

Helping Our Students to Become Successful Users of English

By Dr. Joo-Kyung Park

For the past two decades, a whole new set of changes, challenges, and paradigm shift in English language teaching have been brought up by globalization and the emergence of English as a global language. One of the most significant developments made in Korean ELT is that the 2008 revised national curriculum defined English as an international language (EIL) and emphasized multicultural understanding. The goal of teaching English is to help students to become intercultural speakers of English.

Characteristics of Successful Users of English

Now we as language teachers should focus on how we can help our students to use English and get their meaning across successfully to whomever they talk with. It is important then for us to understand the major characteristics of “successful users of English (SUE)” and develop some strategies to help our students to become SUEs. We also need to promote our students’ understanding of the concept of English as a global language and help them to build their confidence in themselves as English learners and users. Lack of confidence is said to be one of the biggest and most difficult hurdles for learners to overcome, and most often, this lack of confidence comes from the lack of understanding of EIL.

Understanding EIL

It should be noted that EIL is used both for international communication and in a local sense as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies. The use of EIL is no longer connected to the culture of Inner Circle countries, and EIL in a local sense becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used. EIL is to enable speakers to share with others their ideas and culture, and most of all, EIL belongs to its users. Accordingly, the goals of teaching EIL are 1) to ensure intelligibility; 2) to help learners develop strategies to achieve comity, i.e., friendly relations, including those for seeking clarifications, establishing rapport and mi-

minimizing cultural differences; and 3) to develop textual competence or to develop reading and writing skills (McKay, 2002).

Doing Student Needs Analyses

How can we help our students to become successful users of EIL? First, we need to analyze our student needs and then help them by providing them with optimal conditions for their language learning such as exposure to a rich, comprehensible, and authentic language input, use of the language to do things, motivation to listen and read the language, and to speak and write it, as well as some formal instruction in language.

Generating Meaningful Interaction

Second, we need to generate more meaningful classroom interaction. Factors influencing classroom interaction include individual learning styles, learner’s psychological state, and cultural norms. We need to know what these are and how to cope with them. It is very helpful to videotape classroom lessons and examine them thoroughly to observe what worked well, what didn’t, and why it did or didn’t work well.

Providing Sufficient Wait-time

We should also give enough wait-time for our students to process and formulate an answer and should be able to read students’ body language properly, particularly when you and your students have different language and cultural background. Finally, we should ensure intelligibility of our own speech and build confidence in ourselves as a good speech model of English as well as a good language instructor.

Dr. Joo-Kyung Park presented this topic at the April 9 Gwangju Chapter Meeting. She is professor at Honam University and has served in various KOTESOL positions, including Jeolla Chapter President, National President, and Editor-in-Chief of *Korea TESOL Journal*.

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The Importance of Teaching Collocation in the Classroom

By Vivien Slezak

Collocation is the frequent combination of two or more words. These groups can range from phrasal verbs, such as “take charge” to idioms, such as “green with envy.” For native English speakers, such combinations feel “natural” or “just right,” however such “natural” combinations are certainly problematic for L2 learners. Here I aim to show the importance of introducing, discovering, and practicing collocations in the classroom.

Language patterns like collocations are quite common in both written and spoken English. Because of this frequency, it makes sense to teach these patterns in the classroom. The different types of collocations can be broken down into forms. Here are some examples of these forms: adverb + adjective, adjective + noun, noun + noun, noun + verb, verb + noun, verb + preposition, and verb + adverb. From this breakdown, it becomes easier to create lists of examples to help with vocabulary acquisition.

Learning vocabulary is clearly a significant part of tackling a new language. We can do this through various methods. For example, direct learning (through memorization), indirect learning (through context), borrowing words, and culture. Memorization is probably the most popular vocabulary learning method, especially here in Korea, as I have seen many a student draped over their endless lists of words, hoping to absorb them quickly into their memories. Acquiring words through context is slightly more challenging, yet can be easier to understand and then to remember. For example, I can write the word “jot down” over and over, but not quite grasp its meaning. If I hear the sentence, “She jotted down the notes quickly in her notebook,” there is an action I can picture, thus giving me context for a clearer understanding of the words, which in turn assists with remembering them.

Using borrowed words can be helpful, but sometimes it can also be tricky because sometimes the borrowed word does not mean the same thing in the language one is learning. For example, Korean “seobiseu” does not mean the same as English “service.” Finally, living in another culture opens a wide variety of opportunities to learn vocabulary from

speaking with strangers on the street, reading signs and menus, and watching TV or movies. Given these different ways to learn vocabulary, students need some guidance in approaching this arduous endeavor.

As teachers, we can help our students learn vocabulary. One way is to introduce them to the notion of “chunks” of language and “chunking.” This way, we can demonstrate the importance of words in groups, rather than single entities. Learning language in units is far easier for students than having to figure out which words go together correctly. For older students (middle school – adult), it is possible to play collocation matching games, or draw balloon diagrams. For advanced students, they can work with idioms and metaphors. There are a large number of possible activities for the classroom that are both as enjoyable as they are productive.

Collocation is not restricted to higher-level L2 learners. Young learners can also begin using collocations, for example, matching descriptions of weather to the seasons, e.g. summer >> hot and sunny. Young learners can use groups of words that they learned much easier to express their thoughts, even if they cannot formulate complete sentences yet. Collocation is a great tool to start using in your classroom with early ages.

As teachers, we need to focus on what our students need to learn. When it comes to vocabulary acquisition, there are various methods for students to explore. Learning and using collocations is one method that should be practiced more in the classroom, since it is a valuable and effective way for learners to absorb and produce the language. Collocations provide a practical approach to language learning, which may set some minds at ease that not all language learning is centered around grammar. So go on, don't be shy and make collocations a part of your classroom routine!

Vivien Slezak presented on the topic of collocation at our Chapter meeting on April 9. She works at Chosun University in Gwangju and is currently the International Affairs Committee Chair of Korea TESOL and the Treasurer for Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter.

Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL May Chapter Meeting

- Time: Saturday, May 7, 2011, 1:30 p.m.
- Place: Chosun University, Main Building, 2nd Floor, CU TESOL Room 2123

Schedule

- 1:30 pm: Registration and Welcome
- 2:00 pm: Presentation 1: ***A Hemingway Approach to Writing and Sentence Correction***
Julien McNulty (Chosun University; KOTESOL International Conference Chair)
- 2:50 pm: Refreshment Break
- 3:10 pm: Presentation 2: ***40 Years: English Teaching and Learning in Korea***
Dr. David E. Shaffer (Chosun University; Chapter President)
- 4:00 pm: Teaching Idea & Activity Share-time: Open to Everyone
Bring your favorite activity or idea to share with us. (3-5 min. each)
- 4:30 pm: Announcements
Book Drawing
Closing

(Admission is free. Membership is encouraged.)

Upcoming Chapter Events

June 11, 2011. Chapter Meeting

- *Setting Up an Extensive Reading Program*
Scott Miles (Daegu Hanny University)
- *Active Listening: Beyond Fill-in-the-Blanks*
Peadar Callaghan (Daegu Chapter President)

July 9, 2011. Chapter Meeting

- *Games and Communicative Activities: Not Just for Entertainment*
Tory Thorkelson (KOTESOL Past President)
- *Student Impressions of NESTs: Both Sides of the Coin*
Kyung-hun Kang and Jeon Karam
(Chosun University)

Upcoming KOTESOL Events

May 14, 2011.

The 2011 KOTESOL National Conference
Advancing Korean TESOL in the 21st Century
KAIST, Daejeon

June 4, 2011.

Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter Conference
Early English, motivated Minds, and Innovative Assessment
Pusan University of Foreign Studies, Busan

August 27, 2011.

Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter Symposium

October 15-16, 2011.

The 2011 Korea TESOL Intl. Conference
Pushing our Paradigms; Connecting with Culture
Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul

For KOTESOL, Korea & International ELT Events:
<http://www.koreatesol.org/ConferencesAndEvents>

Upcoming Korea ELT Events

The 2011 JELLA Spring Conference

Jungang English Language & Lit. Assn. of Korea
May 20, 2011; Chungbuk Natl. Univ., Cheongju

LAK-SMOG 2011 Spring Conference

Discourse, Language, and English and Linguistics
May 21, 2011; Jeonju University, Jeonju

The 2011 ETAK Annual Conference

New Prospects in the Era of Teaching ESP
June 11, 2011; Eulji University Hospital, Daejeon

KATE International Conference

Empowering Teachers in the Globalization Era
July 1-2, 2011; HIT Bldg, Hanyang Univ., Seoul

Asia TEFL 2011: The Asia TEFL Intl. Conference

Teaching English in a Changing Asia
July 27-29; Hotel Seoul Kyoyuk Munhwa Hoegwan

The 2011 KEES International Conference

English Education in Asia: Issues & Possibilities
August 3, 2011; Chungbuk Natl. Univ., Cheongju