

Julian Edge – United Kingdom

I first taught English to speakers of other languages in Amman, Jordan in 1969. It goes without saying, then, that I am pretty old. Since then, I have lived and worked in Germany, Egypt, Singapore, Lebanon, Turkey and Australia, as well as Britain. I've also been lucky enough to be invited to make brief working trips to a number of other countries, including Brazil (three times), Mexico (three times), Colombia (twice), and Peru. In between those countries and jobs, I found that the questions that arose from the work motivated me to go back to university and get myself a teaching qualification, an MA, and then a PhD. The focus of my interests settled on teacher education and, more specifically, on teacher self-development (including my own) through reflective practice and action research. The combination of the work and the study motivated me to write a number of books, the most relevant of which to this project I have listed below.



So far, so good. You can, of course, read the same story another way. *This young British graduate with no proper training gets a job as a teacher of English just because he is a “native speaker”. He continues to take advantage of this accident of birth while he moves around the world, but he never has any experience of what it means to be a teacher of English who shares the cultural, linguistic, educational or socio-political background of his students. He represents the linguistic arm of a globalisation process that threatens more of our students than it helps. And repeatedly, these foreigners come along with the latest “method” of language teaching that we are supposed to accept is the best, while we coincidentally have to buy the latest set of textbooks from their publishers.*

I have a lot of sympathy with that second version of my biography. Given that I do not yet intend to retire completely from language teaching, I would like to make two statements to clarify my current position:

- My experience over time and around the world has taught me that, as far as the actual teaching of English is concerned, there truly is no single “best method”; there is no “best practice”.
- While we teach English because of the advantages it brings, the ugly side of the role of English in supporting globalisation and worsening the gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’ in many societies is undeniable.

If I put these two statements together, the outcome leads me to the conviction that one positive way forward is for the teaching professionals of each country to become more actively involved in determining the **how** of teaching, in the belief that such empowerment will also lead them to take more part in the discussions necessary to determine **what** the role of English should be in the education system of their people.

And that brings me to action research: the need to **observe** how we teach English now; to **reflect** on what we do, noting the strengths of our traditions; to inform ourselves about possible innovations; to **plan** such interventions (possibly in collaboration with

our colleagues and our managers and our learners and their parents), to put those plans into **action**; to evaluate what we have learned and to **share** that learning with our colleagues more widely.

Well, that's me. And I am married, with a grown-up daughter. And I like to cook and eat and drink and sing. In support of the last of those, I play the guitar with more enthusiasm than skill. I get around town on my bicycle whenever possible and twice a week I go for a gentle five-kilometre jog along the riverbank and round a local little lake that is a joy in all seasons. Right now (June 2014), the swans have four fluffy cygnets that they are teaching to paddle.

Publications

Edge, J. 2011. *The Reflexive Teacher Educator: Roots and Wings*. New York: Routledge.

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Edge, J. 2002. *Continuing Cooperative Development: A Discourse Framework for Individuals as Colleagues*. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press.

Edge, J. (ed.) 2001. *Case Studies in Action Research*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Inc.

Edge, J. & Richards, K. (eds.) (1993) *Teachers Develop Teachers Research*. Oxford: Heinemann.