

# Principled Possibilities – Ideas for Teaching

Gregory Quinlivan



Principled Possibilities  
- Ideas for Teaching

Gregory Quinlivan  
Taiwan, 2012.

Gregory Quinlivan was born in Sydney, Australia. He is an English language teacher with experience in Australia, Brunei, China, Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan. He holds a Master of Applied Linguistics degree, qualifications in Education and Music performance, and is a father and grandfather. As a Buddhist 'upasaka' he is interested in meditation and the original teachings of the Buddha. He also enjoys reading, travel, energetic walks, and spending time with friends.

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**ISBN:** 978-1-4710-4547-9

The author wishes to thank Sandra Schuler for permission to use her photograph on the front cover of this book. It was taken in Myanmar in December, 2011.

Back cover photograph: Steps leading to Wat Prathat Doi Suthep, just outside Chiang Mai, Thailand (taken by author) in 2010.

## Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those brave souls who leave the familiar to discover other peoples and cultures, and perhaps themselves at the same time.

“Language is never neutral.”

— Paulo Freire

“Creativity is as important as literacy.”

— Ken Robinson

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## Preface

In the interest of understanding my position on English language teaching throughout the present volume, particularly in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, from a critical literacy perspective, I would like to share with readers my personal philosophy.

- Teaching English provides learners with a powerful tool to build their economic and social development.
- Teaching should facilitate learning by providing a nurturing, supportive environment in which students feel free to experiment with language and develop a variety of learning skills. The overuse of formal assessment tools will tend to discourage such experimentation.
- Teachers must be aware of the needs and abilities of learners, and tailor tuition goals, objectives, tasks and assessment to meet these as well as curriculum requirements.
- Teachers should honour learners' own cultures, including their songs, stories, customs and beliefs, and develop their understanding and appreciation of other cultures, while also sharing their individual cultures with students.
- Teacher interaction should be characterised by respect, patience, sincere interest and compassion, and their pedagogy should be informed by best practice and reflection on actual experiences in class.
- Since no particular method, approach or system has proven better than another, teachers should select from an eclectic palette, balance oral fluency against grammar rules, and relate content to students' lived experiences and the world outside of the classroom.
- Lessons should be innovative, use technologies where appropriate, and incorporate resources and ideas from both teachers and students themselves.
- Opportunities for connecting with students outside of the school environment using Internet and other networking facilities ought to be explored, in order to provide further English practice.
- Assessment should reflect teaching and learning, involve the learners in its design where possible, employ a variety of instruments, especially informal/continuous ones, and remain secondary to the development of language skills.
- Teachers should monitor the impact of competition and reward systems on student motivation, particularly any negative effects on less-able students.
- EFL teachers need to develop and maintain networks of other professionals for social interaction, support, and to keep up-to-date with changes within the field.
- Finally, the fun developed within lessons should motivate learners to achieve personal goals and higher outcomes.

Gregory Quinlivan,  
Hsinchu City, Taiwan.  
January, 2012.

## **Introduction**

My transition from office work to education was a late one, and came about more by accident than design.

Having successfully trained as a classical musician, I realised that performance opportunities would be limited at my age, so it seemed that music education would be the most logical progression. Having successfully trained as a teacher, I discovered that music teaching opportunities would also be scarce, apart from those occasionally arising in outback Australia.

At the suggestion of a friend I decided to dip my toes into the field of English language teaching by working at a winter camp in Shanghai, China. It was the joy of that experience which sparked my desire to work and travel further.

Several training courses later I began my new career, at first in Australia with children and later with adults from Europe, South America and Asia. From there I have experienced life in the Sultanate of Brunei, Malaysia, South Korea and Taiwan, where I am presently located.

While there is much material available in the field of EFL (English as a Foreign Language), I feel that my own experiences, discoveries, experiments, successes and failures over the last eight years in a variety of settings, with children to adults, and with absolute beginners to upper-intermediate students, are worth sharing with others.

The present book, therefore, includes academic papers, conference and training presentations, and curriculum and planning papers to assist fellow educators. Many of these were developed in the context of formal tertiary training in Queensland, Australia, and refer to issues and cases from that location. Nevertheless, they are equally relevant in other English-speaking contexts.

There are also links to my Internet-based materials and websites where electronic versions of many resources included here may be found for the reader's convenience and further exploration.

I don't look on this publication as the final authority on all matters of English language teaching, but as part of the ongoing professional support and discussion so vital to our dynamically evolving and collaborative field. This is why I encourage readers to continue the conversation with me and others using the links given throughout.

I wish to conclude this introduction by expressing my appreciation to fellow teachers, colleagues, university staff, and members of my personal learning network who have either directly or indirectly assisted in formulating my ideas and refining my approaches to teaching. Their originality, contributions, and occasional criticism, are all deeply valued.



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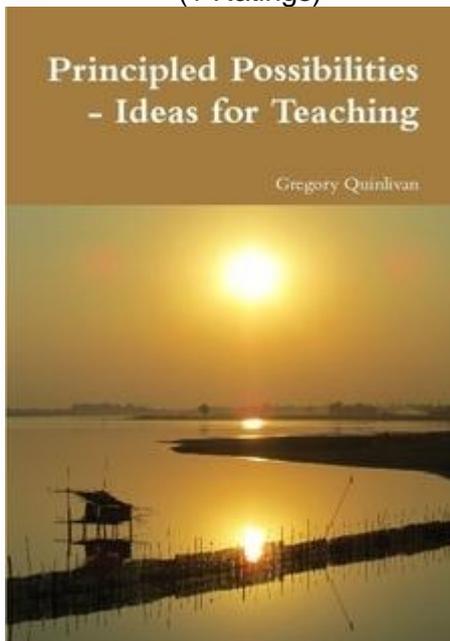
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Principled Possibilities - Ideas for Teaching is a unique publication representing the summation of four years of graduate study, and my own experiences, discoveries, experiments and successes over eight years of teaching throughout Asia and the Pacific. Uniquely the book includes: - a wide selection of academic papers, conference and training presentations, and curriculum and planning documents, - links to websites and other resources for exploring the topics further and contacting the author, - ideas ranging from working with absolute young beginners to adult and upper-intermediate level students, - discussions of current challenges and controversies in teaching, - approaches to online and computer-assisted learning, and - suggestions in the field of English language teaching covering the areas of reading, writing, speaking, the

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### ISBN

9781471045479

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### Edition

First Edition

### Publisher

Gregory Quinlivan

### Published

8 January 2012

### Language

English

### Pages

257

### Binding

Perfect-bound Paperback

### Interior Ink

Black & white

## Weight

0.44 kg

## Dimensions (centimetres)

14.81 wide x 20.98 tall

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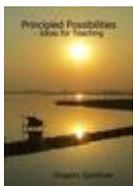
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