

Games & Communicative Activities: Not Just Entertainment

By Tory Thorkelson

Having heard many teachers in recent years belittling the value of games in the language classroom, my recent presentation (and this article) aim to encourage the planned and meaningful usage of games and communicative activities as an integral part of a given lesson or unit and/or simply as a reward for good behavior on the part of students.

Games are usually seen as purely for entertainment while activities are seen as more educational and can be easily related to students' experience. But in terms of education in the Korean context, we face two clear challenges: many Korean students have been tricked by the term "game" into doing things that were neither fun, truly educational nor easily related to their experience outside of the classroom and, second, many of the games that we are most familiar with are neither relevant to nor of any real benefit to our students. Therefore, we need to choose our games carefully and use them appropriately. Below are some questions which we might consider as we choose a game:

- Which language does the game target?
- Which skills does it practice? The language skill focus could be any one of the major skills of listening, speaking, reading or writing.
- What type of game is it?
- What's the purpose for using it?
- Does it fit the students? How could I simplify or make it more complex if necessary? Many games require modification in use when the students' needs are taken into consideration.
- How much interaction and participation is there? Maximum involvement is what we are pursuing.

Next, I will look at students' behaviors that can be addressed or encouraged/discouraged by the use of games. Games are usually somewhat time sensitive, age-specific and may require specialized

equipment to play, but the ritualistic nature of games, using colorful game pieces and unique dice (larger, more colorful or even atypical ones as any player of *Dungeons and Dragons* is familiar with) can appeal to students in unique ways.

Also, it is important to assign roles to each member of the group other than "player" so that they are kept busy. These could include timekeeper, dice roller, language monitor (to ensure that students don't fall into using Korean too much), and so on. Regardless, the trick is to play a game just long enough that everyone is enjoying and benefiting from it – but not too long so that students get bored. After all, if they really like it, you can always play it again another day as a reward for something the class did well on- like a homework assignment or a test.

Finally, I will conclude with some suggestions for the proper usage of these activities in the classroom. As mentioned previously, the Korean context is an issue. Games must be chosen (or adapted) carefully so as to enhance the classroom language experience while simultaneously serving to relieve the stress related to learning a new language. Further, overcoming the preconceptions about games may take time, but it is worth it when students light up, participate actively and derive both pleasure and "edutainment" from them. In other words, let the gaming begin regardless of what age or level you may be teaching. As long as you do so with what I have said above in mind, everyone can truly be winners if you get your game on.

Tory Thorkelson presented this topic at the July 9 Gwangju Chapter Meeting. He presently teaches at Hanyang University in Seoul and is Immediate Past President of KOTESOL. Mr. Thorkelson (B.A., B.Ed., M.Ed.) presents regularly at KOTESOL events.

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Student Impressions of NESTs: Both Sides of the Coin

By Kyung-hun Kang and Karam Jeon

The Down Side

Most of native English-speaking teachers who have taught me have been very nice. They have helped us to blend into English conversation classes without being embarrassed. Unfortunately, not all NESTs are this likeable all of the time. Let me share my less desirable experiences with NESTs with you today.

The first case occurred due to cultural differences. It happened when I was a university freshman being taught by a Canadian instructor. After couple of classes, he started to speak negatively of Koreans and Korean culture. He said that Koreans were uncivilized because they ate dogs and threw used toilet paper into wastebaskets rather than into the toilet. He sometimes interestingly compared Korean culture with Canadian culture, but he often finished on a negative note, indirectly suggesting that Canadian culture was better than Korean culture. One culture is not superior to another but merely different.

The second case I wish to relate involved institutes, I had worked at two private English institutes for three years. Both of the institutes hired NESTs. One of my co-workers at the first institute had a bad reputation among elementary students because he always yelled at them when they couldn't understand what he said. Some of the kids cried or reported his yelling to their parents. He had been hired so that young learners could get used to foreign English teachers, not to scare them when they were in his class.

Another teacher, who I worked with at a second institute, had a better reputation, but he had one problem: drinking too much. He drank until after midnight, and then he didn't show up at the office the next day. It happened again and again. I drank with him once, and he explained to me what his problem was: he was middle-aged and extremely lonely. That's why he went out drinking every weekend, even Sunday nights.

Kyung-hun Kang is a senior at Chosun University, majoring in English Language. He has spent time living and working in Australia and in teaching in Korea.

The Up Side

I am used to studying with NESTs since my early childhood and even now. So I'd like to describe positive impressions of Native English-Speaking Teachers (NESTs).

Sharing Ideas Korean professors usually want their students to produce perfectly correct answers. This atmosphere puts pressure on the student in the classroom. When I was in United States, professors encouraged me to express my own ideas. They never said "No, that's not correct" to my responses. They sincerely thought about my ideas and tried to understand them. This atmosphere helped me speak; it encouraged my participation in class.

Communication There are some Korean professors who are always facing the blackboard or the computer in class. When they are finished writing on the board, we copy it in our notebooks and repeat this until the end of class. When I'm in a native speaker's class, this usually doesn't happen. Students and instructors communicate and the class atmosphere is more active and vibrant.

Patience with Students Since English is not my mother tongue, I sometimes have difficulty in deciding how to best explain my ideas. When this situation occurs, native-speaking instructors try to give some help, such as giving some key words or ideas similar to mine, and let me take my time until I find the proper or expression. If I were an instructor, I probably wouldn't be so patient. I've always been thankful to NESTs for their patience with students.

Acting Like Friends Outside of class, it is possible to hang out like friends with our native English-speaking instructors. It's not hard to eat or drink together with them on weekends. Spending time together builds friendship between us, which has a good effect on the class because it can relax the atmosphere so that students can play a more active role in the class.

Karam Jeon is a graduating senior in the English Language Dept. at Chosun University. She spent a year studying at Murray State University, Kentucky, USA.

Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL August Chapter Meeting

- Time: Saturday, August 6, 2011, 1:30 p.m.
- Place: Chosun University, Main Building, 2nd Floor, Lab 8, Room 2123

Schedule

1:30 pm: Registration and Welcome

2:00 pm: **Swap-Shop**: Share your Teaching Ideas and Classroom Activities
(Open to all. Handouts welcomed.)

2:50 pm: Refreshment Break

3:10 pm: **TEFL Question & Answer Session**
(Bring your teaching questions for the panel.)

4:00 pm: **TEFL Abbreviation & Acronym Challenge**
(Participate in this fun and informative event.)

4:30 pm: Awarding of Prizes
Announcements
Closing

(Admission is free. Membership is encouraged.)

Upcoming Chapter Events

September 3, 2011. Chapter Meeting

- *Teaching, Learning, and Developing*
Brian Heldenbrand (Jeonju University;
Past President of united Jeolla Chapter)
- *Writing Emotion into Writing*
Julien McNulty (Chosun University; 2011
KOTESOL International Conference Chair)

October 1, 2011. Suncheon Outreach Workshop

- *Making Phonics Fun and Easy!*
Hee-yang 'Michelle' Park (KTT Presenter)
- *Using Warmers* – Ji-Myoung Park
- Additional Concurrent Presentations

November 5, 2011. Chapter Meeting

- *Connecting Reading and Writing with YLs*
Keumju Cheon (Chapter Member)

Upcoming KOTESOL Events

September 24, 2011. (New Date)

Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter Conference
Public School Learners' Strand
University and Adult Learners' Strand
Cheongju, Chungcheongbuk-do

October 15-16, 2011.

The 2011 Korea TESOL Intl. Conference
Pushing our Paradigms; Connecting with Culture
Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul
Pre-registration Online: August & September

Upcoming Korea ELT Events

KELTA 2011 International Conference

Impacts of High Stakes Exams
August 20, 2011; KICE, Seoul

MEESO 2011 Annual Conference

*A New Horizon for English Language
Teaching, Learning & Testing*
August 20, 2011; Myungji University, Seoul

21C AELL Autumn Conference

September 17, 2011; Gwangju
Gwangju National University of Education

KAFLE Conference 2011

*Innovating Foreign Languages Education &
Assessment in Korea*
September 17, 2011; Konkuk University, Seoul

PKETA International Conference 2011

*New Directions for Teaching English: Learner
Autonomy & Authenticity for Global Communication*
September 23, 2011; PUFS, Busan

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