is important, because it implies achieving success not only with expert teachers working in favourable circumstances but also with ‘ordinary’ teachers working in ‘ordinary’ circumstances, which may be far from ideal. In my view, for this to happen, planning and support at various levels, including national and desirably international levels, is likely to be necessary.

The notion of ‘conditions’ is not intended in any absolute sense, as in ‘Unless all of the following conditions are met in full, there is no chance of success’. In fact, I do not speculate on what it means to ‘meet’ a condition ‘in full’. In the present article, by

‘conditions’ I mean areas of activity on which it is desirable to focus. If progress can be made in as many of these areas as possible, then the chances of generalized success are improved. Moreover, a strong element of interpretation is required, in that not every country, region, school or teacher is at the same point of development. It is therefore important to ask oneself in what areas things are going reasonably well and in what areas further development is needed. The answers will vary considerably from one context to the next.

Nonetheless, despite the enormous diversity of contexts which early language learning (ELL) encounters and the consequent need for diversity of approach, my own experience as a researcher and as an observer of ELL in many different countries does suggest that certain conditions are particularly important, possibly across all national and cultural contexts – hence my use of the term ‘key’ to identify what to one person at least seems particularly common and important.

Large-scale policy developments: essential but with potential drawbacks

I would go so far as to say that for success in ELL to be generalized there has to be a significant amount of large-scale policy development at national level (or at least at regional level within a country). I do not see ELL becoming successfully generalized if the approach is entirely ‘bottom-up’ – that is, left to the initiative of individual schools and teachers.

Large-scale policy planning undoubtedly has brought major benefits to the implementation of ELL. Among these are: firstly, the high status that ELL thereby receives – an important consideration not only in the minds of pupils, parents, teachers and senior management staff in schools, but also for the wider public; secondly, the additional resources that are often made available in order to ensure that the public policy attains some level of measured success; thirdly, the professional development that teachers may receive, in order to prepare them for implementing the ELL policy; fourthly, the impetus towards collaboration across schools and in many cases across national borders, for example, enabling teachers in different countries to share experiences; fifthly, the links with broader educational thinking and policies that are affecting schools at the same time, since ELL is of course by no means the only policy-related initiative happening in education; and finally, the possible (though not certain) association with funded research and evaluation, since Ministries are often keen to receive an independent perspective on how the new policy is progressing. Taken together, these are substantial advantages.

On the other hand, large-scale policy developments can show potential drawbacks. Among these are: firstly, that the ELL policy may be based on rather dubious assumptions (e.g., I have heard one highly eminent politician claim that young beginners are inherently superior to older beginners when it comes to learning an additional language – at best, this is only partly true); secondly, the policy development may offer a ‘quick fix’ but national priorities in education can often change, and the supply of teachers and other resources may begin to

diminish, so the development may lose momentum and even head towards unsustainability (I have seen clear signs of this in more than one country); thirdly, the policy may be too ‘different’ from the current practice and thinking of busy teachers, and instead of the teachers accommodating themselves to the new policy, the new policy may become distorted in order to fit the teachers’ existing approach, and so not much may be gained. Alternatively, the policy may be too speculative and not sufficiently grounded in the good practices that good teachers are in fact already implementing; and finally, the new policy may promote an over-standardized model of teaching, implicitly discouraging alternative approaches involving teachers’ own local knowledge, initiative and creativity.

A preliminary conclusion then is that the above potential drawbacks in large-scale ELL policy development need to be taken into account, in order to ensure that it gains strength as it moves forward. The Blondin et al. (1998) review of ELL across Member States of the European Union, and its more recent follow-up by Edelenbos et al. (2006), show that much remains to be achieved.

Third wave of international ELL development

It is worth bearing in mind that the early learning of additional languages in pre-school or school education is now in its third wave of international development in fairly recent times. The first wave began in the 1960s but in a number of countries, including the UK, had completely lost momentum by the mid-1970s. The second wave began in the mid-1980s or early 1990s in many different countries across the world. In Europe it was strongly supported by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, both of which put in place large numbers of conferences, seminars and networks, which enabled ELL teachers from different countries to make contact and share experiences. The third wave is with us here and now, with countries such as China, South Korea, Taiwan and of course India (host to the Bangalore conference) adding enormously to the numbers of young learners involved and enabling ELL to project itself increasingly as a truly global phenomenon and as possibly the world’s biggest policy development in education. Thus, meeting ‘the conditions for generalized success’ becomes an awesome challenge.

Characteristics of young and older language beginners

Before reflecting further on what the conditions for generalized success might be, it is appropriate to consider what early learners of an additional language are like. In particular, we need to consider the ‘age factor’ in respect of the ‘critical period hypothesis’ (CPH), or the extent to which young beginners are more predisposed (or less predisposed) to the acquisition of an additional language than are older beginners. In this connection, three hypotheses are outlined by Singleton (1989), based on a detailed consideration of published research: ‘younger = better’, ‘older = better’, ‘younger = better in the long run and under certain circumstances’, and he cautiously comes down in favour of the third of these. Singleton is right to be cautious, because the published research does not leave us with a clear picture. Marinova-Todd, et al. (2000) claim that of 35 fairly recent studies, 14 seem

to offer support for the CPH while 21 suggest the opposite. Writing also in 2000, Scovel claims 'It should be borne in mind that, given the conflicting evidence and contrasting viewpoints that still exist, parents, educational institutions, and/or ministries of education should be exceedingly cautious about translating what they read about the CPH research into personal practice or public policy' (Scovel, 2000: 220).

My own review of the implications of the age factor for language policy (Johnstone, 2002) reaches a similar conclusion to that of Singleton. In other words, ELL can be a very good thing but it is vitally important to ensure that it is set in a supportive context. I agree with the wise words of Stern, expressed as long ago as 1976, who argued that it is misleading to force a choice between early and late language learning. On the contrary, Stern argues, each age brings its own particular advantages and disadvantages. He claims that in the sixties (the 'First Wave' of ELL to which I have already referred), the mistake was to assume that miracles would happen simply by starting young. These miracles did not happen, but he goes on to argue that starting late is not the answer either.

What potential advantages arise from teaching an additional language to young beginners aged (say) five?

My review lists a number of possible advantages that young beginners may have over older beginners. Space does not allow these to be discussed in detail but briefly they include: relative ease in acquiring the sound system of the additional language; less likely to be 'language anxious'; more time overall is available; a range of acquisitional processes can come into play over time, ranging from intuitive to analytical; their cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social, intercultural awareness and skills can be extended to help them form an identity that is bound to be different from the identity of those who begin later at (say) the age of 11 or 12 because in their case many components of their identity are already in an advanced state of formation.

However, the advantages do not all lie with young beginners, for older beginners undoubtedly do have certain things in their favour. Among these are: a more sophisticated conceptual map of the world (so that in their case it may be that a L2 word is new for them but the concept behind the new word is already known, whereas the younger beginner may have to learn not only the L2 word but also the unknown concept behind the word); more experience in handling the discourse of conversations, presentations, reports and other language activities, and so greater adeptness, for example, in negotiating meaning, because they know better how to interact; greater likelihood of having developed a wider range of strategies for learning such as note-taking, using reference materials and revising.

Overall, an advantage of an early start is that in principle at least it allows young beginners to exploit such advantages as they possess, but in addition, as they become older, to make use of the advantages that older learners possess. So, over time, both sets of advantages are available to those making the early start, whereas only the second set of advantages is available to those beginning later. To my mind, this is a compelling argument in favour of ELL, provided that the key conditions for its success can be put in place.

Four different models of ELL

In order to identify appropriate conditions for success, it is important to take account of the particular model of ELL that is being implemented in a particular school or group of schools. The recent review of ELL across Europe by Edelenbos, et al. (2006) identifies four different models:

- roughly one hour per week, based on a given course or set of materials;
- roughly one hour per week, based on a more flexible approach that seeks to embed the additional language in other areas of the curriculum, such as small bits of science, mathematics, or geography;
- a ‘language awareness’ approach which seeks to sensitize children to languages in general, with particular attention to the variety of languages that are actually used in the local community;
- immersion or bilingual education, in which children learn a significant part of their curriculum through the medium of the additional language, with a correspondingly large increase in the time made available over the other three models.

The first two models are by far the most common forms of ELL. In some countries they are called MLPS (Modern Languages at Primary School) and in others FLES (Foreign Languages at Elementary School). MLPS models can have a variety of starting points (ranging from age four to age eleven) but tend to have certain characteristics in common. These are:

- a fairly limited amount of time per week (in many cases less than one hour);
- teachers in many cases being generalist Primary school teachers (often teaching the entire curriculum to their pupils) rather than specialist language teachers;
- teachers possessing a proficiency in the additional language that falls far short of being that of a native-speaker or even a highly fluent speaker of the language.

MLPS teachers are therefore generally very busy people with lots of important things to do, in addition to helping their pupils learn an additional language. In this respect, I am not referring exclusively to my own country, Scotland. On the contrary, the state of affairs that I have described is widespread across many countries. Moreover, the amount of continuing professional development (CPD) training and support that many such teachers receive may be limited, whether because it is not available or because they may have pressing CPD needs in other areas of their overall teaching and MLPS may not be top of the priority list for CPD in a particular school or region.

An indication of the outcomes which the above model of MLPS was yielding by the late 1990s is given by the review of published research findings prepared by Blondin, et al. (1998), which embraced ELL in pre-Primary and Primary school education across all

member states of the European Union. The review found that pupils' attitudes were generally positive. Pupils found the experience of learning an additional language to be enjoyable. However, the review also found that the pupils' measured achievements seemed relatively modest, with only limited evidence, for example, that beginning at Primary school conferred a clear advantage over beginning at Secondary school when it came to assessed performance in listening, speaking, reading or writing. In speaking, very little evidence was found of pupils having developed a competence that would enable them to create their own new utterances in keeping with rules of grammar that they had internalized. Instead, most utterances seemed to be of the 'learnt by heart' variety.

At this point one might ask: Is it reasonable to expect more, given the characteristics of the MLPS model? In other words, maybe the problem lies with the model itself, rather than with any major deficiencies in its implementation? Certainly, when compared with the much more powerful model of immersion (even in its comparatively weaker form of 'early partial' rather than the stronger form of 'early total' immersion), the MLPS model is clearly low on two vitally important factors, namely 'time' and 'intensity'. As regards 'time', the Blondin review points out that in one particular city an MLPS model consisted of 400 hours of L2 teaching from Year 1 to the end of Year 4 Primary (in fact, by most MLPS standards this is a lot), whereas in the same city a bilingual education project over these same Years 1-4 committed 1,700 hours to the L2 – a massive difference. As regards 'intensity', any immersion model inevitably scores higher than any MLPS model, in that in immersion pupils are challenged not only to learn the additional language but also to learn vitally important subject matter through the medium of that language – a big challenge, but one with which many children in fact cope well.

It is widely agreed that immersion leads to very different outcomes from MLPS in the case of young learners. This is not the place for elaborating on these in detail, but those wishing to read more may consult García and Baker (2007) and Johnstone (2001). Suffice for the moment to indicate that immersion can lead to fluent and confident use of the L2, with particularly impressive levels of listening comprehension, with no evident loss of the subject-knowledge that has been acquired through the immersion language. At the same time though, experience over many years in Canada and elsewhere shows that careful attention needs to be paid to the classroom processes of immersion education, with a clearly established need for periodic focus on form as well as on meaning, or as Kowal and Swain (1997) put it, on syntactic as well as on semantic processing, if learners are to become accurate as well as fluent and confident.

However, the fact that immersion leads to more impressive linguistic and content outcomes than MLPS does not mean that MLPS should simply go out of business. In very large numbers of cases it is the only practical option and indeed there are many cases across the world in which, despite the limitations of the model, an impressive degree of success is achieved.

What makes a difference

Earlier I indicated that the term ‘conditions’ was not intended absolutely but in the sense of areas in which it is desirable to focus, in order to make a difference. Below, I set out a number of areas on which it is desirable to focus and which I believe are likely to be common across different contexts. These have been written mainly with MLPS in mind as the most common form of ELL but are intended to apply to immersion models also.

<p>Early start</p>	<p>An early start is in principle advantageous, because it allows a longer time overall for learning; it allows children to learn naturally as young children but then to learn more analytically as older children as they grow up; as such, it gives learners the opportunity to integrate and further develop these different sorts of learning experience.</p>
<p>(Inter) National policy and support</p>	<p>The evidence strongly suggests that the desirable early languages learning initiatives across whole regions and countries could not prevail if left only or mainly to schools and individual teachers. Some form of national or international support is necessary. Initiatives in Europe have benefited greatly from the support of the European Commission and the Council of Europe. The contribution of agencies such as the British Council (and similar bodies for other languages) has also been decisive. In Spain, for example, there has been excellent collaboration between the British Council and the Spanish Ministry for Education in establishing an impressive national early bilingual education project, as presented at the Bangalore conference. The major contribution of the IATEFL SIG for Young Learners, which organized the Bangalore conference, should also be acknowledged, in bringing together valuable insights and experiences from different parts of the world. At national level, Ministries of Education or regional authorities have a major role to play in catering for an adequate supply of well-trained teachers to meet the major increase in demand that arises from lowering the starting age, as well as in helping MLPS teachers raise their levels of confidence and competence in using the additional language in class, so as to provide the sorts of input and interaction that will stimulate the development of their young pupils’ emerging capacities in the additional language they are learning. The national approach to teacher support in Taiwan as described at the conference seemed particularly impressive. However, major questions remain in many countries as to whether the level of support is adequate not only to get an initiative off the ground but to sustain it in the long term. Hence, the importance of long-term planning, going well beyond a ‘quick fix’.</p>

Outcomes and models	Language-related outcomes are strongly dependent on the particular model of languages education curriculum adopted. It is therefore extremely important to be clear about which model of ELL is being implemented, what processes of teaching and learning seem to go well with it, and what sorts of outcome may reasonably be expected. Simply to assume that all will be well just because the starting age has been lowered is a recipe for confusion. At the conference a particularly impressive example was given of how China has developed different levels of proficiency in relation to the particular model of ELL implemented, which levels describe proficiency with considerable specificity, down to the number of words that might be expected per level. Clarity of this sort is in my estimation a very good thing both for teachers and for pupils.
Continuity	It helps greatly if there is an agreed strategy for continuity from one year to the next and into Secondary schooling, in which experiences gained in one year are known, accepted and further developed in subsequent years. An outstanding example of continuity is provided by Chesterton, et al. (2004) who report on a major initiative in New South Wales, Australia, in which Primary and Secondary schools acting in partnership agreed a coherent five-year curriculum that took pupils along a range of planned pathways from the final stages of Primary through the initial stages of Secondary.
Motivation	Initial motivation in young learners seems mainly to be intrinsic, based on enjoyment, interest, curiosity and self-awareness, rather than integrative, instrumental or extrinsic. While it makes good sense with very young learners to exploit the ‘fun’ side of intrinsic motivation through games, songs, playacting and ‘doing things’, it is important to develop the ‘self-awareness’ side of intrinsic motivation too, so that children become motivated through realizing that they are becoming successful learners of their additional language and taking pleasure in this. My visit to Croatia in the mid-1990s showed this phenomenon most clearly.
Local languages	There is value in taking account of such languages as children bring to school with them (including different first languages and dialects) and those languages that are used locally by different ethno-linguistic communities. This can go well with a ‘language awareness’ approach, which to my mind should not be a substitute for, or in competition with, the early learning of one particular language. The two should go together, because language awareness is enhanced at least as much through reflecting on one’s ongoing attempts over time to learn a particular language as it is through being sensitized to a variety of languages. Both are important ingredients in the language education of children.

<p>Language and cognitive development</p>	<p>Children progress through a sequence of stages in their internalized language development, at differing rates. This, however, is not akin to climbing a ladder (i.e., always going upwards), because progress in certain areas, e.g., fluency, can for a while mean fossilization or even regression in others, e.g., accuracy or range, and vice-versa. There is value in helping children progress beyond prefabricated utterances, and some initial evidence has accumulated on how this might be achieved, e.g., importance of children receiving feedback which may be positive (encouragement) or may be corrective, to help them further refine their underlying language system. This feedback may be supplied by teachers, other adults, other children or by the particular child him- or herself. In the past, the notion of ‘aptitude’ has often been viewed as fixed (e.g., an ‘able’ or ‘less able’ child). However, this is misleading, since ‘aptitude’ may be developed through Primary school education, especially in the area of metalinguistic awareness and sensitivity to sound. It is therefore important to develop not only the visible skills of communication but also the underlying qualities that go with aptitude, so that this will develop with the impact of the education each child receives. In their spontaneous play, young children show a tendency to notice, play with and practise features of linguistic form as well as meaning, suggesting the onset of implicit metalinguistic knowledge – something on which classroom pedagogy at Primary school should desirably build. There is also considerable value in introducing children to stories, not only because of their appeal to children’s imagination but also because they help children internalize a narrative discourse structure.</p>
<p>Early reading, writing and grammar</p>	<p>There is value in introducing reading and writing at an early stage, rather than concentrating solely on listening and speaking. A visit I made to Croatia in the mid-90s offered the most advanced and successful methodology for ELL I have thus far seen anywhere. It included children aged seven or eight learning grammatical concepts in their foreign language (which might be French, German, English or Italian), derived from their first language (in most cases, Croatian), and also learning to read and write from an early age. As such, more or less from the start they were learning to develop a strong underlying knowledge system and at the same time to express this through all four communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This contradicted the widespread view that, in ELL, children should concentrate on listening and speaking and should not be asked to develop an analytical knowledge of language. This approach helped the children to think analytically and strategically, in order to monitor their own learning, and also encouraged the sort of self-awareness that I have mentioned in the section on motivation.</p>

Technology-mediated learning	<p>There is high potential value in technology-mediated learning and use, though at present there is relatively little evidence of this in ELL. In my view, the greatest value lies in putting Primary schools in one country in touch with Primary schools in another. In Scotland I have seen children aged 5-6 whose L1 is English, who live in a non-Gaelic-speaking part of Scotland and who on their parents' wishes are receiving their Primary school education largely through the medium of Scottish Gaelic, engaged in video-conferencing interaction with children of the same age who live on one of the islands where Gaelic is spoken. The new technologies offer exciting possibilities for joint projects on a wide range of topics relevant to any Primary school curriculum, involving teachers and possibly parents as well as pupils themselves, and creating new sorts of opportunity for intercultural learning and multilingual or L2 communication. It is worth noting that with the rapid rise of English as major language of global communication, there is no absolute need for the new-technology links necessarily to be with schools in an English-speaking country. Children and staff in (say) Spanish or Italian Primary schools might well engage on joint projects with children and staff in (say) India or China or Taiwan or South Korea, with English as the main language of interaction, since all the children would be learning English as an additional language, but with opportunities for introducing some elements of each national language as part of the emerging linguistic and intercultural awareness of children across the networks as a whole.</p>
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The list set out above can only make these key points briefly – in fact, each section of the list is a significant research field in its own right – but this has to suffice for present purposes as an initial pointer. The list is derived in part from the recent large-scale survey for the European Commission by Peter Edelenbos, Angelika Kubanek and myself (Edelenbos, et al., 2006), which contains chapters on ‘research findings’, practitioners’ views of ‘good practice’ and experts’ views of ‘basic principles’. My own responsibility within the group was largely in the area of ‘research findings’, and the above list draws mainly on this area. I have chosen not to crowd the list with bibliographical references, but the survey referred to above is available online and contains an extensive bibliography, which covers many of the points in this list. The list additionally draws on wider research, reading and visiting over a number of years and also on excellent insights gained from others during the admirable Bangalore conference.

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The EYL publishers panel: Supporting innovation and best practice in EYL: The role of publishing

Catherine Kneafsey, Oxford University Press
Kathryn Munt, Pearson Education
Atiya Zaidi, Ratna Sagar Publishers
Convenor, Shelagh Rixon, University of Warwick, UK

Introduction

Innovation involving the introduction of English at Primary school level or the lowering of the age at which children start English in the Primary school often starts at government level with political objectives often looming as large as educational objectives, as many of the presentations at this conference confirmed. The grand announcement of an initiative having been made, it is frequently the case that the practicalities of exactly how it is to be implemented are then left rather vague and for others to work out at Ministry or Local Education Authority level. Meanwhile teachers in their schools have day-to-day decisions to make about how best to meet the requirement to teach English to the children in their care. Many of these teachers may have found themselves compelled by events to adopt the role of English teacher in addition to their other duties and it may or may not be a role with which they feel immediately comfortable. With budgets and time for teacher orientation at a national level often limited, the contribution that appropriate teaching materials may make in supporting teachers in their efforts is extremely important.

Different countries differ in their approaches to the supply of materials and in the degree of freedom of choice that state-funded Primary schools are allowed in the teaching materials they use.

Three main approaches are found:

1. materials are *specifically commissioned*, written to the specifications of a Ministry of Education or other educational authority, for example the textbook series entitled 'Elementary School English' currently used in South Korea;
2. materials originally published for a wider market (so-called 'glocal' materials) are adapted to local needs, for example, the internationally used Longman/Pearson

Education text *Gogo Loves English* being adapted to suit the requirements of some regions of China;

3. material is *adopted without modifications*; existing published materials, which seem to provide a good fit with the needs of a particular context are adopted, such as Oxford University Press's 'Happy House' material, which is used in Bahrain.

Beyond the day-to-day support that is given to teachers by simply putting something in their hands from which they can teach, published materials may play a direct part in teacher development. They may, for example, give the rationales and provide the resources for activities that teachers may not have had the opportunity or confidence to try before. An example of this is the Story Cards provided with the 'BUGs' series (published by Macmillan) with pictures of key moments in the story on the front for the children to see and a script of the story on the back to support the teacher telling the story. Materials may also become the focus and source of examples for seminars and training courses in Teaching English to Young Learners.

All of these possibilities, in optimum conditions, involve feedback from and consultation with representative teachers as well as teacher orientation to the new materials. That way the textbook or other course materials can truly become the 'agent of change' (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994).

The Bangalore panel on EYL publishing was set up to encourage communication and discussion between publishers and influential members of their constituency. There were two main aims.

1. First, the panel aimed to discuss the selection of teaching materials as reflected by each of the approaches described above and acknowledging these as powerful means in themselves of helping teachers become comfortable with innovation. Particular attention was paid to ways in which possibly unfamiliar classroom practices thought beneficial for children by writers and editors could be made both transparent and appetising to teachers using the materials.
2. Secondly, the panel sought to learn more about the roles which responsible publishers can play in their relations with particular teaching contexts. These efforts often go far beyond the processes centred around the ideation, design and production of a set of teaching resources intended to fit the needs of a particular situation, and extend into direct dialogue with practising teachers. Such dialogue may result in modifications to the materials themselves so they may more closely meet the concerns of teachers and the needs of the children, but may also result in teacher development interventions that inform and support teachers in implementing methodological or language focused aspects of existing materials that may lie outside their current experience.

The introduction to the session by the convener covered the general points mentioned above, as a framework within which the publishers could situate their contributions.

The main part of the session consisted of short presentations by the representatives of three publishing houses, all of them with major commissioning and editorial responsibilities in the area of EYL materials, but each representing on this occasion one of the three material-provision approaches discussed above. This was followed by questions and answers.

The first presentation, given by Kathryn Munt of Pearson Education, gave a picture of a highly developed version of the second approach described above. Kathryn described how a centrally developed corpus of material that contributed to the EYL course ‘English Adventure’ was moulded to produce parallel editions to suit different contexts. Adjustments were made in areas such as cultural content and activity types through a process of drafting and re-drafting guided by feedback from teachers and consultants worldwide.

The second presentation, by Atiya Zaidi of Ratna Sagar Publishers, represented the first approach described above. Atiya described the interactive feedback and consultation process that took EYL materials designed to fit the needs of an Indian EYL context through several successive editions, with revisions being made for each edition in response to teachers’ observations and requests.

Catherine Kneafsey of Oxford University Press represented the third approach described above. Catherine showed how a publishing company could provide practical training support to teachers in a particular context – in this case in Bahrain, where existing EYL materials, entitled ‘Happy House’, had been adopted without adaptation because they were seen by the authorities to be a close fit with local needs. Teachers, however, were felt to need support and orientation in order to make the best use of the resources provided. This was achieved over a four-year period through teacher-development workshops and seminars provided by a teacher educator appointed by Oxford University Press.

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Young Learner English Language Policy and Implementation: International Perspectives

Over the past three decades, there has been a huge expansion across the world in school programmes for the teaching of English to young learners. Much of this growth is due to global forces which currently demand ever-increasing levels of communication in English across continents. This publication, resulting from the conference *The Way Forward: Learning from International Experience of TEYL* held in Bangalore, India, in 2008, seeks to address these issues, responding to concerns that there is often insufficient guidance available to decision-makers at ministry level regarding the policy and practical implications of an early start for English.

Young Learner English Language Policy and Implementation: International Perspectives is a collection of 28 papers which reflect the insights of a group of academics, policy makers, senior educationalists and practitioners who have been important contributors internationally, regionally or in their own countries, to debates about YL policy and implementation. These papers represent a significant contribution to current thinking on effective YL language policy formulation, the design of appropriate programmes for implementation and the sustainable implementation of policy at local and national levels.

Three themes were evident in many of the conference presentations and are also reflected in these papers:

- the specific impact of global factors on policy decisions and classroom practices;
- the challenges of policy and its implementation;
- broader and more local language issues and their impact on policy.

The first section of this book contains country-specific case studies which provide analyses of a range of policy issues in state school provision for TEYL, including some recommendations for policy makers in planning and shaping their future national provision. The second section includes accounts of innovations, experiments or small-scale projects in the YL field from the state and private sectors, across a range of countries.

This volume will be of considerable interest to a wide range of policy makers in ministries and educational institutions, researchers, teacher educators and anyone concerned with YL English language policy and implementation.

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