

Critical Thinking in EFL Classes for All Ages and Levels: Principles, Approaches, and Activities

By Stewart Gray

A familiar challenge to ESL teachers interested in promoting critical thinking and discussion among students is designing and implementing classes that permit and encourage these things: the age of students, their disposition, their ability to communicate in English, and the materials and activities to be used. These are all factors that require consideration. To highlight some of the available options, the focus of this workshop is a number of approaches to critical thinking in the EFL classroom as well as the philosophies of design and the teacher behaviors that can contribute to a classroom environment in which students are empowered to think and discuss critically, and to actively create and negotiate ideas rather than passively accept them.

This workshop includes examples of various efforts made by the presenter to make his own teaching contexts (which included adult students and young learners, advanced students and beginners) more "critical" and to encourage students of all language levels to engage in English-language discussion. Supporting these examples with educational literature, this workshop provides a list of potentially useful advisory points for designing classes, interacting with students, encouraging them to interact, and managing and supporting their language use. Attendees will have the opportunity to

reflect upon and share their own experiences and perspectives, negotiate the validity of the presenter's suggested approaches to their own teaching context, and consider how to, and whether to, include critical thinking and discussion in classes of their own

THE PRESENTER

Stewart Gray is an English teacher who has been living in Korea since 2011. He has worked with a



wide variety of students in different contexts. He completed his MA TESOL at Dankook University (Jukjeon), and is a PhD student with the University of Leeds (England). He is currently one of the facilitators of the KOTESOL Reflective Practice SIG. His research interests include language

and identity, reflective practice, critical thinking, and critical pedagogies.

Mr. Gray will present on critical thinking for the classroom at the January 14th meeting of the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter of KOTESOL at Gwangju National University of Education (Room 811).

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- Bank transfer to **KOTESOL:** KEB-Hana bank account number 299-890069-83204.
- Payment in cash to the Chapter Membership Officer at a Chapter Meeting.

Magical Moments & Critical Incidents

By Dr. David Shaffer

Good-bye 2016; hello 2017! The change of the year is always a good time to reflect on the past twelve months and make plans for the upcoming dozen. In this session, we are going to look back on our ELT (English language teaching) experiences over the past year, pick out those “magical moments” that we had, and share them with our group.

“Just what do you mean by “magical moment”? you may ask. One definition I’ve found is that “a magical moment is when something unexpected and exciting happens because of something a student says, for example.” So, they may be student-generated, but they don’t have to be. A more encompassing definition by another ELT professional is that a magical moments are “inspiring, unplanned moments originating in class from the teacher, students, or both.”

Magical moments are “Ah-ha! moments” – those memorable moments that pounce upon us unexpectedly, filling us with the sudden realization of success, of attainment, or of the path to success or attainment. They may be moments such as when a student pronounces correctly for the first time that word that she was having trouble with all semester (I had trouble with “umbrellella” until I was school age). Or when a student grasps that structure that she constantly confused with another but now realizes how they are different and what situations to use the structure in.

A magical moment might be when the teacher is again giving that explanation that students just don’t quite seem to grasp, but rewords it a little differently this time, and “puff!” the students’ eyes light up. Understanding of the professional development variety can be gained from reflecting on and sharing these magical moments with our colleagues.

Critical incidents can differ from magical moments, but we can possibly learn even more from them. Friend of KOTESOL Tom Farrell tells us that “A critical incident is any unplanned event that

occurs during class. It has been suggested that if ... teachers formally reflect on these critical incidents, it may be possible for them to uncover new understandings of the teaching and learning process.” An activity that didn’t end up the way you wanted it to, student disinterest in a language game you were sure that they would love, a “creative” exercise that was not effective in learning the intended language structure – critical incidents all. And if time is taken to reflect on why they did not have the desired effect, we as teachers can learn, grow, and bloom.

The second portion of our session will be devoted to the sharing of critical incidents – both those that we have reflected on and gained insights from, and those that we are still striving to understand. Through sharing within our small discussion groups, insights will arise.

Pre-meeting “homework”: Each attendee is requested to bring with them at least one “magical moment” that you have had and at least one “critical incident” to share in a small discussion group.

THE FACILITATOR

David Shaffer has taught English skills courses, TESOL, applied linguistics, and linguistics at Chosun University for more years than he cares to reveal. He wishes that during those years, he would have had more magical moments and that he would have reflected more on the ones that he did have. He also regrets the lost opportunities from incidents that arose in his classes by not often enough taking the time to deeply reflect on them and make them into critical incidents and learning experiences



Dr. Shaffer will lead this workshop on Magical Moments and Critical Incidents at the January 14th meeting of the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter of KOTESOL at Gwangju National University of Education (Room 811).

Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL January Chapter Meeting

- Time: Saturday, January 14, 2017, 1:45–5:00 p.m.
- Place: Gwangju Natl. University of Ed., Teacher Training Bldg., Room 811 (1st Floor)

■ Schedule: Chapter Meeting, Main Session

- 1:45 pm:** Sign-in and Meet-and-Greet (Admission is free for first-timers. Future membership is welcomed.)
- 2:00 – 2:50 pm: PRESENTATION**
Critical Thinking in EFL Classes for All Ages and Levels: Principles, Approaches, and Activities
 Stewart Gray (Baekseok Culture University, Cheonan, Chungnam)
- 3:00 – 3:15 pm: Refreshment Break**
- 3:15 – 4:10 pm: Collaborative WORKSHOP**
Magical Moments & Critical Incidents
 Dr. David Shaffer (Gwangju)
- 4:15 – 4:45 pm: SwapShop Session (Open to All)**
 Everyone is encouraged to share their Teaching Discoveries and Secrets with the group. Share your Teaching Tips, Ideas, Classroom Activities, Games, ELT Books, or other Teaching Wisdom. (Handouts welcomed.)
- 4:45 – 5:00 pm:** Announcements / Drawing for Door Prizes / Closing

After-Meeting Dinner at The First Alleyway downtown.

Upcoming Chapter Events

February 11, 2017. Monthly Chapter Meeting

2 Featured EFL Presentations
SwapShop Session

March 11, 2017. Annual Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter Spring Conference

“Stepping Up in an Increasingly Connected World”

Call for Presentation Proposals: Feb. 5
 Gwangju National University of Education

Upcoming KOTESOL Events

May 13-14, 2017.

FAB 11 & KOTESOL National Conference
Boosting the Power of ELT – FABulously
 Sookmyung Women’s University, Seoul

FAB is a series of conferences on neuro-ELT: relating current brain research to better teaching practices.

Reflective Practice SIG

Morning Meeting (11:00-12:30)

“Reflecting on Diversity”

Maria Lisak facilitating.

Jumpstart your reflection plan for 2017!