Foreword
In this May 2022 edition of English as a Foreign Language International Journal (EFLIJ), three research articles bear witness to the resiliency of EFL teachers in carrying their tasks of promoting English pedagogy in their respective workplaces while the worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, remains to challenge their efficient, relevant, and innovative delivery of language instruction.

In the first article, Critical Thinking: What it means in a Vietnamese Tertiary EFL Context, Thi Thanh Binh Nguyen discusses how Vietnamese EFL teachers and students interpret critical thinking. This qualitative study involved 8 teachers and 22 students who articulated some of the features of involved cognitive skills in critical thinking (analysing, synthesising, and evaluating) and affective dispositions (inquisitiveness and open-mindedness). The study shows how research participants had rudimentarily conceptualized critical thinking that can be traced in their local culture. Further, the study indicates that the participant Vietnamese teachers and students viewed critical thinking primarily within the concept of knowledge and self and not in terms of global perspective. As a result, the study has identified a learning gap that can be narrowed by providing training programmes or workshops to address the three components of critical thinking according to Barnett’s (1997) and Bloom’s (1956) models.

In the second article, Grit as a Predictor of Foreign Language Proficiency: An Investigation of Grit and EFL Proficiency in Japanese University Students, Jared R. Baierschmidt addresses the challenges of Japanese EFL learners in engaging even in simple English conversations. To address their need, the researcher used a non-cognitive trait of grit as predictor of EFL learning outcomes among local university students in eastern Japan. Using both demographic information and scores in TOEIC, TOEFL, and current GPA in a regression analysis, the data have shown a positive correlation between grit and English proficiency test scores. Also, the study has confirmed scarcity of studies that show relationship between grit and foreign language proficiency, though there had been findings for the said purpose in education, the military, and work performance. To address the need, the demographic information and standardized test scores of 280 Japanese university students were explored using regression analysis. Baierschmidt found grit to be statistically significant to a certain degree. In addition, he acknowledges that the results need to be verified by further studies with much bigger population size of respondents.

In the last article, Application of Metapragmatics to Language-Learning Research: A Longitudinal Study of Word Learning in Language Exchange Conversations, Jiwon Lee has proposed the use of metapragmatics in SLA research. In this study, the researcher analyzed word learning during a four-month period of language exchange conversation between two native and two-non-native Japanese speakers. The results of the study indicate the potentials of metapragmatics in understanding the reflective and social nature of language learning.

In the context of varied global challenges brought by COVID-19, EFLIJ is optimistic that more EFL practitioners will continue to address the uncharted areas of English language pedagogy, both locally and globally.

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