

The English Connection

A Korea TESOL Publication

Summer 2016, Volume 20, Issue 2

Volunteering:
The new frontier
of English experience

Plus...
Critical thinking:
The need for professional
development



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To promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons concerned with the teaching and learning of English in Korea.

Editorial: 20:2 Summer 2016

By **Julian Warmington** Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the Summer 2016 issue of *The English Connection*, KOTESOL's quarterly publication. Like all volumes and issues before, this set of pages is the product of many good people's hours of volunteer effort, time, and expertise, kindly and freely shared. Great thanks to all the ever ready-to-read editing and proofing team, the contributing writers, and also our resident talented cover shot photographer Steve Garrigues, who makes us all look even better than I'd imagined possible upon your first impression of the cover.



This issue is another wonderful example of the awesome diversity of ideas and experience constantly available among the local and expat TESOL scene in and around Korea. We open the features this issue with a lively contribution from the uber-active Gwangju chapter: from page 8, Nancy Harcar shares the value of getting her happy-looking students out and about and volunteering in the local expat community. Scott DeWaelsche asks us to consider the value of challenging students in a more cerebral vein. Read about how he teaches the asking of questions using critical thinking skills on page 11. In his description of a quick vocabulary exercise to shake up the regular routine of a course, Stewart Gray introduces the flavor of a Montessori influence on page 16. Tyson Vieira offers reflection on the value and potential of using short stories to teach English conversation on page 18. And finally Steven Schuit, John Healy, and Kate Connors present us with an appraisal of the value of their school's professional development program on page 20, nicely rounding out a worthy range of varied topics for one issue!

But even that glorious smorgasbord of delectable treats is not all these filled-to-bursting pages hold. The preeminent Tom Farrell continues apace with his regular column on professional reflection. In this issue, he ponders the concept of being a mindful teacher. You may find his musings on page 6. Our guest book reviewer this issue is Neill Porteous. On page 24, he introduces what appears to be a very worthwhile read of the simply titled *Classroom Management Techniques* penned by Jim Scrivener. Katie Jiyeon Lim wraps up this issue on page 26 with a step outside Korea, reminiscing of her fruitful time on the TESOL program run by Oklahoma City University. Finally, I was very glad to contact the Seoul Chapter's president, Ian Done Ramos. He kindly answered questions about his life in Korea as an English teacher, and his role as president of the capital city chapter. Read his replies on page 14.

Finally, a word of greatest thanks to Professor David Shaffer for the opportunity of working with the fantastic *TEC* team over the last two years. It has been both a fantastic opportunity, and a long overdue introduction to the microcosm of professional enthusiasm that is KOTESOL. One of my tasks has been to identify worthy successors, and Gil Coombe is certainly capable. I daresay his attention to detail and knowledge of written English will help take *TEC* to a whole new level, and I congratulate him on stepping up. With the ongoing support of the *TEC* team of ace editors and proofreaders, and you, the readers and writers of the KOTESOL community, this publication is in good hands. I look forward to reading future issues of this beautiful document of our times, ideas, and experiences teaching English in South Korea.

Julian Warmington

President's Message

By Lindsay Herron
KOTESOL President

The past few months have been quite busy for KOTESOL! First, we have been striving to enhance and expand our relationships with other ELT organizations, both domestically and internationally, with an eye toward improving ELT in Korea. As this issue of *The English Connection* goes to press, we are in the process of renewing our agreement with the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT), ensuring continuing opportunities for mutual support and the sharing of insights. International Conference Co-chair Sean O'Connor recently returned from the TESOL International convention in Maryland, USA, with great ideas for speakers as well as for conference administration. And in November, we will receive the official "captain's wheel" from the English Teachers' Association of the Republic of China (ETA-ROC), our partner organization in Taiwan, symbolically handing over to KOTESOL control of the next conference of the Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching (PAC), which we will host in conjunction with our 2017 International Conference.



We have also been making overtures domestically. This past spring, we signed memorandums of understanding with the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) and with the Applied Linguistics Association of Korea (ALAK), ensuring mutual promotion and a presentation spot at our respective conferences. In fact, the Gwangju-Jeonnang Chapter of KOTESOL will have its September meeting at the 3rd AILA East Asia and 2016 ALAK-GETA Joint International Conference, which will be held September 9-11 at Honam University in Gwangju. KOTESOL members will get a special discount on conference registration, so I hope some of you will take advantage! A special online registration form for KOTESOL members will be up on the KOTESOL website later this summer.

Also online soon will be pre-registration for KOTESOL's annual International Conference, which returns in October to Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul. I am particularly taken with this year's International Conference theme, "Shaping the Future: With 21st Century Skills," as it invites us to consider what kind of future we want for ourselves and our students, as well as the roles we play in crafting our vision of tomorrow.

This reflection on the future seems to align serendipitously with the philosophy behind our new special interest group (SIG), officially announced at the National Conference: the Social Justice SIG. I am delighted to see KOTESOL starting to expand its role in the quest for social justice, not just through this SIG, but also via a new equity policy currently in the works for our online job board. As teachers, we are cultivating global citizens and the leaders of the future. Our actions can help to create critically and socially aware students – students who are empowered to control their own learning, question the status quo, and take action in their local communities. Part of this process is taking the lead and modeling social justice in our own lives; we must be willing to challenge entrenched ideologies, speak out against injustice, and address with compassion and courage the problems facing us today, both locally and globally. With the inauguration of this SIG and our new anti-discrimination job board policy, KOTESOL joins ELT organizations such as TESOL International and IATEFL at the forefront of global advocacy for equity and social responsibility.

As your summer gets underway, I hope you will take a moment to reflect on your path as an educator: where you have been, where you are going, and what impacts you would like to have along the way – both on your students and the world of ELT as a whole. What legacy will you be leaving behind? Keep fighting the good fight, and I look forward to seeing you at a KOTESOL event sometime soon!

Lindsay Herron

“Who I Am Is How I Teach”: The Mindful Teacher

By Thomas S.C. Farrell

The general purpose of engaging in reflection for all teachers is to get some kind of awareness of who we are as teachers, what we do, and why we do it. Becoming more aware of who we are as teachers means exploring our own inner-worlds through contemplation. In my previous article, I suggested that engaging in contemplative practice means consciously observing yourself in the present moment without any intervention (“letting go”) so that we can become more aware of who we are as human beings (“letting come”). I asked you to try it. In this article, I will give some detailed ideas about how teachers can bring this one step further by practicing mindfulness through four meditative techniques: insight meditation, mantra, visualization, and movement meditation. All these can be practiced alone or in combination as they are all very much

“...when teachers contemplate while teaching, they not only became more mindful of their own attitudes towards their classroom practices but also became more mindful of their students’ emotions and experiences.”

connected. Research has indicated that when teachers contemplate while teaching, they not only became more mindful of their own attitudes towards their classroom practices, but also became more mindful of their students’ emotions and experiences.

Mindfulness

Contemplation can help us reach this state of mindfulness where we can experience an enhanced awareness of our thoughts,

feelings, emotions, and perceptions. It is important for us to become aware of our perceptual experiences as a detached observer so that we can also begin to examine them in light of our conscious experiences as teachers. I now present four meditative techniques: insight meditation, mantra, visualization, and movement meditation for the mindful teacher.

Insight meditation (or vipassanā, which means to “see” things as they really are) allows us to focus on what happens in each moment as it happens. We can accomplish this by just focusing on our breathing: when we breathe in and out, we just concentrate on this act and nothing else. Then, as we focus on our breathing, we can gain insight into the “self” as we watch various thoughts and emotions come and go because we do not react to any of them. Eventually, these thoughts and emotions get weaker and finally disappear. In this way, we are practicing insight meditation.

Mantra means “word” and the meditative activity is to use a “word” repeatedly (out loud or internally), either while sitting or in motion, as we continue with our normal daily activities. Singing out loud could also be a form of mantra meditation as the act of singing can lead to an inner calmness and also be a way of relaxing the mind (and even the body before teaching a class). Sing your favorite song out loud ten minutes before entering your next class. After you sing the song, note any physical or mental changes before and after singing. You could even get your students to sing out loud as well and see if their disposition towards learning has changed.

Visualization is a meditative technique where the practitioner visualizes a place (new or old) or a task, and remains in a general

state of openness while using this place as a type of sanctuary where you feel safe because this sanctuary is unique to you. As you see yourself inside this sanctuary, you become calm and just sit there and totally relax. Because this sanctuary is unique to you, it reflects who you are as a person as you “see” yourself relax, and then you begin to notice your personal visualization. We gain knowledge of the self as a result of meditating on our visualizations because these, too, are unique to the person who is meditating. You can try this before class and see if your attitudes (to your teaching, your students, and learning) change. You could also get your students to try it through English as it is all learning.



Movement meditation includes any body movement as meditation. The most popular types of movement meditation include yoga and its many different forms, tai-chi, but even a simple routine such as walking or jogging can also be considered movement meditation. My own preference for movement meditation is my practice of the discipline of *taekwondo*, a Korean martial art. I studied this wonderful art when I was in Korea for 18 years, and for me, the calming nature of the pre-stretching routine, along with the practice of kicking and other body movements and postures, allows for enhanced awareness of self through attention to mind, body, and spirit while in action. Apart from the physical benefits of feeling “high” after intense movement (the effect increased endorphins in the brain), I also have noticed that any negative pre-practice thoughts and energy have been fully transformed into positive thoughts and

energy as I go through the movements. Teachers can do simple stretching exercises or whatever body movements that relaxes the body and mind before they enter a class, or they can take a walk/jog during lunch hour and experience meditation through movement. Try some movement activities before you enter your next class, and note any physical and mental changes before and after your movements. You can also have your students move during class as a way to get them focused, and this is especially useful for teachers of young learners.

Conclusion

Mindfulness is the opposite of mindlessness, and unfortunately, much of our world gives us too many examples of the latter rather than the former. Mindful teachers have a different attitude than mindless teachers, and in this article, I have outlined and discussed four different meditative techniques that can help you be a mindful teacher. I hope at least one (if not more) of these appeals to you and helps you contemplate on who you are as a teacher. My favorite is movement meditation and my mantra is “Who I am is how I teach” (Farrell, 2015).

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Wonder Woman Works in Gwangju: Student Community Volunteers

By Nancy Harcar

This journey for me started years ago, as I was just starting to teach middle school in Gwangju, South Korea. One of the social studies teachers approached me for help at the end of the first semester. “The Director,” as he would later be known to me, was very involved in the local theater scene in Gwangju, and he had an idea to put on an English language production of the *The Sound of Music*, casting a number of our students as well as a few other Korean teachers and semi-professional Korean actors for the adult roles. The Director wanted me to be the production’s “language consultant.” In essence, I would help the cast run their lines in English, correct any pronunciation errors, and generally help the actors sound more fluent.

I accepted even though I knew it was a big commitment, just from the fact that the practices would start in July during our school’s summer break. After school resumed in the fall, practices would happen after school — starting at 3:30 and sometimes continuing until 8 p.m. at night. I was in for some long days ahead. I jumped at the chance nonetheless — I DID love theater and musicals, and it was a great chance to

introduce my students to a fun way to learn and practice English. Besides, I already pretty much knew all the songs and dialogue by heart.

I eventually invited three other native English teachers to the school to better help the students and run lines for various scenes. The four of us would just sit at a table and chat away at “normal” speed, using slang and idioms, etc., and we didn’t think anything of it, until later. One of my students remarked afterwards that hearing me talk “so fast and strangely” made her uncomfortable. I realized that our students rarely interacted with us in an authentic situation. How was I to help them with this problem?

Similar predicaments occurred several years later while teaching an “Airline Services Interview” class at Kwangju Women’s University as an assistant professor of English. While planning syllabi questions like “Have you ever worked in an all-English environment?” “Do you have any foreigner friends?” and “Do you have any experience working in service positions?” kept popping up on websites specializing in airline interview study help. These questions were unsuitable considering the limited experience my students had with native speakers. I then tried to figure out how to get my students the work experience and access to English-speaking foreigners that they just didn’t have, beyond the weekly session with their native teacher in the controlled environment of the classroom.

By this time, I had lived in Gwangju for five years and knew it had a large and vibrant foreigner community, full of people who volunteered and built the community through shared resources and experiences. I noted how people interested in activities not currently available, created those activities themselves, and there are plenty of folks in the community that will pitch in to help. I had gotten involved in a number of different organizations myself, such as fundraising for the Sunbin Orphanage, volunteering at the



Two of Nancy’s students doing hair and makeup for the Gwangju Performance Project’s production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Gwangju International Culture Day, and many other smaller events.

While trying to figure out my students' experience issues in the interview class, I was involved in the planning for our second Alleycon event, which is Gwangju's version of a comic convention for sci-fi and fantasy geeks. It's a fun event where we get together, wear costumes, play games, and raise money for Sungbin Orphanage and the Michael Simning Ndwara Scholarship Fund.

As luck would have it, the planning committee chose Kwangju Women's University as the location for Alleycon 2014. Since the venue would be much larger than for Alleycon 2013, and with over 200 people expected to attend, we would need volunteers to help out, so I decided this would be the perfect time to give my students a chance to get some sorely needed volunteer hours, while interacting with a diverse group of foreigners all at once. The goal for the students would be to get some real educational or professional experience while taking part in the community in a positive and constructive way.

I advertised the opportunity around campus with flyers for the event and spoke with various professors of the Airline Service and the Childhood Early English Education departments, since those students generally seemed to be the most advanced English speakers and the most in need of real practice of their skills.

A lot of factors made volunteering for this event beneficial for the students. The event took place at their school, and they also had a familiar and trusted professor on-site to guide them. Most of the foreigners in attendance were also teachers and would be patient and understanding of my students' shyness and hesitation in communicating. It was also an interesting cultural event for my students to witness and take part in, including board game contests, video game competitions, role-playing games, and a costume contest.

We had around 30 folks signed up by the day of the event, including two Korean professors from other departments who were fluent English speakers and were able to explain the instructions if any of the Koreans did not understand something. Having Korean professors also helped the students feel more



Nancy Harcar showing her other true profession: Dressed as Wonder Woman at the 2014 Alleycon event posing with some of her student volunteers.

relaxed since they had someone they could talk to in case there was a problem or they needed help understanding a situation. My students helped at the registration table, with security, room monitoring, running public service announcements over the sound system, setup and teardown, and as cashiers for the food truck.

All in all, volunteering for this event went well and helped my students in the following ways:

- Volunteer experience to list on their resumes, experience interacting with large groups of foreigners in an English environment and making foreign friends.
- Practicing their English skills with native speakers and taking part in spontaneous English conversations that happened in organic ways in a variety of situations throughout the event.
- Witnessing and taking part in a cultural experience involving geek culture, board games, role-playing games, and a costume contest.

- Fulfilling volunteer hours required to keep scholarships.
- For the airline service majors, it was important that they had their first experiences with many foreigners in a safe and friendly environment rather than at 30,000 feet on the day of their first flight.

“The goal for the students is to get some real educational or professional experience while taking part in the community in a positive and constructive way.”

With this successful event completed, I decided it would be a good idea to lay out a set of parameters to consider before organizing something like this again with students:

- Events should be helping out non-profits or charity organizations so that students wouldn't be working for free when someone else was making a big profit.
- Students should be working in safe environments such as schools, children's orphanages, or art galleries instead of places like bars and clubs.
- To ensure the safety of the students, organizers of events I will not attend should be contacted to find out more about the activity and to make sure there will be people I trust supervising my students.
- In order for the students to get as much out of the experience as they can, an effort should be made to match the students' talents and majors with the events.
- Participation certificates will help students use the experience toward requirements for scholarships, so make sure event organizers can supply them. If not, make blank certificates you can fill out for them and sign.
- These opportunities do not need to be restricted to volunteer experiences, but can generally be any English-enhancing experience such as the Pecha Kucha presentations held in the evening in Gwangju, Toastmasters gatherings, and KOTESOL events.

There were also some considerations for my own involvement that I made sure to do to help myself:

- Ensure you can justify the experience as a good, educational event for the students in case there are any questions from the school.
- Let the office manager or the director of your department know what you are doing, in case there are questions from other departments about the activity.
- Show your work. At my school, I took over half of a large bulletin board in a hallway and posted pictures of my students with foreigners at the various events they participated in. I list new volunteer opportunities there all the time, and the students can stop by and look whenever they want. It helps me look good to my employers, but I also showed these experiences were needed and sought after by the students.

Overall, it has been a successful program for my students and the organizations they volunteer for. My students get valuable experiences to add to their resumes while interacting with native English speakers in authentic situations. The non-profit organizations benefit from having trained and knowledgeable volunteers assist with their events. It takes a bit of work on your part to help organize things, but keep an eye out for ways your students and the community can benefit from a student volunteer program in your city.

The Author

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sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. She will be posted at An-Najah National University in the West Bank beginning in September.

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Activate Critical Thinking: Higher-Level Questioning in Small-Group Discussions

By Scott A. DeWaelche

In a Korean EFL classroom, instructors often seek effective methods for engaging students in activities that go beyond repetitive textbook language. One approach involves the incorporation of higher-level questioning in small-group discussions to promote critical thinking (CT) in real-world conversations. Despite some disagreements, considerable support exists in the literature for the effectiveness of CT pedagogy in an East Asian EFL context (Davidson & Dunham, 1997; DeWaelche, 2015; Riasati and Mollaei, 2012; Shin & Crookes, 2005; Stapleton, 2001).

The posing of carefully constructed questions is a key component of lessons seeking to promote critical dialogue in the classroom. Mazer, Hunt, and Kuznekoff (2008) acknowledged this in a study of CT instruction among university communications students, noting that teachers should encourage students “to become active critical thinkers who ask questions, critique evidence, and most importantly, learn through the process” (p. 194). The authors in this study stressed that the use of higher-order questions aids students in constructing their own understanding and contributes to more effective communication and development of a larger vocabulary. Teachers can succeed with this approach when they design quality questions, prepare students appropriately, promote student engagement, and target student age and proficiency levels when creating lessons.

Bloom’s Taxonomy and Higher-Order Thinking

Higher-level questioning is more than just asking questions. To be successful, it requires posing carefully-constructed questions that activate critical thinking and encourage students to produce original ideas. Introduced in *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl,

1956), Bloom’s Taxonomy (and a later revised version) is a six-level hierarchy that clarifies differences in skills and abilities beyond simple recall of knowledge, and at the top of the scale, differences in levels of critical thinking.

The hierarchy ranges from knowledge recall to information analysis and evaluation, and finally to the creation of new knowledge. The top levels of the scale represent higher-order thinking (Nordvall & Braxton, 1996), and can be a useful tool for educators when coupled with questions designed to target them. The revised taxonomy emphasized strong, active verbs (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), and such verbs are the key to creating good questions aimed at the upper levels of Bloom’s scale (see Figure 1). Table 1 presents several examples of question stems for use with levels four, five, and six, and many web-based resources offer access to more such examples.

Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy



Figure 1. Active Verbs. Adapted from Anderson & Krathwohl (2001).

Direct Instruction of Skills

Korean EFL students often report a lack of familiarity with student-centered approaches where they are asked to speak up and share their own ideas, and they often initially feel uncomfortable with such tasks (DeWaelche, 2015). In an effort to alleviate their

Table 1. Sample Question Stems for Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy

Question Level	Question Stem
Analyze	What inference can you make ...? How would you classify ...? What is the relationship between ...?
Evaluate	Which is more important, moral, valid, and appropriate? What are the pros and cons of ...? Judge the value of ...
Create	What way would you design ...? Can you propose an alternative ...? What would happen if ...?

discomfort, it is imperative that instructors pre-teach CT and questioning skills. From the beginning of the course, it’s important to expose students to Bloom’s Taxonomy, provide them with the relevant verbs and question stems, present examples, and model the dialogue. In my own university-level courses, I introduce these skills on the first day of class and continue reinforcing them for several weeks before I employ them in group discussions.

It is only after they are at ease working with the questions that I ask them to use the question stems to create their own questions independently.

“The most creative lessons are likely the most engaging.”

Students are much more likely to participate when they are comfortable using the tools necessary to succeed in an activity. Students should also have a firm understanding of the topics for discussion before being expected to use CT and questioning skills in group conversations. This can be accomplished by presenting and discussing all materials related to a topic and by frequently checking for understanding to accurately gauge student preparedness for these activities.

Maximize Student Interest and Engagement

Whether it is in a general EFL course or an EFL course that focuses on a topic or discipline, it is important to consider student interests and backgrounds when designing lessons to foster engagement in CT tasks. Research indicates that there is a positive correlation between interest and engagement in student learning activities (Dahlgren & Oberg, 2001; Shin & Crookes, 2005). Even in situations where teachers are obligated to follow a designated curriculum and textbook, they should make every effort to choose topics that students find comfortable and interesting. When using an established text, take advantage of the unit themes and topics that appeal to students or creatively use them as a springboard to other relevant, more interesting subjects.

In cases where more topical flexibility exists, teachers can get creative with discussion topics, even eliciting ideas from students. In a study of CT instruction among Korean high school students, Shin and Crookes report that students excelled using materials they produced themselves since they included Korean social and cultural issues that reflected their own interests. Clearly, student input in lesson materials will likely stimulate interest and improve engagement in student-centered CT activities using higher-level questioning.

Consider Student Levels

Both grade level and language proficiency should be considered when designing lessons involving CT and higher-level questioning. While they are appropriate for nearly all ages, lessons involving such approaches should be adapted for complexity for younger students. More significantly, however, students must be able to communicate to succeed in these activities, so teachers should consider the language proficiency of individual students and of the entire class. Although the methods discussed here aren't recommended for beginner to pre-intermediate students (DeWaelche, 2015), differentiating instruction can allow less-proficient students to engage in CT activities. A higher-level question asking students to assess the pros and cons of school uniforms, for example, could be made more manageable for some students through the use of a graphic organizer as a means of presenting their ideas. Thus, attention to student levels is integral to the success of the approach.

The use of higher-level questions to activate critical thinking can be a valuable tool for teachers seeking to encourage capable students to go beyond what their language textbooks typically ask of them. In addition to group discussions, these strategies can be adapted for a variety of speaking activities including debates, speeches, panel discussions, mock courts, and role plays. The most creative lessons are likely the most engaging. When educators create good questions, teach CT and questioning skills, keep students interested and engaged, and pay attention to student levels, they may help to foster an environment where dynamic, thoughtful conversations are common in their classrooms.

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KOTESOL People: Ian Done Ramos

Hailing from the Philippines, Ian Done Ramos has been president of the KOTESOL Seoul Chapter for a year. In that time he has overseen a continuation of the already existing professional development opportunities for KOTESOL teachers. As an active member of the KOTESOL community, Ian Done Ramos has been busy, but *TEC* managed to catch up with him for a chat.



Ian Done Ramos

TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?

In the Philippines, I worked as an English language instructor in the Languages Department of the College of Arts and Sciences at Cebu Doctors' University. For four years I taught academic courses such as critical thought, basic research methods, advanced grammar and composition, Philippine literature, and world literature; I also worked as a research mentor for graduate students. Before landing a job at the university, I was the academic coordinator and an ESL instructor at a language institute where I taught mainly Korean students for four years; this is where I was first introduced to Korean language and culture.

TEC: What was your first impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane, and when was that?

Coming from a tropical country with what I imagined to be a vastly different way of life than what I would experience in Korea, I was not sure what to expect when I arrived in the spring of 2009. I was immediately struck by the apparent richness of the country. I experienced this feeling in different ways; for one, I could not help but notice that everywhere seemed to have central air conditioning, which was a new experience for things; for example, while walking to a bus stop one day, I saw a great many things that were aesthetically pleasing. Things as simple as the flowers, the trees, and the interesting architecture all seemed really great!

TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea and what do you do now?

There are several things I enjoy about my life here, for example, my teaching hours; I only teach 12 hours a week, and the rest of my time is spent reading and preparing class materials. I find this to be relaxing and far less stressful than my life before Korea. All of my classrooms have computers and whiteboards; the free availability of technology has also motivated me to create my own website for learners to use. Speaking of technology, I cannot say enough great things about internet connectivity here. It's amazing!

Most importantly, though, are the people that I have built strong and lasting relationships with during my time here. One of my close friends (a Korean I met in the Philippines) and his family have taken really good care of me here. They treat me as if I were a member of their family, and on special occasions, they often invite me to join them and celebrate Korean culture.

I spend as much of my free time as possible exploring Korea. However, the rest of my time is spent thinking about my teaching practice and being involved with the KOTESOL community.

TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?

In 2013, the University of Suwon invited me to join the Department of English Language and Literature. I was asked to teach content courses for graduate and undergraduate programs, and so I prepared materials and started teaching. However, I felt that something was missing on my part: I lacked a method for the effective implementation of sociocultural approaches in my classes. In my attempt to find a way to remedy the situation, I found out about KOTESOL.

In February of 2013, I attended a KOTESOL workshop run by Stafford Lumsden. It was amazing because it was my first time attending a workshop with primarily native speakers from diverse cultures. The topic was error correction, which was one of the areas of study for my MA

thesis in the Philippines. From that day on, I started sharing my ideas while attending monthly workshops; these efforts have proved to be invaluable.

TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL, and why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?

With KOTESOL I have come to realize that teaching is not only my job, it also involves the building of community, which helps me to attain greater personal and professional growth. During the three years that I have been working within the KOTESOL community, I have developed a deep passion for my work. I have learned that a great deal of perseverance is necessary for the work that we do as teachers to show positive results. I am now a more humble, more dedicated, and more determined teacher, and it is the KOTESOL community that I would like to thank for helping me to develop my practice in this way. It is this mindset that has helped me to reshape my attitudes and behaviors towards my work and life.

I strongly encourage newcomers to get involved with KOTESOL. The activities that KOTESOL supports will provide them with alternative ways to help students develop their emotional, intellectual, and social awareness, and to help them create the knowledge to face life's challenges with confidence. For example, becoming a KOTESOL member can help novice teachers to develop a sense of importance of their new roles by helping them create practical models for their students. These models will help learners to develop their social consciousness, a deeper sense of responsibility, and a direction in both their studies and their lives. Attending workshops and socializing with other KOTESOL members can also have a positive and lasting effect, which will benefit new and experienced teachers, their students, and their institutions.

TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?

I think that I am happiest about the work I have done to organize the annual conference for KOTESOL as well as monthly workshops at Sookmyung Women's University. Apart from being the current president of Seoul KOTESOL and a member of the research committee, I have also started contributing articles to *The English Connection*. Helping people and sharing my

expertise in the field of language education with both members and non-members of KOTESOL are two things that make me very happy.

TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?

As KOTESOL grows, I believe it should offer more opportunities for teachers to experience evidence-based knowledge and techniques which may contribute to their professional development. This can be accomplished by providing increasingly relevant, interesting, and research-based workshops. It should try to instill in its members the relevance of KOTESOL and the value in continuing with their memberships; to demonstrate to non-members that membership can be seen as a tool for sharpening their classroom experiences; and to help members and non-members alike to build on their practices in ways that produce positive results in their classrooms and in their students' lives.



I would also really like to see a continuation and strengthening of support for the professional and academic community so that KOTESOL can increasingly act as a catalyst for change. This can be done by creating a variety of new opportunities to ignite members' critical responsibility, commitment, and passion. Moreover, to increase our total exposure to current members and the greater academic community, including both domestic and visiting educators and academics, I think that KOTESOL should look into producing an indexed bi-annual journal publication. I believe that the addition of a professional publication such as this will improve conditions for learners and educators, while also contributing to the knowledge pool of the field of language education in general.

A Montessori-Style Team Study Activity

By Stewart Gray

Using the following activity design, a teacher can hand over control of the flow of a review class period to the students. The students work in groups to complete a series of prepared activities, ideally at their own pace and level, with minimal restraint or control by the teacher. As the design is completely open for all activity types, it can be used with students of any age and level, though it is best with classes of a decent size as it involves teamwork.

In preparation for a review class, the teacher identifies different areas of study for students to cover for review (around five may be sufficient to fill one 40–50 minute period). These might include pronunciation, conversational speaking, reading, vocabulary, grammar, and/or discussion – anything deemed appropriate.

The teacher then gets a number of sheets of A4 paper with each sheet corresponding to one area that needs review, and on each paper writes an outline for an appropriate review activity. The activity can be anything, including a game, free-talking time, topic discussion, etc., though it is advantageous if it is something that students have experience doing in a previous class, or something

“It...empowers the students to manage the flow of the class and their level of study, and encourages student collaboration and teamwork.”

simple enough that they will have no problem understanding what is expected. Clear, simple instructions (maybe including L1 instructions) for the completion of the activity should be written, with the goal being that students will understand what to do and be able to do it without you, the teacher, having to become directly involved.

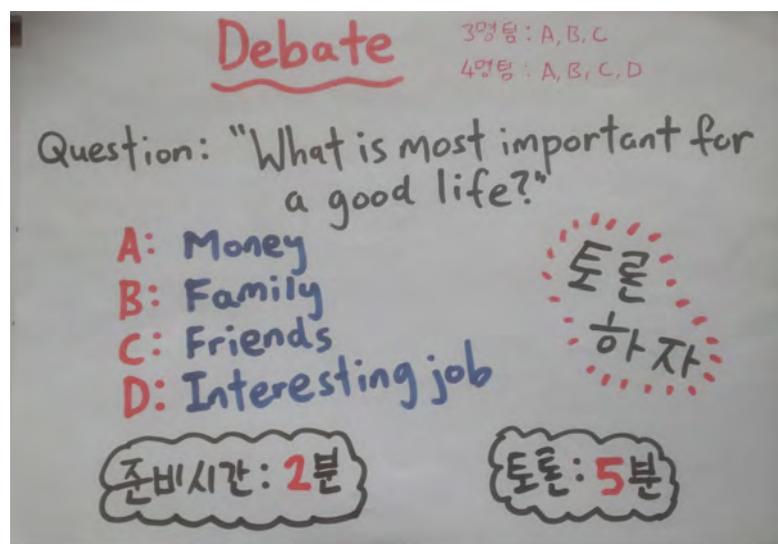


Figure 1: An example activity sheet for debate practice.

An example set of instructions for a vocabulary practice activity might be the following: “(a) Choose 10 words from the textbook that you would like to practice. (b) Write them. (c) Memorize them. (d) Test your friends.” For such an activity, students might be allowed to choose any words they wish, and to work at their own pace. If, however, you wanted to set a time limit, you could write “five minutes” on the paper, and tell students at the start of class that they are responsible for managing the time themselves using their phones (or watches, in less technologically liberal educational settings).

Armed with five activity papers (plus, if you are at all like me, a sixth for “game time”: five minutes play time with a deck of cards provided), the teacher enters the classroom

before class time and arranges the desks into sets, with enough chairs in each set for one team of students. The number of students on each team will, of course, be dependent upon class size. (Hint: try to design activities where the exact number of students does not

teacher's job is to facilitate, ensuring that everyone is on task and understands what they are doing; perhaps give a little guidance; and perhaps suggest the activity a team might like to do next. Fifty minutes later, the class ends; the students have managed their



Stewart with a team of students.

study time largely by themselves from start to finish, and the teacher has spent little to no time lecturing at the front of the room.

This is the principal reason I have used this activity so many times; it lets me escape from the whiteboard, empowers the students to manage the flow of the class and their level of

matter, like time-limited "free conversation," or with different rules for teams of varying sizes, in case it is difficult to predict exactly how large each team will be). Upon each set of desks, the teacher places one of the activity papers they have prepared.

study, and encourages student collaboration and teamwork. It provides a healthy shake-up to normal class proceedings, and in my experience, students enjoy and appreciate these things as much as I do. To any teacher who occasionally finds standing at the front of the classroom and lecturing an oppressive experience, I recommend you give this a try.

When the students arrive, the teacher will instruct them to wait, not to take a seat, but instead to immediately form an appropriate number of teams. Once the teams are formed, the teacher gives the following instructions: "I've prepared five/six activities for you to do in teams. Choose one and sit down together. Read and follow the instructions. When you are finished, stand up, choose another activity, sit down and do that one, too. When you finish all five/six activities, you're done. If you need to do the same activity as another team, that's okay, just find some free desks, sit down, and do it. The order you do the activities in does not matter. If you have any questions or problems, I'm here to help."

Throughout the class period that follows, the

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Short Stories and L2 Learners

By Tyson Vieira

In English conversation courses, instructors would likely never consider teaching literature. However, the effectiveness of a tool or technique depends on how the teacher uses it. A literature project, for instance, can be used as a student-centered, interactive experience in conversation courses. In order for this activity to be successful, teachers need to introduce the literature enthusiastically and systematically. As language instructors, our role is to guide students toward a path of autonomous learning and self-discovery. Literature can be a tool for finding such a path.

Technique

When experiencing English literature for the first time, L2 learners should feel “successful, having accomplished something substantial if they read a complete work with understanding and enjoyment” (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009, p. 251). I credit my success in this task to Professor Linda Gajdusek and her article, *Toward Wider Use of Literature in ESL: Why and How*. In this article, Gajdusek (1988) explains a technique which divides the classroom literature experience into four steps: pre-reading activities (background information and vocabulary), factual in-class work (answering whom, where, and when), analysis (aspects of structure, the why’s, theme, and style), and extending activities (highlighting the ideas and situations found within the text).

Choosing a Text

It is important to choose a text that provides a challenge but is not so overwhelming that it discourages students from the future exploration of English literature. Depending on the text’s length, a short list of words (or just a few sentences) could alter a student’s overall comprehension of the text. According to various linguists, the reader must know and understand at least 95% of a text’s words to successfully comprehend the full story (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).

The story should also be relatable. For example, I used the text *Too Small Paul* with my 3rd-grade elementary school students. The story is about a short young boy named “Paul,” who has a tall older brother. Paul’s brother and his taller older

friends play different sports and games that Paul is too short to play well. When it starts to rain, however, Paul has an idea to play hide-and-go-seek indoors, and because of his small size, he is the best at the game. My students expressed interest in *Too Small Paul* because it included appealing visuals, sports, and the feeling of being small and young in a world of taller and older siblings and adults.

1st Step: Pre-Reading Preparation

After choosing a text, it is important to provide background information to help the students approach the text successfully and prevent misunderstandings. However, it is important not to give away too many details of the story. If the students have too much information, it could dampen their excitement and the pleasure of discovery during the initial read. Vocabulary work is an efficient way to prepare the students without revealing too much of the story. Assigning thematic essay topics is also a beneficial pre-reading activity. In my adult classes, for example,

“As language instructors, our role is to guide students toward a path of autonomous learning and self-discovery. Literature can be a tool to finding such a path.”

I used Ernest Hemingway’s short story *Soldier’s Home* and had the students discuss the following questions taken directly from Gajdusek’s article: “Is there a situation in which a child should not obey his or her parents?” and “Can a person love his or her parents and still disobey them?” (Gajdusek, 1988, p. 237). I often use this “discuss before reading” approach before the initial reading to prompt students with vocabulary from the reading and encourage them to “guess and

explore" the material. Without questions and discussion before reading, there is a chance that the students could misread the cultural attitudes of the text, which might hinder the goal of teaching culture.

2nd Step: In-Class Work

This step involves the students' initial reading of the text. The in-class work could take less time depending on the text's difficulty, class proficiency, and familiarity with the story. However, establishing the text's observational facts is crucial because it gives each student an opportunity to test out assumptions and impressions regarding the text during the class process of discovery and interaction. Plus, the lower-level students are being supported indirectly, giving them enough time to process and participate with the rest of the class (Gajdusek, 1988).

If this is the student's' first English literature experience, the factual observations could be limited to who, where, and what happens in the text, depending on their proficiency. During the initial reading, the teacher could ask students various questions to help evaluate and determine comprehension. After the initial reading, the teacher could ask the class to highlight the characters, locations, and plot of the story.

3rd Step: Analysis

Now that the facts have been established, the students can begin to dive into the *why's*, and "to develop their own attitudes toward the characters, values, and situations of the story... to move beyond information to involvement and experience" (Gajdusek, 1988, p. 245). My activity of choice is journaling, which allows for individual exploration of the text. The prompts can be basic, such as, "What happened in the story and why?" or more complex, such as questions about the writer's style or underlying message. Another activity I use is asking each student to choose before class a line from the text where they believe the climax of the story occurs to discuss with others in class.

4th Step: Extending Activities

This final step in introducing English literature to L2 learners introduces creative writing and in-class group work. I ask groups to come up with relevant and creative responses to the story. Such extension activities "must be structured so that the students will succeed only if they have understood (or are motivated by the activity to understand) the writer's assumptions about character, conflict or values in the piece" (Gajdusek, 1988, p. 252). I

usually ask students to create scenes for the story that are not revealed in the text. This activity requires students to create a scene openly and freely without contradicting the story. In addition, I ask the groups for textual evidence to support their scenes.

Conclusion

I have found Gajdusek's four-step technique to be consistently successful when introducing students to English literature. However, time constraints and institutional policies could affect the implementation of this detailed, step-by-step process. My activities are just a few of a long list of possibilities that a teacher can use. Through a variety of activities, teachers can help guide their students to a path of autonomous learning and self-discovery. Gajdusek (1988) states, "Unless we structure the classroom experience so as to make the students discover what is there, we are not really teaching literature – or anything – in ESL" (p. 254). If teachers introduce English literature enthusiastically and systematically, our students will be able to take a written story and create a new interactive experience in the classroom.

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The Importance of Professional Development: Preaching to the Choir?

By Steven Schuit, John Healy, & Kate Connors

"There is a growing awareness that improvements in the quality and standards of pupils' learning are, to some extent at least, reliant upon improvements in the quality of teachers' career-long learning." — K. Armour and M. Yelling

The benefits attributed to professional development (PD) programs seem to have broad advocacy among teaching faculty, administrators, and researchers, yet some institutions have not implemented a formal process supporting PD for their teaching staff, possibly depriving their educators, and thus their students, of valuable opportunities for improvement (Radyn, 2015). This article will discuss PD, describe the PD program at Yeungnam University, and present faculty reactions to the program.

The concept and practice of PD would seem to align itself well with a profession whose mission and focus is to help students develop themselves, and it would be reasonable to expect the practice of PD to resonate well with teachers and administrators. PD can be considered an uptake of both formal and informal learning opportunities that deepen and extend teachers' professional competence, including knowledge, beliefs, motivation, and self-regulatory skills (Baumert & Kunter, 2006). More succinctly, PD may be considered an essential mechanism for deepening teachers' content knowledge and developing their teaching practices (Smith & O'Day, 1991). While PD is often found to improve teacher practices and student performance, other advantages have also been linked to PD, namely, in the areas of group leadership, job satisfaction, and motivation (Hoyt, Halverson, Murphy, & Watson, 2003).

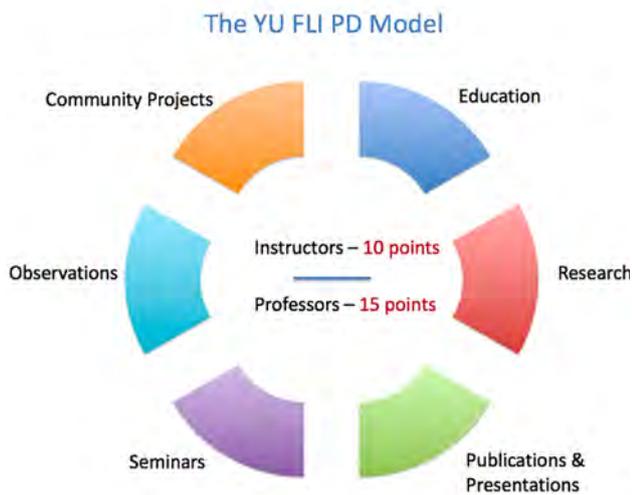
Recent research conducted in the Republic of Korea (Radyn, 2015) suggests EFL faculty at several universities (N=7) consider PD to be important. Of 39 faculty members responding to the question "Is PD important to you?", 33

(85%) answered "yes." In a survey conducted by the authors at Yeungnam University's Foreign Language Institute (N=33), 79% of the teaching faculty agreed that their PD had a direct impact on student learning, while 89% agreed that PD should be ongoing and continuous. While these findings show that support for PD is high, more debatable is the format an effective PD program might take and the support required for it to be sustained both in terms of program leadership and funding.

Yeungnam University's Foreign Language Institute (FLI), comprised of 47 faculty members, is clear about its expectations for PD. Its employment contract states: "The professor is required to participate in professional development programs throughout the contract period." Furthermore, the contract stipulates: "The professor shall attend regular faculty meetings held by the FLI." The contract thus makes it clear that PD is expected by the institution.

The program for PD at Yeungnam University's FLI provides faculty members with a range of options for development activities while establishing both minimums and guidelines via a "point scale" framework. Activities include seminars, teaching observations, community projects, research, publications, presentations, and other educational endeavors. Each activity, proposed by a faculty member as part of their PD plan, accrues points determined in agreement with the faculty member and the department's PD coordinator. Instructors are expected to earn 10 points each year, while professors must earn 15 points.

There are varied criteria for allocating points.



For example, enrollment in a master’s or doctoral program is worth ten points over the course of the year. Keeping a reflective practice journal is worth five points. The community projects category includes point allocations of ten and five points, respectively, for fulfilling the roles of the chief editor of the *YU EFL Journal* or for serving as the coordinator for the English Help Desk. Publication in this KOTESOL publication is worth five points, while presenting at a local conference is valued at three points.

The YU PD Program, despite being mandatory, has largely received favorable reactions from faculty. Ninety-seven percent of the faculty taking the aforementioned survey agreed that they were able to increase their professional knowledge through the program. Ninety percent agreed they were able to enhance their skills as a teacher. Eighty percent agreed that they were enjoying their professional development and having fun. When asked “How does professional development contribute to your teaching effectiveness?”, representative responses included the following: “Professional development provides an outlet to address areas of need in terms of development as a teacher. These are unique to the individual and having the ability to choose that area is important,” and “It prevents stagnation, which results in greater awareness as a teacher and innovation in the classroom.”

Faculty members who were surveyed made suggestions in several areas for improving the FLI PD Program. More than half of the

faculty responding (53.4%) disagreed that their “progress was being monitored by a third-party who provides them with feedback”; this was the understood role of the PD coordinator. Additionally, 60% disagreed that they were “provided with some financial support for their professional development activities.”

Although 94% of faculty agree that they “understand the FLI Professional Development process and what is expected of me,” it seems that more clarification is needed regarding the role of the PD coordinator. It would appear, for example, that there might be a gap between the amount of development monitoring and/or feedback expected by instructors and what is actually given. Additionally, there are limitations to the amount of financial support provided for development activities. Reimbursement for development expenses is limited to \$1,000 for all 47 faculty members and that amount can only be used towards participation in the annual KOTESOL International Conference. In light of the out-of-pocket costs for faculty engaging in PD, this could reasonably be seen as a minimal amount of financial support. Some might argue that a program that requires PD should provide more than \$1,000 in support for all faculty for a once-a-year event. However, another argument is that many development activities are cost-free and therefore do not require any financial support.

Some EFL teachers across Korea report that their institutions offer little or no support for professional development. The authors have received comments such as “Non-existent,” “Limited,” and “We don’t have any opportunities for professional development at our university” when inquiring on social media about the state of PD at other institutions. “Perhaps as the department grows we will, but not at the moment,” another teacher reported. Other professors speak more favorably about their PD programs: “We have a really extensive PD program for our EFL faculty,” and “We share our lesson materials in a Google Drive for each unit. I’m trying to start informal classroom observations.”

Not surprisingly, these informal responses suggest a mix of institutional support for PD

programs. They range from “You are on your own” when it comes to PD to more formal kinds of university support, such as the YU program described in this article. Given the evidence that thoughtful PD programming benefits faculty and students, what is perplexing is why more institutions do not encourage and support PD. Additionally, strong PD programs have the ability to attract prospective faculty, making such programs potentially strong recruiting tools.

As with many educational initiatives, successful implementation requires strong visionary leadership, effective sponsorship, and ongoing sustained commitment. As department chairs and coordinators are often kept very busy, PD may not be perceived as a priority. But as we have stated here, PD programs have the potential for widespread positive impact on the attainment of quality education outcomes.

We think our findings suggest further research opportunities, warranting a comprehensive study of PD at the tertiary level in the Republic of Korea. A further look at how university administrators view PD would also be beneficial. If advocating PD is indeed preaching to the choir, why then is it falling on so many deaf ears?

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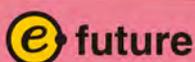


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Classroom Management Techniques

Jim Scrivener.
Cambridge University Press (2012).

Book Review by Neill Porteous

Whether you are an instructor who has been teaching languages for some time, a newly qualified teacher, or someone jumping into the deep end of classroom teaching with no prior experience, classroom management is likely to affect you at some point. If you feel like you need to freshen up your classroom techniques or you are searching for an idea to improve an aspect of your class, Jim Scrivener's award-winning *Classroom Management Techniques* (2012) may be a useful addition.

Jim Scrivener is one of the well-known names in English language teaching and has written a number of student books and teaching methodology books.

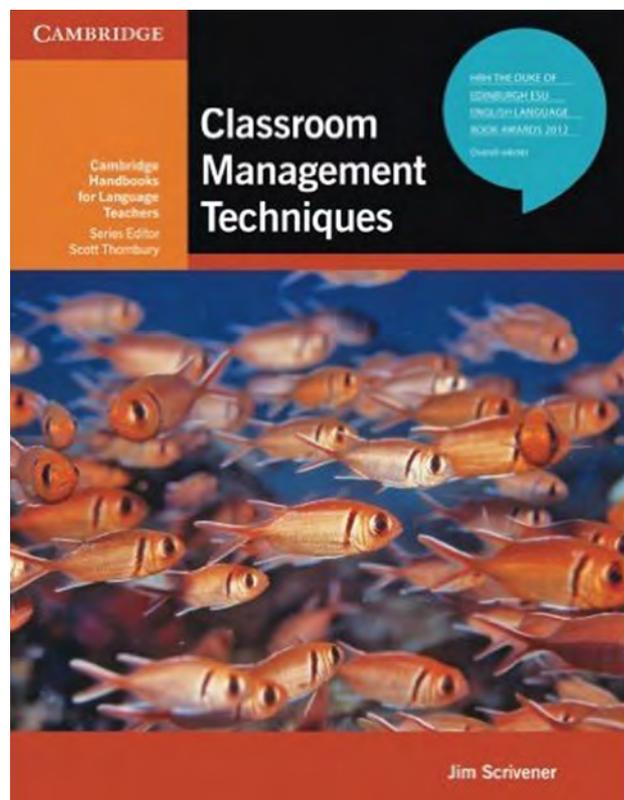


Jim Scrivener

Among the latter, *Learning Teaching* (1994/2005) is well worth a read, too. *Classroom Management Techniques* does not relate to any particular teaching methodology, but instead focuses on the conscious choices we make and how they affect the atmosphere of our

language classrooms. An important point to note is that Scrivener does not use the typical definition of classroom management associated with controlling behavior and maintaining discipline. Instead, he uses it in the sense of organizing the class to create an engaging learning environment.

The book is divided into seven main sections. These are the classroom, the teacher, the learners, key interventions, facilitating interaction, establishing and maintaining appropriate behavior, and the lesson. Most units are made up of six to ten sections, and each section follows a similar formula. A classroom management comment or question that might be uttered by a teacher unhappy with a particular situation opens the section



and sets the scene. The aim of the section is stated and subsequently introduced in more detail. Scrivener then offers various techniques to address the aim of the section, before concluding with some reflective questions.

In order to get a better understanding of the book, it is worth looking at a section in more detail. One topic that is likely to be of interest to many teachers is learning students' names. The aim of this section is stated as "To learn and remember the names of all students in your class as quickly as possible" (p. 76). The beginning of the section covers some of the excuses given by teachers for not learning names, such as there being too many students or the task requiring too much time. Scrivener then states the importance of teachers knowing the names of their students, as well as of students knowing the names of their classmates, in order to acknowledge each other as individuals and to show interest. Following

the introduction, fifteen different techniques to learn names are then presented clearly and succinctly. Suggestions include using name cards or labels, a room map, a photo poster, and even using bingo. The wide variety of techniques offered means that it is likely readers will find at least a few suggestions that they will want to experiment with. The section then concludes with questions that invite consideration as to whether any of the techniques that have been offered may work better than the methods currently being used by the reader.

The accessibility, variety, and conciseness of the sections are definite strengths of *Classroom Management Techniques*. Rather than being a dense academic text, the book is full of suggestions for teachers needing some quick ideas or solutions. The content is easy to read and digest due to Scrivener's excellent use of plain English, combined with easy-on-the-eye page layout, with suggested techniques being placed into individual boxes, the use of clear diagrams, and plenty of white space. In addition, the wide variety of subjects included should mean that the majority of teachers' queries will have been covered. Locating a specific topic is simple due to the inclusion of a detailed contents section and index, and Scrivener also includes a lot of cross-references to related sections in the book, making it easier to connect ideas.

“The large number of suggestions means that teachers can choose the ones that suit their teaching style.”

While there are no real issues with the textbook, as it meets its objective of offering a wide variety of techniques to address many different situations, some instructors may want more in-depth information. In this case, the inclusion of a suggested reading list towards the end of the book should be sufficient to direct those readers to more detailed material. Also, the large number of suggestions means that teachers can choose the ones that suit their teaching style: some techniques may not be suitable

for a teacher personally or culturally, may not seem to be sensible, or may not match the reader's ideas about classroom management. For example, in my personal case, some of the gesture techniques suggested for use in class

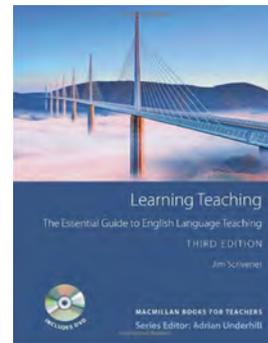
do not suit my teaching philosophy. The idea of stretching my hand out at waist height to indicate that an individual's answer was not quite right feels like I am wasting an opportunity to verbally interact with the students even if the language level of the

class is low. Of course, what doesn't appeal to one instructor may work well for another teacher and vice-versa.

With regard to how to use the book, Scrivener suggests two ways: when a classroom management problem arises, and when wanting to develop professionally. Having used the book in both ways, the variety, brevity, and ease of reading make it easy to find a solution to an issue or to systematically read through the chapters. While the book certainly doesn't have all the answers, as the author makes a point of noting in the introduction, it does offer numerous suggestions to get one thinking about how to further enhance the classroom learning environment.

References

- Scrivener, J. (1994). *Learning teaching*. Oxford, UK: Heinemann.
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The Author

Neill Porteous teaches in the Department of British and American Language and Literature at Sangji University. His interests include language attitudes and the global spread of English.



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It Only Takes a Year to Change Your Life: Oklahoma City University OKTESOL Program

By Katie Jiyeon Lim

I am currently an English instructor who teaches adults at corporations in Korea, and recently I have started working at some leading global companies, such as Hynix and Samsung. Do I earn big money? Yes. Am I content with my job? Certainly. Of course, there is pressure to teach such educated business people, but I am very happy with my career. You might be wondering how I became this content and won such a position? What helped me to survive in this dog-eat-dog world?

The answer is the TESOL program at Oklahoma City University, USA, where I completed my training. Before pursuing this master's degree, I had already taught English to adult students. However, without having had much expertise, I often faced numerous challenges in my classroom, which I neither anticipated nor knew how to solve. But now, I am excellent at dealing with the dynamics of the English language classroom, having been well prepared

with techniques and strategies to help my English language learners. And all this expertise required only a year in the Oklahoma City University (OCU) OKTESOL Program. You can have this same opportunity.

In the OCU program, you begin by reflecting on your teaching philosophy. Then, after finding your interests, you write an annotated bibliography, and you research a list of citations to books, articles, and other documents in your field of interest. After that, you share your ideas with your peers, and upload your writing on an online dashboard, known as D2L (Desire to Learn).

Your professor checks your work and offers you feedback, and you continue in the course. The ability to research, receive feedback, and build your resume with numerous chances to teach in local schools, as well as work with faculty during your study at OCU throughout your



The poster features a red and blue circular logo on the left, a blue globe on the right, and a grid-patterned globe at the bottom right. The text is centered and uses various colors (blue, red, black) for emphasis.

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time there, provides you with an opportunity to really improve your teaching, fix your teaching skills, and prepare for the job market.

Within the course, you will be kept busy completing journal assignments, making presentations, writing and demonstrating your lesson plans, making portfolios, participating in discussions, and researching to write literature reviews, many of which are later used to write your thesis paper. The final step in your pursuit of the MA degree is to take a comprehensive exam, and passing that leads to your graduation.

“The ability to research, receive feedback, and build your resume with numerous chances to teach in local schools, as well as work with faculty during your study at OCU throughout your time there, provides you with an opportunity to really improve your teaching, fix your teaching skills, and prepare for the job market.”

You might be surprised at how all this could be done in a year. I still cannot believe how I got through it in one year. But you are not alone, so you don't need to worry. There are always people and places on campus to help you. Class assignments and projects are often conducted in supportive ways. Mostly,

you work in pairs or in a group; thus, you have many fruitful interactions, which helps you to sharpen your thoughts.

Also, your professor is happy to make time for you in order to provide feedback, and even to listen to your problems about studying in a foreign country, as in my case. In addition, on a weekly basis, there are discussion clubs, in which you can reflect on current TESOL topics. The university also has a learning center that employs native English-speaking students who volunteer to help you improve your English proficiency.

Above all, endless researching and paper assignments make it possible to broaden your understanding of TESOL and focus upon your specific interests. And such courses are sequenced in a well-organized curriculum for a year, including the possibility of taking classes in the summer. So you can see that you have sufficient time to think, research, share, get feedback, and modify your ideas.

You also have many opportunities to put your ideas into practice by making presentations, having discussions, and teaching in local schools and institutes, which improves your confidence and professionalism for your future career.

Finally, you are expected to study hard to pass the comprehensive exam, since this provides you with a review of everything you learned. When you do that, you will graduate as an expert in your field.

To be honest, it is a lot of work to obtain your master's degree in TESOL through the Oklahoma City University program, as it is in any good program. However, once you overcome the challenges, your life as a teacher will change for the better, because your efforts will definitely pay off. I did it and so can you. I suggest you give it a try.



The Author

Katie Jiyeon Lim

majored in Tourism and French in college and gained an MA in TESOL. About ten years ago, she couldn't even speak a word in English, but now she teaches English to adult students. She



is interested in pedagogy and methodology, especially with regard to student motivation.

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