ELT in Southeast Asia: A Survey of Current Practice

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Abstract

The field of English language teaching (ELT) has witnessed dramatic changes in the past 40 or 50 years. A quick survey of the literature reveals that a paradigm shift has indeed occurred. The ELT world is abuzz with new terminology that reflects current thinking in language education, such as constructivism, learner-centeredness, cooperative learning, communicative language teaching, process-oriented instruction, reflective teaching and authentic assessment. The question, however, is whether and to what extent this new paradigm is reflected in the typical ELT classroom in Southeast Asia. Are important changes currently happening in the teaching and assessment practices of ELT teachers in Southeast Asia? Or are ELT teachers basically doing the same things that they have been doing for a long time?

In the symposium, I will present a broad overview of English Language Teaching in Southeast Asian countries based on a study (Renandya et al., 1999) that I conducted recently on the teaching and assessment practices of ELT teachers from countries such as Brunei, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Data from the study that provide answers to the following questions will be discussed:

1. What is Southeast Asian English teachers’ preferred teaching methodology?
2. What are their perceptions regarding
   - the role of teachers in the classrooms?
   - the qualities of good teachers and good learners?
   - the causes of learners’ failure to reach a high level of proficiency in English?
3. What are the functions of traditional and non-traditional modes of assessment?
4. Do EFL and ESL teachers hold the same or different views with respect to the three questions above?