

Training 'clerks of the [global] empire'?: English for Research Purposes (ERP) in 21st century Asia

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Recent global escalation of English language teaching especially in Asia has led to increasing concern about the most appropriate ways to teach English in Asian contexts. Meanwhile, Government policy reforms in many Asian countries now demand that academics and research students contribute to international scholarship in their fields. In Vietnam, for example, since the Government's education reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, traditional teaching methods are not believed to result in communicative fluency and the critical application of language skills needed today by Vietnamese English speakers. As a result, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training is giving strong support to the training of English language teachers to be researchers, to critique the relevance of Northern metropolitan teaching methods for Vietnamese EAL/EFL teachers, and to conduct systematic research for that purpose. English language teachers are under considerable pressure to gain research skills, and institutions are required to develop a culture of research through effective training programs. However, as Pham (2006) has shown, this research is not happening for a variety of reasons, one of which is that ERP academics themselves are often unclear about their positions as researchers and writers in the global academy.

This paper presents a small study exploring how Vietnamese ERP teachers conceptualise their roles as educators of English language research skills and writing, and how learning and teaching are actually experienced in ERP classrooms. Using Freire's (1970) distinction between transmissive and transformative pedagogies, this study engages with key questions for ERP teaching in Asia: What does it mean to have a 'critical consciousness' in conducting and writing Asian research in English? How is ERP understood, and taught, in practice today? Are teachers and students in fact being trained to be little more than 'clerks' of the global academic 'empire' (Giroux, 1994)?

References

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Biodata

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