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## **Important Tasks of English Education: Asia-wide and Beyond**

by David Nunan,  
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This volume represents a unique compendium of specific Asian based studies that are largely culturally context sensitive. They, thus, offer valuable new insights well beyond generalizations and put into focus the specific needs of learners on the continent. In fact, all editors and most contributing authors are based in and/or have had extensive experience or connections with Asia and the Pacific. For myself, I have spent a lifetime in the area: growing up, taking graduate studies, being a professor and writer as well as learning a second language - Mandarin.

We need to look deeply at times into the specific needs of learners in Asia and the Pacific region who we cannot forget are still very much living in local contexts -not only an evidently increasingly global one. That being said, there is much to learn from these studies that can be borrowed and lent across a number of frontiers. Further, it is evident that we must not exclude research into second language learning because of its geographical or cultural source. That has to underlay an important part of the integrity of research and this book is very much devoted to that principle.

One approach, that does seem to meet a wide range of cross-regional needs and to which a number of the authors deal with directly or indirectly is one to which I have continuously been drawing attention and analysis for more than two decades. It is that of task based learning. Interestingly, its popularity is accelerating in East Asia as well as elsewhere. A demonstration of this is the fact that I was asked by a Chinese publisher to prepare a new task based publication for China's English curriculum. China represents, as Professor Minsheng Li states in his included work, the world's largest source of English learners, let alone the largest segment of EFL learners anywhere in the world.

India with its huge population and apparent new boom for English learning as mentioned by Professor Deepti Gupta is also a large beacon of English learning. Just these two countries alone and their appetites for English education give us a new sense of the increased diversity of language ownership; something Dr. Phan Le Ha touches on in her article on the internationalization of the language and non-natives increasingly critical role in teaching and learning. It signals the reality that those learning English will be significantly centered around or originating from Asia.

Therefore, as the studies in the book indicate, educators need evermore to recognize the importance and distinctive context based needs of those requiring education in English outside the traditional native speaker contexts. This is not inherently contradictory with those with persistent arguments that many general principles of acquisition should be understood and appropriately applied by educators within their distinctive classroom settings and communities.

In keeping with such thoughts, I believe it can be reasonably well argued that the task based teaching as I have largely described it in various publications -more recently, *"An introduction to Task Based Teaching"*, 2004, Cambridge University Press- does provide a flexible, functionally compatible and contextually sensitive approach for many learners, as well as teachers. There may not be a magic approach anywhere for this region or others, but let us look at some of the attractive features of task based learning. It offers the potential for the following:

1. A replacement to or a supportive infusion of more student centered learning to certain single approach based syllabi.
2. Utilizing more authentic experiences and materials as well as

