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Korea TESOL Journal

The *Korea TESOL Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal, welcoming previously unpublished practical and scholarly articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language. The *Journal* focuses on articles that are relevant and applicable to the Korean EFL context. Two issues of the *Journal* are published annually.

As the *Journal* is committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to the application of theory to practice in our profession, submissions reporting relevant research and addressing implications and applications of this research to teaching in the Korean setting are particularly welcomed.

The *Journal* is also committed to the fostering of scholarship among Korea TESOL members and throughout Korea. As such, classroom-based papers, i.e., articles arising from genuine issues of the English language teaching classroom, are welcomed. The *Journal* aims to support all scholars by welcoming research from early-career researchers to senior academics.

Areas of interest include, but are by no means limited to, the following:

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Table of Contents

Research Papers

- Maria Teresa Martinez Garcia* **Bridging the Gap: Leveraging Neuroeducation to Enhance Teaching Methodologies** 3
- I-Jiuan Ting* **Exploring Effective English News Reading Strategies for Vocational College Students** 27
- Jeongho Park* **Improving Korean EFL Adult Learners' Oral Skills Through Role-Play** 51
- Junko Chujo* **Needs Analysis for Pronunciation Instruction for Japanese University Students** 77
- Noemi Castelo Viego* **Social Education in South Korea: Professional Perspectives and ELT Implications** 87

Book Reviews

- Charles Mueller* **Review of *Usage in Second Language Acquisition*** 103
(By Kevin McManus)
- Jake Kimball* **Review of *Sustaining Action Research: A Practical Guide for Institutional Engagement*** 109
(By Anne Burnes)

Appendix

- General Information for Contributors** 117

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About Korea TESOL

Korea TESOL (KOTESOL; Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a professional organization of teachers of English whose main goal is to assist its members in their professional development and to contribute to the improvement of English language teaching (ELT) in Korea. Korea TESOL also serves as a network for teachers to connect with others in the ELT community and as a source of information for ELT resource materials and events in Korea and abroad.

Korea TESOL is proud to be an affiliate of TESOL (TESOL International Association), an international education association of over 10,000 members with headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, as well as an associate of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), an international education association of over 4,000 members with headquarters in Canterbury, Kent, UK.

Korea TESOL had its beginnings in October 1992, when the Association of English Teachers in Korea (AETK) and the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) agreed to unite. Korea TESOL is a not-for-profit organization established to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons associated with the teaching and learning of English in Korea. In pursuing these goals, Korea TESOL seeks to cooperate with other groups having similar concerns.

Korea TESOL is an independent national affiliate of a growing international movement of teachers, closely associated with not only TESOL and IATEFL but also with PAC (the Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies), consisting of JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching), ThaiTESOL (Thailand TESOL), ETA-ROC (English Teachers Association of the Republic of China/Taiwan), FEELTA (Far Eastern English Language Teachers' Association, Russia), and PALT (Philippine Association for Language Teaching, Inc.). Korea TESOL is also associated with MELTA (Malaysian English Language Teaching Association), TEFLIN (Indonesia), CamTESOL (Cambodia), ELTAM/Mongolia TESOL, MAAL (Macau), HAAL (Hong Kong), ELTAI (India), BELTA (Bangladesh), and most recently with NELTA (Nepal). Korea TESOL also has partnership arrangements with numerous domestic ELT associations.

The membership of Korea TESOL includes elementary school, middle school, high school, and university-level English teachers as well as teachers-in-training, administrators, researchers, materials writers, curriculum developers, and other interested individuals.

Korea TESOL has nine active chapters throughout the nation: Members of Korea TESOL are from all parts of Korea and many parts of the world, thus providing Korea TESOL members the benefits of a diverse, inclusive, and multicultural membership.

Korea TESOL holds an annual international conference, a national conference, workshops, and other professional development events, while its chapters hold monthly workshops, annual conferences, symposia, and networking events. Also organized within Korea TESOL are various SIGs (special interest groups) – e.g., Reflective Practice, Classroom Management, Social Justice, Christian Teachers, Research, Women and Gender Equality, Young Learners and Teens – which hold their own meetings and events.



Visit <https://koreatesol.org/join-kotesol> for membership and event information.

Research Papers

Bridging the Gap: Leveraging Neuroeducation to Enhance Teaching Methodologies

María Teresa Martínez García

University of Valladolid, Soria, Spain

This paper explores how insights from neuroscience can enhance English language teaching (ELT) in South Korea, addressing the persistent achievement gap in English proficiency despite its mandatory inclusion in the curriculum. It emphasizes the importance of aligning teaching methods with brain development. By understanding cognitive functions such as motivation, attention, practice, and feedback, educators can create positive learning environments that foster language acquisition. The study highlights the brain's plasticity and the need for repeated exposure and production to solidify language skills. Additionally, it discusses how emotions influence learning, with positive experiences enhancing memory and negative ones causing anxiety and avoidance. The paper aims to bridge the gap between neuroscience research and practical classroom applications, offering strategies for effective language teaching that respect the brain's natural learning processes.

Keywords: neuroeducation, ELT, cognitive functions, motivation, attention, practice, feedback, memory enhancement

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized context, proficiency in English as a second language (L2) is increasingly crucial for success (Choi, 2024). South Korea has mandated English education since the 1980s, yet persistent gaps in achievement indicate shortcomings in current ELT methodologies (Lee & Lee, 2021; Lee et al., 2024; Park & Son, 2022). The country's emphasis on English education, driven by economic imperatives and global competitiveness, has led to mandatory English education from elementary school onward (Kim, 2000; Kwon, 2000). However, disparities

persist, with affluent families exacerbating the “English divide” by investing heavily in private English education, reflecting a perception that the mandatory classroom instruction alone does not suffice to attain desired proficiency levels (Park & Abelmann, 2004).

The South Korean education system and its institutions hold the responsibility of equipping students with the necessary English skills to navigate the demands of a globalized world. This is particularly crucial for high school students on the cusp of adulthood, as they prepare for higher education or careers. Adolescence is a period of significant brain development, during which students may struggle with emotional regulation and behavioral control (Blakemore, 2012). Consequently, the ELT approach must address these specific needs by fostering motivation, providing support, and creating a positive learning environment, while also recognizing that these approaches yield similar advantages regardless of the learner’s age (Blakemore, 2012). A negative learning experience can hinder immediate progress and discourage future language acquisition endeavors, leading to anxiety and avoidance of similar experiences. In contrast, a positive learning experience can open doors to successful and enriching language learning opportunities. Insights from neuroscience can inform these educational strategies, emphasizing the importance of understanding brain development to enhance learning outcomes (Sousa, 2016; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2014).

The human brain is inherently designed for learning, possessing a complex and powerful capacity to master new skills, including an L2 (Ratey, 2008). However, to unlock its full potential, we must respect the brain’s natural learning processes and rhythms. In the context of South Korea, this necessitates that English language teachers adapt their methods to align with how the brain acquires language. Understanding how the brain learns is paramount, as neuroscience offers valuable insights into which pedagogical practices should be prioritized and which should be avoided to cultivate a productive learning environment. Teachers wield significant influence over their students’ brain development through daily interactions. Thus, it is essential for educators to be aware of this influence and equip themselves with the tools to optimize the brain’s potential for language learning (Sousa, 2016). Ultimately, the goal is to create a learning environment that fosters “teaching to the rhythm of the brain” (Edjidjimo, 2022) – an approach that equips students with the tools they need to succeed in English language learning and flourish in other areas of their lives (Ratey, 2008; Sousa, 2016;

Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2014).

Korean society and education have witnessed momentous changes in the past two decades due to the widespread use of English, and consequently, a rapid increase in English language education and an expansion of English-medium instruction in tertiary education (Choi, 2023; Graddol, 2006; Park, 2009). A complex confluence of linguistic, psychosocial, and economic factors has influenced this desire to learn English as a foreign language. Key driving factors include an urgent sense of linguistic and cognitive globalization, English being seen as a gateway to increased global status and wealth, and a deep-seated belief that educational credentials related to English language proficiency are essential to future job opportunities (Choi, 2023; Kim, 2020; Park, 2009). In primary, secondary, and tertiary education alike, English language education has become the focal point of curricular revision and pedagogical innovation. This is epitomized by the national Ministry of Education's 2010 announcement of a sweeping ten-year plan to reform English language education at all levels of public schooling (Yi, 2010). A considerable portion of research has centered on primary and secondary English education, partly due to the increasing prevalence of English instruction at these levels (Lee, 2011), but also due to a belief that English learning in childhood and adolescence significantly shapes language attitudes, motivation, and overall L2 proficiency in ways that impact future adult English education and L2 use in the country (Yi, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to explain the ways in which neuroscience can inform language teaching and use this information to the benefit of ELT professionals, particularly those in South Korea. Both an understanding of how the brain works in regards to language learning and the practical applications for the classroom are vital to bridging the current gap between research and practice in Korea. Drawing on the authors' own research experience in Korea, this study will first reflect on the ways in which a deeper understanding of language learning from a neuroscience perspective can be used to inform teachers, as research suggests that currently there is very little understanding of second language acquisition (SLA) among English as a second language (ESL) teachers (Gray, 2021; Richter, 2022; Shin et al., 2021; Whitehead, 2022). This research is unique in that it does not merely identify the gap between research and practice in Korea but makes concerted efforts to bridge it with useful and practical information for ESL teachers in

Korea.

It also explores the contributions of neuroscience to education, examining the brain's learning processes and identifying key aspects to consider for effective language acquisition. Furthermore, it analyzes L2 learning from a neuroscientific perspective, highlighting the brain regions involved in language processing and memory mechanisms. The article, thus, seeks to understand the implications of current SLA research on explicit and implicit knowledge in designing English tasks, and how these insights can enhance learning transfer. Based on these findings, the article will explore neuroscience-based strategies for effective language teaching and provide a practical guide for incorporating these strategies into typical English language classrooms in South Korea.

NEUROSCIENCE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Neuroscience is the study of the different parts of the brain and the nervous system, and how they operate and interact with each other to direct the psychological and behavioral aspects of an individual (Kemmerer, 2022). Stemming from individual differences in language learning and bilingualism and the discussion of the age factor, neuroscience is at the core of the issue of language acquisition (Aamodt et al., 2020; Luk et al., 2020). Recent advancements in neurotechnology have enabled researchers to directly observe brain function during learning. These breakthroughs have fueled the field of “educational neuroscience,” also known as “neuroeducation” or “mind, brain, and education science” (e.g., Kim & Han, 2018). This emerging field explores how neuroscientific findings can inform and optimize educational practices (Han & Park, 2020), as it aims to translate knowledge about the brain's learning processes into practical applications for educators (Knowland & Thomas, 2014).

Research suggests that the brain possesses remarkable plasticity, meaning its structure and function can adapt throughout life based on environmental interactions (Chang, 2014). While it is true that this plasticity is more evident among younger learners, it remains present as learners get older as well (Knowland & Thomas, 2014). Educational neuroscience seeks to identify learning environments that promote optimal brain function, fostering effective learning. This translates into improved learning outcomes by equipping educators and students with

tools and strategies to enhance the learning process (Edjidjimo, 2022). The field goes beyond purely cognitive functions, also considering factors like physical activity, sleep, stress, and nutrition. However, this article will focus on those elements over which the teacher has direct control.

Neuroeducation is an inherently interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon neuroscience, pedagogy, and psychology (Cho & Kim, 2019; Doukakis & Alexopoulos, 2020). Education has traditionally benefited from psychological insights. However, Lee et al. (2018) highlight that while psychology focuses on observable behavior, neuroscience delves deeper, examining the “brain mechanisms underlying behavior” (p. 2). Neuroscience offers a unique window into the mind, allowing us to observe the brain and nervous system at work through brain imaging and other techniques. This direct observation informs educators about brain states conducive to optimal learning, fostering a holistic understanding of the brain-learning connection (Sousa, 2017). Educational neuroscience can investigate all internal and external factors influencing learning, exploring how to cultivate a healthy brain, optimize its function, and address learning disabilities (Pasquinelli, 2015). A healthy, well-functioning brain forms the foundation for successful learning. Neuroeducation equips educators with a deeper understanding of student needs, particularly those with learning disabilities (Howard-Jones, 2014).

Language acquisition, including learning a foreign language, is a fundamental neurobiological process. Accordingly, before delving into English language learning specifically, this section will explore key aspects of brain-based learning, identifying elements that English language teachers can cultivate to support their students’ learning journeys, independent of their age or current level of proficiency.

Motivation: The Spark for Learning

Motivation is a crucial factor influencing learning success, particularly in language acquisition. It serves as the driving force for students to engage in challenging tasks, persist through difficulties, and ultimately achieve fluency in a new language (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Understanding the neurobiological underpinnings of motivation can provide valuable insights for language educators.

Research in neuroeducation suggests that the frontal lobe plays a central role in motivation (Passingham, 1995). This region integrates

various cognitive functions, including planning, decision-making, and goal-setting. Repeated positive experiences trigger the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with reward and pleasure, in the brain's reward system (Gold et al., 2014). This dopamine release reinforces the behavior and increases motivation to repeat the action in anticipation of the positive outcome (Zangemeister et al., 2016). There are two main types of motivation identified in the language learning literature: approach motivation and avoidance motivation (e.g., Elliot, 2013; Lee et al., 2018). Approach motivation is the desire to engage in a task due to the anticipated positive outcomes, such as gaining fluency or obtaining good grades. The expectation of a positive experience can trigger dopamine release, further fueling motivation (Elliot, 2013). Avoidance motivation, conversely, arises from the desire to avoid negative experiences such as failing a test or disappointing teachers. The amygdala, a region associated with processing emotions like fear, plays a significant role in avoidance motivation (LeDoux, 1996). If past language learning experiences were negative or associated with anxiety, the amygdala may trigger avoidance behavior, discouraging further engagement.

Understanding these neuroeducational concepts can guide English language teachers in fostering student motivation. Creating positive learning environments that emphasize fun and successful experiences can trigger dopamine release and enhance approach motivation (Asher, 1999). Providing constructive feedback focused on progress and improvement, rather than solely on errors, can further reinforce positive learning experiences. Clearly outlining learning objectives relevant to students' lives demonstrates the value of learning and fosters intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Finally, encouraging students to reflect on their learning goals and desired outcomes can help them discover their intrinsic motivation for language acquisition.

Attention: The Gateway to Effective Learning

Attention is a crucial cognitive process that underpins successful language learning. It allows learners to selectively focus on relevant language stimuli, such as auditory input, spoken words, and grammatical structures, while filtering out distractions (e.g., background noise, irrelevant conversations; Nation & Waring, 2019). In essence, attention acts as a neural gatekeeper, prioritizing information essential for language

acquisition (Doukakis et al., 2022). Brain regions involved in attention, such as the parietal, temporal, and frontal lobes (Cabeza & Nyberg, 2000), work in tandem with areas responsible for processing auditory input, a critical skill for SLA (Lee et al., 2018).

Several internal and external factors influence learners' attention in the foreign language classroom. Internal factors include learners' individual goals and motivation. External factors encompass elements such as classroom lighting, the teacher's teaching style, vocal delivery (intonation), and background noise (Lee et al., 2018). Research suggests several effective strategies that language teachers can utilize to capture and maintain learner attention during instruction.

Effective language learning hinges not just on content delivery but also on how we engage the learner's mind and emotions. Short breaks throughout a lesson can prevent information overload and allow refocusing, while also regulating emotions for better learning (Simpson, 2011). Presenting information in clear, concise chunks (Nation, 2008) and using a well-structured approach further reduces cognitive load. Curiosity is key to maintaining attention, and introducing new language in surprising ways or incorporating authentic materials like videos can spark this (Ellis, 2018). Engaging multiple senses through visuals, sounds, and even kinesthetic activities can enhance learner engagement (Lee et al., 2018). Finally, when dealing with challenging sounds, especially in differentiating between similar ones in an L2 (like /l/ and /r/ for Korean-speaking learners of English), initial exaggeration can help solidify the distinction, gradually reducing the emphasis as learners form new sound categories (McCandliss et al., 2002). By incorporating these strategies, educators can create a dynamic and emotionally charged learning environment that optimizes language acquisition.

Among the previously mentioned techniques that language instructors could employ, repetition with variation is one of the most important ones. The following section focuses on this specific point in more detail.

Practice: Making Learning Stick

While motivation fuels the engine of language acquisition and attention makes sure students get the information needed to learn, practice and repetition provide the essential mileage needed to reach fluency. Research consistently highlights the critical role of repeated exposure and production in solidifying language skills (e.g., Long, 1981;

Schmidt, 1990).

Language acquisition relies on the formation of new neural networks (pathways) in the brain. Repetition serves as a critical mechanism for strengthening these networks, facilitating the retrieval and application of vocabulary, grammar structures, and pronunciation patterns (Decoo, 2011; Ullman, 2001). This process is similar to how long-term memories are consolidated through repeated activation (Scoville & Milner, 2000), which aligns with the concept of spaced repetition. Research has consistently shown that spaced or distributed practice, where a task is practiced at random intervals with other intervening tasks, leads to long-term retention compared to regular blocked practice, where all learning occurs in a single session (Kantak et al., 2010; Lee & Simon, 2004; Shea & Kohl, 1991). Spaced practice may be beneficial because it forces learners to actively retrieve information, leading to stronger memory formation (Ho et al., 2010).

Language instructors could make use to different strategies to make practice and repetition engaging and effective, as they are crucial for learning, but monotonous drills can lead to disengagement. To ensure effective and engaging practice, teachers can employ a variety of strategies, which includes, among others, incorporating a mix of activities (e.g., drills, games, role-plays) that cater to different learning styles (Fredricks et al., 2019). Another strategy would be providing scaffolding, which could be implemented by providing initial support and gradually increasing complexity as students gain proficiency (Tai et al., 2021). Meaningful contexts that resonate with students' interests and lives can be integrated into practice activities to enhance engagement (Bai, 2018), as feedback and correction focused on progress and improvement are essential for skill refinement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Finally, integrating technologies such as spaced repetition apps and interactive exercises can provide additional and engaging practice opportunities (Tabibian et al., 2019).

By incorporating these strategies, language classrooms can become dynamic environments where practice and repetition feel less like a chore and more like a journey towards improved fluency.

Feedback: The Bridge to Mastery

Similar to motivation, attention or practice, feedback plays a crucial role in language learning success. It acts as a compass, guiding learners

towards improvement by providing targeted information about their performance. Research on SLA has shed light on how the brain optimizes learning through feedback. Studies with adult learners highlight the concept of plasticity, the brain's ability to adapt and form new neural connections throughout life (McCandliss et al., 2002). Learning new speech sounds, like the English distinction between /r/ and /l/ for Korean speakers, requires the brain to develop new perceptual categories. When learners receive feedback with perceptual exaggerations, emphasizing the differences between sounds, followed by a gradual reduction in exaggeration, the brain can establish new categories for these sounds (see McCandliss et al., 2002). This demonstrates the brain's capacity to learn with targeted feedback.

Further research by Tricomi et al. (2006) explored the connection between feedback, reward, and learning. Their study found that learners showed improved performance when receiving feedback on their speech production tasks. Interestingly, brain activity patterns were similar when learners received either feedback or reward. This suggests that learners are more likely to engage with learning stimuli they previously performed well on, especially when accompanied by feedback or reward (Tricomi et al., 2006).

Effective feedback acts as a compass, guiding learners on their language learning journey. To maximize its impact, teachers can employ several strategies. First, feedback should focus on progress and improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Highlighting areas for growth while acknowledging achievements reinforces positive learning experiences and motivates continued effort, as described in the previous section. Second, feedback should be targeted and specific to the task at hand (Sadler, 1989). Focusing on correctable errors provides students with clear learning goals to work towards. Third, incorporating a variety of feedback delivery methods, such as written, oral, and peer feedback, caters to different learning styles and keeps the process engaging (Bhat, & Bhat, 2019). Finally, encouraging self-assessment fosters self-awareness and a sense of ownership over learning (William, 2010).

These findings offer valuable insights for language instructors. By employing these strategies and understanding the neurobiological underpinnings of effective feedback, teachers can create an optimal environment for successful language acquisition, while helping learners optimize their brain's plasticity for language acquisition.

The Emotional Roller Coaster: How Emotions Fuel Learning

Similar to motivation, attention, or feedback, emotions play a significant role in capturing and maintaining attention during the process of learning a new language. However, it is crucial to avoid cultivating counterproductive emotions such as anxiety, which can hinder progress (Lee et al., 2018).

Emotions are not simply subjective experiences; they have a profound impact on the brain and learning processes. Research suggests that emotional information activates several brain areas, including the amygdala, the orbital prefrontal cortex, and the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (frontal lobe), areas associated with memory and emotion (Slotnick, 2017). The processing of emotional data strengthens long-term memory for language content due to the synergy between the amygdala and the hippocampus (Lee et al., 2018; Slotnick, 2017). The amygdala, an area associated with processing emotions like fear, actually enhances the encoding and consolidation of emotionally charged language information within the hippocampus (Lee et al., 2018; Slotnick, 2017).

The learning environment and content can be significantly impacted by emotional stimuli. Learners' feelings towards the learning experience are important. Positive emotions, such as enjoyment and accomplishment while learning a foreign language, trigger the release of endorphins, which can create a pleasurable and successful learning experience (Sousa, 2016). Conversely, negative emotions like stress can trigger the release of cortisol, which leads to a defensive “fight-or-flight” response that can hinder language learning (Lee et al., 2018; Sousa, 2016). Emotions can also be reflected in the learning content itself. Students are more likely to remember language content associated with positive emotions (Sousa, 2016).

One way for language teachers to manage student emotions is to begin by managing their own. Students often learn through imitation, which is linked to the concept of mirror neurons (Bueno, 2021). Mirror neurons fire when individuals execute an action and when they observe another person doing it. Mirror neurons are not only a learning mechanism but also a way to infer emotions, intentions, and feelings of others (Bueno, 2021). Considering that language learners often experience feelings of vulnerability and lack confidence, it is important for teachers to have positive intentions, believe in their students, and manage their own emotions in a way that fosters positive emotions in

students, ultimately enhancing the language learning experience.

These findings highlight the crucial role of emotions in L2 learning. By understanding how emotions influence the brain, instructors can create environments that foster positive emotions like motivation and confidence. This, in turn, can optimize learners’ brain plasticity and enhance language acquisition.

Encoding to Retrieval: The Memory Journey

Understanding the memory systems that support language acquisition is crucial for effective English language teaching (Ullman, 2001). The declarative-procedural model (DPM) proposed by Ullman (2001) provides a framework for understanding the neural basis of language, emphasizing the distinction between two types of memory: declarative memory and procedural memory. This model has significant implications for language education, as it helps educators understand how different aspects of language are learned and processed in the brain. The two memory systems work together to enable learners to acquire both the factual knowledge and the practical skills needed for proficiency and are briefly explained in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Overview of the Two Memory Systems

	Declarative Memory (Knowing “What”)	Procedural Memory (Knowing “How”)
Focus	Facts and events related to language learning.	Acquiring motor and cognitive skills for language use.
Brain Regions	Primarily associated with the medial temporal lobes (including the hippocampus) and parts of the prefrontal cortex.	Primarily associated with frontal/basal-ganglia circuits, including the caudate nucleus, putamen, and motor areas of the cortex.
Language Learning	Involved in the learning and retrieval of vocabulary (lexicon) and explicit language knowledge.	Involved in the learning and application of grammar and syntax (rules of language).
Learning Rate	Can be rapid, with new information potentially retained after a single exposure.	Gradual but leads to strong retention, similar to how one doesn’t forget how to ride a bike.
Development	Strengthens during childhood and stabilizes in adolescence, potentially declining later.	Younger children tend to rely more on procedural memory compared to older learners.

Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conscious recall. • Flexibility in use (knowledge can be applied in various contexts). • Rapid acquisition (learning can happen quickly). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unconscious recall. • Automatization of skills (actions become automatic with practice). • Gradual acquisition (learning occurs through repeated practice).
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Note. Table made by the author based on Poeppel and Hickok (2004), Rasch and Born (2009), and Ullman (2001).

While Table 1 provides us with an overview on how the two memory systems are structured and work, Table 2 provides more detailed information on how the previous information is directly linked with language acquisition (extracted and reorganized by the author from Ullman, 2001).

TABLE 2. Declarative/Procedural Memories and Language Acquisition

Memory Type	Function in Language Acquisition	Learning Process	Factors That Enhance
Declarative Memory (Lexical)	Stores individual words, irregular forms, idioms, and proverbs.	Learned consciously through explicit teaching, memorization, and attention to detail.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Explicit teaching * Slower feedback * Spaced presentation * Retrieval practice
Declarative Memory (Rule-Based)	Can learn some grammatical rules and patterns treated as chunks.	Learning can be slower and less efficient. May lead to reliance on rote memorization for complex grammar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Slower feedback * Spaced presentation * Retrieval practice for retention
Procedural Memory	Automates grammar, morphology, and phonology. Used for handling sequences and categories in language.	Learning happens implicitly through exposure, practice, and not necessarily requiring conscious attention to the rules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Not requiring explicit teaching * Faster feedback * Exposure through immersion or task-based learning * Increasing complexity

Recent research in language acquisition has provided new insights into the roles of declarative and procedural memory systems in learning a second language, building on the foundations of Ullman’s (2001)

declarative-procedural model. This model posits that the declarative memory system, which is responsible for learning and storing factual knowledge, is crucial for vocabulary acquisition, while the procedural memory system, which underlies the learning of motor and cognitive skills, is essential for mastering grammar and syntax. Studies have shown that effective language instruction can benefit from leveraging both memory systems. For instance, Pascual et al. (2022) found that explicit vocabulary teaching methods that engage the declarative memory system significantly enhance learners' retention and recall of new words. Similarly, Morgan-Short et al. (2014) demonstrated that immersive, practice-based grammar instruction that stimulates the procedural memory system leads to more fluent and automatic use of syntactic structures. These findings suggest that a balanced approach, integrating both declarative and procedural learning strategies, can optimize the effectiveness of English language teaching. By incorporating activities that promote explicit knowledge acquisition alongside those that encourage procedural practice, educators can better align their teaching methods with the cognitive processes involved in language learning, potentially improving learner outcomes (Morgan-Short et al., 2014; Pascual et al., 2022).

The following section will discuss practical tools for English teachers to facilitate this dual approach, fostering both explicit knowledge and implicit learning in their students, while still taking into account all the other factors discussed thus far.

ENHANCING ENGLISH LEARNING THROUGH NEUROSCIENCE

While the field of educational neuroscience is still developing, we are gaining valuable insights into how the brain acquires language across different age groups. These principles can inform language learning strategies for people of all ages as well as provide language instructors with the resources needed to create a more successful learning environment within their classrooms. Additionally, educational goals and learner experiences vary globally, requiring adaptable approaches. Here are some key principles based on current research, applicable to language learning across one's lifespan:

1. If the goal is to learn a language, rather than just gaining certain

proficiency, practice is the key. Achieving fluency, not just basic proficiency, requires consistent effort. Language learning at any age, like childhood education, demands long-term commitment from both learners and educators. This applies not only within the classroom walls but also in getting students to continue practicing the language outside of the classroom.

2. Intrinsic motivation and focused attention are crucial for successful learning at any age. These not only help with retention but also reduce dropout rates. Feedback on performance is equally important, especially for older learners. For example, promoting curiosity can be fostered by taking into account students' interests, their emotions, using humor, reducing stress, or avoiding authoritarian manners. Using games, stories, or linking the content to students' interests or daily lives could be good options to foster their motivation.
3. Engaging with a live instructor and actively interacting with learning materials may be more beneficial for individuals than passive learning methods. That is, while AI can serve as a useful tool in language instruction, it cannot yet replace the role of human language instructors. This can be true for learners of all ages, though the specific methods may differ. While younger learners would benefit for a learning environment involving lots of movement and stimuli, an older learner would benefit more from a quiet place with lots of chances for active participation in the classroom.
4. While some teachers think that, when teaching English (or any other language for that matter), the most important aspect is to provide students with plenty of input, the order of instruction should be taken into careful consideration. Focusing on foundational skills, like attention control or phonemic awareness (sound-letter relationships), lays the groundwork for more advanced language acquisition. This reduces learning variability and improves overall outcomes, making it possible to have more balanced students (in terms of their proficiency level) within a given classroom. This, in turn, would lead to more motivated students, more opportunities for equal participation in the classroom, and more proficient students.
5. When learning new distinctions in language (e.g., verb conjugations or how to pronounce a particularly challenging minimal pair (e.g.,

/r/ vs. /l/ by Korean-speaking learners of English), initial materials should exaggerate the relevant features. Combining this with spaced repetition, where learners revisit information at unpredictable intervals, optimizes learning. One common mistake that many instructors make when planning their classes is to leave some time at the beginning of class to practice what was learned in the previous lesson. While repetition is crucial for language learning and consolidation, doing so at unpredictable intervals would be of greater benefit for our students.

6. Related to the idea that spaced repetition is useful is the fact that quality and quantity of sleep is necessary for memory consolidation, regardless of age. This applies to procedural memory (learned skills) and declarative memory (factual knowledge) involved in language learning, which will be further discussed in the next paragraphs. Moreover, noise and distraction reduction is essential, particularly in busy learning environments. However, this may be challenging in most classroom settings with large groups of students. Utilizing diverse learning materials across different sensory channels can further mitigate distractions.

The key takeaway for educators is that language learning is possible at any stage of life. However, recognizing both the strengths and limitations of the brain at different ages is essential when designing effective learning programs. Let us not forget that, for a successful learning process, both procedural and declarative memory should be at play. Next, this article proposes some ideas on how language instructors could create specific activities targeting each type of memory system. The following are some activities that may be used to, explicitly, target procedural memory (which directly relates with language skills):

1. Grammar Games: Turn grammar drills into interactive games. For example, create a board game where players must answer questions using the correct verb tense to move their piece. This makes practicing grammar rules more engaging and strengthens the procedural memory for those rules.
2. Role-Playing Activities: Design role-playing scenarios that require students to use specific language structures in conversation. This provides opportunities for repeated use and practice of those structures, solidifying them in procedural memory.

3. **Shadowing:** In shadowing exercises, students listen to native speakers and repeat what they hear immediately. This helps them internalize pronunciation patterns and speaking rhythms, improving their procedural memory for spoken language.

The following are some activities that may be used to, explicitly, target declarative memory (which directly relates to vocabulary acquisition and the learning of facts):

1. **Flashcards with a Twist:** Instead of just showing a word and its definition, use flashcards with pictures, synonyms, antonyms, or short sentences demonstrating the word's usage. This creates additional connections in the brain and strengthens memory retrieval.
2. **Mind Maps:** Encourage students to create mind maps associating new vocabulary with related words, concepts, or pictures. This visual representation aids recall and helps integrate new vocabulary into existing knowledge structures.
3. **Storytelling Activities:** Have students create stories using newly learned vocabulary words. This encourages them to think about the meaning and usage of these words in context, solidifying them in declarative memory.

And finally, the following are some ideas for activities that combine strategies targeting both procedural and declarative memories:

1. **Spaced Repetition Apps:** Utilize spaced repetition apps for both grammar drills and vocabulary flashcards. These apps present information at increasingly spaced intervals, optimizing memory consolidation for both procedural and declarative knowledge.
2. **Interactive Dialogues:** Design interactive dialogues with built-in spaced repetition. These dialogues can introduce new vocabulary and grammar structures, and then revisit them at set intervals, reinforcing both procedural and declarative memory.

In short, all the recommendations discussed so far in this article could be briefly summarized as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Neuroscience Principles to Consider in the Teaching–Learning Process

Principles	Strategies
Motivation	Provide positive and constructive feedback. Highlight the importance and relevance of the material. Set clear and achievable learning objectives.
Attention	Introduce novel and engaging stimuli. Employ multisensory teaching techniques. Deliver information concisely and clearly. Incorporate regular breaks.
Emotions	Integrate emotional engagement in lessons. Create a supportive and safe learning environment. Minimize excessive stress.
Memory	Offer regular feedback. Implement spaced learning techniques. Use diverse instructional methods. Encourage practice and repetition.

By incorporating these types of activities and keeping in mind the different aspects that have been found to lead to successful language acquisition through neuroscience, educators can create a more well-rounded learning experience that caters to engaged language learners, targeting both procedural and declarative aspects of language acquisition. This can lead to deeper understanding, improved fluency, and better long-term retention for learners of all ages.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding developments in neuroscience is crucial for language acquisition, particularly for instructors striving to bridge the English proficiency gap in countries such as South Korea. Neuroscience provides insights into how the brain processes and retains new information, highlighting the importance of aligning teaching methods with natural cognitive functions. This includes, for instance, recognizing the best mechanisms to get students into the right learning mode, while implementing strategies that enhance memory retention and emotional regulation. By utilizing neuroscience-based approaches, such as incorporating multisensory learning and providing positive feedback,

instructors can create more effective and motivating learning environments. This understanding can lead to tailored educational practices that support the brain's natural learning rhythms, ultimately improving language acquisition outcomes and addressing the persistent challenges in South Korean ELT. Emphasizing neuroscience in educational strategies not only optimizes student engagement and performance but also equips teachers with the tools to foster long-term language proficiency.

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Exploring Effective English News Reading Strategies for Vocational College Students

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This study investigated effective English news reading strategies for vocational college students. The research subjects were from my News English course at a private technology university in northern Taiwan. The objective of this study was twofold. First, it aimed to identify the students' most and least frequently used strategies in English news reading and the reasons for their choices. Second, it further investigated the importance of the strategies weighed by the students and identified whether they differed significantly. According to the research findings, there are distinct differences in reading strategy preferences between high- and low-achievers. High-achievers exhibit a more balanced use of different strategies, demonstrating a skillful equilibrium between general comprehension and analytical reading. In contrast, low-achievers tend to depend more extensively on grasping the main idea, neglecting analytical reading strategies. These findings could be used to advocate for more personalized reading strategy instruction in educational settings.

Keywords: English news, reading strategy, vocational college students

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has led to increased collaboration and information sharing among countries. Authentic materials, including internet articles, newspapers, magazines, YouTube videos, music, and advertising, are increasingly used in English classes. The key characteristic of authentic materials is that they are not specifically designed for language learning purposes but rather are created for real-life communication. This can help students develop their language skills in a more natural and meaningful way. By providing up-to-date information directly from the

source, authentic materials help students construct their perception of the real world and guide them on how to approach and realize these matters. Among the various media, news articles frequently give diverse viewpoints on a matter, enabling readers to engage in critical thinking and cultivate independent perspectives. By employing English news in the class, students can be exposed to authentic language usage in real-life contexts rather than solely relying on simplified instructional materials like textbooks. News in English covers a wide range of vocabulary, authentic grammatical structures, and colloquial expressions, providing students with a more precise understanding of how English is often used in formal written forms. Additionally, English news includes a broad spectrum of topics, including politics, economics, entertainment, and sports. By using English newspapers as a supplement to traditional textbooks, teachers can help students be exposed to diverse vocabulary and writing conventions. This expands their comprehension and improves their ability to communicate effectively in different contexts and with various audiences.

Although there are many benefits to reading news in English, it can be challenging for students with insufficient reading skills. News articles frequently employ specialized terminology for specific domains such as politics, economics, or science. For novice or pre-intermediate learners like vocational college students who have not yet established a solid foundation of vocabulary, this might be a challenging task. In addition, news writing frequently uses complex sentence structures containing multiple clauses and embedded phrases. This can pose a challenge in interpreting the intended meaning, particularly for individuals unfamiliar with this writing style. Furthermore, news articles often employ idioms and figurative language as a means of concisely delivering information. Comprehending these phrases demands a deeper understanding of the English language's cultural background and finer details.

As suggested by many researchers (e.g., Antepara, 2003; Foden & Fillingham, 2019; Petersen, 2019), reading strategy instruction can provide significant benefits for those who hope to navigate the complexities of English news. Helping students learn to skim for main ideas and scan for specific information enables them to effectively comprehend lengthy and complex news articles, resulting in time-savings and increased reading speed. In addition, by helping students understand the major components of sentence structure, including the main subject and verb, the students' frustration can be alleviated. This promotes a

positive learning experience and keeps students motivated to tackle more complex reading materials in the later phase of their learning journey.

All of the aforementioned issues helped frame my initial assumption that reading strategies, including skimming for the main idea, scanning for 5Ws and H, and identifying the main subject and verb, can play critical roles in supporting vocational college students' learning from English news reading. This study specifically focused on exploring how these students employ the strategies to facilitate English news reading and how important the students weigh these strategies. The following research questions guided the present study:

RQ1. What are the students' most and least frequently used strategies?

RQ2. What are the reasons for the most and least frequently used strategies?

RQ3. How do students weigh the importance of the strategies?

RQ4. Does the importance of the students' weighed strategies differ significantly?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Higher-Order Thinking

Bloom's taxonomy is a hierarchical framework that categorizes learning objectives based on varying degrees of complexity. The framework consists of hierarchically arranged models, wherein elements at the top denote greater complexity, and those at the bottom represent reduced complexity. In ascending order of complexity, the six levels are remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Bloom, 1956). Higher-order thinking (HOT) refers to cognitive processes that involve critical analysis, evaluation, synthesis, problem-solving, and creativity. These thinking skills go beyond basic memorization and understanding of information. The development of HOT skills is closely linked to the improvement of both creative thinking skills and critical thinking skills. HOT skills require students to engage in more complex mental activities that involve reasoning, interpretation, and evaluation. These skills are often considered advanced cognitive abilities contributing to deeper understanding and critical thinking (Halx & Reybold, 2006). HOT skills are crucial for students as they navigate

complex academic tasks, real-world challenges, and lifelong learning. In practical terms, they are vital skills utilized for success in the global workplace (Au, 2013). Since research has indicated a strong connection between cognition and language development (Carter, 2015), it can be confirmed that second language education should emphasize the significance of advanced thinking skills (Ayaduray & Jacobs, 1997).

Using Authentic Materials to Enhance Learning

Using authentic materials in English teaching involves incorporating real-world, unmodified language materials into language learning activities. Authentic materials are texts, audio, video, or multimedia resources that were created for native speakers in real-life communication contexts. They are essential for teaching and learning English, as they offer English language learners genuine examples of the target language (Gilmore, 2007; Richards, 2001). Authentic materials, particularly newspaper and magazine articles, are frequently utilized by English teachers. Many colleges in Taiwan have incorporated English newspapers into reading instruction for English majors in response to the growing emphasis on employing authentic materials in English language teaching (Chang, 2015; Shie, 2012). Reading English newspapers can offer several advantages for students, including contributing to their language proficiency, cultural awareness, and overall academic development. Newspapers use authentic English, as opposed to the simplified language often found in textbooks or learning materials. Exposure to authentic language helps learners develop a better understanding of the language and its subtleties. Overall, newspapers serve as a valuable tool for English learners, as they provide comprehensive exposure to vocabulary, grammar, writing styles, cultural insights, and authentic language usage. Their accessibility, affordability, and engaging content make them an effective and enjoyable resource for language acquisition. According to Vockell and Cusick (1995), including newspapers in the classroom can significantly enhance the students' reading skills and foster their interest in reading. Through the use of newspapers, students can not only enhance their proficiency in English but also expand their knowledge, strengthen their foundational understanding of current events, cultivate their skills in cross-cultural communication, and gain a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic global environment (Street, 2002; Tao, 2020).

Strategies for Reading English News

Rentawati et al. (2018) classified 21st century talents into two primary categories: abstract and concrete skills. HOT skills are classified as abstract, whereas communication and collaboration skills are considered concrete. As discussed in the previous sections, the acquisition of HOT skills is intricately connected to the enhancement of both creative and critical thinking skills. In addition, by employing authentic reading materials such as newspapers, students can establish their capabilities in cross-cultural communication. Consequently, using English news as a medium for English reading instruction can be an effective way to cultivate the students' abstract and concrete talents and empower them to effectively meet the demands of the 21st century. Authentic materials like English news can offer valuable learning possibilities, provided that challenging tasks are adequately supported (Mariani, 1997). To improve English news reading competence, EFL students must receive a comprehensive teaching program for effective learning outcomes. Foden and Fillingham (2019) and Petersen (2019) proposed a set of useful English news reading strategies, including skimming for the main idea, scanning for 5Ws and H, and identifying the main subject and verb. To shed light on these strategies, the dimensions of these approaches are discussed in the following sections.

Skimming for the Main Idea

Skimming involves rapidly perusing a written passage to obtain a broad understanding of its intended message. It can be contrasted with scanning, which involves reading to locate certain information. Skimming is a strategic, selective reading method in which students focus on the main ideas of a text. When engaging in skimming, students intentionally omit content that contains specific information, narratives, statistics, or any other form of elaboration. Although students may engage in a more thorough examination of the text in the subsequent reading process, utilizing skimming as a method of previewing can enhance the students' understanding of the overall content (UNC-Chapel Hill Learning Center, 2024). Foden and Fillingham (2019) indicated that skimming provides a variety of benefits to readers. It helps readers manage their time better and broadens their range of available research sources. In addition, it also facilitates the rapid retrieval of general information for readers. Furthermore, it serves as a valuable instrument

for reviewing and updating the readers' knowledge. However, as cautioned by the researchers, skimming entails more than casually perusing a text or giving it only partial attention. When engaging in skimming, students need to be purposeful and attentive in their selection of reading material. Skimming is neither a kind of laziness nor a half-hearted approach to reading. Teachers need to ensure that students employ it with caution and strategic thinking and can extract the essential concepts of the text (UNC-Chapel Hill Learning Center, 2024).

Scanning for 5Ws and H

An alternative method of reading that is distinct from skimming is scanning. In contrast to skimming, which entails a brief reading of a text to gain an overall understanding of its content, scanning contains the systematic pursuit of specific information within the text. Instead of looking for the main idea or overall structure, scanning is focused on finding particular words, phrases, or details. Journalists frequently use the "5Ws" as a series of questions to gather information and provide a comprehensive overview of a news story. In addition to who, what, when, where, and why, the 5Ws may also include the question word "how." Although the 5Ws and H may not be employed in every news story, they serve as a valuable instrument for journalists to report stories clearly and concisely. The 5Ws and H are frequently used as a framework to ensure that their reporting is thorough and covers all essential aspects of the news. By addressing these questions, reporters aim to provide their audience with a complete and well-rounded understanding of the events being covered.

As proposed by Petersen (2019), students are encouraged to use the 5Ws and H strategy for reading the headline and the lead (i.e., the opening paragraph of a news story) to clarify the details prepared by the journalists. Foden and Fillingham (2019) stated that scanning the 5Ws and H provides a variety of benefits to readers, including helping readers identify the key data points of a newspaper article, bridging the gaps in a reader's knowledge, and enabling readers to find specific information.

Identifying the Main Subject and Verb

A lead is an introductory paragraph that presents the most important information about the news in a concise and clear manner while also captivating the readers' attention. The lead is crucial because it sets the

tone for the entire story and aims to grab the reader's attention and draw them in (Kille, 2020). Journalists strive to communicate essential information within a confined space, and this conciseness might pose a difficulty for readers who are accustomed to more comprehensive or complex introductions. Furthermore, many news articles follow the "inverted pyramid" structure, placing the most important information at the beginning and gradually providing less critical details as the article progresses. This structure can be extremely confusing for readers who are accustomed to narratives or essays that gradually lead up to the central argument. Owing to the nature of the lead that contains the most important information in a capsule form (Antepara, 2003), the ability to identify the subject and verb of a sentence is essential for deconstructing grammatically complex sentences.

As proposed by Nordquist (2020), a sentence is commonly defined as "a complete unit of thought" (para. 2). Identifying the main subject and verb in a sentence is crucial for understanding its basic structure and meaning. These two elements serve as the foundation of a sentence and provide essential information about who or what the sentence is about and what action is taking place. The main subject and verb form the core of a sentence's structure. Identifying these components facilitates the deconstruction of the language into its fundamental constituents, thereby simplifying the process of analysis and understanding. Once students can identify the main subject and verb, it becomes easier for them to recognize the modifiers and additional information in the sentence. This enables them to distinguish essential information from additional details and, consequently, effectively improve their overall reading comprehension.

METHOD

Participants

The research subjects were from my News English course at a private technology university located in northern Taiwan. A total of 12 students participated in this study with the following common characteristics at the time: (a) They were fourth-year English majors in the five-year junior college program; (b) They had acquired fundamental English reading skills in other reading-related courses but were novices in reading English news; (c) They had attended my English Proficiency Certification

Tutoring course in the previous academic year, where they reviewed and reinforced grammar knowledge comprehensively; (d) They were currently taking my News English course, where they established the knowledge and skills of skimming, scanning, and identifying the main subject and verb while reading English news. Based on the individual total scores summed from the two semesters of the English Proficiency Certification Tutoring course, the students were further divided into two groups: six high-achievers and six low-achievers. Students in the high-achiever group were individuals whose scores ranked in the upper quartile of the whole class. Students in the low-achiever category were those whose scores fell within the lowest 25th percentile of the class.

Research Instruments

The research method was a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative research was used to quantify the attitudes and perceptions of the high-achievers and low-achievers, and qualitative research was employed to gain insights into the underlying reasons for the participants' choices of strategies. The measure employed in this study contained two sections (see Appendix). The first section of the questionnaire was designed to assess the students' preference for the strategies. It included items asking participants about their most frequently used strategy and their least used strategy when reading news in English. Out of the three choices of skimming, scanning, and identifying the main subject and verb, the participants had to provide only one most appropriate answer. To obtain a deeper understanding of the rationales that guided the students' selection of the strategies, they were obligated to explain their choices. Additionally, the second section of the questionnaire aimed to evaluate the importance of the strategies weighed by the students. The participants had to allocate a total score of ten points to the three strategies based on their significance or influence. Constraining a cumulative score of 10 points ensured that the total importance assigned to the three strategies summed up to a meaningful value.

Data Analysis

Microsoft Excel was employed for test analysis. The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA). Firstly, descriptive statistics was employed to allow the collected data to be compared and understood more easily. Secondly, an ANOVA was run to see whether or not a significant difference in the weight of importance existed between the high-achievers and low-achievers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Preferences for English News Reading Strategies

RQ1. Students' Most and Least Frequently Used Strategies

As outlined in Table 1, the research results provide valuable insights into the reading strategies used by high-achievers and low-achievers. Details are discussed below.

TABLE 1. Strategies Most and Least Used in English News Reading

Strategy	High-Achiever (<i>n</i> = 6)	Low-Achiever (<i>n</i> = 6)	Total (<i>n</i> = 12)
Strategies most frequently used			
Strategy 1: Skimming for the main idea	3 (50%)	5 (83%)	8 (67%)
Strategy 2: Scanning for 5Ws and H	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Strategy 3: Identifying the main subject and verb	3 (50%)	1 (17%)	4 (33%)
Strategies least used			
Strategy 1: Skimming for the main idea	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (17%)
Strategy 2: Scanning for 5Ws and H	2 (33%)	1 (17%)	3 (25%)
Strategy 3: Identifying the main subject and verb	2 (33%)	5 (83%)	7 (58%)

Note. *n* = participant number.

Skimming for the main idea

For the high-achievers, 50% of them frequently took this approach, whereas it was also one of the least used strategies for 33% of them. This suggests a divergent inclination among high-achievers towards skimming. Although 50% of them found it advantageous, a substantial proportion did not rely heavily on it. Regarding the low-achievers, a striking 83% of them frequently used this strategy, but none of them

indicated it as their least used strategy. This suggests that skimming for the main idea is a predominant strategy among low-achievers, potentially indicating their reliance on getting a general understanding rather than focusing on specific details.

Scanning for 5Ws and H

Neither group reported using this strategy as their most frequently employed strategy, indicating it might be less useful for the students. However, it appeared as the least used strategy for a portion of both groups (33% of high-achievers and 17% of low-achievers). This could imply that while it was not a primary strategy, it was still recognized and used to a certain degree.

Identifying the main subject and verb

Half of the high-achievers used this strategy frequently, but it was also among the least used for another 33%. Similar to skimming, this shows a split in preference. High-achievers might have been balancing this strategy with skimming to enhance comprehension. On the contrary, only 17% of the low-achievers frequently used this strategy, but a significant 83% listed it as their least used strategy. This suggests that low-achievers may struggle with or avoid more analytical reading skills that demand a solid background of grammar competence, like identifying the main subject and verb.

In summary, the data derived from descriptive statistics indicates distinct differences in reading strategy preferences between high-achievers and low-achievers. High-achievers exhibit a more balanced use of different strategies, potentially adjusting their approach depending on the reading material or activity at hand. Conversely, low-achievers seem to rely more heavily on skimming for the main idea, possibly at the expense of deeper and more analytical reading approaches. The research findings imply that while low-achievers aim for quick comprehension, they might be missing critical details or deeper understanding that comes from more analytical reading strategies.

RQ2. Reasons for the Most and Least Frequently Used Strategies

The additional information collected by the subsequent open-ended questions in the first section of the questionnaire sheds light on why certain strategies are preferred or avoided by high-achievers and

low-achievers. Qualitative data derived from the participants' responses and relevant analyses are presented in the following sections.

Reasons for the most frequently used strategy

Skimming for the main idea

- Skimming can make it easier and faster for me to comprehend the main idea of the article. [High-achievers: 1, 3, 5; Low-achievers: 4]
- Skimming helps me understand the overall content of the article better. [Low-achievers: 1, 2, 3, 6]

Based on the participants' responses, it can be identified that some high-achievers found skimming to be an efficient method for quickly comprehending the main idea of the news article. The result indicates that they prioritize speedy understanding while maintaining an overall comprehension of the information. As for the low-achievers, they also appreciate skimming for its ability to enhance their comprehension of the whole content. However, those low-achievers didn't mention reading speed as a consideration. This inclination may suggest their prioritization of broad understanding over rigorous examination of the content.

Identifying the main subject and verb

- Finding the main subject and verb can simplify the structure of the sentence, allowing me to understand the article's key points more easily and quickly. [High-achievers: 2, 4, 6; Low-achievers: 5]

The majority of the high-achievers valued this strategy for its capability to simplify sentence structure, aiding in quicker and easier comprehension of the key points of the text. This implies that high-achievers who utilize this approach are seeking a more methodical and analytical approach to the act of reading.

Reasons for the least used strategy

Skimming for the main idea

- Usually, after finding the main subject and verb of the sentence, I can quickly know the main idea of the article, so I don't need to use the skill of skimming. [High-achievers: 2]
- I have difficulty using skimming to get the main idea. [High-achievers: 4]

The above data reveal that some of the high-achievers rely on something other than skimming to obtain the main idea. They prefer

more structured analytical approaches like identifying the main subject and verb in their English news reading. They can use the “identifying the main subject and verb” strategy to grasp the main idea without counting on skimming.

Scanning for 5Ws and H

- I have difficulty using the skill of scanning for 5Ws and H. [High-achievers: 6; Low-achievers: 5]
- I know how to use the scanning strategy, but it takes more time for me to identify the 5Ws and H while reading the article. [High-achievers: 3]

As discussed previously, higher-order thinking skills go beyond basic recall of information and require deeper mental processing. They involve analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, and creating information rather than simply remembering it. They involve working with multiple pieces of information, understanding their relationships, and drawing conclusions. For both groups of students, the difficulty in using this strategy and its time-consuming nature were reasons for its infrequent use. This suggests that the strategy of scanning for 5Ws and H might not be well understood and mastered by the students. Consequently, it is seen as less useful compared to alternative methods.

Identifying the main subject and verb

- I don't know how to find the correct main subject and verb. [High-achievers: 1, 5; Low-achievers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6]

Finding the main subject and verb is a fundamental skill for understanding the grammar and the meaning of a sentence. This is particularly crucial for comprehending the overall message and its context of news in English. The sentences can be ambiguous or confusing for students without pinpointing these two key components. As admitted by most of the low-achievers in this research, difficulty in correctly identifying the main subject and verb was a common reason for not using this strategy. This highlights the challenges of implementing advanced analytical reading methods, which demand a solid foundation in grammar and focused practice on reading skills.

Students' Evaluation of the Importance of News Reading Strategies

RQ3. The Importance of Strategies Weighed by the Students

The second section of the questionnaire aimed to assess the importance of strategies weighed by the students. The participants were required to assign a cumulative score of 10 points to the three strategies based on their individually evaluated importance. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for weights of the strategies' importance, and each strategy was analyzed by the three categories of all participants, high-achievers, and low-achievers. The data suggest that skimming for the main idea ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.06$) was rated as the most important strategy for all participants, whereas scanning for 5Ws and H ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.62$) was considered the least important. Indicated by a higher standard deviation, the strategy "identifying the main subject and verb" ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.35$) had the highest variability in received weights, which could mean all participants used this strategy less consistently or found it less effective.

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics for the Importance of the Reading Strategies

Strategy	Group	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Skimming for the main idea	All participants	12	4.25	1.06	2	6
	High-achievers	6	4.00	1.41	2	6
	Low-achievers	6	4.50	0.55	4	5
Scanning for 5Ws and H	All participants	12	2.75	0.62	2	4
	High-achievers	6	2.83	0.75	2	4
	Low-achievers	6	2.67	0.52	2	3
Identifying the main subject and verb	All participants	12	3.00	1.35	1	5
	High-achievers	6	3.17	1.83	1	5
	Low-achievers	6	2.83	0.75	2	4

Note. *n* = participant number, *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, Min = minimum weight, and Max = maximum weight.

Detailed breakdowns of the weights allocated by the two groups of participants across three reading strategies are further discussed below.

Skimming for the main idea

The data shows that the low-achievers ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 0.55$) assigned slightly more weight to the skimming strategy than the high-achievers ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.41$). The lower standard deviation for

the low-achievers suggests less variability in their evaluation.

Scanning for 5Ws and H

Scanning received the lowest average weight among the three strategies. The overall low weights and low standard deviations, particularly among the low-achievers ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.52$), suggest that both groups find this strategy challenging or less useful. High-achievers ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.75$) have slightly higher scores and greater variability, indicating a more inconsistent application of this strategy.

Identifying the main subject and verb

As shown in Table 2, this strategy has the highest variability in weight, especially among the high-achievers ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.83$). High-achievers assigned more weight to this strategy with notable variation, suggesting they might use it more, but with varying levels of success. Low-achievers ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 0.75$) allocated less weight with less variability, which could imply that they find this strategy challenging or less relevant to their reading approach.

RQ4. The Differences in Students' Weighed Importance of the Strategies

Table 3 presents the results of a series of one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) tests evaluating the importance of different reading strategies perceived by students. The strategies tested were skimming by scanning, scanning by identifying the main subject and verb, and identifying the main subject and verb by skimming. These tests were performed for all participants as well as separately for high-achievers and low-achievers. Findings of the one-way ANOVA tests provide insights into the students' perceptions of the importance of different reading strategies. The following discussions explore each strategy in detail, and their specific effects are further examined.

The importance of “skimming” by “scanning”

- All Participants: A significant effect of the treatment was observed ($p = 0.00033$), indicating that the skimming strategy plays a notable role in the perceptions of the entire group.
- High-Achievers: The treatment effect was not significant ($p = 0.105$), suggesting that the high-achieving students did not perceive

the skimming strategy as particularly impactful.

- Low-Achievers: A very strong treatment effect ($p = 0.00014$) was noted, indicating that the low-achieving students found the skimming strategy to be significantly important.

The importance of “scanning” by “identifying the main subject and verb”

- All Participants: No significant treatment effect was found ($p = 0.566$), suggesting that there was no significant difference of importance existing between these two strategies, and consequently, they did not cause a notable impact on the group as a whole.
- High-Achievers: Similarly, no significant effect was observed ($p = 0.689$), indicating that the high-achievers found neither of these two strategies particularly useful.
- Low-Achievers: Again, no significant effect ($p = 0.664$) was found, suggesting that the low-achievers also did not find either of the strategies to be significantly beneficial.

The importance of “identifying the main subject and verb” by “skimming”

- All Participants: A significant treatment effect was observed ($p = 0.019$), suggesting that the skimming strategy with a higher mean score was particularly important for the group as a whole.
- High-Achievers: No significant difference ($p = 0.399$) was found, indicating that the high-achieving students did not find either of the two strategies particularly impactful.
- Low-Achievers: A very significant effect ($p = 0.001$) of the skimming strategy was noted, indicating that the low-achieving students found this strategy to be extremely important.

TABLE 3. One-Way ANOVA Statistics for Students' Weighed Strategy Importance

Skimming by Scanning					
All Participants					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	13.500	1	13.50	18.000	0.00033***
Error	16.500	22	0.750		
High-Achievers					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	4.083	1	4.083	3.182	0.105
Error	12.833	10	1.283		
Low-Achievers					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	10.0833	1	10.083	35.588	0.00014***
Error	2.833	10	0.283		
Scanning by Identifying the Main Subject and Verb					
All Participants					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	0.375	1	0.375	0.340	0.566
Error	24.25	22	1.102		
High-Achievers					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	0.333	1	0.333	0.169	0.689
Error	19.667	10	1.967		
Low-Achievers					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	0.083	1	0.083	0.200	0.664
Error	4.167	10	0.417		
Identifying the Main Subject and Verb by Skimming					
All Participants					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	9.375	1	9.375	6.395	0.019**
Error	32.250	22	1.466		

High-Achievers					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	2.083	1	2.083	0.776	0.399
Error	26.833	10	2.683		
Low-Achievers					
Source	SS	df	MS	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Treatment	8.333	1	8.333	19.231	0.001***
Error	4.333	10	0.433		

Note. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

Implications of the one-way ANOVA statistic results

The ANOVA statistics provided in Table 3 show that when all participants were considered, the reading skill of skimming was significantly more important than scanning ($F = 18$, $p < 0.01$) or identifying the main subject and verb ($F = 6.395$, $p < 0.05$). The consistent results indicated that real differences in weighting existed in the students' opinions. When participants were divided into high-achievers and low-achievers, the results differed. For the high-achievers, the treatment effect was not significant for any of the three statistical examinations. None of the three reading strategies demonstrated a statistical difference among the high-achieving students, meaning that the strategies might be equally important for this group. For the low-achievers, the reading skill skimming played a prominent role. According to the substantial treatment effects, it was confirmed that skimming was significantly more important than scanning ($F = 35.588$, $p < 0.01$) or identifying the main subject and verb ($F = 19.231$, $p < 0.01$).

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the important role reading strategies played in the students' English news reading. Facing the challenges of new technology development in the AI era, students need to cultivate essential talents at the stage of school education. As discussed in this research, critical talents for the 21st century, including abstract and concrete skills, can be fostered by English news reading instruction. By incorporating English news reading into language learning, students can

not only develop abstract skills like critical thinking but also acquire concrete skills like international communication. Due to the unusual “inverted pyramid” article structure and complex writing style of journalistic English, students frequently encounter tremendous difficulties while reading English news. These challenges have caused students to have low interest and little motivation to exposure to this type of article genre. The objective of this study was twofold. First, it aimed to identify the students’ most and least frequently used strategies in English news reading and the reasons for their choices. Second, it further investigated the importance of the strategies weighed by the students, identifying whether there were significant differences between them.

According to the findings derived from descriptive statistics, there were distinct differences in reading strategy preferences between high-achievers and low-achievers. The high-achievers exhibited a more balanced use of different strategies, modifying their approach based on the specific reading material or activity being undertaken. In contrast, the low-achievers appeared to depend more extensively on skimming to grasp the main idea, thereby neglecting more in-depth and analytical reading strategies. When taking a closer look at the possible explanations for both groups’ behavior, it can be perceived that both of the strategies, “scanning for 5Ws and H” and “identifying the main subject and verb,” are challenging for the students. Only when students possess higher-order thinking skills and solid grammatical knowledge can they use the two strategies freely and effectively.

When further examined with one-way ANOVA tests, the prior findings can be revalidated. Different reading strategies exhibited different degrees of importance depending on the student’s level of achievement. Low-achievers derived substantial advantages from the skimming approach and consequently regarded it as extremely important. This might indicate that the skimming strategy helps in quickly identifying key ideas or concepts, which is crucial for students who struggle with detailed analysis or have shorter attention spans. However, the high-achievers have a series of more balanced reading approaches and are capable of employing an orchestration of strategies while reading. As a result, there was no significant difference found among the strategy weights allocated by the high-achieving students.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR KOREAN ELT

Correlation Between Reading Comprehension and Strategy Use

According to Park (2010), Korean EFL college students frequently use reading strategies when they read authentic expository or technical texts in English. The present research confirms that both high- and low-achieving students in Taiwan also tend to employ strategies that they perceive as effective and efficient for reading English news. The findings validated the significance and pressing need for teachers to integrate diverse reading and comprehension strategy education into their programs while teaching courses pertaining to this particular article genre.

Strategy Differences Between Language Proficiency Levels

Park (2010) found a strong positive correlation between Korean college students' reading comprehension proficiency level and their utilization of reading strategies. The study revealed a direct relationship between the advanced students' reading comprehension proficiency and their use of more sophisticated reading strategies. In addition, another study examining EFL Korean college students in an intensive English program found that those who self-rated their English reading abilities as intermediate employed a wider range of strategies than those who identified as novices. According to Hong-Nam and Szabo (2021), this difference was statistically significant. The current study found that high-achievers demonstrate a skillful equilibrium between general comprehension (i.e., skimming) and analytical reading (i.e., scanning for the 5Ws and H, and identifying the main subject and verb). In contrast, the low-achievers lean more toward strategies facilitating general comprehension.

Strategy Reliance and Challenges for Low-Achievers

As identified by Park (2010), Korean EFL learners with limited reading proficiency frequently used dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words and translated word by word. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) noted that less proficient readers often focused on vocabulary acquisition and used a word-by-word approach, which is a bottom-up processing strategy.

Interestingly, several studies (Perfetti, 1985; Eskey, 1988) have shown that some readers with limited reading skills can also use a top-down processing approach similar to proficient readers. As shown in the present research, the low-achievers overly relied on top-down strategies like skimming for the main idea due to weak bottom-up skills such as word recognition and sentence decoding. Additionally, the challenging nature of authentic expository texts like English news articles may lead students with limited language proficiency to adopt a different approach to complete a reading task.

Individual Variability in Strategy Preferences

The present research suggests that educational strategies may not be one-size-fits-all. Students of different proficiency levels respond differently to the same instruction and have varying perceptions of what is effective or efficient. The choice of strategy is also influenced by the individuals' understanding and preferences in using these strategies. Some strategies are avoided not because they are ineffective but because students find them difficult to use or understand. Moreover, high-achieving students within the same proficiency group also exhibit diverse strategy preferences and abilities. Consequently, it is suggested that reading strategies might be highly personal and depend on individual learning styles, strengths, and weaknesses.

Pedagogical Implications for Korean ELT

For Korean language educators, the findings of this research underscore the importance of teaching a variety of reading strategies and recognizing that students may have different preferences and abilities in using these strategies. These results could be used to advocate for more personalized learning strategies in educational settings. Recognizing that students have diverse learning needs can lead to the development of more effective teaching methods targeted at different student groups. Educators and curriculum developers should consider incorporating different types of reading comprehension strategies into their programs, especially to support low-achieving students. Based on Song's (1998) study conducted on Korean university students, it can be inferred that strategy training is particularly advantageous for less proficient readers

while it still aids more proficient readers in enhancing their reading competence. It is recommended that English reading instruction for college students in academic settings should include explicit and direct strategy teaching. The findings from this research could pave the way for more detailed studies, possibly exploring why certain strategies are more effective for specific groups and how these can be further optimized. As suggested by Suh (2012), teachers should be aware of the students' perspectives and strive to empower them to take a more proactive role in the classroom. While it is essential to teach students decoding skills for reading English news, as Lee and Oxford (2008) claimed, teachers also need to support students in cultivating positive self-images as English language readers. Encouraging students to understand their own learning styles and identify the strategies that work best for them could be the next step toward more effective self-motivated learning.

THE AUTHOR

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APPENDIX

Survey of English News Reading Strategy

Section A

Question 1: What is the most common strategy you use when reading news in English? (Single choice)

1. Skimming for the main idea
2. Scanning for 5Ws and H
3. Identifying the main subject and verb

Reason:

Question 2: What is the least used strategy you use when reading news in English? (Single choice)

1. Skimming for the main idea
2. Scanning for 5Ws and H
3. Identifying the main subject and verb

Reason:

Section B

Assuming a total score of 10 points, how important do you think the following three strategies are?

- _____ 1. Skimming for the main idea
- _____ 2. Scanning for 5Ws and H
- _____ 3. Identifying the main subject and verb

Improving Korean EFL Adult Learners' Oral Skills Through Role-Play

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This article presents practical strategies to enhance the communicative competence of high-intermediate adult EFL learners in Korea through task-based language teaching (TBLT) with a focus on role-play activities. Grounded in theoretical and empirical literature and supplemented by a needs analysis, the article outlines a series of task-based activities designed to engage learners in interactive scenarios that resemble real-world situations. These activities progressively grow in complexity from receptive and controlled activities to productive and spontaneous ones while supplying efficient modeling and scaffolding, such as vocabulary preview, C-test scripts, and role-cards. This article demonstrates how to efficiently create customized teaching materials by using multimedia videos and ChatGPT's dialogue-generating capabilities, which address the specific needs of learners and teachers in actual classroom settings.

Keywords: role-plays, task-based language teaching, pragmatic competence, ChatGPT

INTRODUCTION

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has significantly influenced language teaching methodology, and task-based language teaching (TBLT) has further developed this approach methodologically (Nunan, 2003). Both have contributed to the prevalent positive views and expectations among teachers and researchers. Despite these trends, CLT and TBLT do not seem to have taken hold in the Korean EFL context, as Korean English teachers face challenges in implementing CLT, finding it rather unsuitable for their classrooms (Flattery, 2007). Many

learners still rely on the grammar–translation method or audiolingual drills and struggle with their speaking and communicative abilities due to limited contact with native speakers (Clément et al., 1994).

This article aims to provide effective methods and supporting materials for teaching English speaking to intermediate high-level adult EFL learners in Korea. The Literature Review examines the characteristics of the Korean EFL setting and its learners, and reviews the theoretical and practical foundations of TBLT with a focus on the use of role-plays. The Needs Analysis section utilizes an online survey to assess the needs for speaking practice through role-plays and includes an interview with an ESL instructor, as well as a TBLT pilot session that focused on role-plays. Role-plays address key challenges in the EFL context, such as the learners' inactiveness, reticence, and public self-consciousness, which often stem from teacher-centered traditions. Building on the insights from previous discussions, this project incorporates a set of tasks and materials, featuring role-plays as the central activity, complemented by various pre-tasks. The selection of materials and the creation of actual teaching resources are detailed in the Overview of Materials and Portfolio Collection sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching Speaking to Adult Learners in the Korean EFL Context

Balhorn and Schneider (1987) indicated that Korean EFL learners face challenges in speaking due to a traditional dependency on memorization. In response, they proposed well-selected topics and non-threatening environments as possible alternatives for developing speaking proficiency. Learning English primarily with instrumental motivation, along with minimal L2 interaction, limits practical language use in the EFL context (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Exam-centric approaches hinder the development of essential pragmatic skills needed for real-world applications (Clement et al., 1994). English exams in Korea predominantly assess receptive skills rather than productive skills, which exacerbates the deficiency in speaking. While the overall ranking of Korean TOEFL test-takers is 87th globally, which is above average, their performance in the speaking section ranks 132nd, still below the global

average. This discrepancy reveals that Korean learners' speaking abilities fall short of the international norm (Pyo, 2020).

In addition, Korean learners' reticence, mainly due to a fear of making mistakes and teacher-centered classes, compromises their oral proficiency and fluency (Folse, 2006). Folse advocated for a shift to learner-centered environments, where errors are seen not as sources of stress but as essential to language acquisition, thereby encouraging voluntary participation. Instructors also must select appealing topics and center materials around student needs (Folse, 2006). Miller (2001) confirmed practical needs among Korean university students, with face-to-face interactions and self-expression ranked first and third. According to Lee and Villacorta (2017), while passing exams is the primary goal, socializing and casual conversations are also highly prioritized in learning English, as they are ranked second and third, respectively. However, identifying needs and selecting topics may not be sufficient. Folse (2006) stressed that "a conversation class cannot function on topics; it must function on tasks" (p. 45), underscoring the importance of implementing tasks over merely adopting engaging topics to ensure all students, even those who are less confident, participate. He recommended small group or pair work to address the learners' reticence and create a non-threatening environment, a view supported by Balhorn and Schneider (1987).

The Use of Role-Play in the Task-Based Approach

By facilitating negotiation and modification, well-designed tasks centered around real interaction are highly effective to enhance fluency (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) recommended role-plays as one of the most effective TBLT activities for cultivating practical speaking abilities of EFL learners through interactive tasks. The study demonstrated that role-plays, integrated with pre-task, during-task, and post-task activities, significantly improved the oral skills of Iranian university students compared to traditional methods, thereby validating the pivotal function of role-plays in TBLT.

Brown (2001) detailed the implementation of role-plays within TBLT to develop practical skills. This method starts with language exercises and modeling, culminating in a simulated interview between students, which enables inductive language use. Richards and Rodgers (2001) exemplified TBLT with pre-task preparation where students

brainstormed and role-played scenarios they might encounter outside the classroom. Humanez and Rios (2009) illustrated that TBLT enhances both the quality of oral interaction and spontaneity. Knowing that inputs from the pre-task would be utilized in the task stage, learners became more goal-oriented and could better recall previously practiced elements during subsequent discussions, enhanced by their prior learning.

Role-plays can range from highly structured activities to everyday situations and even more complex conflict scenarios (Hadley, 2007). Employing role-play activities with varied levels of difficulty as sequential tasks aligns well with H. D. Brown's (2001) continuum from "controlled" to "free," making them suitable for implementation in TBLT). Richards (2015) illustrated the transition from receptive listening to productive language uses, such as pair reading of scripts, sentence-completion tasks, and role-plays that require the active utilization of key elements from texts. These activities, organized according to the task-based approach, bridge the gap between semantic knowledge and syntactic application in real-world contexts to foster fluency and automaticity. Echoing the findings of previous studies, Waluyo (2019) showcased the effectiveness of role-plays within TBLT for Thai college-level EFL learners. The research involved pre-task activities focusing on vocabulary and grammar, followed by role-plays that used these skills in simulated scenarios that were based on the scripts written by the students themselves. Post-task feedback helped refine their abilities, with the final speaking test confirming the substantial improvements in communicative competence.

The Advantages of Role-Plays

A significant advantage of using role-plays is that they can be integrated with realistic language models presented by multimedia and more recently by artificial intelligence, thereby enhancing their practicality. Hadley (2007) suggested that role-playing scenes from multimedia sources not only enable enjoyable language use but also add cultural aspects to it. Multimedia also alleviates the burden on teachers as the sole L2 input (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Brown (2001) advised that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) draw on recorded media to showcase examples of native English speakers. Ramirez Salas (2002) pointed out that using videos in the EFL context simulate natural communicative situations with appropriate intonation, pace, fillers, body

gestures, and facial expressions.

The recent development of generative artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, enables role-plays to utilize AI-created language models as valuable learning resources, thereby broadening its applicability. Baskara and Mukarto (2023) demonstrated that ChatGPT enhances language learning by creating authentic dialogues. This exposure to real-world language materials improves the learners' reading, comprehension skills, and overall language proficiency, while also increasing their motivation. Alawida et al. (2023) also illustrated the applicability of ChatGPT in language education, noting its ability to adjust the levels and situational factors of conversations as needed. The above studies suggest that role-plays integrated with multimedia and AI can be a practical tool for non-native English-speaking teachers in the Korean EFL context.

In addition to expanding role-plays with multimedia and AI, studies suggest that role-plays develop pragmatic skills, which EFL learners may lack due to limited authentic L2 interactions (Clement et al., 1994). Rhener and Lasan (2023) demonstrated, through teachers' self-reports, the efficacy of action-oriented tasks, including role-plays, as they are meaningful, open-ended, and individualized in enhancing sociolinguistic competence, which is the ability to use language suitably in context (Kasper, 1997). Alcon (2005) confirmed that explicit and implicit instruction using videos can be used to enhance pragmatic competence related to awareness of requests. In that study, role-plays tested the learners' pragmatic ability, and the technique used there can also be applied to teaching pragmatics through a task. Jaen and Basanta (2009) also showed the benefits of using DVDs to improve conversational competence and the possibility that role-play activities can be combined with instructions. Celce-Murcia et al. (2010) exemplified how videos can be integrated with a role-play task to increase the learners' awareness and competence of intonation and its pragmatic use.

Salazar-Campillo (2008) revealed that role-play tasks encouraged EFL learners at the lower-intermediate level to produce more diverse internal modifiers as mitigating devices, such as hedges, hesitators, and attention-getters in requests. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) asserted that students can raise pragmatic awareness by watching videotaped situations in which inappropriate pragmatic problems are shown and then performing role-plays to repair the problems. The study shows that high-intermediate ESL learners obtain pragmatic awareness through the fixing type of role-plays, even when no instructions are given. Tateyama

(2001) illustrated that as an assessment tool, role-plays require more cognitive efforts from learners than multiple-choice tests, which may mean that role-plays can be an effective teaching method that stimulates the learners' ability to respond quickly to oral interactions.

Ladousse (1987) shed light on the key benefits of role-plays, which offer valuable insights for teaching in EFL settings. Firstly, role-plays provide diverse real-world experiences that enhance speaking skills adaptable to any situation. Secondly, they build social skills even among learners with low proficiency, serving as effective scaffolding to boost speaking skills and pragmatic competences typically underdeveloped in Korean EFL learners despite years of learning. Regarding this, Hadley (2007) confirmed the adaptability of role-plays to any learner level, stating that teachers can modify the difficulty – from simple guided activities to complex scenarios – based on student capabilities. Thirdly, role-plays can teach students how to handle specific situations people may encounter in their lives. Finally, shy and timid students feel comfortable because in role-plays they do not have to reveal their own self. Magos and Politi (2008) noted that role-plays protect timid and reluctant learners by offering them a “disguised self,” which encourages gradual integration into the class and allows learners who do not participate actively to still acquire necessary knowledge by observing others. They concluded that role-plays allow immigrants to practice situations essential for their survival in a safe setting.

Moreover, using the rational cloze procedure (RCP), a test method that requires test takers to fill in blanks deleted selectively by the test developer (Bailey, 1998), as a pre-task activity can guide learners to the more challenging stage of a role-play. Lee (2008) demonstrated that RCP elicits and improves productive vocabulary learning, which thereby enhances the learners' writing quality. This method can also be applied to role-plays to activate oral language production. A role-play using a partially deleted excerpt is effective for getting students both to engage in the activity without much pressure and to practice sequencing linguistic elements needed for the next task by activating pragmatic expectancy grammar (Bailey, 1998).

NEEDS ANALYSIS

The purpose of this section is to describe how data were collected

regarding the needs of role-plays based on TBLT in EFL conversation classes.

Method 1: Online Survey for Adult EFL Learners in Korea

Procedures

In July 2013, thirty adult English learners from Korea ranging in age from 20 to 46, with an average age of 30.7, completed an online survey. The online survey was comprised of three sections with a total of 30 items. The first section collected demographic data and information about the participants' English usage, experience, and future goals. The second section, based on a methodology from Miller (2001), asked participants to rate the importance of various English learning needs on a five-point Likert scale, covering both general and specific academic or professional uses. The last section assessed the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of role-plays in improving their speaking and reducing anxiety, using a five-point scale to gauge agreement with the prepared statements.

Results

All 30 participants completed the survey. The respondents were predominantly female (77%). While English usage varied, with the average frequency slightly above *sometimes*, 19 participants had spent time in English-speaking countries, and 11 had not. Future travel plans ranged from studying to working abroad. Notably, 70% reported mild anxiety when speaking English, highlighting a general need for anxiety reduction strategies.

The second part of the survey asked participants to rate the importance of 19 English learning needs on a five-point scale. As shown in Table 1, clear communication in English was rated as the most crucial need, emphasizing the significance of communicative competence. The high rankings of other needs related to speaking ability suggest that Korean learners are aware of the importance of pragmatic competence. Given that role-plays effectively enhance pragmatic skills, these results support the need to improve speaking abilities by engaging learners in realistic situations, which align with other studies (Lee & Villacorta, 2017; Miller, 2001).

TABLE 1. Top 5 English Learning Needs of Korean EFL Learners

Rank	Learning Need	Average Rating
1	To make myself understood precisely in English	4.5
2	To speak in a formal setting using appropriate conversational style	4.133
3	To carry on face-to-face conversation with English speakers	4.1
4	To obtain academic or professional information necessary in my field	4.1
5	To carry on English interviews for a job or school entrance	4.033

The final survey section assessed perceptions of role-plays as a teaching tool (see Table 2). The average rating for the effectiveness of role-plays was 3.467, indicating moderate agreement. This response aligns with the 83% of participants who reported feeling at least a little anxiety when speaking English, confirming ongoing nervousness. Strong support for role-plays emerged in the ratings for its necessity in practicing English in specific scenarios and its potential to reduce speaking anxiety. Overall, the survey results justify the use of role-plays to foster speaking abilities and reduce learner anxiety. The current online survey can be interpreted as evidence that the learners have substantial needs for improving communicative competence and that they believe role-plays could be helpful for these purposes.

TABLE 2. Learner Perceptions of Role-Plays in English Language Learning

No.	Survey Statement	Average Rating
1	I become nervous or embarrassed when I encounter situations in which I have to speak English.	3.467
2	I am well prepared for various situations in which I have to speak English.	3.0
3	I need to practice English within specific situations that I may encounter in the future.	4.233
4	Supposing a realistic situation that I may encounter and performing an imaginary role in that situation will be helpful to improve my English conversational skills.	4.3
5	If I practice dealing with realistic situations in which I have to speak English, it will reduce my anxiety when carrying on English conversation.	4.4

Method 2: An Interview with an ESL Instructor

In July 2013, an interview was conducted with an instructor from the American English Institute (AEI) at the University of Oregon who had extensive experience in Korea and Japan – regions known for students’ reticence and fear of making mistakes. He discussed the advantages of role-plays for beginner-level students through memorization, which provided controlled practice for students to speak with appropriate intonation and gestures. However, he suggested that occasional prompts, such as having students refuse invitations with appropriate excuses, should be incorporated to add spontaneity to repetitive drills. He also shared his experience teaching construction workers, where he used chants to help them memorize useful phrases before transitioning to more natural speech in skits, suggesting how the pre-task could maximize the effectiveness of role-plays.

The instructor acknowledged the limitations of role-plays, noting that they often focus on narrow topics and may require considerable time and repetition. However, he argued that these drawbacks are outweighed by their effectiveness in language learning. He described a successful experience with reading theater, where students acted out a fable by reading lines. There needed to be four speaking parts, including three characters acting as a blind woman, a doctor, and a judge, as well as the narrator. An Arabic woman did not want to have a speaking part at first. However, she observed others acting and speaking and realized how fun the activity was. In the following round of the activity, she volunteered to take the role of the judge for the drama and enjoyed the role, pleased to be given the power as a judge. It seems that by acting out a new persona other than her limited self, she could try language use more freely and safely, as suggested by Ladousse (1987) and Magos and Politi (2008).

In conclusion, the interview revealed that while role-plays are time-consuming, they are effective for language learning, particularly when integrated into a TBLT framework, as they encourage participation and linguistic development.

Method 3: Piloting of Materials

In June 2013, as part of a microteaching workshop at the University of Oregon, the materials were piloted with six graduate students enrolled

in the Master of Arts in Language Teaching Specialization program. The session included three stages: (a) a scripted role-play involving reading parts of a telephone conversation, (b) a role-play with a partially deleted script (C-test), and (c) a role-play using direction-giving role-cards. Despite the limited time for preparation and implementation, the participants successfully engaged in the role-play activities. Feedback from the participants highlighted several benefits: step-by-step scaffolding, effective application of the C-test method to learning, authentic situation and language use, enjoyable activities, facilitated memorization and recall of key words and expressions, and relevance to adult business communication needs. However, feedback also pointed out areas needing improvement, such as clearer instructions on role assignments and conversation initiation, additional language support, and more preparation time. To address these issues, modeling by a proficient student was suggested, alongside advanced provision of language examples and more structured brainstorming sessions to better prepare students for spontaneous communication.

The pilot demonstrated that task-based role-plays can effectively transform structured language input into active oral production, provided there is sufficient preparation to familiarize students with the scenarios and relevant language.

OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS

By the nature of TBLT, the first requirement is to produce materials for a set of stages of a class, from pre-tasks to during-tasks to post-tasks, featuring essential language components for effective communication. This approach emphasizes continuous engagement with key language features learned in previous activities, boosting student motivation and enhancing speaking skills through repeated exposure and practice. Understanding the relevance of language input to task goals enhances motivation and learning outcomes (Humanez & Rios, 2009).

Moreover, materials should be appropriate to be performed as role-plays. Dialogues between two people are easy to use for pair role-plays, as they present meaningful context and useful situations. The current portfolio uses dialogues as the basis for all of the materials. However, resources available for role-plays are not confined to dialogues; descriptive or narrative language such as short stories and

news articles can be employed instead (Woods, 2001). The convenience of well-structured dialogues that can be used in role-plays without much preparation makes them the most efficient option for creating role-play materials. In addition, dialogues have been used effectively for form-focused instruction (Brown, 2001), which allows for opportunities to integrate grammar into the meaningful interactions that occur in role-plays.

Next, in selecting conversational situations, the students' needs should be considered. Based on the findings from the needs analysis, this portfolio provides two sets of materials designed for realistic situations: a job interview and making a bank account. Catering to these needs, videos on YouTube can supply audio-visual language input containing not only clear metalinguistic elements, such as pronunciation, intonation, and tone, but also extralinguistic cues, such as gestures and facial expressions, by native English speakers (Brown, 2001; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Hadley, 2007; Ramirez Salas, 2002). These videos provide language modeling and prior knowledge needed for subsequent role-plays.

However, in designing role-plays, teachers may need to adjust the difficulty level of a dialogue and demand more specific language use. This is where the teacher's own materials development will be necessary (Bailey, 1998; J. D. Brown, 1995). This portfolio explores ChatGPT's applicability in creating conversations customized to specific learners and their needs. The ability of ChatGPT to generate virtually unlimited realistic conversations and adjust to any language levels substantially reduces the teachers' strain of development in preparing lessons (Alawida et al., 2023; Baskara & Mukarto, 2023).

Raising pragmatic awareness is also a key goal of this materials portfolio, which utilizes real-world language examples from videos and ChatGPT to facilitate learning. Exposure to authentic (or at least semi-authentic) L2 followed by learners' own language performance may underscore the discrepancies between the two. Reflecting on and exchanging feedback regarding the inappropriateness of their performance can enhance the high-intermediate learners' pragmatic awareness, even in the absence of direct instruction learning (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005).

In addition, the arrangement of tasks is another crucial factor for materials creation. The continuum of "from controlled to free" activities is the key principle in this portfolio (Brown, 2001). The shift from a structured role-play to a more conflicting situation, mentioned by Hadley (2007), is implemented in this portfolio, although she recommended

increased complexity as a way of catering to higher-level classes rather than as the sequence of task placement in a particular lesson.

The tasks also follow the sequence from receptive to productive activities. Watching the video and reading words relevant to subsequent role-plays are receptive activities. However, requiring students to repeat after the video when listening a second time and to read the vocabulary out loud will add productive language use, even at a low level. Reading the dialogue script and acting out a role as pair work, called “reading theater,” can be more productive than reading the script silently alone. Role-playing with a partially deleted script, such as a C-test sheet, demands further language production. Role-plays with a role-card require much greater cognitive demands to produce language mostly on their own, thus enhancing language competence more effectively. As a final stage, each student writing a dialogue scenario on their own provides the opportunity for active language production. According to the criteria discussed so far, the sequence and structure of the tasks are as follows.

Pre-Tasks

1. Introduction and Video Watching (choral activity)
2. Video Watching and Shadowing (choral activity)
3. Vocabulary Preview (choral activity)

Main-Tasks

4. Reading Theater (pair work)
5. C-Test Role-Play (pair work)
6. Role-Play with Role-Cards (pair work)
7. Peer Feedback and Self-Reflection of the Role-Play (pair work)
8. Demonstration of the Role-Play in Front of the Class (choral activity, performed by one chosen pair)

Post-Tasks

9. Class Discussion of the Demonstration (choral activity)
10. Announce Homework of Creating a Similar Dialogue (choral activity)

Criteria for Materials Selection and Creation

1. Realistic Contexts and Pragmatic Competence Enhancement: Materials should present realistic scenarios that learners are expected to face, addressing specific speaking needs and boosting pragmatic

skills.

2. Audio/Visual Modeling and Customized Learning by ChatGPT: Offer audio/visual elements to highlight meta/extra-linguistic cues and utilize ChatGPT to tailor text and scenarios, enhancing relevance and interaction.
3. Promoting Spontaneity and Meaning Negotiation Through Progressive Activities: Develop materials that foster spontaneous speech and meaning negotiation, transitioning from structured to more open-ended activities to better simulate real-life communication.
4. Integration of Focus on Form: Dialogues are suitable sources on which focus-on-form grammar exercises can be based in a meaningful context (Brown, 2001). This portfolio will attempt to incorporate this approach into role-play activities whenever possible.

PORTFOLIO COLLECTION

This section describes the actual materials and how to instruct students using these materials in the sequence of ten activities discussed below. The activities and materials are designed for a 50-minute class. Classes can be adjusted with flexible time frames, such as skipping the second round or assigning video watching and vocabulary preview as homework.

Materials Group A: A Job Interview

Activity 1: Introduction and Video Watching (7 min.)

After the topic of the lesson is briefly introduced, students watch a two-minute YouTube video where a personnel director and an applicant conduct a job interview (Ellii, 2023, July 20). This dialogue serves as a language model, as it provides basic knowledge about job interview scenarios. The video is then played a second time, allowing students to capture more details that they may have missed during the first round.

Activity 2: Video Watching and Shadowing (3 min.)

Students shadow the video by repeating it simultaneously. The teacher may activate subtitles to aid the students' comprehension. Like subsequent activities, this exercise transforms the receptive activity of

listening into an output-based, productive activity, bridging the gap between receptive and productive competence.

Activity 3: Vocabulary Preview (5 min.)

Students are given a script that has been created by ChatGPT-4. Through interactions with ChatGPT, the teacher can set specific scenarios and adjust the difficulty level or length of the dialogue. ChatGPT significantly reduces the time and effort required to develop or adapt conversations and allows for experimenting with various possibilities. The teacher hands out sheets for vocabulary preview. The preview sheet includes fourteen words extracted from or related to the dialogue script. It also presents the meaning of each word described in plain English to promote comprehension (see Table 3). The teacher reads the vocabulary sheet aloud, allowing students to learn the pronunciation and meanings of the words that will appear in the conversation. Students then repeat each word after the teacher to practice productive language use.

TABLE 3. Vocabulary Preview for “A Job Interview” (Sample)

No.	Term	Definition
11	health benefits	Health insurance and other medical-related advantages provided by an employer.
12	pension plan	A retirement savings plan provided by an employer, where money is saved for when you stop working.
13	paid vacation	Time off from work that you still get paid for.

Activity 4: Reading Theater (5 min.)

The summary of the dialogue that ChatGPT created is as follows: Jamie Lee, a job applicant, is being interviewed by Alex Carter, the personnel manager at Grandview Hotel. Jamie has experience working the hotel front desk, detailing her responsibilities at previous jobs, which included managing reservations and training staff. They discuss the working hours, and Jamie expresses flexibility with the rotational shift schedule. The conversation then moves to salary expectations, where the manager proposes an amount, and they agree on \$43,000 annually, along with comprehensive benefits and annual leave. The interview concludes with a mention of the final decision within a week.

Each student in a pair will choose a role from the dialogue and read

their part of the script, acting as if the situation is unfolding in real life. It takes around 1.5 minutes to read the dialogue through once. Afterward, the students will switch roles for a second round. This activity allows students to practice a basic, structured role-play, gradually turning receptive activities into productive ones by reading aloud. Since reading does not impose a significant cognitive burden on the students, the students will enjoy the dramatic fun of role-playing with their partners.

Activity 5: C-Test Role-Play (5 min.)

Students are asked to role-play using a partially deleted script (see Table 4). They switch roles for the second round. This task imposes a greater cognitive demand than the reading theater activity, as it requires students to predict and produce contextually appropriate linguistic forms (Bailey, 1998). Although it remains a controlled activity, the need to fill in the missing parts of the script on their own makes it a more productive step, bringing the students closer to actual speaking practice. The C-test script serves as scaffolding, and the non-threatening environment encourages students to practice speaking with confidence.

TABLE 4. C-Test Script for “A Job Interview” (Sample)

Original Script	C-Test Format
Jamie Lee: I can work those hours.	Jamie Lee: I can w__ those h__.
What is the salary range for this role?	What is the s____ range for this r__?
Personnel Manager: For your experience, we can offer \$43,000 annually, with full health benefits and a pension plan.	Personnel Manager: For your exp____, we can o__ \$43,000 an____, with full health be____ and a pen__ plan.
Jamie Lee: That’s acceptable.	Jamie Lee: That’s ac_____.
How much annual leave is provided?	How m__ annual l____ is pro____?
Personnel Manager: You’ll get three weeks of paid vacation, federal holidays, and personal days.	Personnel Manager: You’ll get three weeks of p__ vacation, fe____ holidays, and per____ days.

Activity 6–7: Role-Play with Role-Cards / Peer Feedback and Self-Reflection (10 min.)

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, the role-cards present slightly more challenging situational demands. In the original dialogue, Jamie agrees to the \$43,000 offered by the manager and moves on to discuss other benefits. However, in this role-cards activity, each student in the pair is

required to engage in a conflict over the salary, present their own arguments, but eventually reach an agreement. Jamie mentions that she was already earning \$42,000 in her previous job and requests \$45,000, but the manager, citing the company budget, offers \$43,000. Still, they will need to compromise at a middle point. The teacher briefly explains the demands written on the role-cards, emphasizing the increased difficulty. The teacher encourages students to improvise and use circumlocution to achieve their goal. The pair also needs to seek negotiation for meaning to make themselves understood, asking what the other intends or checking if they make sense of each other properly (Ortega, 2009). These elements can make the activity more authentic, spontaneous, and open-ended. After reading the role-cards and briefly preparing for the situation, a pair of students perform the role-play by only consulting their role-cards. Switching roles, the process is repeated. Upon completing this stage, students reflect on and discuss their performance and exchange feedback.

TABLE 5. Role-Card Modification for “A Job Interview”

Stage	Content
Original Script	Jamie Lee: I can work those hours. What is the salary range for this role? Personnel Manager: For your experience, we can offer \$43,000 annually, with full health benefits and a pension plan. Jamie Lee: That’s acceptable. How much annual leave is provided?
Modification	Objective: Negotiate salary within a specified range. Jamie Lee asks about the salary for the position. The Personnel Manager offers \$43,000 annually with benefits, citing budget constraints. Jamie negotiates, mentioning her previous salary of \$42,000 and her hope for \$45,000. They need to agree on a midpoint.

TABLE 6. Role-Cards for “A Job Interview”

Character	Jamie Lee (Job Applicant)	Alex Carter (Personnel Manager)
Goal	Secure the front desk position at Grandview Hotel with the desired salary and benefits.	Check if Jamie Lee is suitable for the front desk position and agree on a salary and benefits.
Background Information	You have four years of experience working at The City Inn and The Riverside Hotel. You handled reservations, guest	You are responsible for hiring experienced staff who can ensure guest satisfaction. The hotel operates with morning

	services, and trained new staff at the front desk.	and evening shifts, and occasionally overnight shifts.
Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greet Mr. Carter and introduce your background. 2. Discuss your experience and ability to handle various front desk tasks. 3. Express your flexibility regarding shift hours and ask about specific shift patterns. 4. Negotiate your salary mentioning your previous salary of \$42,000 and your expectation of \$45,000. 5. Ask about the health benefits, a pension plan, and annual leave. 6. End the interview by thanking Mr. Carter and expressing your interest in the job. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome Jamie Lee. 2. Ask about Jamie's specific experiences at previous hotels, focusing on their roles and contributions to guest services. 3. Detail the shift hours: morning (7 a.m. to 3 p.m.), evening (3 p.m. to 11 p.m.), and occasional overnight shifts. 4. Offer a salary of \$43,000 and negotiate with the budget in mind but try to reach an agreement. 5. Explain the benefits: health insurance, a pension plan, and annual leave. 6. End the interview by informing Jamie that you will be in touch soon.

Activity 8: Demonstration of the Role-Play in Front of the Class (5 min.)

The teacher chooses one pair of students to perform the role-play with the role-cards in front of the class. This performance is implemented only once. The teacher encourages the performers to handle the situation and achieve their objectives without overly emphasizing the accuracy and refinement of language. In addition, it is important to maintain an enjoyable and comfortable atmosphere among both the performers and the audience.

Activity 9: Class Discussion of the Demonstration (7 min.)

The teacher and students discuss the role-play performance and exchange their opinions about it. The enjoyable atmosphere from the drama performance may help the students share their thoughts more openly. The teacher may need to give direct corrections about the performers' errors if they are significant. While students may not always produce the expected outcomes perfectly, the opportunity of actively engaging in authentic situations, be it as performers or spectators, is invaluable in the EFL context. It will not only aid in skill development but also significantly boost their motivation and positive attitudes

towards learning.

Activity 10: Wrap-up / Homework of Creating a Similar Dialogue (3 min.)

The teacher summarizes the day's lesson and announces the homework. Students are asked to write their own dialogue script about a similar situation. They are guided to make the situation more related to their own lives while using the vocabulary and expressions learned through the lesson. This individualized post-task may improve the students' oral competence, particularly their sociolinguistic competence (Rhener & Lasan, 2023), by building on what they have learned (Humanez & Rios, 2009).

Materials Group B: Opening a Bank Account

In this section, the materials and lessons are organized in the same sequence and manner as the Materials Group A.

Activity 1: Introduction and Video Watching (7 min.)

In the video, a bank accounts manager guides a customer through opening a checking account, explaining the initial deposit, the process of opening an account, and banking services (Ellii, 2023, July 19).

Activity 2: Video Watching and Shadowing (3 min.)

The students watch the video again and shadow the spoken dialogue by repeating it simultaneously.

Activity 3: Vocabulary Preview (5 min.)

The structure and instructional methods follow the same principles as outlined in Materials Group A. This includes the use of ChatGPT for creating realistic dialogue scripts, adjusting the complexity and the length as needed. The script and vocabulary preview are handed out to the students. The students are exposed to the words relevant to opening an account and bank transactions.

Activity 4: Reading Theater (5 min.)

This activity utilizes a new dialogue created by ChatGPT, based on a bank account opening scenario. In this dialogue, Mr. Kim visits a bank

to open a checking account. The bank teller explains the features of the account, including the option for a free basic account or an upgraded account with personalized checks, online banking, and overdraft protection for a monthly fee. Mr. Kim opts for the basic account, learns about the account management options, and thanks the teller for their help. The participants engage in a structured role-play, where each student reads their assigned part. After reading, the students switch roles for a second round.

Activity 5: C-Test Role-Play (5 min.)

The students are asked to role-play using a partially deleted script and switch roles for the second round.

Activity 6–7: Role-Play with Role-Cards / Peer Feedback and Self-Reflection (10 min.)

This stage is designed to add more complexity to the task (see Table 7). The role-card for Mr. Kim demands that he ask about overdraft protection and what could happen without it. The teller is required to answer the questions and illustrate potential risks in the absence of the protection and recommend that the customer use the service. For this activity, form-focused instruction is incorporated. By integrating grammatical points within dialogues, the learners can practice grammar in a meaningful and contextualized manner. The dialogue between a customer who does not understand overdraft protection well and a teller trying to convince the customer of its necessity can naturally lead to hypothetical questions and answers about the potential negative consequences that could occur if the service is not subscribed to. The following sentences could be used in such a context:

- What would happen if my account didn't have enough money to pay a bill?
- If the payment were declined, you would pay more as a penalty.
- What would you do if you were in my shoes?
- If I were you, I would sign up for overdraft protection.

By adding these sentences to the role-cards and requiring students to use these expressions, the lesson can teach subjunctive past in a more meaningful and realistic context, employing focus on form. This approach may restrict spontaneous utterances to some degree, but using

the structured sentences can also serve as prompts that facilitate fluent language exchanges between the students. The role-card activity requires handling a more complex situation than previous script-based activities, and there is also a demand for a certain grammar point, but the expressions presented on the role-cards guide the language exchanges as scaffolding. Therefore, a balance in the difficulty level is established, enhancing further engagement and negotiation for meaning between the pair.

TABLE 7. Role-Card Modification for “Opening a Bank Account”

Stage	Content
Original Script	Mr. Kim: What is overdraft protection? Bank Teller: It covers you if you spend more than you have in your account, up to \$500. You can pay it back later. Mr. Kim: I’ll go with the basic account for now. Bank Teller: Sure! We send out statements on the 5th of every month, and you can check your account online anytime.
Modification	Objective: Explore overdraft protection. / Persuade the customer to sign up. Mr. Kim has to learn what the service is like and ask for detailed examples of potential risks if it is not included. The teller has to explain possible disadvantages of not having overdraft protection and exemplify specific cases. Role-cards require students to use subjunctive past, such as “If S+V (past), S+would ~.”

TABLE 8. Role-Cards for “Opening a Bank Account”

Character	Bank Teller	Mr. Kim (Customer)
Goal	Help the customer open a checking account and explain the details of the account and any fees.	Open a new checking account and find out about special features like overdraft protection.
Background Information	You are trained to explain the benefits and details of the bank’s services. You know how to open accounts and about different banking plans, including overdraft protection.	This is your first time at this bank, and you want to open a checking account. You know some basics about banking but want more details about special services like overdraft protection.

Tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask how much they want to deposit. 2. Talk about filling out the form to open an account. 3. Explain what a checking account is used for. 4. Discuss fee options and extra services like personalized checks or online banking. 5. Describe overdraft protection and how it could help. 6. Persuade the customer to sign up for it. 7. Mention the bank statement and online banking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell the teller you want to open a checking account. 2. Let the teller know how much money you have for the first deposit. 3. Ask how the checking account works and what you can use it for. 4. Inquire about any fees and extra services. 5. Ask for details about overdraft protection, including how much it costs and what it covers. 6. Decide if you want overdraft protection. 7. Learn about your bank statements and online banking.
You need to use:	<p>“If the payment were declined, you would pay more as a penalty.”</p> <p>“If I were you, I would sign up for overdraft protection.”</p>	<p>“What would happen if my account didn’t have enough money to pay a bill?”</p> <p>“What would you do if you were in my shoes?”</p>

Activity 8: Demonstration of the Role-Play in Front of the Class (5 min.)

Activity 9: Class Discussion of the Demonstration (7 min.)

Activity 10: Wrap-up / Homework of Creating a Similar Dialogue (3 min.)

These activities are implemented as in Materials Group A. For this lesson, the teacher particularly underscores the grammatical features of subjunctive past as well as the general situational performances and encourages students to make use of the grammar in creating their own dialogues as homework.

CONCLUSIONS

The current article aimed to illustrate practical ways of creating task-based classroom materials featuring role-plays to improve the

speaking ability of high-intermediate Korean adult learners in the EFL context. The lack of authentic L2 input, students' reticence derived from a teacher-centered culture, and a focus on receptive skills combined have constituted significant obstacles to achieving communicative competence. As a solution, task-based language teaching (TBLT) encourages voluntary language production through the accomplishment of specific task goals. Furthermore, role-plays, as incorporated within the TBLT framework, have been proven effective, particularly in enhancing oral skills necessary for handling real-world situations. Role-plays provide an ideal environment where learners can venture into productive language use without the pressure of self-disclosure in a non-threatening atmosphere. The methodology implemented in this article involved starting with receptive and structured activities and progressively developing towards more productive and spontaneous tasks to maximize the effectiveness of role-plays. The balance between the incremental complexity and accompanying scaffolding may be said to be a prominent feature of this article's materials design. Additionally, the use of multimedia videos and ChatGPT has been demonstrated to be highly beneficial in creating a series of coherent teaching materials based on realistic dialogues that meet the learners' needs.

Project Limitations and Future Investigation

This article was not designed as an empirical study that draws conclusions from experimental data. Instead, it aimed to apply insights from existing literature to the creation of educational materials, supplemented by a needs analysis conducted through a simple online survey targeting Korean adult learners, an interview with an ESL instructor, and a pilot role-play session. However, the article lacks an experimental framework to rigorously investigate the materials' effectiveness.

Future research should aim to address this gap by implementing a structured experimental study to collect and analyze data on the effectiveness of these materials. Such studies could provide empirical support for the methodologies proposed in this article. Additionally, any shortcomings identified through rigorous testing could be addressed to refine and enhance the materials development process. It is also necessary to establish detailed, flexible instructions and efficient assessment tools in real classroom settings. This iterative approach will

help evolve the materials into more effective tools for language learning, ensuring that they are not only theoretically sound but also practically effective in diverse learning environments.

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A Needs Analysis of Pronunciation Instruction for Japanese University English Learners

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This study presents the results of a needs analysis on the English pronunciation knowledge of Japanese first-year university students with six or more years of English instruction. The analysis focused on students' knowledge of nine English consonants, which frequently cause communication breakdowns due to L1 Japanese pronunciation influence. Additionally, the study investigated students' pronunciation-related learning experiences and their confidence level in their pronunciation skills through a written questionnaire. The findings revealed a significant gap in knowledge of the targeted consonants, low student confidence in pronunciation skills, and insufficient pronunciation instruction. The results support the need for explicit and systematic pronunciation instruction at the university level.

Keywords: pronunciation, needs analysis, Japanese university students

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation skills are widely recognized as essential in Japanese English education, and government guidelines for junior and senior high school English include instructing both segmental and suprasegmental features of pronunciation in the curriculum. However, when observing students who have entered university, English instructors often wonder how much pronunciation instruction students have received and which elements of pronunciation have been introduced in their educational settings.

This study performed a needs analysis on the pronunciation knowledge of Japanese first-year university students in order to develop suitable systematic pronunciation pedagogical materials for university-age

English learners who already have at least six years of English instruction. The study focuses on the students' pronunciation knowledge of segmental features of nine selected consonants that cause communication breakdowns due to interference from native Japanese sound patterns. It also examines students' confidence level of pronunciation and their pronunciation learning experience. Finally, it provides educators with a clear starting point for developing systematic, effective pronunciation instruction at the university level.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Pronunciation instruction has become a recognized component of foreign language teaching, yet its value was not always been fully acknowledged. Goodwin et al. (1996) observed that pronunciation instruction has often been undervalued, historically considered less essential than other skills such as reading and writing. Early pronunciation teaching methods, such as the direct and naturalistic approaches, emphasized imitation of model sounds and laid the foundation for what is now known as the intuitive-imitative approach. The intuitive-imitative approach focuses on learners listening to and imitating pronunciation of the target language without explicit teaching. This approach, influenced by first-language acquisition, assumes that learners can internalize pronunciation through listening and mimicry (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010).

Building on these early approaches, the Reform Movement introduced the analytic-linguistic approach. This approach, which uses phonetic symbols and articulatory descriptions to help learners consciously produce target sounds, was made possible by the advent of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), which created a systematic relationship between sounds and symbols. While the intuitive-imitative approach plays a key role in emphasizing the development of initial pronunciation skills through listening to the target language, the analytic-linguistic approach focuses on helping students consciously understand and produce sounds that differ from their native language. Often used alongside the intuitive-imitative approach, the analytic-linguistic approach emphasizes the active role of learners in understanding sound structures and forming them accurately.

Despite these advancements, pronunciation instruction still struggles

for a secure position in many language curricula (Setter & Jenkins, 2005). Naiman (1992) observed that, without dedicated classes, pronunciation often goes untaught or receives minimal attention. More recently, Walker et al. (2021) argued that international intelligibility – effective communication across linguistic backgrounds – should be the primary goal for learners and has become a realistic and essential goal for EFL learners in global contexts. This underscores the importance of immediate corrective feedback to support pronunciation development.

However, many teachers lack confidence in teaching pronunciation and feel unprepared to teach it in their classrooms. This can be counteracted through continuing professional development, which will familiarize teachers with the concept of international intelligibility, deepen their knowledge of pronunciation, and help them make links between theory and practice. Helping teachers attain a deep understanding of pronunciation goals, structures, and teaching strategies can contribute to a greater confidence in teaching pronunciation.

METHOD

The study's participants were 450 first-year Japanese students at a science university in Japan. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted in seven classes held by two instructors during the first day of class. The survey aimed to (a) assess students' current knowledge of nine English consonants that frequently cause communication breakdowns due to L1 Japanese pronunciation influence and are a priority for training Japanese L1 English learners to gain an internationally intelligible level of pronunciation (Chujo, 2017), (b) evaluate their confidence in English pronunciation, and (c) understand the methods used in their previous pronunciation instruction.

To examine pronunciation knowledge, students completed two tasks. In the first task, students were asked to match each of nine consonant symbols (/l/, /r/, /f/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /s/, /z/, /ʃ/) with the correct manner of articulation, described in Japanese. The options included additional non-target consonants and vowels as distractors. In the second task, students matched the nine underlined target consonants presented in words with the correct pronunciation explanations. Target words included *lice* (/l/), *rice* (/r/), *food* (/f/), *very* (/v/), *think* (/θ/), *breathe* (/ð/), *seat* (/s/), *breeze* (/z/), and *sheet* (/ʃ/). For both tasks, students could select a

“do not know” option.

To ascertain students’ confidence level in their overall pronunciation skills, students answered the following question written in Japanese: “How confident are you in your English pronunciation? Please rate your confidence from 1 (*not confident*) to 10 (*very confident*).”

The final section of the survey sought to understand the learners’ background in pronunciation practice in their junior high and high school English classes. This section was an open-ended question. Students were asked if they had received pronunciation instruction in their previous years of English study and to freely describe in Japanese their experience with English pronunciation.

RESULTS

The results of the first task, where students matched nine consonant phonetic symbols with their corresponding articulations, are summarized in Figure 1. Each correct match received one point, with a maximum possible score of nine. The score represents the number of correctly matched phonetic symbols. The number above the line shows how many students received that score.

FIGURE 1. Consonants Articulation Knowledge Score

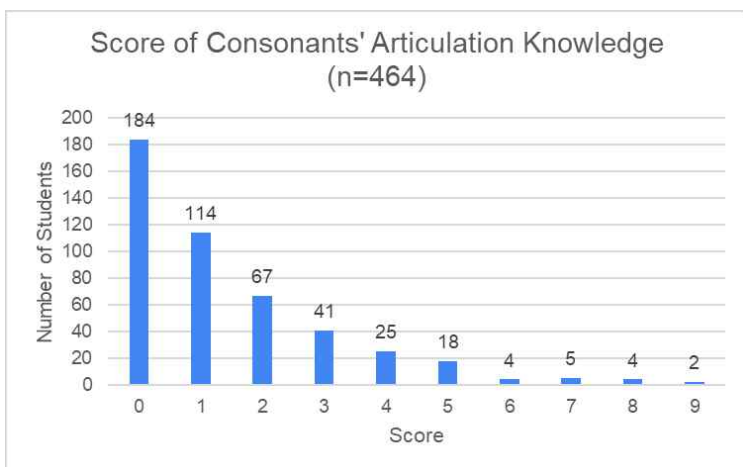


Figure 1 shows that 40% of the students (180 students) scored 0

points, 24% of the students (114 students) scored 1 point, and 14% of the students (67 students) scored 2 points. In other words, nearly 78% of the students received a score of 22% correct or less. On the other hand, two students scored a full 9 points, four scored 8 points, and five scored 7 points out of 9.

Table 1 provides details on the accuracy of students' identification for each phoneme.

TABLE 1. Articulation Knowledge of Consonants (Phonetic Symbol) (n = 464)

Pronunciation Target	/l/	/r/	/f/	/v/	/θ/	/ð/	/s/	/z/	/ʃ/
Correct (%)	10.56	13.36	28.45	29.74	14.66	6.90	17.24	18.32	4.74
Incorrect (%)	24.78	25.65	23.28	22.63	38.36	54.53	28.02	32.11	62.72
Don't Know (%)	64.66	60.99	48.28	47.63	46.98	38.58	54.74	49.57	32.54

The most accurately identified sounds were /v/ at 29.74%, followed by /f/ at 28.45% and /z/ at 18.32%, while the least recognized were /ʃ/ at 4.74% followed by /ð/ at 6.90%. These results suggest that students struggle particularly with sounds less common in Japanese.

In the second task, students matched nine target consonants within words to their pronunciation explanations. Table 2 shows the percentage of students by answer for matching the nine target consonants placed in a word with the pronunciation explanation for each phoneme.

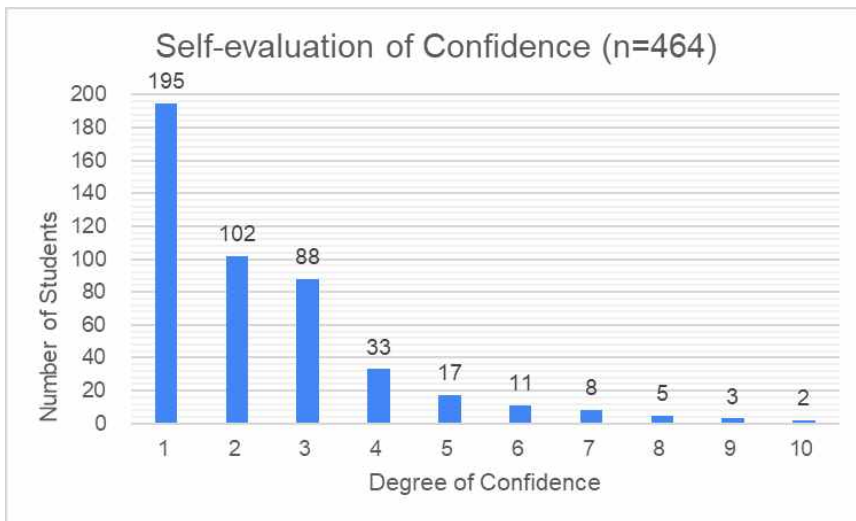
TABLE 2. Articulation Knowledge of Consonants (Word) (n = 464)

Word	lice	rice	food	very	think	breathe	seat	breeze	sheet
Pronunciation Target	/l/	/r/	/f/	/v/	/θ/	/ð/	/s/	/z/	/ʃ/
Correct (%)	9.27	12.07	16.59	28.66	13.58	5.82	20.04	6.25	4.31
Incorrect (%)	68.32	65.52	58.41	50.65	62.93	64.66	50.86	58.41	64.22
Don't Know (%)	22.41	22.41	25.00	20.69	23.49	29.53	29.09	35.34	31.47

Table 2 shows that /v/ had the highest accuracy rate at 28.66%, followed by /s/ (20.04%) and /f/ (16.59%). The least recognized sounds were /ʃ/ at 4.31% and /ð/ at 5.82%. This pattern of recognition aligns with the findings in Table 1.

Table 3 presents students' self-evaluation of their pronunciation confidence.

TABLE 3. Students' Self-evaluation of Confidence



Results revealed that 42% rated their confidence at the lowest level (1 out of 10). Overall, 90% rated their confidence below average (4 or less), and fewer than 7% rated their confidence above average (6 or higher). These low confidence levels suggest students are acutely aware of their pronunciation difficulties, which could impact their willingness to engage in spoken English.

Table 4 categorizes students' responses regarding prior pronunciation instruction in junior high and high school. The responses, grouped into five categories – imitation, explicit approach, diagnostic approach, self-study, and others – reveal that imitation was the most common practice. Many students reported passive methods like reading aloud after a teacher or recording, indicating a lack of explicit, structured pronunciation instruction. Additionally, a small number of students practiced pronunciation independently through electronic resources or extracurricular activities, though these were in the minority.

TABLE 4. Practice Method

Practice Method	Students' Responses
1. Imitation with teachers or played sounds (including read-aloud)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the words aloud. • Read English thoroughly. • Read out loud. • Read English aloud. • Read the textbook aloud. • Read after the teacher reads. • Reading aloud only. • Just speak English. • Read English. • Read textbook. • Say it out loud. • Read the words of the text aloud. • Repeating what the teacher said in preparation for the National Center Test. • Write the correct pronunciation in katakana above the English word and read it 10 times.
2. Explicit Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was only taught that this phonetic symbol is pronounced like this. • Look at the position of the tongue and the shape of the mouth for each phonetic symbol (l, f, etc.), listen to the audio, and try to imitate the pronunciation. • The content includes being taught how to read phonetic symbols and how to pronounce words by following the teacher's instructions on how to move the tongue. • The teacher explained where the tongue is placed and how the sound is pronounced in Japanese, and then we practiced to be able to produce it. • An ALT teacher teaches phonetic symbols and actual pronunciation, and then we repeat it. • I learned the phonetic symbols and pronounced them. • I had to practice different pronunciations between Japanese and English many times, such as the pronunciation of "a" in "image" and "ou" for "o" in "photo." In addition, they often pointed out pronunciations that don't exist in Japanese, such as how to pronounce "th," and I practiced them. • Memorize phonetic symbols, etc. • Look at the position of the tongue and the shape of the mouth for each phonetic symbol (l, f, etc.), listen to the audio, and try to imitate the pronunciation. • The content includes being taught how to read phonetic symbols and how to pronounce words by following the teacher's instructions on how to move the tongue.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They explained where the tongue is placed and how the sound is pronounced in Japanese, and then we practiced to be able to produce it.• A format in which the ALT teacher teaches phonetic symbols and actual pronunciation and then we repeat it.• I learned the phonetic symbols and pronounced them.
3. Diagnostic Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The teacher corrected any incorrect pronunciation.• Talk to foreigners in English conversation classes and have them point out things each time.• I was asked to read the textbook and check my pronunciation.• Just talk to foreigners and get them to evaluate you.
4. Self-Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I used to use an electronic dictionary to listen to the sounds of the words in my English vocabulary book and the words I had learned in class.• Use electronic dictionaries or online English dictionaries to find out how to read the words and learn how to say them in the same way yourself.• Memorize the phonetic symbols and try pronouncing them.• (Preparatory school) Independent study. Memorize the phonetic symbols and use them as a reference to read each word in the vocabulary book.
5. Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I went to an English kindergarten, so the teachers were from other countries, and we were constantly communicating and learning.• National Center Test preparation and in-class practice.• I was just trying to understand the pronunciation questions that would appear on the National Center Entrance Examination.• They focused more on accent than pronunciation.• I was taught that you should pronounce it with your mouth open to the side as if you were smiling, and I had never heard of it before, but when I actually looked at foreigners, I was surprised to find that it was true.• Dictation.• Read strongly before -tion and -sion.• I don't remember.• When pronouncing the target word.• The teacher will tell you where to pay attention to pronunciation, and you can learn and practice it.• It was a practice to pronounce words according to the rhythm.• Practice what the teacher taught you in pairs.• I received an explanation about phonetic symbols during the explanation of the accent question on the National Center Test.• When I was in high school, I practiced pronunciation questions from past National Center Test questions in class.

Overall, the results highlight significant gaps in students' phonetic knowledge and confidence, suggesting that previous pronunciation instruction may have lacked systematic and explicit elements crucial for effective learning. These findings underscore the need for more structured and targeted pronunciation support at the university level.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey results indicate that most of the students entered university with limited knowledge of English consonant articulation and had not received explicit pronunciation instruction. Despite advancements in pronunciation pedagogy and technology, instruction remains limited and largely reliant on imitation-based methods. In addition, the students lacked systematic instruction, with their learning limited to fragmented, imitation-based practices. The results further reveal that the students had low confidence in their pronunciation skills, likely due to the limited pronunciation instruction they received in prior schooling.

It is the mission of both researchers and instructors to aid Japanese students in attaining an internationally intelligible level of pronunciation. Based on these findings, it is essential to provide systematic, explicit pronunciation instruction tailored to university learners' cognitive maturity and learning needs. An effective pronunciation curriculum should combine analytical, explicit instruction to build foundational knowledge of English sounds, along with intuitive-imitation exercises to promote natural pronunciation practice.

Developing a comprehensive pronunciation teaching program that includes structured methods, materials, and assessments will benefit both students and teachers. Such a program would allow teachers to implement pronunciation practice more easily in the classroom and offer resources for independent practice. Ultimately, this approach would ensure that students have the opportunity to build pronunciation skills for effective, confident communication with speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds, fostering their ability to achieve international intelligibility.

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Social Education in South Korea: Professional Perspectives and ELT Implications

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Technological progress, globalization, the boom in international migration, and the influx of refugees have increased the multiethnicity and multiculturalism of contemporary societies, making them increasingly diverse, flexible, and mobile. This new reality has made cultural diversity an issue of vital importance in democratic nations that aspire to civic, intercultural, and inclusive coexistence within the framework of human rights. It is precisely in this convivial environment where the profession of social education, especially in Europe, is called to act by attending to inequalities and fostering intercultural competencies in citizenship. Drawing on literature that addresses the theme of social education in Asia and examines critical matters from different perspectives, this paper shares insights into the development of this profession in South Korea that have practical implications for community work, adult education, school institutions, and Korean ELT.

Keywords: social education, cultural diversity, professional development, ELT, South Korea

INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity is consubstantial to human beings. However, in the current era of postmodernity and late capitalism, which is characterized by the exponential development of technology, the phenomenon of globalization, the boom of international migrations, and the influx of refugees due to political, economic, social, and environmental factors, the multiethnicity and multiculturalism of contemporary societies have increased rapidly and profusely, as they have become increasingly diverse, interdependent, flexible, and mobile (Leman et al., 2008; Portera

& Milani, 2021). In these times of liquid modernity, that is, of changes in the time-space binomial and of social relations filled with uncertainty and immediacy (Bauman, 2000/2015), the development of a civic, intercultural, and inclusive citizen coexistence, based on respect for ethical minimums or ethics of minimums (Cortina, 2000) within the framework of human rights (United Nations, 1948), constitutes an inexcusable duty for any democratic and plural society. It is precisely in this project of coexistence that education, in general, and the social and educational professions, in particular, are called upon to act through attention to the inequalities of society and the promotion and development of intercultural competencies in citizenship.

One of these professions is social education. Social education, according to the Asociación Estatal de Educación Social (2007), is a citizens' right that takes the form of a pedagogical profession whose main function is to improve and broaden the educational, employment, leisure, integration, and social participation perspectives of all citizens. It is often confused with other social professions, especially with social work. Although both are complementary and connect people with resources, their objectives and ways of working differ. While social work is built around social services and oriented mainly to solve problems and intervene in deficits, social education is mostly based on educational aspects, dealing mainly with people's learning and their socio-educational and cultural development in general (Úcar, 2021). Specifically, social education professionals are agents of social change and energizers of social groups through socio-educational strategies that help people to understand their environment and integrate properly into it (Agencia Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad y Acreditación, 2005). Social educators can work with a plurality of groups and in a multitude of fields: sociocultural animation, specialized education, the penitentiary system, mediation, intercultural education, adult literacy programs, or the school setting, to name a few (Colexio de Educadoras e Educadores Sociais de Galicia, 2018).

This paper analyzes the perspectives of professional development for social education in South Korea, with particular attention to the management of Korea's thriving cultural diversity and the implications for Korean ELT. This paper is part of a doctoral thesis project supported by the Government of Spain through the University Professor Training Program (FPU19/05258). This doctoral dissertation project studies cultural diversity as an area of professionalization in the social education

in the Spanish context using different quantitative and qualitative instruments and techniques, in this case, questionnaires, rubrics, and a focus group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Social Education Profession from a Comparative Approach: The Case of Asia

Social education is a perpetually adolescent profession that reproduces itself differently depending on the specific economic, social, political, and cultural characteristics of each context and national tradition. It is clear that the demands and needs of citizenship will not be the same in democratic countries with high standards of living as in economically poorer nations and/or those with a recent dictatorial past (Tiana, 2017; Úcar, 2011). This profession has developed mainly in Europe and has a great tradition in regions such as France and Germany. It exists in most European countries, although in a very heterogeneous way in terms of services and subjects of intervention as well as professional profiles and denominations, which is reflected in Table 1 (Ronda, 2012; Ruiz-Corbella et al., 2015). Be that as it may, social educators can practice their work in most of Shakespeare's continent, even in the United Kingdom within the broader field of social education, despite the fact that social education as a profession is still nonexistent in that area (Calderón & Gotor, 2013; Vocalía Internacional del Consejo General de Colegios de Educadoras y Educadores Sociales, 2011). The British reality, with nuances, can be extrapolated to the United States, Canada, and South Africa (Schugurensky, 2016; von Kotze et al., 2016), since unlike Europe and some Latin American countries, such as Uruguay, Brazil, and Colombia (del Pozo et al., 2021), there is no training tradition or professional knowledge of social education, although there is currently a growing interest in the Anglo-Saxon world (Petrie, 2020; Schugurensky, 2016).

TABLE 1. Designations of Social Educators in Different European Countries

Country	Professional Designation
Germany	Sozialpädagoge – Sozial Arbeit
Belgium (Wallonia)	Educateur(trice) spécialsé(e)
Denmark	Social Pædagogerne
Slovenia	Socialni pedagog
Spain	Educador/a Social
Estonia	Sotsiaalpedagoog
Finland	Sociaaliohjaaja
France	Educateur(trice) spécialsé(e)
Ireland	Social Care Workers
Iceland	Þroskaþjálfari
Italy	Educatore professionale
Lithuania	Socialinis pedagogas
Luxembourg	Educateur Gradué
Norway	Vernepleier / Barnevernspedagoger
Netherlands	Sociaal Pedagogisch Hulpverleners
Portugal	Educador/a Social
Sweden	Socialhandledare

Note. Adapted and translated from Calderón and Gotor (2013, p. 25) and the *Vocalía Internacional del Consejo General de Colegios de Educadoras y Educadores Sociales* (2011, pp. 4–5).

In the specific case of Japan, social education is a profession that includes adult education, community education, and out-of-school education of children. Social education is not infrequently considered a particular personal expense because of its strong connection with job orientation, continuing education, and cultural and leisure learning (Matsuda et al., 2016). In contrast to continental European countries, in Japan, professionalization has not been developed in the university system, although the figure of the social educator is implemented in libraries, museums, sports facilities, and especially the *kominkan*, Japan's main regulated social education facility. Having recently incorporated the conception of social welfare, these centers facilitate both self-determined learning for local community development and adult and continuing

education for individual fulfillment (Wang, 2019). However, the socio-educational reality of Japan seems not to be extrapolated to other geographical areas of the Asian continent, where social education is unknown at the professional level, finding only some scarce references in compensatory adult education developed in the last century and currently framed in the paradigm of lifelong learning (Han & Choi, 2014).

Therefore, in most Asian regions, with the exception of Japan, social education seems to follow the Anglo-Saxon line, especially that of the United Kingdom and the United States, as it is not a profession, unlike social work, but is understood similarly to be citizenship lessons and social studies teaching for critical historical knowledge, critical sociopolitical literacy, and application with agency (King & Kasun, 2013). Specifically, it is conceived as a curricular and pedagogical approach implemented in primary and secondary school curricula in order to develop social competence in students. It can also be applied and designed in a unidisciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary manner (Grossman & Lo, 2008). Particularly in South Korea, the interest in social focus in the curriculum increased after the tragic and unforgettable sinking of the Sewol ferry in 2014, which caused the heartbreaking agony of the entire nation for the demise of more than 300 people, many of them high school students, and for the inaction of the captain and crew who abandoned the ship, as it inevitably plunged to its death with some of its passengers (Cha et al., 2017). Also, due to the phantom of the Cold War still present on the Korean peninsula, the focus of social studies and social education has developed around the controversial issues raised by teaching about North Korea, with dilemmas emerging, such as the implicit impact of self-censorship on teaching, the pedagogical compromises devised by the traditional mode of assessment, and the ambivalent stance of South Korean society towards North Korea (Jho, 2008).

Professional Perspectives of Social Education in South Korea: Interculturality, Community Development, and Implications for Korean ELT

After four bitter decades of oppressive colonial rule and an ominous civil war that eventually separated it from the current ideologically opposed socialist-Stalinist North Korea, the Republic of Korea, commonly

referred to as “South Korea,” has been able to successfully transition from a military dictatorship to a vibrant democracy. It has become in less than half a century a country with one of the largest economies in the world, as well as a leader in technological innovation and educational success (Cha et al., 2017; Jho, 2008), a commendable fact to say the least. All these changes have caused South Korea to be no exception “to the challenges of citizenship in a globalized world” (S.-J. Lee, 2011, p. 90), changing from a nation of monocultural and homogeneous emigration to a nation of culturally and ethnically heterogeneous immigration (Kang, 2010; Shin, 2020), which is reflected in the evolution of its migration statistics (Statistics Korea, 2011, 2024). In concrete terms, cultural diversity in South Korean society comes from Korean and non-Korean ethnic groups, mainly (a) North Korean immigrants and defectors or *saetermin*, who usually have no problems with legal citizenship because they are considered refugees and from the same national community; (b) non-professional foreign workers of non-Western ethnic origin who come to fill 3D jobs (difficult, dirty, and dangerous) and undocumented immigrants; (c) young immigrant women from China and Southeast Asian regions married to South Korean men from rural communities; and (d) children of interracial marriages or *damunhwa*, i.e., when one of their parents does not belong to the monocultural South Korean group (Kang, 2010; S. K. Kim & L. H. R. Kim, 2012; S.-J. Lee, 2011; S. Lee et al., 2023; Palmer, 2020; Shin, 2020).

South Korea’s leaders are aware of the nation’s changing and increasingly diverse demographics and have developed various measures within the framework of limited multicultural education, with an aim to facilitate the integration of foreigners into the host society while addressing the themes of Koreanness, national belonging, and cultural citizenship. These measures include legislation to support multicultural families and protect North Korean defectors and foreign workers, as well as support centers, social service agencies, specific guidance and (extra)curricular programs, especially for foreign wives and children of interracial marriages (Kang, 2010; S. K. Kim & L. H. R. Kim, 2012; S.-J. Lee, 2011; Shin, 2020). Despite its well-intentioned nature, embracing diversity in practice is reduced to (a) adapting cultural differences, which are understood as a source of shortcomings, and domesticating cultural difference to the mainstream (i.e., diversity at risk); (b) limiting cultural diversity to a distinctive professional potential

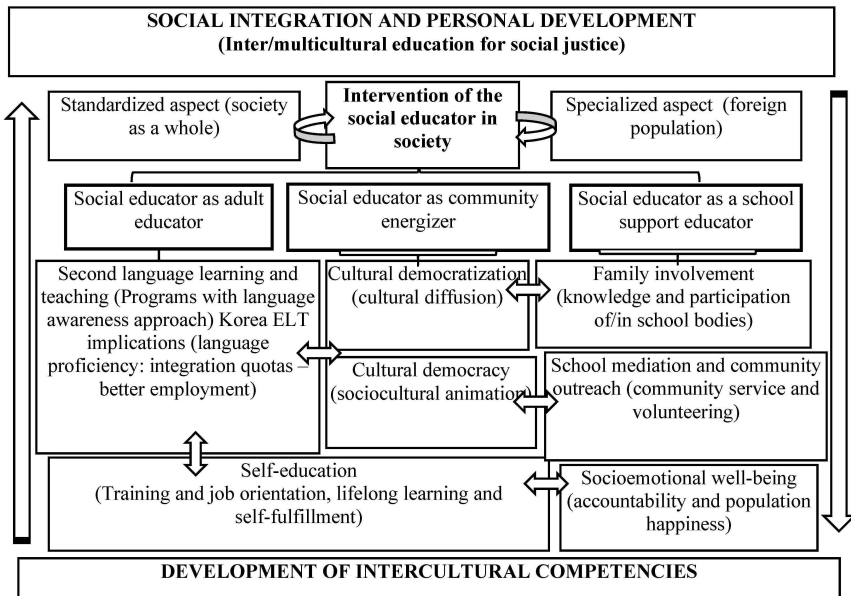
capital in a globalized world, with differences constituting an essential neoliberal means facilitating South Korean economic growth (i.e., productive diversity); and (c) granting a limited place to differences, understanding cultures in an essentialist manner and cultural differences as passive objects or exoticized subjects (i.e., endurable diversity; S. Lee et al., 2023). All of this may be due in part to a lack of experience in the field, as multicultural policy, pedagogy, and theory are at a nascent stage in South Korea (Palmer, 2020), with multicultural education being virtually unknown before the 2000s (S. K. Kim & L. H. R. Kim, 2012).

The paradoxical effects of these multicultural policies often facilitate a representation of foreigners as the others, i.e., inferior and dangerous, and draw a dichotomous line between “us” and “them” (S.-J. Lee, 2011; Palmer, 2020), along with other societal problems related to voracious competitiveness and “exam hell” (*ipsi jiok*) (S. K. Kim & L. H. R. Kim, 2012), poor collaboration in civic activities in and out of schools (Cha et al. 2017), unequal participation in adult education, generational gaps in educational attainment (Chan & Choi, 2014), and alarming youth suicide rates, which contrast with happiness as a recognized constitutional right (M. J. Kim, 2023). All of these figures justify the need for the social education profession in South Korea. In this regard, the figure of the social educator is proposed as a socio-educational professional, who is trained in social pedagogy and can work in adult education, community, and the school framework from a standardized and specialized perspective to foster intercultural competencies and socio-personal development of citizenship (see Figure 1). First, as an adult educator, they favor the residents’ self-education and second language learning, particularly Korean and English, through programs based on a language awareness approach (de Villa, 2018). Second, as a community energizer, they promote cultural democratization (i.e., cultural diffusion) and cultural democracy (i.e., sociocultural animation) (Ventosa, 2008). Thirdly, as a school support educator, they improve family involvement in educational bodies, socioemotional well-being, school mediation, and connection with the community through the coordination of practical projects that relate curricular content with the real needs of the immediate environment (King & Kasun, 2013).

CONCLUSION

This paper has theorized about social education as a profession in the South Korean nation, suggesting possible areas of action from a double standardized and specialized perspective, with a particular interest in the attention and management of cultural diversity. It is evident, as Ortega (2005) recalled almost two decades ago, that the social educator is not the Fierabrás balm that cures everything, in the same way that when transferring practices from one territory to another, identical results cannot be obtained, since cultural, historical, and contextual differences always remain (Palmer, 2020). However, the ideas and suggestions of a particular context can mark a roadmap in another. And this is the main objective pursued by this paper: to transplant small seeds of social education so that they end up bearing fruits of professional development in South Korea and help in the construction of transformative citizenship. That is, to train individuals to be structurally integrated into the society in which they live, to develop roots and loyalties towards it while maintaining their own cultural identity, always within a democratic and human rights framework. It would thus be a matter of achieving a balance between unity and diversity (Banks, 2017). This is all the more so when the multicultural measures applied in nations such as South Korea, despite the good intentions of their people and leaders, seem to be ignoring important aspects of a true intercultural project. There is a need to rethink approaches in this nation and elsewhere in the world when dealing with cultural diversity, and this inescapably begins by reflecting on how explicit one can be about discrimination when people are not overly aware or unknowing of the need to fight it (Sleeter, 2024). All of it has undoubted implications for social education and second language teaching.

FIGURE 1. The Professional Figure of the Social Educator in South Korea



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Book Reviews

Review of Usage in Second Language Acquisition: Critical Reflections and Future Directions



Edited by Kevin McManus
New York, USA: Routledge (2024).
Pages: 198. (ISBN: 9781032668055, Paperback)

Reviewed by Charles M. Mueller

INTRODUCTION

During the last several decades, usage-based linguistics has emerged as a major theoretical perspective in second language acquisition (SLA) studies. This broad framework assumes that language learning is primarily based on general learning mechanisms that unconsciously extract patterns from language use as it occurs within rich communicative contexts. The growing popularity of the usage-based perspective among researchers using a wide range of methodological approaches makes this edited collection particularly relevant to the ongoing task of comparing and synthesizing SLA research findings.

SUMMARY

The collection contains seven chapters along with introductory and concluding chapters written by the editor, Kevin McManus. One strength of the book is that the authors of each chapter were asked to focus on

the same set of key questions concerning the nature of usage, the nature of the L2 learning task, and the connection between usage and learning. The seven internal chapters provide excellent overviews of the usage-based perspective as understood by researchers employing various approaches, including a corpus-based approach (Chapter 2 by Stefanie Wulff), a conversation-analytic approach (Chapter 3 by Søren Eskildsen), a variationist approach (Chapter 4 by Aarnes Gudmestad), a dynamic usage-based approach (Chapter 5 by Marjolijn Verspoor and Hans-Jörg Schmid), a cognitive linguistic approach (Chapter 6 by Han Luo), a processing-based perspective (Chapter 7 by Ronald Leow), and skill acquisition theory (Chapter 8 by Yuichi Suzuki).

CONTENTS

In Chapter 2, Wulff points out how corpus-based research is especially well-suited to usage-based approaches as it is able to elucidate the role of frequency in acquisition. A number of studies have noted that token frequencies (the number of occurrences of a particular word or construction) and type frequencies (the number of unique realizations of a particular construction) both drive language learning, with high token frequency leading to the conservation of specific variants of a construction (Bybee, 2006; Ellis, 2006). Moreover, research on first language acquisition has demonstrated that verbs that occur with the highest frequency within a construction (e.g., the verb *give* in the double-object construction) often serve as “pathbreakers” as they tend to draw attention to a construction’s general meaning.

In Chapter 3, Eskildsen argues that ethnomethodological conversation analysis (EMCA) has much to offer SLA research. He views talk-in-interaction as the primordial scene of human social life, drawing attention to the relationship between materiality, embodiment, the usage environment, social action, and multimodal communication, as these features of use have been revealed in longitudinal research on L2 learners.

In Chapter 4, Gudmestad divides variationist research into studies that focus on “vertical” variation (which occurs along the developmental trajectory as learners produce forms that are more or less target-like) and “horizontal” variation (which is found within target language community usage). Focusing on horizontal variation, Gudmestad summarizes research

that has examined the linguistic and social factors that drive variation. One interesting finding concerns ways in which learners who have studied abroad produce certain target form variants that are not produced by their peers who did not go abroad.

In Chapter 5, Verspoor and Schmid discuss the entrenchment-and-conventionalization model. The model combines both cognitive and social processes and shows how these interact under the influence of usage events and a range of forces. A key feature of the model is that speakers can, through usage events, extract a wide range of features beyond the core formal features of grammatical and semantic elements. For example, a learner of Korean could presumably, over time, unconsciously extract features of a speech situation (formality of the situation, interlocutor's status, difference in age, etc.) that are relevant to the use of Korean honorifics.

In Chapter 6, Luo discusses the cognitive linguistic (CL) approach, which she explains largely through the lens of Langacker's (2000) theoretical work. She emphasizes the fact that interlanguage grammars are thought to contain a great deal of redundancy. For example, learners may memorize a collocation (e.g., I wanna ...) while at the same time acquiring the words and constructions that make up the collocation. She argues that a key advantage of CL approaches is that they show how features of an L2 formerly thought to be arbitrary are actually motivated (see also Mueller, 2022; Tyler et al., 2010). She gives the example of particle placement with phrasal verbs like *pick up*. In contrast with many textbook explanations that treat the choice (e.g., *He picked up the pen* and *He picked the pen up*) as arbitrary, she notes that the continuous order in the former sentence evokes a holistic construal, whereas the discontinuous placement in the latter evokes a sequential construal. Based on such considerations, Luo advocates instruction that draws learners' attention to the motivation behind the systematicity of target language constructions.

In Chapter 7, Leow discusses the usage-based perspective in relationship to instructed second language learning, focusing in particular on the cognitive processes that occur within working memory as input is processed. He claims that deeper processing of linguistic data (especially awareness at the level of understanding) allows language data to be "explicitly learned or restructured if necessary and stored in the grammatical component within the L2 developing system" (p. 140). Noting that the usage-based perspective regards L1 and L2 acquisition

as having a great deal of overlap, he questions whether this assumed overlap has received empirical support and is applicable to learners in non-immersion settings. Leow's chapter thus stands out as questioning many of the key assumptions of the usage-based perspective as presented in other chapters.

Suzuki, in Chapter 8, discusses skill acquisition theory in relationship to language use. He reports research showing that declarative knowledge (i.e., knowledge about things, which is verbalizable) and procedural knowledge (i.e., knowledge of how some skill is performed, which is consolidated slowly but less susceptible to forgetting) rely on distinct brain areas. He puts forth a view of language learning in which most L2 expressions and grammar are initially learned as declarative knowledge but are then proceduralized and automatized through practice. He claims that automatization (the development of the ability to access and use knowledge rapidly, as during a conversation) requires systematic practice.

EVALUATION

I would highly recommend this book to SLA researchers and language teachers who are interested in how scholars working in different areas of SLA and applied linguistics understand and apply the usage-based perspective. Two admirable features of the book are its tightly integrated focus and its inclusion in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 of perspectives that both challenge and diverge from typical usage-based perspectives.

One weakness of the book is that the editor's two chapters do not, in my opinion, go far enough in problematizing the definition of the usage-based perspective and the tensions between Eskildsen, Leow, and Suzuki's chapters and the other chapters in the volume. For example, Eskildsen views cognition as "a socially shared, publicly visible phenomenon" that can be studied through "visible behavior" (p. 57), whereas much of the focus in usage-based approaches has been on implicit stochastic learning and the accumulated effect of language processing over multiple instances of use. Inclusion of Eskildsen's work as an example of the usage-based perspective seems to water down the term to the point that it becomes a mere slogan. All theories of language learning, after all, have something to say about learners' use of the target

language.

Other chapters diverge even more sharply from the fairly consistent perspective presented in most of the earlier chapters (i.e., chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6). Leow, in particular, echoes Schmidt's (2001) contention that conscious awareness of form-meaning mappings is the key driver of L2 acquisition, a position opposed to that of most usage-based scholars, who see implicit learning as central. This is no trivial academic debate. If usage-based scholars are correct, second language instructors need to prioritize learners' exposure to realistic input within context and the use of language for authentic communicative purposes.

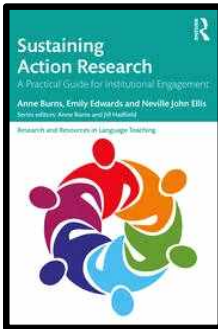
THE REVIEWER

Charles M. Mueller holds a PhD in second language acquisition from the University of Maryland. His research has primarily been in the area of cognitive linguistics. He is a professor in the Department of English Language and Culture at Fuji Women's University in Sapporo, Japan. Email: mueller@fujijoshi.ac.jp

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Review of Sustaining Action Research: A Practical Guide for Institutional Engagement



*Anne Burns, Emily Edwards, and Neville John Ellis
Routledge (2022).
Pages: viii + 297. (ISBN 978-0-367-21065-6, Paperback)*

Reviewed by Jake Kimball

INTRODUCTION

Teachers must continually evolve their practices to meet learner needs. One way to do that is to investigate our classes. Action research (AR) is a research approach that intends to identify and solve problems through a series of actions and reflections to spark minor changes or more significant transformations.

Readers might be more familiar with quantitative and qualitative research. While these traditional research methods have advanced EFL pedagogy, their practical application in classroom settings often falls short. Not to deny their value, but it is worth pointing out that these research approaches frequently do not address the immediate and localized needs of practitioners working at ground zero: the classroom. We have complex, context-specific challenges that must be addressed promptly, and AR is better positioned to address these issues. Action research fosters professional development and empowers teachers to tackle their problems systematically. More importantly, I would argue that AR has more potential to play a pivotal role in enhancing the

quality of learning outcomes. What is more, practitioners can engage in AR alone or collaborate with others. And this is precisely where *Sustaining Action Research: A Practical Guide for Institutional Engagement* (Burns, et al., 2022) shines: highlighting opportunities to work with others.

Who is the intended audience for this book? Teachers with classroom experience, especially those wanting to investigate their classes and the learning process. While teachers with classroom experience will find practical solutions, early-career researchers and institutional leaders can also draw valuable insights for integrating AR into broader pedagogical practices. However, it would help first to grasp the fundamentals of action research. Several dedicated AR books have been published (Edge, 2001; Wallace, 1998; Burns, 1999, 2010). These offer a sufficient action research knowledge baseline before taking on *Sustaining Action Research: A Practical Guide for Institutional Engagement*.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Logically divided into four parts, the content moves from background theory to hands-on practice. Part 1, From Research to Implications, starts by underpinning AR as a valid research approach. It is only 28 pages (10% of the entire book) and lays a foundation for shared understanding. Two philosophical points stand out and resonate with me. The first is ecological systems theory, which can be distilled down to “a complex set on interactions with the world” (p. 11). The second pertains to the book’s title, *Sustaining Action Research*. The authors all share the sentiment that, ideally, ecological systems and sustainability are connected: AR spurs teacher development; AR projects continue over time; they broaden to include our colleagues and institutions; and finally, AR ripples out to “communities of practice beyond their immediate school” (p. 25).

Part 2, From Implications to Application, offers projects or activities in six different areas:

- Needs analysis for AR (10 activities)
- Designing and planning AR (17 activities)
- Implementation and support (14 activities)
- Sharing AR with the school community (8 activities)

- Sharing AR with the broader community (6 activities)
- Planning the next steps (5 activities)

The chapter begins with a brief justification for activities. Then, there are about 200 substantial pages outlining AR projects. This is the linchpin of the whole book and fills a critical gap in AR literature. Each activity is structured similarly: an introduction, connections to research, procedural steps, added resources (often online), and project extensions or variations. Taken as a whole, they serve as a model for how to initiate AR and how to follow through on projects.

Part 3, From Application to Implementation, focuses on goals and is bolstered by vignettes to illustrate AR in a variety of contexts at the micro (individual), meso (workplace), and macro (community) levels. This short chapter is organized by Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). I found the example vignettes to be compelling short reads. These are real contexts from around the world, and they highlight episodes of growth and change brought about by engaging in AR.

To round out the text, Part 4, From Implementation to Research, completes the cycle. Here, the authors deliberate the nuances of participatory approaches to research. They distinguish between reflective practice, exploratory practice, exploratory action research, self-study, design-based research, and lesson studies. The remaining pages evaluate research suggestions at the levels discussed in Part 3: micro, meso, and macro. Again, relevant vignettes contextualize teachers engaged in AR projects. These tangible narratives show the potential of AR.

EVALUATION

Sustaining Action Research is not your typical, dense teacher resource book. Sure, it has a lot of AR jargon. If you have read other AR books, you would be much better able to absorb the suggested projects and findings. Instead of chapters outlining theory and research outcomes, there are heaps of charts, Venn diagrams, tables and boxes, flow charts, and bullet points. *Sustaining Action Research* is more like a cookbook with tasty recipes.

One weakness of teacher resource materials is that they feature successes. They all too often present ideals. In the implications to application section, the authors address this by bringing up teacher

concerns, such as when AR projects begin to falter, how do researchers get back on track?

As mentioned earlier, suggestions, variations, and AR projects are aimed at teacher-researchers at all levels. One activity (C2) that intrigued me was What Are the Qualities of a Good Mentor? The accompanying framework, research links, and resources take a meaningful look at self-assessment.

Another unique feature of this book is the use of practical tips. To name a few, there are checklists and templates. How is your AR project going? Refer to the checklists. If you have completed a step or item, keep going. If not, there are suggestions for reviewing specific past activities to see what others have done in that case. That is sound advice. Time Chart samples are also of great help. Want an effective way to manage and organize your project to stay on track? Make your own, and feel free to refashion it for your circumstances. The online resources are worth following up on. They are not simply “further reading” suggestions. Of course, there is some helpful reading to download. But there are links to free, roll-up-your-sleeves research-related materials, too. Finally, the section on tips for writing a journal article or presenting at a conference provides essential guidelines for success.

Reflection serves as a foundational principle of action research. It permeates every phase of the activities. Reflection is a continuous thread. However, the purpose of reflection extends beyond merely fostering reflection. Through active participation and direct engagement with action research, the ultimate aim is to guide reflective practitioners toward becoming teacher-researchers.

CONCLUSION

Whether you call it action research, reflective practice, exploratory practice, or classroom research, *Sustaining Action Research* is worth your time and effort to rummage through. Reading it from beginning to end is unnecessary, though there is good reason to do so. Readers can select sections of interest to peruse and get started at once with classroom research. It is, after all, a practical guide. This is one of the most valuable and motivating teacher resource books gracing my home library. I encourage you to add it to yours if you want to conduct action

research. The promise of teacher growth, alone or in cooperation with colleagues, is within.

THE REVIEWER

Jake Kimball holds an MSc in educational management in TESOL from Aston University, and his research interests include program evaluation and classroom dynamics. He is especially interested in classroom management issues that impact willingness to communicate (WTC) and demotivation. Taking part in teacher development activities has been of interest for a long time. He is an assistant professor of English in the Liberal Arts Department of Semyung University in South Korea.

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Appendix

Korea TESOL Journal General Information for Contributors

As an academic journal in the field of English language teaching (ELT), the *Korea TESOL Journal* welcomes the submission of manuscripts that meet the general criteria of significance and scientific excellence. Submissions should be of practical import, dealing with aspects of the Korean ELT context or directly applicable to it. As a journal that is dedicated to the nurturing of research among ELT practitioners, the *Journal* also welcomes quality submissions from the early-career researcher.

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Manuscripts are accepted for peer review with the understanding that the same work has not been submitted elsewhere (i.e., not pending review or currently under review) and has not been previously published, online or in print. A statement confirming this should accompany submissions.

Manuscripts should follow APA Style guidelines (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th ed.), especially for in-text citations, reference items, tables, and figures. Submissions should be

made with tables, figures, and other graphics included in the manuscript text (and upon request, as separate files). Graphic text must also follow APA style. All figures should be created in black and white, and graphs (pie graphs, bar graphs, etc.) must display distinctive shades or patterning for readability. Manuscripts should be submitted as MS Word (DOC or DOCx) files.

The *Korea TESOL Journal* accepts submissions for two issues annually.

Inquiries/manuscripts to: journal@koreatesol.org

For more information on submissions to the *Korea TESOL Journal*, including paper submission deadlines, evaluation criteria, and manuscript formatting requirements, visit:

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