

The English Connection

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This Issue:

Advice Corner: Strategies for Teaching Multi-level Classes

Korea-Costa Rica Comparison

Social Networking in Education

Making Classroom English Comprehensible

Classroom Participation

Reflections of a Co-teacher

"Teaching Unplugged"
Book Review

Winter 2011 Volume 15, Issue 4

Intentionality and Awareness in Language Learning

Josh Kurzweil

Becoming an EFL Materials Writer

Chris Mares



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Editor's Welcome

Dear Reader,

Winter is upon us and the school year is rapidly drawing to a close here on the Korean peninsula. I hope you have met all of the goals you set for your classes. If you attended the KOTESOL International Conference in October, I'm sure you were inspired to become better at what you do. I know I was. To that end, our editorial team has assembled a set of articles that aims to help educators from kindergardens to universities become better at what they do.

We also received a letter from a student that should give us pause as educators. It serves as a reminder that students may not see us as we see ourselves. You will find it below.

Enjoy this winter issue and please feel free to send feedback to tecfeedback@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Tim Thompson

Tim Thompson
Editor-in-Chief



Readers' Voices

Usually it is a very exciting and joyful experience to meet native English teachers because it is a great opportunity to improve one's English skills and share unique stories from different worlds. Unfortunately, I have not met many foreign English teachers, just a few. I don't have enough experience to evaluate foreign English instructors with total fairness and objective judgment. Compared to other Koreans who traveled abroad or enrolled in private institutions where native speakers teach, I haven't met many foreign instructors. However, in my perspective, especially looking back at my past in university, there are two kinds of foreign teachers: the ones who really care about students trying to improve their English and the other ones who don't care about students, and are only trying to fulfill their greed. Of course, there are many good foreign teachers. In my university, some teachers from Western countries who can speak English always paid attention to students, teaching them really useful and valuable things. This kind of teacher had a tendency to listen carefully to what others said, and change things if problems were pointed out. That means they are not self-indulgent. They came to Korea to teach, but they were also ready to learn. Other teachers, the ones who don't care about students, don't listen to students either. They prefer fluent English speaking students to the other students who cannot speak English well. They only talk to those who are already good at English. Then, what's the meaning of having English class? If the teacher only wants to deal with fluent speakers, why didn't he or she accept only elite students in the first place? The other students may feel neglected or ashamed. They might even want to leave the classroom because they are always discouraged to speak because of the odd atmosphere in the class. If an English learner who starts from the beginning only meets those kinds of teachers, it will take too long to learn English. That type of teacher might be the main obstacle to learning English. Plus, I think English teachers should not only teach English, but also be a role model. A female professor from Ireland (no offense to Ireland or Irish people!) who taught me a lot when I was in my university was an expert in English literature. She was really intelligent and passionately conducted lots of research projects. However, whenever students said something against her opinion, she "hit the roof." She said, "That was really foolish, I am a professor who majored in English literature, and you dared to speak to me like that? Fine, if you don't like my class, get out! I don't want to hear complaints." So there were no opinions that went against her in the class, and we just did what she asked us to do. Although I learned many things from her, I didn't think she was a good role model. As a result, nothing remains in my memory related to her class except her reddish face filled with anger. Another bad example of teachers are some foreign teachers who don't develop their teaching methods. They repeat the same materials each year. Arrogance, laziness and discrimination are not what students expect to learn. Most foreign teachers I know are great role models. There are, however, some bad teachers also. I hope they change their attitudes, so that they don't only care about themselves, but also care about their students.

Jae-Jin Lee
Graduate student at Chung-Ang University

Intentionality and Awareness in Language Learning

Josh Kurzweil discusses ways to help students become self-directed learners

Classroom Observations

In my work teaching English, I have often been struck by students that are very motivated to learn, expend a great deal of energy, and yet are often frustrated by their lack of progress. There are many explanations for this phenomenon, but in the last couple years I've begun to form some theories about the role of student focus in language learning and how it can affect the results of their efforts. In this article, I will first profile two students that typify for me this dilemma and then discuss ways of helping students become self-directed learners.

Defining Fluency and Accuracy

Yan was one of my students from China. She spoke very quickly, but was often difficult to understand because of poor pronunciation and the density of basic grammar mistakes.

Sue, a young woman from Korea, was in many ways the opposite. She had natural intonation and spoke carefully, but was very slow and hesitant, making it hard to have a sustained conversation with her.

As I looked at these two language learners, the concepts of accuracy and fluency jumped out at me. Yan's focus on fluency came at the expense of her accuracy, while the opposite was true for Sue. Scott Thornbury, in his book *How to Teach Speaking*, discusses this distinction (6-7). He looks at fluency in terms of the frequency and placement of pauses, noting that all speakers pause, but that the issue is when and how often. More fluent speakers pause less frequently and at places that allow ideas to be meaningfully chunked. Thornbury also explains that part of this speed has to do with the automaticity that the speaker has gained with chunks of language, meaning that they do not have to think hard about how to express an idea.

Accuracy, on the other hand, refers to the use of error-free and appropriate language by formulating utterances with correct grammar and vocabulary through writing or speaking. Depending on how the language is expressed, issues of spelling, legibility and pronunciation also come into play.

The attention students pay to accuracy or fluency is also often apparent during classroom activities. For example, when there was a more fluency-based discussion, Yan happily would talk to her partners and often dominate the conversation, as she was eager to express her ideas. On the other hand, she would speed through the more accuracy-focused activities, continuing to make the same mistakes. Interestingly, she often took the opportunity to ask questions and talk about the grammar rules or vocabulary, but didn't really practice in a meaningful way that improved her performance. In contrast, Sue was very deliberate in her accuracy practice, but 'finished' very quickly when it came to the discussions more focused on fluency.

As I observed these students following their natural preferences, I realized that they weren't thinking about these activities in the same way that I was. My big 'ah-hah' in the classroom was that students need to be aware of concepts like fluency and accuracy, so that they can develop intentionality in their practice. Because Sue didn't understand the meaning or value of fluency, she didn't see the purpose or goal of the classroom activity. Likewise, Yan operated under the notion that talking about grammar would be enough and that she really just needed to persist in her drive toward fluency.

So, by way of summary, my puzzle and guiding question became: How can I raise my students' awareness of accuracy and fluency in a way that allows them to (a) recognize the purpose of activities and (b) be engaged in a way that will help them improve?

Raising Student Awareness

As a teacher trainer, I have done many sessions on accuracy and fluency for participants in my TESOL certificate courses and wanted to create a simplified version for my students. So I developed a short lesson in which I do just that. I give them an opportunity to think about the terms, elicit definitions, demonstrate what an extreme focus on fluency and accuracy might look like (often to much laughter), and then have them discuss what type of language learner they are. Do they tend to focus more on fluency or accuracy? Surprisingly, even my lower level students can usually identify their own tendencies with relative ease. The chart below is what ends up on my board.

Fluency	Accuracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaking quickly• Fewer pauses• Focus on communicating ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slowing down• Thinking carefully• Choosing the correct vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and spelling

Once these definitions are in place, a number of things can happen. First of all, I can ask students what the main purpose of an activity is, and they can think of it in terms of fluency and accuracy. Secondly, and more importantly, students can also begin to develop and share strategies to improve in each area.

Self-directed learners

In the book *How Learning Works*, the authors discuss this idea of being a self-directed learner with the following principle: "To become self-directed learners, students must learn to assess the demands of the task, evaluate their own knowledge and skills, plan their approach, monitor their progress, and adjust their strategies as needed (191)."

By helping students become aware of whether activities were focused on fluency or accuracy, I believe that they were able to take a first and important step in becoming self-directed learners. However, awareness of the concepts and ability to ‘assess the demands of the task’ are just the first steps. In the second part of this article, I’d like to offer some practical ways in which I’ve tried to support students so that they could have focused practice to help them improve.

Supporting Self-directed Learning

To illustrate some practical ways of putting this idea of the self-directed learner into practice, I would like to describe how I have been using a speaking activity that has become a core part of my classes and is designed especially to help students develop their fluency. This speaking activity provides students with sustained speaking opportunities in much the same way as part 2 of the IELTS speaking test. The adjustments I have made mostly focus on making it a regular classroom practice that supports students in the final four components of the above definition of being a self-directed learner: evaluate their own knowledge and skills, plan their approach, monitor their progress, and adjust their strategies as needed.

The Keep Talking Activity

Paul Nation describes a wonderful activity called “4-3-2 speaking” that can help students develop fluency (153). In this activity, the students speak to a partner about a given topic first for 4 minutes, then for 3, and finally 2, each time changing partners. In this way, they try to express the same ideas more fluently. I have modified Nation’s activity with a few more guidelines for the speaker and listener. The roles and steps are listed in the table below:

Speaker	Listener
Speak for two minutes about the topic	Listen actively (Ex. “Uh huh, really”) but do not ask questions. -> If the speaker stops, you can say, “Tell me more about _____.”
Check and correct the report. Did your partner make a mistake or forget something you said?	Report what you heard. Ex. “You said that you ...”
Ask at least 3 follow up questions	

By having the listener report, the activity can provide that student with a reason to listen and help the speaker feel heard. In addition, the listener actually gets a big burst of fluency without the burden of trying to think of what to say. Although the time can be shortened as in Nation’s activity, I also find that by keeping it the same and switching partners, I can encourage the students to try and include more details, especially because the previous listener asked follow-up questions that can prompt more ideas. As with the IELTS speaking test, I provide students with a minute or two to brainstorm ideas and jot down key word notes before speaking. This time can help them prepare their ideas, which can aid in fluency. Once the students are familiar with this activity, it can be done quickly and easily throughout the course with different topics. The following are two tasks that I have used, which again borrow heavily from the IELTS test format:

Lower Level

Talk about a gift you have gotten. Be sure to talk about the following:

- Who gave it to you?
- What’s it like?
- How often do you use it? When? Where? How?
- What do you like about it?

Upper Level

Describe different ways that people show their status.

- What status symbols are popular in your country?
- What do think are the best ways to spend extra money?
- Do you think that people have become too materialistic?

Student Recordings

Two or three times a session, I have students record their speaking tasks so that they and I can better assess their skills. With the popularity of smart phones, I have found that most of my students have the ability to record their conversations right in class. I then have them transcribe their recordings (just the parts when they are the speaker), correct the transcription, and comment on their strengths and challenges. They then email the recording and written work to me, so that I can give them feedback.

The transcription serves several functions. First of all, it makes the students really listen to what they have said and can raise their awareness of and evaluate both their fluency and accuracy. Another advantage of the student transcription is that it allows me to easily do a word count by copying and pasting the text into a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word. Once I have figured out their total number of words, I can divide that by the number of minutes the students spoke and arrive at their WPM (Words Per Minute). This data is invaluable in being able to quantify student fluency. Having the transcription also makes it easy to go over the content of the student’s talk so that I can give qualitative feedback. For example, I might comment on their ability to develop an idea, provide relevant details, or offer opinions and support. By using WPM and comments on content, I can provide students with feedback on two critical areas to improve their fluency.

Students often have the impulse to correct their spoken mistakes when doing the transcription, so I encourage them to catch as many mistakes as they can in their correction. This activity can be illuminating as I can see what they can and can’t correct (i.e., gaps in knowledge). Likewise, students are able to slow down and self-correct, which can help them internalize the corrected grammar or vocabulary point that they notice.

My final comments about their performance provide students an opportunity to begin thinking about what they most need to work on. This discussion usually continues in class and during individual conferences with students. After students have received my feedback by email, I have them discuss their results with classmates in addition to reviewing the concepts of fluency and accuracy. This discussion can often help clarify students’ strengths and challenges, while also providing an opportunity for them to brainstorm and

share strategies so that they can improve their fluency. Below are some of the strategies that my students and I recently came up with through such a discussion.

To improve fluency	To improve accuracy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write key words to get ideas • Do the “Keep talking” activity often with friends or even alone • Push yourself to go faster • Do the same topic/task several times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down • Repeat corrected sentences over and over • Try to use corrected sentences in conversation • Write personalized sentences with new grammar points from class and memorize those

One of the benefits of such a discussion is that individual students can get a better sense of what they need to do to improve their speaking. For example, I can tell a student like Yan that since she is speaking at 140 WPM, she can afford to slow down to focus on accuracy. In similar fashion, with a student like Sue who initially got 35 WPM, I can encourage her to focus more on her fluency.

Once students have a clearer sense of what they are working on, they can practice with intentionality that can lead to measurable improvement. In the case of Sue, she was actually able to raise her WPM to 70 after 7 weeks of practice. Although her jump was higher than most, I have generally found that students have been able to make quantitative and qualitative improvements in their fluency through this practice. In short, when students know what the aim of the activity is, they can more effectively focus and strategize so that they can improve their performance.

Summing It Up

In his book *Why Students Don't Like School*, Dan Willingham discusses the importance of focus in practice (149). He offers the example of driving, noting that he has thirty years of experience driving, but that he does not have thirty years of practice. Because of our ability to become automatic as we develop skills, we are able to drive to work and not think about driving. We might be listening to music, talking with a friend, or just thinking. Then, suddenly, we find ourselves at work. This automaticity allows us to function in the world, but it can also prevent us from paying attention and practicing in a meaningful way. When students do classroom activities without sufficient awareness or intentionality, they may find that they are expending a great deal of time and energy, but not progressing in the way that they had hoped.

The same principle of intentionality and awareness in practice can easily be seen in the language learning classroom. Students can develop a certain degree of confidence by talking with their classmates and can internalize new language through the experience of using it. In addition, there can be a great deal of incidental learning that can occur during conversations as students pick up new expressions, vocabulary and strategies. However, I also wonder if students can stagnate when they have no focused practice in their speaking. I am not suggesting that students always have conversations with strict objectives and focus, but it is worth considering how to add focused practice into

the range of classroom activities we do. Moreover, I believe that by increasing student awareness of concepts, such as fluency and accuracy, we can lay a more solid foundation upon which they can develop as self-directed learners.

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On Becoming a Materials Writer

Chris Mares shares some considerations for prospective authors

Many teachers are interested in developing materials to some degree or other. At one end of the continuum, teachers simply develop materials for their own classes; at the other end, teachers become professional materials writers while still teaching. In some cases, individuals stop teaching to become full-time materials writers. Regardless of which end of the continuum teachers find themselves, the principles governing materials writing remain the same.

A teacher wishing to write materials needs to be both informed and current. This means being a member of TESOL (or a regional affiliate/ equivalent organization), attending conferences, reading professional journals, and submitting proposals for conferences. This, after all, is what it means to be a professional.

Let's consider what a potential commercial materials writer needs to know. First and foremost, having an idea is not enough. Any publisher needs to know how the new materials will fit into the current market, what the competition is, and what edge any new materials may have. From experience, I know that most mainstream publishers want new materials that are both the same as the current bestsellers and yet somehow different. That is to say, new materials can't be too radically different from what is currently available. By the same token, there needs to be something very apparent that is new. What is new is often informed by current research.

Naturally publishers want to work with writers who know the market and have done their research. This is not difficult to do, but it is necessary to be thorough. Plenty of people have ideas, but not many people follow through.

It goes without saying that writers should produce materials for a market they are very familiar with. The materials produced need to fill a need that is apparent in the market.

The biggest market is for four skills course books, but there are many other possibilities, such as activity books or books for specific skills, such as listening or reading.

Having a niche is important, either a skill area, or a focus; such as using drama, music, or some other content in the classroom. Becoming an expert and being known as such will lead to the developing of contacts and the opening up of various possibilities. Attend conferences, give presentations, go to workshops, and subscribe to professional journals. With many possibilities existing in the online world, an active familiarity with the potential of current technologies and applications is certainly a plus.

Anecdotally, there are tips I can give that might expedite the writing process. For example, never write instructions that are above the level of the language you are presenting to students. This is harder than it might sound, but important to bear in mind. Remember that the materials are for teachers and students, not for you. What interests you is of less importance than what interests your target market.

There are certain constraints that you will have to consider. If, for example, you are writing for a market where most teachers are non-native or non-native-like speakers, then you will not be able to depend on the assumed knowledge you would expect of a native speaker.

Writing is an art, but it needs to be informed and principled. Some people have an 'ear' for language and how it is used. How it is used and how we think it is used are not the same thing, as anyone with any experience in discourse analysis will tell you. Keep a notebook and record what people actually say when they greet each other, initiate phone calls, make requests, etc. You may well be surprised.

To be a materials writer, you have to let go of your ego and be prepared for some brutal feedback and frustrations. It is possible to make some money through materials writing, but this should not be the motivation. The primary goal should be to produce interesting and effective material for your target students that is transparent and well-supported for your target teacher demographic. Writing effective materials will improve your own teaching and also make you more empathetic and sympathetic to your fellow teachers, as it will raise your sensitivity both to the difficulties inherent in teaching, as well as the rewards.

Chris Mares is the director of the University of Maine Intensive English Institute. Chris is a teacher, teacher trainer, and materials writer who has written several coursebook series with his friend Steve Gershon. Chris also teaches in the University of Maine Honors College. Currently, he is working on a novel entitled, *Jo - A short work of faction*. He also writes the blog peacefulamazon.wordpress.com.



Advice Corner

Three educators give suggestions to help English teachers around Korea

I work in a middle school and my classes are grouped by ability according to their grades on the English exams. Yet, the classes still have a wide range of levels. My main concern is how to plan lessons that are both easy enough for low level students and challenging enough for high level students. Could you recommend teaching strategies or any advice for teaching mixed-level classes?

Jong-Hyun Park, Daejeon



Jin-Young Lee
English Teacher
Daegu Sangwon
High School

Jin-Young Lee

In most education systems, it is impossible to avoid mixed-level classes. But it seems clear that the ideal goal that we should aim for is meeting every student's needs as much as possible. As a teacher who experiences the same situation, I would like to share an approach based on three types of lesson activities: whole, individual and group.

In whole class activities, one of the most frequent types of interaction is between the teacher and the entire class.

When the teacher explains or

asks questions, the students listen or answer. Considering a mixed-level class, the teacher can adjust their language according to the students' understanding. Even though using classroom English is usually advised, if there are students who are left behind, you can use L1 translation, paraphrasing, or gestures together with the target language when necessary. You need to use mind reading skills when gauging your students' understanding and you need to be sensitive at the same time so that you don't make them feel ashamed. Another type of whole class activity can include student presentations where you may encourage higher-level students to express themselves more creatively by asking them additional questions, which can also be a good language model for the other students.

For individual activities, we frequently use worksheets which can be prepared in two or three different ways. The worksheets for higher-level students might have more blanks that include more difficult tasks, such as producing creative opinions or more accurate or fluent expressions. Lower-level students can have worksheets with fewer blanks requiring simpler responses or answers in Korean.

With group activities, you can make mixed-level groups or homogenous groups according to the characteristics of your lesson. In the former case, students can be allowed to choose different roles within their groups according to their preferences or abilities, which will hopefully attract more

voluntary participation from students and encourage cooperation among the different leveled members. In homogenous groups, you can make all students do the same task, but have different outcomes, based on the group's level.

To meet every individual student's needs may seem like an unreachable ideal. But we know how to eat an elephant: one bite at a time. We started the first bite by raising the question and sharing a few ideas. I hope this will help you spark further creative bites at the mixed-level class elephant.

Colin Walker

Your concern regarding mixed level classes has long been a topic of discussion in teaching EFL. To begin with, it is important for you to accurately assess student proficiency. Middle school EFL students are often quite sensitive of what others think of them. Therefore, they may not perform to your standard to avoid embarrassment, despite being proficient. This could explain how some students score well on written tests, but fail to perform well in the actual English class.

To overcome this, get to know the students and their personalities by using a variety of tasks. This allows students to practice all facets of English (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Examples include student presentations, group work, and speaking tasks (such as role-playing). Additionally, include a lot of student-to-student and teacher-to-student interaction in your lessons. I have found the more I interact with the students, the more I can accurately assess their proficiency. Both of these methods will help you identify the strengths and weaknesses of your students, as well as give you a more complete assessment of their proficiency. If you still notice a significant range in their proficiency, try the following strategies:



Colin Walker
English Teacher
Seoul Guryong Middle
School

1) Since classroom dynamics will vary from class to class, experiment with different seating arrangements. I have found arranging students in groups of four to be effective because it allows for student-to-student interaction and gives you two options. The first is to seat one advanced student beside three low-level students. This allows the advanced students to take on a leadership role by helping the low-level students. Outline your expectations to advanced students beforehand. For example, tell the advanced students to encourage and provide hints to the low-level students - not simply do the work for them. The other option is to group the students based on their proficiency. For example, seat advanced students in one group and the low-level students in another. After instructing the students on the main task, adapt the task difficulty to each student's proficiency by observing, walking around the class and giving personalized feedback. This teacher-to-student interaction can encourage student motivation to learn English, a key factor in language acquisition.

2) Maintain a strong working relationship with your co-teachers. Ask to observe their class and note how they overcome the challenges of teaching mixed level classes. Additionally, review your lesson plan with your co-teachers beforehand. Outline what s/he can do for the low-level students while you focus on instructing the advanced students.

Annie Shipman

Although dividing students into classes of the same level is a great idea, using exam scores to determine the levels isn't ideal. As you've found out, English exam scores and English communication competence are two separate animals. But I think we can still put a positive spin on this. If students with lower communicative ability have similar exam scores to ones of higher ability, I believe the English is simply inside them waiting to come out. We just need to supply them with a focused, comfortable lesson so they can feel confident enough to get the English out. Try planning a lesson with a very simple lead-in activity that helps everyone predict the

lesson's target language. I also avoid small-talk at the beginning of class. Small talk usually only engages the top 5-10% of the class and makes the other 90% uncomfortable or bored. A simple pair or group lead-in gets everyone going in the right direction. Try to use as much visual material and 'realia' as you can in your lessons. Not only do visuals engage students, visuals also really help the bottom 20% grasp what's going on. Don't limit visual input to your teaching part of the lesson, also use it when giving instructions for an activity. Model the activity, don't just give instructions.

The final and most important tools in your EFL teaching kit are Comprehension Check Questions (CCQs). They are a must! If you catch yourself about to say, "Do you understand?", "Is that clear?", "Okay?", or "Got it?", try to stop yourself and ask specific CCQs. For example, let's say you just taught the word healthy. Instead of asking, "Do you understand?", you can ask a set of CCQs such as:

"Is ramen a healthy food?"

"Is kimchi a healthy food?"

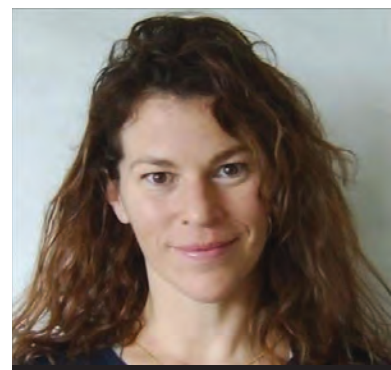
"Is ramen or kimchi a healthy food?"

Make sure the students answer with the full sentence so that they use the target word, healthy.

"What is another healthy food?"

With this set of CCQs, all levels of students should be able to answer at least two or more and the last question allows higher level students to challenge themselves.

Starting off a lesson with a simple, student-centered lead-in and adding CCQs to my teacher-talk has really helped keep all the students in my classes on track. I hope they will do the same for yours.



Annie Shipman
Teacher Trainer
Jeollanamdo Educational
Training Institute

Advice Corner is an opportunity for readers to send in their questions and concerns about problems they encounter while teaching English in Korea.

The English Connection will find experienced educators to give advice for your unique level, problem, and teaching situation.

Send your questions or concerns to tecfeedback@gmail.com.

An Alternative Approach – Humanistic Teaching

Mark Sample outlines techniques for connecting with your students

As teachers, we are always on the lookout for effective strategies that can further inspire, engage, and ultimately enhance the learning process for our students. The approaches and techniques on offer are endless, but I wish to highlight an alternative style of education that may benefit your classroom.

Humanistic ideas are derived from psychology and were first linked to education by a therapist named Carl Rogers (1969), who identified a number of elements that linked the humanistic approach to education. The approach focuses on the learner as an individual, taking interests, enthusiasms, and goals as the basis upon which to organize or facilitate the learning experience.

This style of teaching is child-centered and reflects students being given some responsibility for their own learning. Traditional techniques that see the teacher in an authoritarian role dictating to students are replaced with those that facilitate the learning process in autonomous surroundings. Humanists focus not just on the cognitive aspects of learning, but also the affective - self-esteem, feelings, and emotions.

As teachers, we are in a host of different environments, each with their own separate variables; it is impossible to suggest the perfect method. My teaching context is an elementary school in Gangnam, Seoul, teaching mixed-level classes where the majority of students are above national standards. Most have benefitted from either living abroad or studying in English academies. I teach third, fifth and sixth grades with contact time limited to forty minutes, twice a week. I'd like to highlight some humanistic principles that I've found useful in my classroom. My EFL classroom experience is approaching four years and I began experimenting with these strategies after uncovering them during my Masters studies in Applied Linguistics, last year.

Humanists encourage self-initiation rather than the teacher taking control throughout. I find that my students are far more focused when they have some involvement in decision making. For instance, at the end of a game, I might ask the students to select the winner. Another way I invite more responsibility is by nominating a team captain within groups during activities who is responsible for the smooth running of the activity.

Also, I like to gauge what interests my students and to provide a variety of activities from which they can select. Humanists relate to this by encouraging subject relevance and allowing choice. Even though I am bound to a strict curriculum, I can create lessons that incorporate my students' interests whilst remaining within the objectives of the curriculum. First, to conjure their interests at the start of a new semester, I use survey activities. This information can then be used when producing lessons in the future so that they are more exciting. Additionally, it is essential that students understand the benefits of an activity. A simple teacher explanation or demonstration about a scenario when the learners might use the target language can provide extra impetus.

Vital to humanism is the minimization of criticism and helping each student feel a sense of belonging. I always want to maintain students' confidence and a positive atmosphere. As my classes are large and mixed-level, there are students who have frequent difficulties. To counter this, I request that my co-teacher provide extra assistance to these particular students. In my classroom, if a student answers a question incorrectly, I assist the student in making the correct answer rather than simply switching to a different student. In my experience, I've found a child's willingness to participate can be dented from a negative episode.

Humanists suggest it is important to provide as many opportunities for success in the classroom as possible. I try to limit my lecture time so that every student has a greater chance to participate in class. I believe the more students are participating, the more they are engaged. A high sense of accomplishment breeds confidence and high self-esteem. Furthermore, I take great care to create activities that are challenging, but solvable, to the extent that the student feels he or she has achieved something at the completion of an activity.

Next, I regularly use group work activities, as I want students to communicate and interact frequently with one another. Humanists argue feelings and emotions should be involved where possible. If tasks are created well, learners will converse with classmates rather than just me. They can practice the target language whilst incorporating their own views and beliefs on a particular subject.

Finally, I always encourage students to ask questions, and I invite their opinions about the world around them. Humanists promote creativity and personal identity, and debate-style activities provide an environment where students can express their personal beliefs on the topic in question.

Personally, I would never advocate one approach as the proper solution. I feel by incorporating elements from a number of approaches, teachers can find the correct balance that fits their situation. Humanistic education is an alternative method; however, the ideas link well with a modern communicative classroom. Overall, I've found that the principles I've integrated have been productive and beneficial to my classroom.

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Teaching English in Costa Rica

Charles Fullerton breaks down living and teaching in the “Rich Coast”

Comparing jobs and living conditions for EFL teachers in Korea and Costa Rica is a little like comparing *sagwa* and *naranja*. They're both fruit, but that is where the similarities end. Both countries can be great places to live and work, though they present very different opportunities and challenges.

I should begin by confessing my reasons for visiting both countries were very different. My goals no doubt colored my experiences. I went to Costa Rica in 2000 fresh out of university, wanting to learn Spanish and see the world. A year later I moved, permanently it seems, to Korea because I needed money to begin a Masters program. Remaining honest, I must admit I did not begin my adventures abroad as a teacher. I became one by default when, about a month after I'd left home, I ran out of money and realized I needed to find a job.

Costa Rica is a seahorse-shaped country in Central America directly north of Panama. It is a flourishing democracy which managed to avoid the worst of the Cold War-sponsored dictatorships so common in the region. Its population of 4.6 million is concentrated in and around the capital, San Jose, which lies in the center of the country and is surrounded by mountains. Beyond the mountains are the “rich coasts” from which the country derives its name. Costa Rica's traditional economic pillars are coffee and bananas.

While Costa Rica is only about half the size of South Korea and the people there only earn about half what the average Korean makes, I don't remember hearing or feeling any of the angst Koreans associate with these numbers. This may be because, though Korea is the larger and richer country, relative to its nearest neighbors, it feels like the poor sister. Costa Rica, while not a first world country, is far better off than most of the rest of Central America. Amongst many other factors, geopolitics feeds into some of these differences. While South Korea faces a million man army across the DMZ, Costa Rica proudly disbanded its armed forces in 1948 (the money saved is used to fund many of its social programs). At the same time, paradoxically, the streets of Seoul are far safer than those of San Jose. Like most big cities (though unlike Seoul), there are areas you should avoid, especially at night, and you should always be alert to possible theft. For women, unwanted advances and whistling can also be an annoyance.

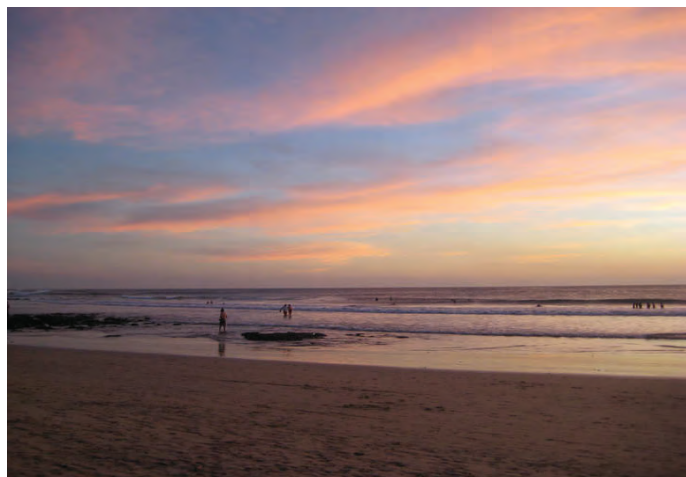
Unless you are highly qualified, it is not generally possible to get a job without first visiting Costa Rica, as the schools there like to interview potential teachers in person before hiring.



In Costa Rica, the (eco)tourism industry and American economic influence ensure a continuing demand for English. There are jobs, though, that are neither as plentiful nor as lucrative as those in Korea.

Unless you are highly qualified, it is not generally possible to get a job without first visiting Costa Rica, as the schools there like to interview potential teachers in person before hiring. As of October 8, 2011, eslcafe.com has just one listing for Costa Rica. Teaching there requires a leap of faith. Once you are in country, you can find schools and potential jobs in the newspapers or by phoning and visiting the various language schools. In 2001, the going rate was the equivalent of about \$5 US an hour. Pay is now \$7-10 an hour. Before you quit reading, note that to rent a room in 2001 (no jobs with housing included here) only cost \$100-150 a month (now \$250-400). I also used to be able to buy two large bags full of exotic fruits at the market each week for \$5-10. While the cost of living is lower, saving money teaching in Costa Rica would require an extremely frugal lifestyle. You definitely won't be paying off any student loans or buying plane tickets to Southeast Asia. That being said, you can enjoy your stay in the country. Among my favorite memories of my time there are the two day whitewater rafting trip I took through the jungle and the night I sat with a couple of friends in the back of a pick-up truck watching molten lava flow from the tip of the Arenal volcano. Weekend trips to any of the absolutely gorgeous beaches along either coast can include turtle sightings, surfing lessons, drinks on the beach to the sounds of Bob Marley and/or salsa dancing, all often accompanied by the haunting sounds of howler monkeys passing through the foliage overhead. You can also visit the rest of Central America – by bus.

All the jobs for English teachers in Costa Rica are in and around San Jose. While the weather is unbeatable, 14-24C year round, there are *gasp* only two seasons (wet and dry). Despite the fact that earthquakes limit the height of buildings in Costa Rica, San Jose manages to feel like an urban jungle with narrow and inadequately maintained roads leading to frequent traffic snarls. Geological activity means a subway system cannot be built. Like Korea, limited space and an overabundance of mountains mean that people have ended up crowded together in the more building-friendly areas. All the greenery which the country is famous for is located either further up the mountainsides or on the coasts, which are at least an hour and a half away by bus. Sadly, the only teaching jobs on the beaches are for native Spanish speakers. Soon after I realized I needed to find work, and after dropping off my résumé at a number of private schools (where most of the teaching jobs are), I got lucky and landed a full-time job teaching adults at the Instituto Britanico. I taught the standard 20-25 hours per week. Unlike most teaching jobs in Costa Rica, mine was a one-year contract. At most schools you will be paid an hourly or monthly wage, which does not offer a great deal of security. My co-workers, once I was able to understand their English accents, were very helpful in my transition to teaching. I did not do any work on the side. I was looking more for language exchanges at that point. Extra work is available at about \$10 per hour, but again, not to the same extent as in Korea.



In Korea these days, all students study English. Classes are mandatory in public school and a good portion of students also study in private English institutions. The same cannot be said for Costa Rica. In my experience, it is only the elite who (can) study English, though I am sure there is a minimum of instruction in public schools as well. My classes were a mix of professionals, young adults from well-heeled families, and people entering the tourism industry. In Korea, I have taught kids, university students, and adults. In my experience, the Costa Ricans, or Ticos, as they like to refer to themselves, were more motivated. They do not have anything remotely approaching the background in grammar all Koreans have, but they are generally much more willing and interested in conversing in English. They do not have the same reserve and tend to get into role-plays and interactive activities much more quickly and enthusiastically. Spanish and English are also much more closely related than Korean and English, so students tend to pick up the language faster.

You would be hard-pressed to find two cultures more different than Costa Rica and Korea. In Costa Rica, you are greeted with *pura vida*, which literally means pure life, but which roughly translates as “all good”. In Korea, it is *balli balli* and *fighting* that are most commonly heard. I think these sets of expressions say a lot about the groups of people who use them. In many ways, Ticos are stereotypical Latinos with large, tight-knit families that love to spend time together talking, dancing and just generally enjoying life. They are a very happy, incredibly warm, outgoing and friendly people. Family is also very important in Korea, though Confucianism creates a very different dynamic. Life is much more structured and serious, with a far greater emphasis on work and study.

The expat community in Costa Rica is a little more diverse than in Korea. There are plenty of retirees (mainly American), along with backpackers, surfers, Spanish language students and teachers. In Korea, depending on your haircut, you are pegged as either a soldier or a teacher. It is impossible not to stick out. Anonymity is possible in Costa Rica if you are not blond-haired and blue-eyed and if you do not reveal your stilted Spanish by speaking.



Koreans and Costa Ricans have heard of one other through the World Cup, though they really know very little about one another. I suspect most people who have not visited either of the countries are equally in the dark. I hope this article, describing and comparing the two countries from the perspective of an EFL teacher, can act as a starting point for anyone interested in either place. For further information on Costa Rica, start with the following websites: <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/> (Spanish language website) or <http://www.ticotimes.net/> (English language website).

Charles Fullerton has been teaching at Hongik University for the past 7 years. He has been in Korea for nearly ten years. Before that, he taught in Costa Rica. He graduated from Framingham State College with a Masters in Education in 2009.



Social Networking for Professional Development

Marisa Constantinides reflects on what she has gained by engaging in social networks

It's Wednesday morning. As I begin to write this short piece on what I have gained from being involved in Social Networking as an ELT professional, I glance at Tweetdeck to see what new links are coming down my timeline on Twitter (Figure 1). As usual, there is a wealth being shared: blog posts new and rediscovered, tweets about webinars about to begin or which look enticing enough for me to register for.



Figure 1: Marisa's Twitter timeline

Meanwhile, I keep my eye on the #ELTchat hashtag column on Tweetdeck and re-tweet for #ELTchat followers to go vote on their favorite topics for today's online discussions. My Google Reader reveals a few dozen new posts by colleagues whose writing I respect and whose voice I want to hear on matters related to teaching, learning, and educational technology.

My Facebook news has also become more interesting and exciting lately because I decided to connect my account with other educators. I follow announcements of conferences and links for new ideas and tools; an MA student asks me if I would respond to his research questionnaire and I do this willingly and gladly. These online interactions with other ELT professionals help inform and inspire my work, and provide a network of colleagues that extends around the globe.

10:00 - My training session begins. Today we are talking about lesson planning. I send out a tweet to my followers, asking if they would share some tips about how to make listening and reading lessons more motivating. The cascade of answers impresses my trainees – two go out and immediately create Twitter accounts... the rest will begin to appear slowly on my timeline over the next few days.

It's 14.00 P.M. and an ELTchat is on. I am one of the five moderators; the others are in Japan, the US, and the UK. The topic is "How to make writing more stimulating for our

students" and generates hundreds of tweets, great links to blog posts with lesson ideas, and suggestions for Web 2.0 tools and useful websites. I leave the chat totally energized.

15:30 - As I collect the chat transcript to share and summarize the #ELTchat conversation which will be summarized by one of the participants, I read a new blog post on the age-old question, "Should we focus on form?", and the comments that follow it. As a result of this conversation, I learn about two books that look very interesting. I also find a link to a recorded round table discussion from a past conference which I sit and listen to enthralled. I immediately bookmark the link and share it with my Facebook groups, and post it on Twitter and on my trainees' wiki. I am also inspired to write a blog post about my reflections on the focus on form based on the numerous lessons I have observed in the last two years.

My Personal Learning Network (PLN)

This is a teacher educator living in Athens, Greece, writing these lines. Sure, I get to meet my colleagues and I am privileged to be involved in training people who have a desire to be good, better, or even outstanding teachers. I do also attend local and international ELT events in person, but I have come to see that more contact is needed to keep being motivated in this hard but wonderful profession of being an ELT teacher and teacher educator.



Figure 2: Marisa's PLN

The daily contact with an ELT community which shares and connects is available to me because of Social Networking. I talk to colleagues around the world daily, as if we lived next door, and these great educators enrich my daily professional life. It is often because of these exchanges that I am stimulated to present a new idea, to write a new talk, to go to yet another conference, to write a new blog post, to present my material to my trainees in a new and more effective way. The rich variety of presentation styles and content has enriched my repertoire immensely. At conferences, these

days, I also find that I will regularly have members of my PLN awaiting me, great educators I have met and connected mainly through Twitter, ready to connect and bond in person, too, a gift of friendship and a bonus that was unexpected and delightful.

Social Networking - How it is shaping my professional development

Over the past two years of being engaged in Social Networking with ELT colleagues around the globe, I would dare claim that my professional development has been ten times faster than in all of the 20+ years of my previous experience. I am now involved in many exciting new collaborative projects, simply by being part of this global conversation. For example, by engaging with my peers on Twitter, it has become possible for me to work on aPLaNet, a major EU funded project which aims to help teachers in their autonomous professional development through the use of such social networks as Facebook, Twitter and Nings.

Connecting with my peers on a global scale has truly made a great difference to my professional development. Through these conversations, I have formed numerous personal connections and networks, from which new opportunities for collaboration and growth continually emerge.

Our online exchanges stimulate my work, contribute to my learning and motivate me to contribute to the ELT community, even when I am tired and feel burnt out or uncreative, challenging me to go beyond my comfort zone.

Social Networking supports and inspires my pursuit of excellence as an ELT professional and that, I believe, is an idea truly worth spreading!

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Making Classroom English Comprehensible

Heidi Vande Voort Nam explains how keeping it simple leads to success

On paper, a policy of Teaching English in English (TEE) has a lot of benefits: it increases the amount of input that is both comprehensible and meaningful. Students are motivated to focus their attention on the teachers' language in order to follow instructions. In practice, however, many teachers find TEE difficult to implement in their own classes.

Teachers who are accustomed to teaching in the students' first language may find that the instructions that they normally use are not effective when translated directly into English. For example, a teacher might ask her third grade class, “들은 낱말을 누가 이야기해 볼까요?” and get a fine response, while a direct English translation like “Who will try saying the words they heard?” might elicit nothing but blank stares. Teachers will have much more success in English if they both pare down the number of concepts that they are trying to communicate and use more familiar vocabulary to communicate them. The resulting question might be something like “What words did you hear?” The need to simplify concepts, and perhaps even modify activities, places an additional burden on teachers who switch the language of instruction to English.

It is often thought that native English speakers have an easier time simplifying their classroom English, but native English speakers have their own challenges to work through. Fluency itself enables them to overwhelm their students with too much input, spoken too fast. A rich vocabulary means that the first expression that comes to mind might not be one that a group of students would readily understand. Of course, when teachers learn more about the language and educational background of their students, they can increase their ability to guess which words and phrases will be the most (or least) comprehensible to their students.

Simplifying the Message

Regardless of the teachers' background, there are some tricks of the trade that can help teachers make their instructions more comprehensible to students. Quite often, the most effective explanation of an activity is a demonstration. For written exercises, the teacher can walk the students through the first exercise so that the students can see how they are supposed to respond to the input. Pair work activities could be demonstrated with co-teachers; otherwise, a teacher can demonstrate with a student, feeding the student the language necessary to get through the activity.

When a verbal explanation is necessary, the teacher can simplify the message. In order to do this, the teacher needs to recognize the core message of the classroom instruction and weed out the unnecessary ideas. Sometimes teachers ramble. Ironically, when some teachers worry that their students might not be following their instructions, they explain more, which may end up overloading the students with input. There are several ways of keeping this tendency in check. The teacher could try writing out a teaching script, which could help the teacher think through which instructions are truly necessary. During class, if the teacher

is unsure whether the students really got the message, they might try asking a specific question about the instructions, rather than explaining them again.

In addition to cutting out extraneous words, the teacher can support comprehension by breaking the instructions into meaningful chunks. Since lists of oral instructions are easily forgotten, the teacher can help the students by focusing on what they need to do at the moment. Whenever there is an instruction that can be applied immediately, the teacher may stop and check that the students have successfully followed that chunk before going on to the next chunk. If the students need to understand a sequence of instructions, it may be better to write or project the instructions some place where they can be reread as necessary.

The teacher may also make ideas more comprehensible by making them more concrete. One way of doing this is by using “I” and “you” language. Instead of using a third person prompt like “When it's someone's birthday, what do people say to them?” they might use something like “It's my birthday. What do you say?” Another technique is to replace grammatical terminology with grammatical formulas. For example, instead of talking about “present progressive,” the teacher can talk about “be + (verb)ing.” Likewise, a teacher may want to replace functions with key expressions. Instead of saying, “We're going to learn how to talk about ability,” the teacher may say, “We're going to learn can and can't.”

Modifying delivery

Once the message has been simplified, the teacher can also support student comprehension by changing the style of speaking. The following five delivery techniques (in ascending order from my least to most favorite) are often used to increase comprehension: the omission of function words, modification of pronunciation, slowness, pauses and repetition.

The omission of function words (such as articles and prepositions) is a technique that many native English speakers use, resulting in short phrases akin to “Me Tarzan. You Jane” or “Get pencil.” Although I have heard a number of teachers swear by the effectiveness of “Tarzan Talk,” I suspect that the success may be attributable to clearer articulation or to the shorter phrases and the increased frequency of pauses. Since many learners frequently do not hear function words, even when they are used, it seems unlikely that the omission of function words would increase these learners' comprehension.

Pronunciation can be modified in several ways to assist learners. Teachers might make their speech clearer by over-articulating consonants or by limiting their use of reductions (such as “gonna” for “going to” and “dija” for “did you”). Some teachers also adopt features of Korean pronunciation in order to make their words more comprehensible to Korean learners. For example, they may add a vowel sound following /d/ or /s/. Since these sounds are not articulated when they come at the end of a syllable in

Korean, adding the extra vowel sound can make the final consonant more salient to some Korean listeners.

Although adding the extra vowel sound does aid comprehension for some learners, other learners don't need the help. Many of these learners have had a great deal of exposure to unmodified English, and they may find this kind of modified pronunciation patronizing. Furthermore, adopting features of Korean pronunciation can make the English less comprehensible to anyone who is not familiar with the style.

Slowness, repetition, and pauses all serve to reduce the number of words that the student needs to process in order to understand the teacher's instructions. Although slowness alone can aid comprehension, the other two techniques have additional benefits. Repetition reinforces an idea, and pauses provide valuable time for listeners to take in what has just been said. Pauses are perhaps the most underused of these techniques. Sometimes teachers use repetition but avoid pauses because they are afraid of silence. These teachers should consider that students who don't seem to respond to the message immediately might need additional time to think. If even native speakers are more likely to get a joke when the speaker pauses after the punch line, how much more do non-native speakers benefit from a moment to let the message sink in?

Providing additional support

Teachers can provide additional support when they introduce unfamiliar instructions. Translation or mime can help students get the instructions the first time, but the teacher has to be careful not to make the extra support a habit. When teachers make the extra support automatic, they may unintentionally train their students to watch for the movement or wait for the translation rather than try to understand the instructions in English. To avoid this problem, after the students have heard the instruction a few times, the teacher can try giving the instruction again without support. If the students can follow the instruction, then the extra support is no longer necessary.

How much should teachers simplify?

Teachers should be aware that there is a trade off when they simplify their language. Restricting vocabulary means that students have less varied input. While an elementary school student might appreciate that the teacher substitutes the key phrase "I'm sorry" for the function "apologize," a more advanced student may need the word "apologize" to discuss the formality of different ways of apologizing. Modifying delivery to make English more accessible to learners makes it less like the English used in conversations among native speakers. Slowness, over-articulation and the avoidance of reductions, for example, can all lead to separation of the words so that phrases lose common features of connected speech. Tarzan talk provides a model of English that would only be acceptable in a few situations, and extra vowel sounds often lower comprehensibility outside of Korea.

Two factors should determine how teachers simplify their language. First, teachers should keep the learners' goals in mind. If the ultimate goal of the learner is to communicate in English as an international language, then perhaps it is in the learner's best interest to learn a simple style of English

that will be comprehensible to other non-native speakers. English with basic vocabulary and distinct pronunciation may be the most useful style for them to learn.

The second factor is the students' level. Obviously, some groups of students need more assistance than others to understand the teacher talk. Finding the right amount of simplification for a particular group of students is a challenge in itself. Teachers need to regularly check whether their students understand. This could involve simply observing whether the students successfully follow the instructions. The teacher may also ask specific questions about the instructions ("How many sentences do you have to write?") or elicit an L1 translation ("How do you say that in Korean?"). When simplification is well-targeted to the students' level, it will greatly increase the effectiveness of classroom English.

Heidi Vande Voort Nam (MA TEFL/TESL) teaches academic writing and teacher-training courses in the Department of English Education at Chongshin University. As a member of KOTESOL Teacher Training (KTT), she presents at chapter meetings and other special events. Heidi also facilitates KOTESOL's Christian Teachers SIG. She may be contacted at heidinam@gmail.com.



This article was adapted from a presentation that Heidi gives through KTT.

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Classroom Participation

Bora Sohn outlines strategies for encouraging students to participate

When it comes to classroom participation, I have become the sensitive teacher who tries to ensure equal participation. If a student does not talk in class, it bothers me a lot. Although the goal is not to have all students participate equally, and in the same way, I want to ensure an equal chance of participation. I want to make sure that I do not make anyone feel left out, especially in a big class. Throughout my six-year-long career, teaching students and working with teachers, I've had chances to observe many teachers teach and noticed that the vast majority tend to respond to the students who answer first or with the loudest voice. Admittedly, these students are hard to ignore. However, problems can arise when we reconstruct our instructions based on the feedback we receive from these students (for example, we might discover that the other students did not understand the task requirements). When you have a large classroom with 25 to 30 students or even more, it is not easy to give equal attention and chances for all the students' voices to be heard. I have tried different ways to acknowledge each individual's contribution. Here is a brief summary of what I have learned to use in order to promote equal participation.

Seating Chart Checking System

My persistent trial and error attempts to give equal chances to my students resulted in my using a seating chart checking system. I began by attaching a seating chart to my clipboard to memorize students' names. During class, I noticed myself writing comments next to their names, which made me realize that it could be used to ensure equal participation. The next day, I prepared a new seating chart and simply ticked the names of the students who volunteered and called out the names that I had not checked. The seating chart checking system was very handy in that I did not have to depend on my memory of who had a chance to talk or not. I wanted to have an objective and systematic assessment tool that I could apply to all of my students.

As a novice teacher, I used to put the responsibility on the students when they did not take part in class.

As I was getting comfortable with this method, I started to play around with it by marking differently students who volunteered from those whose names I had to call out (see Figure 1). In addition, new seating charts were used for each activity, and I made sure that all the charts were on the same page so I could easily call on the students who did not say much in the previous activity. This extended version of using the seating chart worked well for me not only because it tracked down the level of student participation, but also because it helped me understand my learners better. I was able to collect reliable information on which activities my

students enjoyed more and felt comfortable participating in. It also helped me understand each student better. I slowly came to see each of their characters, strengths, and weaknesses, and I was able to use this valuable information as a basis for making decisions in teaching and designing lessons.

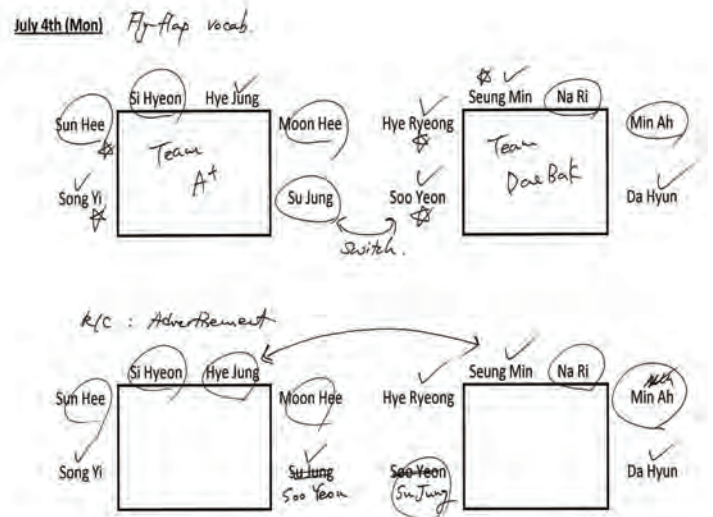


Figure 1: Recording class participation [Check mark (✓): volunteers, Circle(O): called out Ss, Star(*): active participants]

TPS + Repeat

The seating charts were used alongside the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) strategy. TPS gives students time to formulate their own ideas, then discuss or practice in pairs to practice the words and refine their thoughts and opinions, and eventually share their ideas with the class. This strategy relies on the premise that students will be more prepared to give good answers and actively participate when enough thinking time is given.

TPS is a wonderful strategy for teachers; however, some students may still not be ready to talk to the whole class for various reasons. Despite close observation and monitoring, teachers can still find themselves calling on these unprepared students. If I happen to call on such a student, I try not to say that I am sorry or the famous, "Good try, but maybe next time." Instead, I have someone else say the answer, and then ask the student who originally wasn't able to give me the answer what they think about the peer's answer and if they have anything to add to it. On the surface, it seems that the student simply repeats someone else's utterance. However, this strategy can prevent students from leaving the class feeling like failures and becoming reluctant the next time they have a chance to talk in class. Besides, students tend to give a different answer or rephrase the answers in their own words whenever they can, instead of simply repeating them.

Closed Fist

The methods I mentioned above do not work for all students. For some, we need to wait; wait until they are ready. In my class, I had a handful of students who were still reluctant to raise their hands in class. One cannot expect reluctant learners to participate in the same way active students do. I thought about ways to get them involved and was introduced to an idea by Bryan Harris (director of Professional Development Casa Grande ESD, Arizona). It is called the "Closed Fist." One of the clear behavioral indicators of active participation is raising hands. I am sure most teachers have students who rarely raise their hands because of shyness or a lack of confidence with their answers. For them, the simple act of raising their hands can be a mission. Harris suggests having a private talk with reluctant students and telling them they can raise their closed fist. The teacher will not call on them when their hand is a closed fist. The students can open their fist to indicate that they are very sure that they have the right answer and are ready to say it in class.

The secret code of the closed fist helps the reluctant child build confidence in the class. This agreement can bring a child one step closer to becoming an active participant. Bryan Harris mentions that it does not have to be a closed fist if a student isn't comfortable raising hands. It can be any indicator, like putting an eraser on top of a book. As long as the teacher has a way to know when a student is ready, it can be effective.

As a novice teacher, I used to put the responsibility on the students when they did not take part in class. I thought that it was the student's role to pay attention to the teacher and show that s/he was learning. My time spent in the classroom taught me that I was wrong and unfair. Reluctant learners become reluctant for a reason, and I am part of the reason. Every child is different, and thus different strategies have to be developed and applied to promote participation. I hope that the methods that I suggested will help you make your classes more participatory.

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What were your personal highlights from the 2011 KOTESOL International Conference?

Loved the words of inspiration by Chuck Sandy and Stephen Krashen, which motivate me to be a better teacher and community leader.
-Jure Majnaric

It was energizing to be among such a large number of teachers who are as excited about teaching and reflective practice as I am.
-Josette LeBlanc

Meeting and talking with presenters in the Presenters Lounge. So many wonderful people, so much passion for learning and educating, so many different life paths.
-Maria Pinto

Being the MC, hosting seven awesome Pechas Kuchas, moderating a great panel of teacher trainers and presenting with my wife sans projector.
-Tim Dalby

Enjoyed learning more about reflective practice from T Farrell, stimulated by Dr Kumar... about global consciousness, added to my knowledge of listening with Prof. Graham-Marr.
-Liz Bailey

Hearing Dr. Krashen speak Saturday. His story about the Hispanic boy learning English and Hebrew while working in a restaurant reminded me of how my father learned to speak English. He sat in pubs and listened to people talk!
-Kristine Maxine

Giving my first presentation in the 101 series. The personality and energy of Setsuko Toyama. Last, and certainly not least — spending time talking shop with two colleagues who were attending their first KOTESOL conference!
-Michael Free

A New Paradigm in Korean English Education

Mi-Seon Lee introduces the National English Ability Test

Winds of a novel innovation have blown into Korean English education. The new curriculum encourages the productive skills of language use and requires Teaching English in English (TEE) as a step toward it. Through TEE, it is said that students could use and improve English naturally by increasing the chances of being exposed to English. Along with TEE, the National English Ability Test (NEAT), the new English testing system introduced by the Korean Ministry of Education, provides another rationale for the curriculum. By adopting the direct assessment of speaking and writing skills as a test domain, NEAT should promote instruction of productive skills in schools. Other than the change in the curriculum, there are several factors that led to the development of NEAT. Rampant English proficiency tests with commercial use triggered the demand for the new English test, which is appropriate for and meaningful in the Korean English learning environment. Besides, as proficiency tests started to adopt speaking and writing as part of their test content, it was required/became necessary to cover all of the four skills in a test. However, the current CSAT, which is receptive-skill based, could not satisfy the needs, and it is NEAT that emerges to meet all of the complicated requirements in Korean English education.

After the government announced the introduction of a new test in 2007, the development of NEAT was undertaken in 2009, and the pre and pilot tests were administered several times from 2009 to 2011. It is scheduled to be implemented as a full scale test as of 2012, and is intended to replace the English section of the current CSAT from 2015 for students entering university in 2016. There are three levels of NEAT – Grade 1 was developed for adults, Grades 2 and 3 for high school students; the latter two grades will replace the CSAT. Grade 1 was designed to replace TOEFL or TOEIC, which is used as a college student's graduation examination or an employment examination, and its targeted level of English is that of the second or third-year students in university. The difference between Grades 2 and 3 for high school students is based on basic academic English. Grade 2 covers standard English required in the disciplines where English is often used for study, while Grade 3 mainly deals with practical English and fits the English requirement for other disciplines where English is not considered highly important.

By adopting the direct assessment of speaking and writing skills as a test domain, NEAT should promote instruction of productive skills in schools.

The most notable change in the new test is, however, the introduction of speaking and writing skills to the evaluation elements. The test consists of four parts: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Grade 2 has four questions for speaking and two for writing and Grade 3 has four questions each for both speaking and writing. Regardless of the number of questions in those sections, though, the mere inclusion of those productive skills in the test seems to be revolutionary. It is certain that NEAT will cause quite a stir in Korean English education. Of course, before examining what influence NEAT will have on the curriculum, the execution of productive skill testing in schools needs to be examined.

In Korea, performance assessments were first introduced to the curriculum in 1999 to measure students' proficiency levels based on the way they complete a specific task. Most secondary schools chose listening, speaking, and writing as the main test domains for performance tests. In almost all schools, listening comprehension is used because it is convenient to administer. Students already take a standardized listening test every semester, and teachers can simply use the same score for the performance test. As for speaking and writing, while many schools choose speaking due to the 7th curriculum, where the enhancement of English communicative ability was strongly emphasized, a smaller number of schools adopted writing to their test domain. This illustrates that writing instruction in schools is somewhat neglected.

Unlike the standardized listening tests, speaking and writing tests vary from school to school, as they are usually made by the schools' teachers. Common forms of speaking tests include class participation, word quizzes, students' attitudes in class, the recitation of a famous speech, a dialogue or play scripts in textbooks, English poems, singing pop songs, reading aloud from a textbook, or reading and translating a textbook. There are, of course, some schools which make students interview with a native speaker teacher or tell their opinion about the given topic. At this point, doubts are raised about what these tests originally intended to measure. Is it really students' speaking ability, pronunciation, or just memorization skills?

The situation is not much different in a writing test. Common forms of writing performance tests are a word quiz, a sentence completion test, arranging word order, a dictation, and translating a sentence. In most cases, Korean translations for the given sentences are offered in these types of written tests. Free writing, such as an essay or journal, is sometimes given as a writing task for students, but it might be too difficult for students' levels, especially for middle school students, if it is not guided writing. Essay writing has a high validity in terms of the ability intended to measure, but whether it is a good test that can elicit enough writing from middle school students is still in doubt. In addition, it was common that these performance tests did not have a reliable scoring rubric or test specification.

Although performance testing has been in the curriculum for more than ten years, item development and scoring for the testing system are still being neglected, and relatively little attention has been paid to the administration of the performance tests in schools.

Now, at a time when the administration of NEAT on a full scale is coming up, what should we prepare for it and how should we do it? This would be the task left for the public sector of education. The first and simplest answer for these questions is to increase the portion of speaking and writing instruction in classes. Currently, many schools have native speaker teachers who are usually in charge of speaking instruction. That is not enough to prepare for the new changes. Korean teachers should also include the enhancement of productive skills in their lesson objectives and promote the integration of four skills on a topic or some target language in their lesson plans.

However, most of all, lessons should become activity-centered. TEE does not just mean that the language used in class is changed into English. It also requires the lesson itself to be changed into student-centered and activity-focused modules appropriate for TEE. Through various activity forms, students should actually speak and write in English, not just learn how to do it. Teacher-centered and reading-based high school lessons might be difficult to change immediately, but teachers could gradually devise and apply various activities suitable for their students' levels and needs. When speaking and writing lessons oriented to NEAT are developed, students' communicative ability can be enhanced naturally, because NEAT has various forms such as guided writing, functional writing, and picture descriptions and they are all produced based on learning objectives in the curriculum. Therefore, preparation for NEAT is believed to help students develop their communicative ability.

If productive, skill-based lessons are difficult to provide in regular classes, after-school programs would be a good way to offer students useful and appropriate speaking and writing instruction, because after-school programs usually have fewer numbers of students. The institutions for education should develop activity-focused textbooks in speaking and writing for school use and spread applicable examples of speaking and writing instruction to schools.

Korean teachers should also include the enhancement of productive skills in their lesson objectives and promote the integration of four skills on a topic or some target language in their lesson plans.

Last but not least, along with changes in English teaching, innovation is considered necessary for school performance

tests. If students learn how to use productive skills, evaluation elements should be included in the skills and the tests should accurately measure their speaking and writing ability. NEAT could play a leading role in the process. Teachers could develop performance tests referring to the test items of NEAT. By doing so, performance tests will have higher validity and naturally help students study for NEAT.

NEAT is bringing about a new paradigm shift in Korean English education. The key to success is how well schools will support it, and whether it can successfully replace the CSAT or not will also be of paramount concern. When all of these concerns are resolved, Korean students can achieve far higher English proficiency, and public education can earn more confidence from both parents and students. Teachers should keep in mind that they are opening a new page in the history of Korean English education and do their best to be successful pioneers.

Mi-Seon Lee is a teacher at Eunhaeng Middle School in Seongnam, Gyeonggi-do. She has been teaching English in middle school for over 10 years. She finished her studies at Seoul National University Graduate School of Education and is writing her thesis for an MA degree on writing performance tests in Korean secondary schools.
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(Role-)Playing to the Motivation Level of Students

Andee Pollard suggests role playing as a motivational tool

Motivating elementary school students for longer than the typical 40-minute class can be challenging. I was able to experience this challenge recently. The following is a reflection on the events that transpired.

To briefly outline the learning context, the school where this took place is a public elementary school located in a small city in Gangwon-do. The school had recently remodelled seven existing classrooms into two larger classrooms with additional stages that included, among other things, an airport, a restaurant, and a hospital to form an 'Experiential English Center' (EEC) – essentially an English Village. The students involved attended three public elementary schools in the immediate area. They also attended one 3-hour class per week at the EEC on a rotational basis where they experienced 2-3 of the stages per class. This means that each group of students experienced the EEC two or three times in a single semester. There were 12 third graders and 144 fourth graders with between 29 and 33 students per class.

The prospect of attending a program in the EEC – which was a new experience for most of the students – appeared to have a positive impact on the students' motivation levels, with the majority of students entering the classroom in an energetic mood. However, the issue of how to maintain, and if possible, further build on the mood and motivation levels of the students remained an issue. Working in my favor was the fact that the students attended on a rotational basis. This meant that classes later in the rotation generally experienced a smoother lesson due to the repetition.



Conducting similar lessons enabled me to refine the lesson's structure and delivery into something with fewer bugs. Through this refinement and repetition, factors arose that were in need of attention if I were to keep student motivation high. The first among these was the need for rapport building activities in every class, as the students had no prior experience with me as their teacher and often no prior experience with a NES teacher. The second factor was the need to step away from the traditional classroom feeling. Even though the students were participating in the EEC program, essential vocabulary and dialogue structures were introduced in the classroom prior to moving to the stages. It should be noted that while the students required this often

new language to effectively participate in the EEC program, it was also expected that they would have an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Due to their energy upon entering the EEC, building rapport with the students was not difficult. Through combining language relevant to the opening stage – Airport – it was possible to simultaneously learn student names and birthdays and assess English proficiency levels through simple activities such as brief self-introductions. Things to consider included ease and fluency of delivery, as well as reading ability when the script was considered. The students also had the opportunity to learn a little about me, including my nationality and interests. This basic Q&A session was used in conjunction with vocabulary games to add enjoyment. Time-tested games, such as Speed Game – as my Korean colleagues have called it in the past – and an inverted version of 20 Questions – what you may call 20 Answers – were integral to the success of these beginning stages.



In addition to the two noted above, a number of other vocabulary games were used throughout the program. However, vocabulary selection was largely related to my initial perceptions of the students' language levels – as the students were not my regular students, a quick assessment of their levels was done in order to modify the lesson accordingly – and it was through this on-the-fly lesson refinement that a reliable median of vocabulary difficulty was reached. Keeping motivation levels high meant that achieving a balance between vocabulary and dialogue difficulty was a necessity.

Due to time constraints, the role-play language could not entirely escape the "traditional" framework – i.e. a teacher-centred approach – and to accommodate this, a largely audio-lingual method was utilised to facilitate acquisition of the base structures and was complimented with grammar translation to aid comprehension. To elaborate on this, it should be noted that the grammar translation activities at play focused on students listening to the teacher presenting the dialogue line-by-line while the students read along simultaneously. The teacher followed

this by asking students for a translation of each respective line, and even if a correct translation was given, further reinforcement of the meaning was given by the teacher in Korean. Once the dialogue had been presented and the meaning verified through the Korean translation, audio-lingual activities, such as repetition drills, substitution drills, and back-chaining were undertaken. For clarification, substitution drills were used where appropriate to add some variety to the repetitive nature of the dialogue and back-chaining – where a longer or more difficult phrase is repeated in sections from the end, e.g. “another / have another / do you have another” – was used in an attempt to achieve a greater degree of spoken fluency. While I perceived that the students would not have tolerated this approach for the majority of the class, their motivation appeared to increase through the use of techniques such as back-chaining. It was through back-chaining that the students could achieve a greater degree of fluency in their delivery of lengthier and more complicated dialogues. The ability to present such material with only minor complications appeared to give many a motivational boost. Cases of this could be seen in not only the more proficient students communicating naturally – under the staged circumstances – with one another, but also could be seen with the lower-level students tackling the dialogues with confidence and vigor, something that initially surprised both myself and their homeroom teachers.



Energy and motivation in the students also appeared to increase after participation in the role-play on stage. The addition of props, costumes and a stage in conjunction with successful delivery of the proposed script (see Appendix 1) typically had the students returning to the classroom from the stage full of smiles and laughter. In addition to this, students appeared to whole-heartedly engage in the vocabulary and structural practice that took place in preparation for moving onto the second or third role-play stage. I believe that this was due to having a positive experience during the first role-play stage of the class and that the students had become aware of what was expected of them and what their intrinsic reward was for putting in the proverbial effort. In any case, the overall consensus was that the class was rewarding and enjoyable for all involved, including me, as their teacher. The reward, however, does not end solely with the students’ enjoyment levels, as it can also encompass exposing them to glimpses of reality outside of the safety of the classroom. This, if we are to expand upon it, suggests that ‘glimpses of reality’ can include everyday necessities, such as ordering food in a restaurant, an everyday occurrence that the EFL learner in Korea cannot

truly experience through the medium of English without travelling overseas to an English-only or ESL environment.

While the communicative context in this instance is still within the confines of the classroom, there exists the opportunity to familiarise students with what may await them outside of the classroom. Having the ability to recall experiences, such as the role-play on stage, may facilitate the students in achieving a degree of communicative competence in the real world when they are exposed to a similar situation. Therefore, when I reflect on this experience, I believe that the most important aspect of learning that took place for myself is built on the premise that a simple communicative act that mirrors the real world – such as ordering food in a restaurant – when combined with props and costumes can result in students walking out of the classroom with their motivation to speak English intact, if not higher than before their entrance, and also may have the added benefit of enabling students to tackle similar situations outside of the classroom with a greater degree of confidence and fluency.



Appendix 1: At the post office

Clerk: Can I help you?

Customer: Yes, I'd like to post this [letter / parcel].

Clerk: Where is it going?

Customer: To _____.

Clerk: Would you like to send it airmail or surface mail?

Customer: _____ please.

Clerk: It will take about _____ days. Is that OK?

Customer: That's fine. How much is it?

Clerk: It's _____ dollars and _____ cents.

Customer: Here is _____ dollars. (give money to Clerk)

Clerk: Here's your change. (give change to Customer)

Customer: Thank you.

Clerk: Have a nice day.

Andee Pollard is a recent recipient of the Palgrave Macmillan (Australia) Award for Applied Linguistics and holds an MA (Applied Linguistics) with Distinction. He is currently pursuing his doctorate while trying to be a better husband and father. Andee teaches at Kangwon National University and may be contacted at: andeepollard@gmail.com.



Reflections of a Co-teacher

Heather Lynne Kwon looks back on her co-teaching experience

There are times when you click with someone immediately – your personalities and teaching styles mesh, and you can work together happily and productively. Such was my experience co-teaching during this summer’s English camp. When you are in a situation like this, you can collaborate to develop new ideas and help each other in difficult situations. You work as a team, and the idea of co-teaching suddenly makes a lot of sense. However, this was definitely not the nature of my first co-teaching experience when I left my position as a hagwon instructor and began my struggle co-teaching at a public elementary school in March. With no guidance in this area, I began to experience problems working with two of my three co-teachers. Now, more than halfway through my contract, I have discovered ways to help me improve or to simply cope with my situation. I wish that I had been armed with more knowledge at the start so that maybe I could have foreseen or prevented some of these problems. I am writing this article to share my experiences with other teachers who might find themselves in difficult co-teaching situations and hopefully to prevent others from falling into one.

Starting out on the same page and being able to communicate with each other is a good way to begin a co-teaching relationship. This is how I felt when I worked together with my co-teacher at the summer camp. Although neither of us had taught a public school camp before, we knew what we were expected to teach and what each of our roles were because our school had a group meeting and specified these things before the camp started. In the case of my regular elementary school, I was trained at a workshop for foreign English teachers held by the Gangnam District Office, whereas my co-teachers had received their instructions from the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (SMOE). Thus, we were trained separately and had two different sets of instructions. One of my co-teachers, who I will refer to as “Linda,” and I had numerous disagreements regarding how we should teach class. Making matters worse, we had a language barrier and would struggle for hours discussing how to teach each lesson. This led to misunderstandings and frustrations on both of our parts.

Through reflecting on each class by writing journals, I had an outlet for my frustrations with Linda, and I also began to see the situation more clearly and objectively. I noticed how our emotions compounded the problems that began from different opinions and sets of instructions. When writing my journals, I noticed that there were times when our classes went really well, but then there were times when both of us were frustrated and had difficulty accomplishing our objectives. Both of us had strong leadership skills in the classroom and because we were used to teaching alone we were both used to being the one in charge. Without realizing it, we were involved in a subtle power struggle each time we taught. It took longer to pinpoint what made our lessons work really well. Eventually, I realized that when we both clearly knew what each of our roles were, we were

controlling the class together and did not need to struggle because we were managing different tasks. Even though we did divide the material into separate parts from the start, we never discussed who should be in charge of discipline when a student misbehaved or what we should do when it was our turn to step back. Finally, we spent an entire afternoon discussing these issues, and also the feelings of frustration which we both were feeling, but neither of us mentioned. As time went by, we began to understand more and more when we had to step back and how to support the one who was teaching. Solving the problem was rewarding, and now we work well as a team, but that was after a semester of struggle. We succeeded because of our determination and willingness to communicate. I feel that if both teachers are willing to try, the road can be difficult, but you will eventually find your way. People told me this my first semester, but I didn’t really believe them. However, I also feel that if my co-teacher and I had been trained together, the difficulty we had synchronizing our styles could have been reduced. My opinion is that if SMOE requires teachers to co-teach, they should have mandatory workshops where both the native and Korean teachers are trained together.

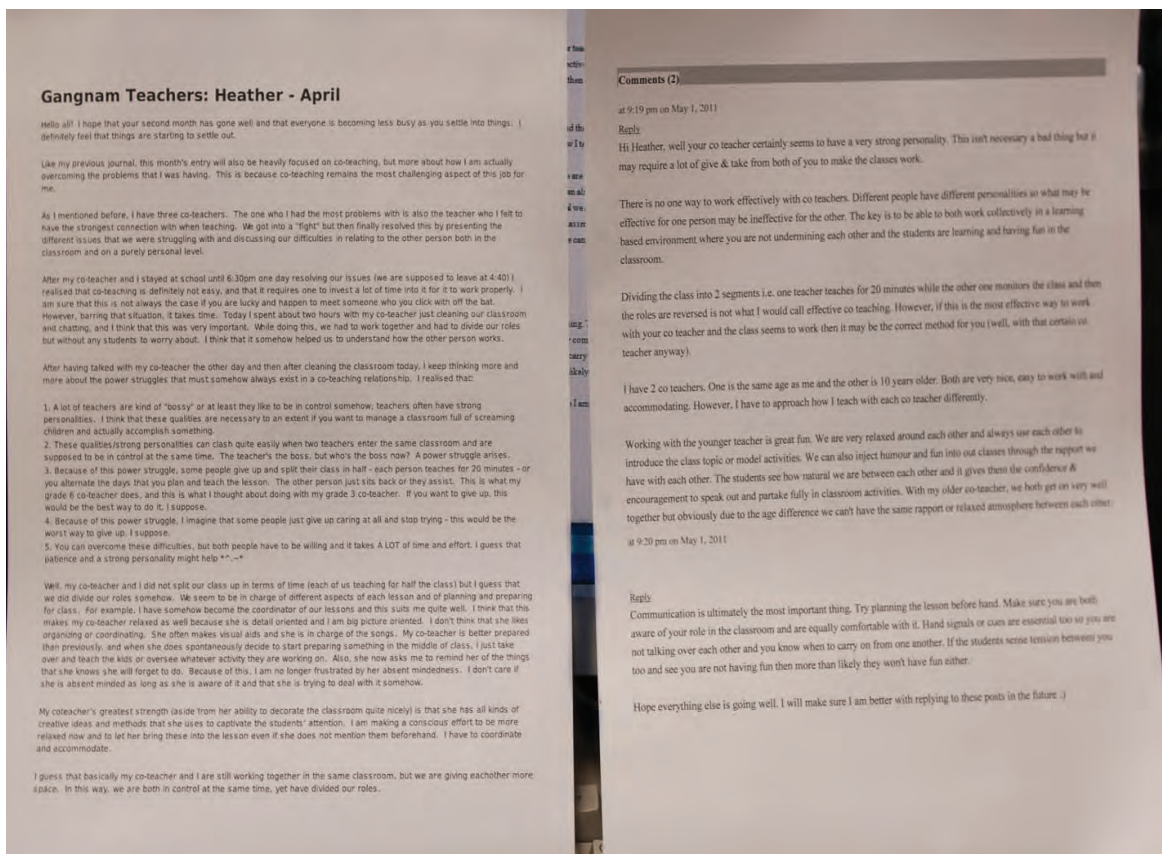
Reflecting on this experience, my feelings of intimidation carried over into the classroom. They negatively affected my ability to help improve the students’ English.

My problems working with a different co-teacher, who I will call “Alice,” have been quite different. From the very first day, she made it clear that we were to split the class in half – she would teach the first 20 minutes of class and I would teach the last 20 minutes. I admit there was a time during the first semester, when things were the worst with Linda, that I felt as if splitting the class in two was easier than trying to work together. But this method always caused me to question the purpose of co-teaching. Why were there two teachers in the room if one teacher just sat in the back and did nothing for 20 minutes? Overall, I did not like this arrangement and expressed my opinion on the matter. Alice responded by saying that this was the best way to do things and made it clear that it was not up for discussion. Being new to co-teaching, not really understanding my role as the foreign English teacher, and feeling that she had seniority over me, I felt lost. Again, I remember wishing that SMOE could have trained us together and defined our roles. At least that way, I could know where to stand.

From the start, Alice kept communication and interaction between the two of us to a minimum. In class, she would greet the students in Korean and have them greet her, but she never once included me in the greetings. This made me feel very awkward, but I did not say anything about it. She taught the students three times each week while I only saw

them once. Thus, I felt that the classes were hers, not ours. I also felt that Alice viewed me as a subordinate rather than as an equal, but I was too intimidated by her to say anything. There were certain things that Alice did in class, especially in terms of discipline, which I felt to be unprofessional or wrong, but I never once talked to her about them because I did not know how to bring these issues up. I told my friends and foreign co-workers how I felt, but I never went to my liaison teacher on this matter. I did not want to be a tattletale in regards to what I viewed as unprofessional behavior, and having already spoken to my liaison teacher about my situation with Linda, I felt that bringing up another similar situation would only reflect badly on me. Finally, nearly halfway into my second semester, I confronted Alice regarding not being treated as an equal, then spoke to my liaison teacher about the situation. Not doing anything for so long was my biggest mistake. Although I still do not get along with this co-teacher, I am no longer intimidated by her and feel better about the whole situation. I feel better knowing that my liaison teacher is there to listen and is capable of giving good advice. In retrospect, dealing with the situation earlier would have made my life a lot more pleasant. Perhaps Alice and I never would have gotten along, but because we split the class in half anyway, this was not necessarily a requirement.

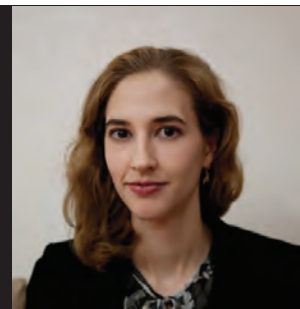
Reflecting on this experience, my feelings of intimidation carried over into the classroom. They negatively affected my ability to help improve the students' English. Yet at the same time, I feel that this experience has made me a better teacher. I questioned the purpose of co-teaching when I had to sit in the back of the classroom and do nothing but watch or daydream while Alice taught. But sitting there with the students really opened my eyes to what it is like to be one of them. This experience helped me to gain greater compassion and empathy for my students. Sitting in the back of the room as somebody teaches, and standing in the front of the room teaching present totally different perspectives. Furthermore, observing Alice's somewhat harsh disciplinary methods led me to question my own disciplinary strategies. It allowed me to rethink how much discipline is really necessary, how much or what kind is constructive and what is detrimental. I still have not found the answers to these questions and I had thought about them before, but this experience definitely gave me perspective. In this way, reflecting on my



co-teaching practice turned a negative work experience into a valuable learning experience. Maybe I was not able to turn the negativity around or to overcome my problems in the same way as I did with Linda, but at least I learned a lot!

Finally, this entire experience at a public school led me to question which of my difficulties were caused by linguistic and cultural miscommunication and which were caused by other factors. As an additional way to cope with my troubles, and also as a way to pass the time at my desk when I have finished planning classes, I have been reading up on Korean culture. One interesting book titled *Korean Business Etiquette: The Cultural Values and Attitudes That Make Up the Korean Business Personality* by Boye Lafayette De Mente contains some strong opinions, but also discusses different assumptions that Westerners and Koreans might have regarding how people should act in the workplace. After starting this book, I think that learning more about Confucianism and understanding concepts such as *jeong* and *kibun* - which are more complex than a simple dictionary definition might suggest - can help foreign English teachers to understand and get along with their Korean counterparts.

Heather Lynne Kwon currently works at a public elementary school in Gangnam. She has been working as an EFL teacher in Korea for six years at private institutions for elementary and middle school students. In Canada, she taught TOEFL and worked as a counselor for Korean high school students living abroad. This is her first year at a public school.

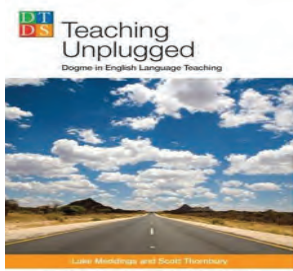


Book Review: Teaching Unplugged

Justin Trullinger takes us inside *Teaching Unplugged*

Book Review

Teaching Unplugged: Dogme in English Language Teaching



By Luke Meddings & Scott Thornbury
Delta Publishing, 2009
Pages: 104. (ISBN - 978-1-905-085194)

If you're reading this review, you may already be familiar with Dogme English language teaching. If you aren't, a little background may be in order. In early 2000, EFL teacher and writer Scott Thornbury published a piece titled "A Dogma for EFL." (IATEFL Issues, Feb/March 2000) In it, he advocated the application of the principles of the Dogme 95 cinema movement to English teaching. Very simply, Dogme 95 called for a back-to-basics approach to movie making. Thornbury called for a back-to-basics approach to EFL. He invited teachers to join him in a "Vow of EFL Chastity," and return to teaching that didn't rely on technology, grammar, or, most famously, teaching materials. Much debate ensued; in print, online, and in staff rooms of schools all over the world. *

This book, *Teaching Unplugged* by Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury, is the first book (that I know of) about Dogme in language teaching. To appreciate what it is, you first have to realize what it isn't. It's certainly not a textbook or coursebook. It isn't an activity book, though it does contain numerous useful activities for teachers interested in exploring the idea of unplugged teaching. Neither is it what is frequently, and often dismissively, described as "teaching theory." The best way to describe this book is to say that it's part of a conversation about what is really important in classrooms. It continues the conversation started nearly a decade before its publication with the first vow of "EFL chastity."

Teaching Unplugged is divided into three sections. Part A outlines the theories and ideas behind Dogme ELT. It describes the core values and principles that emerged on the Dogme discussion list online, and puts these in a broader context of well-known educational theories and theorists. My personal favorite quotation from Neil Postman's *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future* appears on page twelve. ** "What is the problem to which this technology is the solution?" In the context of *Teaching Unplugged*, a reasonable way to paraphrase this might be to ask "Do these classroom materials actually solve a problem?" This part of the book is enjoyable to read, especially if you've ever been

frustrated by an English class with PowerPoint, whistles, bells, and flashing lights, but no actual English communication. It makes it clear that teaching unplugged isn't just about throwing away your materials, walking into the classroom, and hoping for the best. It's a well-developed concept of teaching with a different focus.

Part B reads more like a how-to manual. It details strategies for unplugged teaching, such as "managing conversation" and "learning from lesson to lesson." For each strategy discussed, it provides descriptions and instructions for numerous activities for teachers to explore. These activities alone are worth the cover price of the book. The activities are simple, practical, and varied. I've tried several, and they tend to generate a lot of student conversation. The variety of activities is such that when you read this section, you'll find something for every class you teach. You'll also realize that "materials-light" (one of the key principles of *Teaching Unplugged*) doesn't mean "materials-free." It's sometimes more about how to use materials than whether to use them. This section also makes the important point that teachers can try unplugged teaching as much, or as little, as they feel comfortable with, without fundamentally altering their teaching styles.

Part C is about unplugged teaching in different teaching environments. It addresses many issues very relevant to teaching in Korea. The misperception that only native-speaking language teachers can be spontaneous enough to teach unplugged is discussed, and the challenges of teaching unplugged for a whole term, with a coursebook, and in different kinds of courses (ESP, young learners, one to one) are also addressed. This section was especially interesting to me, as it begins to clarify ways that unplugged teaching can work in existing teaching contexts without overly challenging the expectations of students, coworkers, or administrators. If you enjoyed the activities in Part B, and would like to unplug more of your teaching, this section discusses many questions you're probably asking.

From A to C, I found this book enjoyable, easy to read, and fun to use in class. It's also an important book for English teachers in Korea. More than in any other country where I have taught, we are fortunate to have access to rich and varied materials, resources, and technology. In many classrooms the materials, resources, and technology are the stars; the students, the audience. If you've ever asked how to get the spotlight on your students, maybe it's time to consider unplugging your teaching.

*For more information about the origins and development of Dogme ELT, you can visit the original yahoo group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/dogme/>

** Random House, 2000

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Expatriate Life

Ttompatz distinguishes pension and health insurance fact and fiction

One topic that has always been controversial among E2 visa holders revolves around the NHIC (National Health Insurance Corporation) and the NPS (National Pension Service). I will start with the NPS since it has a few more variations depending on where you are from.

First, how does it work? With a couple of exceptions - those being South Africans and those employed by a university and enrolled in a private pension plan - all employees are required to be enrolled in the NPS. Your contribution to the plan is 4.5% of your monthly salary and this is matched by your employer.

If you are from Canada, the USA or Australia, you are entitled to a refund of all contributions (both yours and your employer's) made into your account when you depart Korea. In effect, this amounts to 9% of your salary over the length of time you are employed. For your average E2 visa holder, based on a salary of 2.2 million won per month, this works out to a refund when you leave of about 2.376 million won per year worked.

Unlike your severance, that requires a full year worked before you are eligible to claim it, your pension contributions are yours from day one and there is no minimum period before you are eligible to claim your refund.

To claim your refund, you need to show your Alien Registration Card (ARC), passport, your ticket leaving Korea and the information of your bank account in your native country.

Once the NPS has ensured that all contributions have been made (in some cases this can take up to 90 days), your visa was in fact canceled, and you have departed Korea, they will forward the funds to you at the designated bank account.

The British, New Zealanders and Irish are still required to pay in but are unable to collect a refund. They are covered under separate bilateral treaties (<http://english.nps.or.kr/jspage/english/main.jsp>) and if you would like to know more about where your contributions go and how to get them on retirement, please take the time to read your respective country's treaty.

Now for a quick look at the NHIC. ALL employees are entitled to be enrolled in the NHIC (<http://www.nhic.or.kr/english/main.html>). This is the 50/50 medical deduction that is referred to in most contracts for English teachers. This is often, however, not the case and is one of the areas with the largest number of inquiries and complaints that I have had to deal with over the last decade.

If you do not have your NHIC booklet, you are not enrolled in the NHIC program, in spite of what your employer may have told you. The cost of being enrolled in the NHIC is 2.94% of your salary with your employer making a matching contribution. All unemployed dependants are also entitled

to coverage on your plan with no increase in your premium. There have been various schemes by employers where they pay 1/2 of your "medical expenses" and enroll you in supplemental private insurance (a scam), or they enroll you in the NHIC as a "private" enrollee rather than as an employee (to avoid paying their contribution), all so that they can get around this legal and contractual requirement.

What do you do if your employer is not fulfilling their legal and contractual obligations? First, make sure that this is indeed the case. You can't be enrolled until you have your ARC in hand. You should receive your NHIC booklet about 2-4 weeks afterward if everything is on the up and up.

If you don't have your NHIC booklet, then you may be the victim of an unscrupulous employer. You do have the option of filing complaints with the NHIC and NPS, but before you run off and make your complaints, there are some things to take into consideration.

In the case of the NPS, you will be required to pay all of your unpaid contributions dating from your entry into Korea and show proof of entitlement, usually by way of your contract. They will then go after your employer for their share. If you are unable or unwilling to pay your share first, they will do nothing.

The NHIC will also require you to pay all of your unpaid premiums dating from your entry into Korea before they will consider going after your employer. An additional complication arises if your employer has declared you to be a sub-contractor rather than an employee. This will also require a labor board (<http://www.moel.go.kr/>) tribunal to determine your legal status as an employee before anyone will act.

My column this time is unfortunately shorter than I would like due to space limitations, so if you have further questions, you can contact the NHIC and the NPS at the appropriate e-mail addresses and phone numbers found on their websites or, for minor issues, you can e-mail me.

"Ttompatz" has been in the ESL game for some 16 years, most of which were spent in Asia and almost a decade of which has been spent here in Korea. As well as working as a teacher he has also spent many years working as a volunteer at one of the foreigner help centers here in Korea as well as posting on the more common internet ESL forums. Contact him at ttompatz@yahoo.com.



Report Cards from the Edge

Jason Burnett



Best Submission from Previous Issue

"I left it in my folder, that I left in my violin case, that I left at my math academy."

- Dan Wiberg (via Facebook)

Report Cards from the Edge is intended to be a fun and interactive comic strip. We encourage readers to submit caption ideas and use the comics in class.

Send your captions to tecfeedback@gmail.com to compete for inclusion in the next issue.



Spring Issue Preview

Classroom management advice

Interview with Dr. B. Kumaravadivelu

Teaching on Jeju Island

And much more!

Look for it online at www.KoreaTESOL.org

Photo by: David Hasenick (www.pbase.com/dibh)