The English Connection

A Korea TESOL Publication

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The English Connection

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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
The Winning Language

By Dr. Andrew White Editor-in-Chief, *The English Connection*

Ruti Aga, from Ethiopia, recently won the Women's Daegu Marathon with a time of 2:21:07. An impressive feat. A couple minutes after crossing the finish line, Aga, still breathing heavily but sporting a huge winning grin, was interviewed at the media area. The Korean interviewer asked her about the race, while a translator translated into English. "How do you feel after winning the marathon?" Silence from Aga. Again the questions came in Korean, translated into English. "How was your run?" Aga kept her smile and said nothing but a simple "no English." What followed was an awkward back and forth between the interviewer and translator, asking and answering their own questions in both Korean and English, all with nary an expression from Aga, save the beaming grin. When they finally realized the futility in going any further, they congratulated her again and Aga left the media backdrop, unfazed and still beaming.

The Korean media seemingly had done nothing wrong. An English translator was provided, and even the Korean interviewer was able to switch over to English. However, the assumption, or gamble, was that Aga spoke English. And that was the problem, at least for everyone but Aga.

Despite English being the medium of instruction in most regions starting with Grade 7, the current state of English in Ethiopia is that of a prestige language. However, despite the popularity and prestige, the majority of students fail to attain adequate English language skills for basic communication. The main contributing factors to Ethiopians' low English proficiency levels are foreign language anxiety, questionable teaching, lack of natural English exposure outside the EFL classroom, and the discrepancy between private and urban localized schooling and the more rural and government school counterparts.

Sound familiar? Anyone teaching in Korea would nod their head and say, "Same here."

East Africans' domination of long distance running mirrors Korean womens' domination of professional golf, specifically the LPGA, America's organization for female golfers. In 2008, while there were 121 international players from 26 nations on the LPGA Tour, 45 of them were from South Korea, a number that was also dominating tournament victories. And the low English proficiency levels by Korean women at award ceremonies and press interviews was apparently a problem – so big of a problem that a plan to make English proficiency a requirement was created.

"All we are asking," LPGA commissioner Carolyn Bivens said in a 2008 statement, "is that in the three designated situations that are very important to the success of the LPGA and its players – pro-ams, winner acceptance speeches, and media interviews – the players must be able to communicate basic sentiments in English." The commissioner's proposal for mandatory English came from her desire to "brand" the LPGA as an American-based business model. "If these players don't take this step [and learn English]," Bivens told *Golf World*, "their ability to earn a living is reduced. They will be cut out of corporate and endorsement opportunities."

The controversial plan was quickly dropped. "What if Korean players don't want to be branded in an American sports league?" critics argued. "What if they just want to play and win?" Other's pointed out the diversity and international spirit the LPGA was attempting to portray, in contradictory light of the English language requirement. "Next year, there will be LPGA events in Thailand, Singapore, China, Korea, and Japan, and the tour has its eye on India and the Middle East as well. Will Americans who win in those countries be expected to give their speech in the local language?"

The two examples I've given, Ethiopian runners and Korean golfers, are comparable in a few ways: organized athletics, international stage, national dominance, and… a struggle with English. The marathon interview resulted in confusion, and the LPGA policy resulted in controversy. If anything, it highlights the complexity of English as an international language (EIL). The debate over the role of English internationally is fraught with contextual issues and has no simple answers, although the resulting policy usually lies between English as a lingua franca and English as language imperialism.

In the cases I've mentioned, should English be the lingua franca of the sport? Doing so would draw greater global attention, more personalized athlete voices and personalities would arise, and media promotion and sponsorship funding would skyrocket. Think of how pleased the interviewers would have been, the more colorful and diverse the media coverage of athletes, the back-slapping with sponsors and gabbing for the cameras. And the hometown national pride on the world stage.

Or the opposite, English imperialism? These are champions at the international level. How dare any reporter or official insist they speak English? They're too busy running, training, competing, and winning. Wouldn't the time taken away from training in order to study English put them at a disadvantage over their English-speaking competitors? Ethiopia and Kenya have dominated men's and women's marathon running since the 1960s, so where is the policy to make Amharic or Swahili the required language for the international marathon organizations and the media?

EIL proponents often talk about "the English spread" (Widdowson, 1997) amidst the national identity of countries in the outer and expanding circles of English. In this global era, it's a compelling, often controversial process between those that promote the language and those who chose, or are forced, to learn it. But for Aga and Korean golfers in the early 2000s, they refused in their own ways, for better or worse. Have the sports grown from it, or stagnated? I don't know.

I also don't know what Rugi Aga would have said, had she been given the chance to speak in her own language on the winner's podium. But I do remember her winning smile, and that, for me, is an international language of its own.

Celebrating This Semester: A Toast to KOTESOL's Triumphs

By Lindsay Herron KOTESOL President

As the lazy dog-days of summer draw near, KOTESOL is still at full steam – and we have a lot to celebrate as the spring term winds down.

First, the 31st Korea TESOL International Conference (#KOTESOL2024) was a smashing success. We had around 400 participants from about 25 countries, not including the numerous educators across the globe who accessed the conference's abundant free online content (pre-recorded sessions, digital posters, and even an asynchronous online plenary from Guy Cook). For the first time ever, a complimentary lunch was provided for all pre-registered participants, and I overheard oodles of praise for the Korean, Western, and vegan options offered. The basement area of the Prime Complex, where registration, poster sessions, and sponsors' booths were, was always buzzing, thanks to the ready availability of free coffee and snacks, charging stations, rest space, and interesting people.

The variety of booths was also quite enticing; personally, I enjoyed many lovely conversations with our sponsors and also purchased some handmade ceramics at the inaugural KOTESOL members' booth. The Social @KOTESOL2024, our annual gala event, also garnered extensive praise. Held in the Han Sang Eun Lounge on the seventh floor of Centennial Hall, the event boasted around 120 attendees, a delectable selection of hors d'oeuvres (including many vegan options) catered by Spoon Seoul, stunning skyline views, and copious amounts of wine. I'm sure everyone ate their fill and made new connections before taking the last shuttle back to the official conference hotel that night! Gratitude to the conference team for the thousands of hours they invested in this conference – and indeed, to everyone who participated. I hope you had as much fun as I did!

Also at the conference, multiple awards were announced – and that's worth celebrating, too! Congratulations to the following award recipients: James "Jake" Kimball, recipient of the 2024 Reflective Language Teacher Award; Nicolas E. Caballero and Meghan Yu, recipients of the Research Paper of the Year Award for their article "Using Self-Determination Theory to Examine Motivations of Korean EFL College Students Informed by Korean Studies" in the *Korea TESOL Journal*; Yutaka Fujieda, recipient of the Best Paper Award for "Analyzing the Felt Sense of Writing in English" in the *KOTESOL Proceedings*; and Steven Adoranti, recipient of the Article of the Year Award for "Value the Process: Writing in the Age of ChatGPT" in *The English Connection*.

Another thing to celebrate this semester is the launch of a new quarterly publication, *KOTESOL Happenings and News* (*HAN*). Many years ago, when I first got involved in KOTESOL, *The English Connection* included a supplement, *TEC News*, that delved into chapter and committee affairs. I used to love reading the information in *TEC News*, fascinated by the plethora of workshops offered by chapters and intrigued by glimpses into KOTESOL's inner workings. I wondered if I would ever run for office in KOTESOL, or if I could ever entertain ambitions of representing the organization overseas. Today, *HAN* is a kind of reformulated relaunch of this early publication. In greater detail than ever before, *HAN* delves into what our chapters and SIGs are doing; explores the work of our national committees (and the concomitant opportunities and advantages they create); and showcases the accomplishments of our members, from significant milestones in their lives – retiring, completing a doctorate, publishing a book, receiving an award, etc. – to their KOTESOL endeavors, including taking out a lifetime membership or representing us overseas. Gratitude to Dr. Andrew White, the editor-in-chief of *The English Connection*, and his team for taking on this challenge and creating such a delightful paean to the many tendrils and triumphs of KOTESOL! If you haven't read the first issue yet, I highly recommend it. For inspirations, aspirations, and insights into what KOTESOL has to offer – and what you can offer KOTESOL – look no further.

Finally, KOTESOL is celebrating new connections. Most recently, we've teamed up with English Scholars Beyond Borders (ESBB) for a multi-day national conference, the 2024 ESBB International TESOL Conference & KOTESOL National Conference, to be held in October in Gwangju. Proposals are being accepted on a rolling basis now through July 31; in fact, we've already lined up in-person concurrent sessions by presenters from Japan, Korea, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, and more. The conference welcomes a wide variety of topics, but we especially encourage sessions related to the conference theme, "Transcending Borders, Building Bridges: Compassion, Connection, and Criticality in the 21st Century." The topic is timely and important – and ideal for KOTESOL to spotlight the cutting-edge work our members are doing in peace studies and related areas. Indeed, we're pleased to announce that both Kevin Kester and Jocelyn Wright will be representing KOTESOL as featured speakers.

What do you have to celebrate this summer? Send us your achievements; we'd like to celebrate with you in the next issue of *HAN*! Please also consider submitting a proposal to the national conference. We hope to see you in Gwangju soon!

Teaching as Storytelling: An Appeal for a Narrative Approach to Education

By Stewart Gray

This is my plea for stories in the classroom. I believe that stories are among the most powerful tools we have as teachers to engage and educate students. I also believe that many aspects of a lesson can be improved by redesigning them in a story-like way. In this article, I will lay out some of my reasons for believing this as well as some approaches for incorporating storytelling into lessons of all kinds.

Stories as Schemata
I must have been studying for my MA TESOL when I first encountered the term "schema activation." Back then, I took it to mean "reminding students of stuff they already know so they can learn the new stuff more easily." I had no sense of what the word "schema" meant. Now, I tend to think of a *schema* as a network of interconnected ideas.

When students encounter ideas in isolation, they may struggle to comprehend those ideas and retain them in memory. However, when they link ideas together, they weave an intricate spiderweb of connections inside their own brains (that's how I visualize it), and the structure of the web holds the ideas in place. That is, students are more likely to understand and remember ideas that are linked schematically. This brings me to my first reason for advocating stories in the classroom: A story is a schema. Fictional stories, with their characters, scenes, and plotlines, form a world within the human mind where all elements are connected schematically (Simpson, 2014).

Now, perhaps you are not a teacher of fiction. Fear not! I believe that teachers of all stripes can make use of narrative-like activities to enhance the "schematicity" of the lesson content. For example, if you're teaching grammar, you could deliver the grammar point within a story, and then encourage students to make stories of their own as practice. If the stories in question can be funny, or personally meaningful, then even better for enjoyment and retention. An excellent tool for this purpose is Rory's Story Cubes, which is a storytelling game consisting of a set of dice with different icons on every side. A player (student) rolls the dice and must produce a short story based on the icons that appear face-up. This can be done verbally or in writing, alone or in collaboration. Crucially, an English teacher can specify the grammar that should be used (e.g., "Tell your story in the simple past" or "Use modal auxiliaries"). Thus, students incorporate the grammar into a meaningful structure while engaged in an enjoyable, creative, and communicative activity. A quick note: If you'd like to try this in class but don't have the budget to buy physical dice, search "story cube generator" on Google.

Meanwhile, if you're lecturing on a complex topic, tell a story about the topic, or tell a story that exemplifies the relevant concepts/theories. For instance, some students in my literature class struggled to understand the Ancient Greek concept of "peripeteia" (reversal of fortune) in tragedy. But then, I told them about Oedipus, a great and beloved king who discovered over the span of one horrendous day that he had (spoiler alert) murdered his father and married his mother entirely by accident. Understandably, he then gouged out his own eyes and left his city alone in despair. That story made the concept much clearer.

In fact, whatever you are teaching, I recommend you pause to ask yourself: Could this somehow be a story? Could tax law be a story? Could Spearman's rank coefficient be a story? It's worth thinking about, as stories can encapsulate and exemplify even quite difficult concepts in a schematic form that is arguably more natural, comprehensible, and even enjoyable for students than plain explanation/lecturing. Indeed, as stories are so often fun and memorable, we might ask: Can whole lessons be stories?

A Narrative Lesson Structure
Beginning in 2022, I found myself facing a new professional challenge. I had to deliver lectures. And not just any lectures: 80-minute, theoretical lectures. As a long-time teacher of conversational English, I was immediately uncomfortable. How could I speak so long without boring and confusing the students half to death? Worse still, the content of each lecture included a variety of ideas that lacked any obvious relationship to each other.

My response to these issues was to approach lecturing as a form of storytelling, i.e., "(the) interactive art of using

words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener's imagination" (National Storytelling Network, n.d.). To achieve the effect of "revealing elements" and "encouraging imagination" as in a told narrative, I designed my lectures with the following principle in mind: Each part of the lecture must end with a concluding question, and the following part of the lecture must answer that question.

The idea behind this principle is to give the lecture (or any kind of lesson) a narrative flow – what Exley and Dennick (2009) called a "serialistic" structure. Each part is a scene to be followed logically by the next, and students (as the "audience") are encouraged to see how each scene fits into the larger plot. For instance, perhaps I must give a lecture that includes the works of Edgar Allan Poe on the one hand and the format of the "short story" on the other. Once I've finished talking about Poe and the engrossing darkness of his work, I will ask students a question out loud: "Poe's stories are wonderfully Gothic, but why are so many of them so short? Can we think of any reasons that shorter horror stories could be even more effective than longer ones?"

By posing this question and inviting students to discuss it briefly, I hope to encourage what Agosto (2016) called "ongoing cognitive engagement" with the lecture-narrative and create explicit connections between different "scenes" (i.e., topics) to improve coherence. Thus, I can transition from talking about Poe to talking about short stories without worrying that students will be confused by the apparent change of topic. By explicitly interrelating

I believe that teachers of all stripes can make use of narrative-like activities to enhance the "schematicity" of the lesson content.

these topics, I represent them as elements of a common schema, and by presenting them as a series of linked "scenes," I aim to give a narrative coherence to my lectures. In other words, I treat the lecture itself as a single story, and all the disparate contents are elements in that story.

This approach requires some thinking on my part. I need to decide in advance how to order the contents to permit the most natural, logical transitions and to consider how I'm going to phrase the transitional question. It can be challenging to do so when the ideas to be presented are disparate. However, the main thing is this: I want to avoid any sense of my class contents being random or isolated. This is an anxiety I developed early on as a teacher. In my earliest days in the profession, when I taught English to kids, if I had five minutes left at the end of class, I would often give them a wordsearch to do. Why? Mainly, to fill the five minutes.

In the years since, I've sometimes planned class activities that may have had some pedagogical value but were effectively disconnected from the other tasks of the day. Students would finish a worksheet, and then I'd give them a card game. Why did I do it in that order? Whatever reason I may have had, I'm confident my students were unaware of it. To them, my English class must often have appeared to be a random series of events. I've seen a lot of university lectures that gave a similar impression: The lecturer talks about theories, examples, and historical context but makes no clear connection between these different elements. If lectures as an

educational genre have a bad reputation, I believe that this incoherence and lack of connections is a major reason for that.

A narrative lesson structure offers an alternative. We can aim to order our lesson contents and tasks so that they follow each other in a purposeful, meaningful way like scenes in a story. Moreover, we can make the logic of this ordering explicit as a storyteller might. As an example, imagine an English class in which the teacher says something like this to students: "Now that we've learned some new words, it's important that we keep them in our memory. So next, we're going to play a card game to help us remember the words." Discourse of this sort may seem redundant, but it can help students understand the coherence of our lesson design. Otherwise, the risk is that they will not see any point to the tasks we give them.

> **I speak as though Michael Halliday were as heroic as Achilles, and systemic functional linguistics were as captivating as the siege of Troy.**

We can also take a cue from storytelling and ensure that our lessons open in an eye-catching manner. We can begin class by telling the students a joke, or something surprising or shocking (relevant to the topic, of course). The same is true of the ending. An impactful final thought, or a quote, or a last question to think about can give the lesson a sense of conclusion and tie everything together – that is, rather than the lesson just ending abruptly. Ideally, students will leave the lesson feeling that every task had a purpose, and that every idea they heard and discussed was part of something larger, like scenes in a story.

Enthusiastic Storytelling to Combat Student Disengagement

In truth, I want my lessons to be like stories because stories are interesting, and I'm terrified of student disengagement. These days, I occasionally hear it said that we should make education as "addictive as social media" or as computer games. I have misgivings about such sentiments, but I cannot help but notice that education is often not addictive in this way. Quite the opposite, in fact. When I recently told a friend that I was teaching a literature class, she told me that not only did she hate literature class at university, but far worse, she had come away with a permanent dislike of poetry. Such student experiences confuse and dismay me. How can we be teaching wonderous things like language and literature, yet students do not see the wonder? There is no singular solution to this, but I believe storytelling can contribute to improving matters.

For example, perhaps you're planning to provide students with a real-world example to illustrate some theory or another. Instead of just presenting the example, I suggest you tell it like a story. "Long ago, a brave and ambitious researcher named (such-and-such) set out to discover…"

When I do this myself, I aim to make even the driest, most vexing theories seem a bit like epic poetry. I speak as though Michael Halliday were as heroic as Achilles, and systemic functional linguistics were as captivating as the siege of Troy. I try to give the stories about theory catchy beginnings, twists and turns, and clear, valuable lessons for us to learn. And I always tell those stories with enthusiasm in my voice. That may sound silly, but I'm deadly serious. It is good to remember that the ideas we teach *are* interesting and worthy of attention as much as any fiction and that they have fascinating implications in our world. I would recommend to any teacher that they reflect on why their lesson topic deserves interest, and even passion. I believe that if we reflect on why we ourselves are passionate about our topics, that reflection can enable us to present those topics to students with greater enthusiasm. Not all students will share our enthusiasm, of course. But if we teachers treat our lessons' contents as a fascinating story that we cannot wait to tell, we might catch the interest of a few more students than we otherwise would. With luck, we might even spark in our students a little of the joy that comes from hearing a story told well (Agosto, 2016). As an additional benefit, a well-told story is also a source of "rich high-quality language input" (Bland, 2015, p. 168) delivered in a schematic form that a student's brain might comprehend more easily than, say, a traditional lecture.

With all this in mind, I urge teachers to play around with storytelling as an approach to education: to tell stories in class, to encourage students to tell stories, and to structure lessons in a more story-like fashion. You may find this makes the classroom a more engaging space for students, and perhaps even for yourself.

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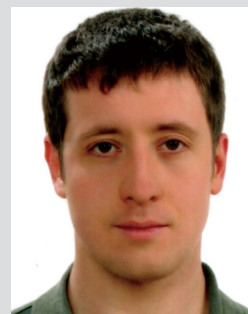
Creating and Publishing Coloring Books with AI

By Jungok Son

How I Came to Write This Article

At 6 p.m. on December 23, a dinner party was held at Melvin's restaurant, hosted by the Seoul Chapter. It was there that I had the pleasure of meeting Andrew White, a professor at Induk University and editor of KOTESOL's *The English Connection*. While conversing with him, our Seoul Chapter president, Rhea, introduced me and mentioned my recent venture into publishing coloring books. Yes, I've published coloring books featuring dinosaurs, princesses, Halloween themes, and flowers. To cut to the chase, I created these coloring books using AI. It seems that AI has infiltrated nearly every aspect of society these days.

Personally, my initial goal wasn't to publish a book through AI. My aim was simply to publish a book under my own name. One day, while casually watching a video, I stumbled upon a method for publishing books with AI. It appeared to be the fastest and easiest route for me to achieve my goal, so I decided to give it a try and ended up publishing coloring books using AI. My heart raced with excitement! It looked so fascinating! Surprisingly, it wasn't as difficult as I had anticipated; it was easier than I had imagined – fulfilling a dream I had harbored for quite some time. Writing and publishing a book has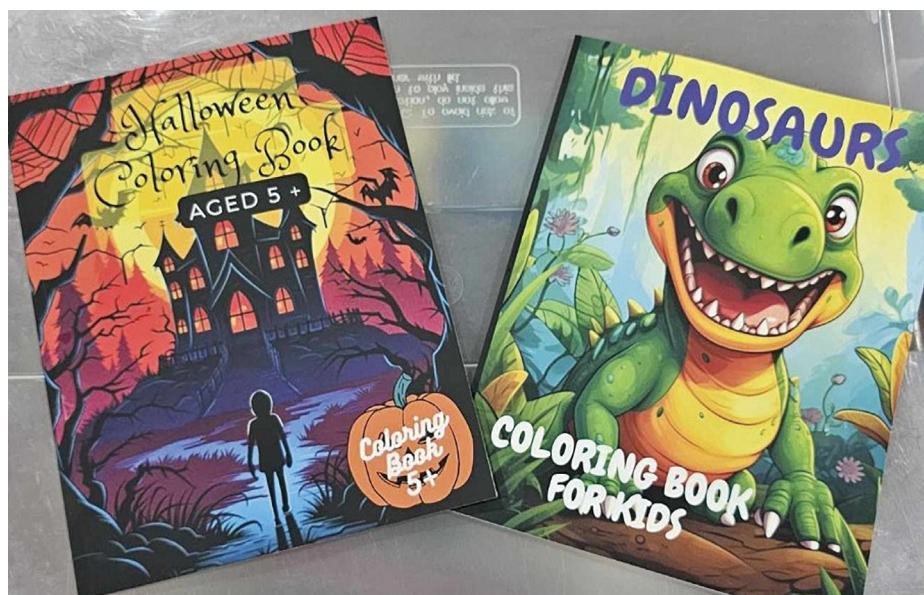 always been one of my long-standing aspirations. This dream was kindled during my college years by a poem I read that spoke of a writer inscribing his name in the sand, only for it to vanish with the arrival of waves. Yet, the essence of his name would endure eternally. Thus, I aspire to leave my mark for posterity.

Initially, creating coloring books presented a challenge for me. Being not particularly adept with technology, I viewed this as an opportunity to enhance my technical skills. Truth be told, I wasn't particularly fond of AI. I had seen numerous movies where AI dominated humanity and seized control of the world, so it felt like an acquaintance one preferred to keep at arm's length. However, we're now living in an age where AI integration is inevitable. It permeates society, offering myriad conveniences. I cannot deny this reality. Even in the realm of education, AI has secured a significant foothold. Hence, neglecting to engage with AI appropriately could result in falling behind and failing to innovate in one's teaching methods. Through the process of creating a book, I believe I discovered a prime opportunity to embrace AI as an ally and to enhance my own skills.

How to Publish Coloring Books

Creating a coloring book becomes manageable once you're committed to the task. Firstly, selecting the theme is crucial – it's the cornerstone of the entire process. Secondly, once you've settled on a theme, gather various elements corresponding to it. For instance, if your theme is flowers, seek out a variety of flower species. Utilizing ChatGPT can aid in this search.

Thirdly, utilize tools like "Midjourney," an AI-driven drawing website that generates customized illustrations based on specific prompts, such as "Draw a cute dinosaur for kids." This platform employs questions to tailor artwork to users' preferences, offering a range of drawing tools and techniques. Next, refine and enhance the generated images using Canva. Canva provides intuitive tools for designing high-quality creative content across various formats.

Fourthly, navigate through the registration process of Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) as directed. Registering involves providing details such as the book title, author, description, category, and pricing. The entire publishing process through KDP is cost-free, convenient, and expeditious. Finally, upload all files to Amazon KDP, making your books available for purchase on Amazon's platform. Upon order placement, Amazon handles the printing and direct delivery of the books to customers.

Let's Go for It!

I've created four coloring books with distinct themes: dinosaurs, princesses, Halloween, and flowers. Among these, the flower coloring book is tailored for adults, while the others cater to children. Dinosaurs typically captivate young boys, while princesses hold a special allure for

young girls. The Halloween coloring book is specifically crafted for the holiday season.

The flower coloring book, in particular, is designed with adults in mind, inspired by my mother's passion for floral patterns. She frequently incorporates them into her knitting projects. As she ages and her strength diminishes, I wanted to provide her with activities that not only engage her physically but also stimulate her mind. Coloring, I believe, is a beneficial activity for preventing dementia.

Five Reasons Why Coloring Books Can Be Beneficial for English Education
First, coloring books introduce children to new English words associated with colors, shapes, and objects depicted in the illustrations. Second, coloring activities provide opportunities for children to reinforce their English language skills by discussing the colors they are using and describing the images they are coloring. Third, children can practice forming English sentences by describing what they are coloring, reinforcing grammar and sentence structure in a creative way. Moreover, coloring books often include simple text or instructions, encouraging children to engage with written English and improving their reading skills. Lastly, some coloring books feature culturally relevant images and themes, providing opportunities for children to learn about English-speaking cultures while they color.

How to Teach English with Coloring Books
Teachers can teach English to young learners using coloring books. First, students can learn vocabulary and cultural facts from coloring books. For example, in Halloween coloring books, students can learn words such as *pumpkin, jack-o'-lantern, haunted house*, and more. Additionally, teachers can explain the origin of Halloween

> **First, coloring books introduce children to new English words associated with colors, shapes, and objects depicted in the illustrations.**

and introduce Halloween activities. This gives students a chance to learn about other cultures. Second, students can practice listening and speaking while coloring. Teachers can ask students to color certain pictures while giving them directions to follow. Afterward, students can take turns leading the activity by giving instructions to their peers. For instance, if the teacher tells students to color a dinosaur's head green, they color the dinosaur's head

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accordingly. Initially, the teacher provides instructions, but eventually, students take on this role themselves. This activity is beneficial for practicing listening and speaking skills.

This Is Just the Beginning!
My next goal is to publish a book in Korean. I teach Korean to learners who are studying the language. I really enjoy it. I can meet people from different countries, and it's fascinating! I feel connected to the world. I am curious about people, and I like to talk. Ultimately, I want to create a Korean book that will help those who want to learn the language. Thanks to my publishing of coloring books, I've also been given the opportunity to write this article. I don't know what other opportunities I may be given, so I'll keep striving for them!

For more information on Jungok Son's coloring books, follow these links to Amazon:

30 Dinosaurs Coloring Book
https://a.co/d/cC48lmv

Halloween Coloring Book
https://a.co/d/4q6S23u

50+ Princesses Coloring Book for Kids
https://a.co/d/drTvQms

30 Flowers Coloring Book for Adults
https://a.co/d/go0B1nQ

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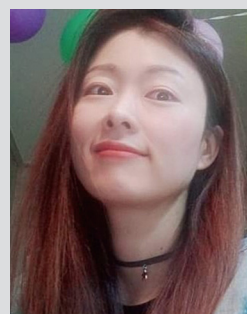
International Students and University Life in Korea in Their Own Words

By Dr. Tory S. Thorkelson

Having read with great interest "A Short Dialogue on International Students Adapting to Korean Culture" from the 2023 summer edition of *The English Connection*, the examples and advice made a lot of sense, based on the comments many of my international students have frequently made to their classmates and myself. Over the years, the number of international students in all my classes has been creeping steadily upward to the point where one of the classes, Global Business Communication, was most recently composed of non-Korean undergraduate students from a variety of countries, including Indonesia, Columbia, America, Italy, China, Holland, India, and Denmark. The growing number of non-Korean students is in line with the trend in Korea as a whole, as noted in a recent article in the *Joongang Ilbo*:

"According to the Korean Educational Development Institute, there were 166,892 international students in Korea as of April 2022. That's up 9.6 percent … and a record high…. Among the 166,892 students, 67,439 were Chinese students, making up … 40.4 percent. Vietnamese students accounted for 22.7 percent ... Uzbekistan accounted for 5.16 percent ... Mongolia accounted for 4.4 percent, Japan 3.4 percent, United States 2.02 percent, and France 1.53 percent…. *The university with the most international students … was Hanyang University, with 6,999 international students*. Kyung Hee University followed with 6,912, Sungkyunkwan with 6,676, Yonsei University with 5,926 and Korea University with 4,739…. The only non-Seoul university to make it to the top 10 list was Gacheon University, with 3,057 international students" (Lee, 2023, para. 1–3).

> **As the top university in terms of international students … it made sense to try to relate the class to the students' lived experiences as international students attending this university.**

As the top university in terms of international students, Hanyang University, and while teaching the aforementioned class, it made sense to try to relate the class to the students' lived experiences as international students attending this university. This article will draw on one example of this related to Daniel H. Pink's (2006) *A Whole New Mind: How to Thrive in the New Conceptual Age*. Under this heading, Pink deals with approaches such as drawing pictures and problem-solution finding to bring in ideas from a variety of fields and our daily lives to foster a big-picture approach.

In order to help my students apply the problem-solution process in a more objective and systematic fashion, the creative problem-solving model (CPSM) was introduced. The CPSM is a step-by-step problem-solving approach developed by Osborne and Parnes between the 1940's and 1960's still used today in many fields including business and design thinking (Center for Applied Imagination, 2023).

Students in the Global Business Communication class were asked to use the CPSM to analyze their experiences as international students at our university. The following sections will highlight what two international students, EH from Holland and F from Indonesia, had to say in their reports, and their most comprehensive responses that offered the most insightful suggestions and ideas.

Figure 1. The Six-Step Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem-Solving Process
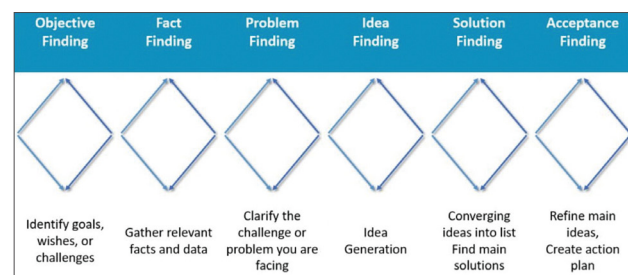
1. Objective Finding

One student from Holland, Student EH, has clearly and concisely stated the objectives for the problem-solving process as follows:

"The objective would be to improve the treatment of foreign students at Hanyang University. This includes promoting inclusivity and ensuring equal opportunities for foreign students to help them in school and socially."

Student F, from Indonesia, addresses the key issues in a bit more detail stating that "the most-known challenges include discrimination and language barriers. In general, discrimination toward 'foreigners' is a well-known issue in South Korea, but, in the context of international students, sometimes they are excluded from class opportunities and student social activities. In addition, in classes that mix Korean and foreign students, there is a certain struggle to communicate with each other."

2. Fact Finding

Student EH continues by identifying the key areas that require attention, including "identifying any specific areas where the treatment of foreign students may be lacking or where improvements can be made. Also looking into questions like 1) Are there cultural differences that result in misunderstandings or bias? 2) Is there any discrimination or policies that disadvantage foreign students? 3) How are foreign students supported in terms of housing, scholarships, etc.?"

Student F addresses EH's first question with what appear to be personal examples:

"The initial problem for international students in the first stage is discrimination and language barriers. The discrimination against international students often happens because of the prejudice toward foreign students, which can cause nonoptimal class opportunities, unfair treatment, and school activity prohibition. Moreover, from personal experience, some professors have hindered themselves from interacting with certain international students in academic activities by

having no conversation or preventing them from taking their classes. In addition, language barriers pose a challenge for international students to feel included and respected by the community."

3. Problem Finding
Student EH goes on to outline the main problems foreign students are encountering:
"By analyzing the facts. This could be issues such as lack of support, cultural challenges, discrimination, or limited access to resources."

Student F details his solutions more broadly:
"A solution mainly for the discrimination issue would be a consistent buddy program that pairs international students with Korean students to help them adapt and blend in with the culture of South Korea. In addition, the buddy program could encourage international students to participate in social activities during their time at Hanyang University. Moreover, from the academic activities conducted by the university, committed professors who conducted classes in the English program were more inclusive toward international students. In addition, to fulfill the needs of interaction with Korean students, a mandatory Korean language course may improve the communication barrier between international students and Korean students, reducing the exclusion and discrimination that prevent them from grasping social and academic opportunities. A language course could also increase international students' interest in Korean culture; hence, it will make their time during exchange in South Korea more interesting."

In response to Student F's first point, Hanyang has had a buddy program in place for a number of years, perhaps inspired by the very successful program that has been ongoing at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies' (HUFS) Seoul Campus. Its stated objectives are (a) providing an opportunity for both the Center for Korean Language and Culture (CKLC) and HUFS' students to learn and improve Korean and foreign languages and (b) overall support in everyday life, such as buying a SIM card, opening a bank account, using public transportation, etc. Throughout this process, we aim for a stable settlement, improvement in language skills, and friendship promotion for foreign students (Center for Korean Language and Culture, HUFS).

As for Student F's second point, Hanyang University does offer a program for international students through the "International Institute of International Education, [which] provides [a] comprehensive course for international students who wish to study Korean. Students can progress through six levels of Korean language classes, and a Korean culture class is linked to the Korean language curriculum" (Institute of International Education, 2021).

▲ *Hanyang University orientation and campus tour.*

However, HUFS additionally offers links to external Korean courses under their exchange pre-arrival information including a class at the Seoul Global Center and one offered by a HUFS PhD student (HUFS, 2019). Further, the number of international students in the government-funded Korean Immigration and Integration Program (KIIP) is also on the rise. The program is "a free program developed by the Ministry of Justice that provides comprehensive support for foreigners in Korea, including education, employment and social life" (Lama, 2023, para. 2). While this program is not specifically for international students, "between 2009 and 2018 … those with the international student visa, D-2, made up only 4.8 percent.... However, there have been more international students taking the classes, with the figure rising 17.3 percent on year to 2,780 in 2018" (Lama, 2023, para. 6–7).

4. Idea Finding
Student EH summarizes her ideas:
"Some ideas to address the identified problems would be 1) implementing language support programs, 2) organizing cultural exchange events 3) creating mentorship programs 4) create support services for foreign students 5) reviewing and revising policies to eliminate any discrimination."

Student F offers these ideas:
"Based on the proposed solution, a buddy program would improve the discrimination problem as it opens up opportunities to participate in social activities. However, further problems could arise, since not [many] Korean students want to open up themselves toward the international students. In addition, a mandatory Korean language course could be a good solution for the daily activities of the international students; however, it may not cover the issues of discrimination faced from the professors in the academic activities."

5. Solution Finding
Student EH suggests her solutions:
"Selecting the most viable and effective ideas and developing a plan; for example, organizing a cultural exchange event and choosing the date, gathering the resources, and finding people to participate."

Student F provides some specifics as follows:
"According to the evaluation done in the fourth step, it can be concluded that none of the solutions could address all the difficulties faced by international students at Hanyang University. However, several solutions are required. A buddy program may create more opportunities for international students to participate in social activities, campus activities being the least. Moreover, mandatory Korean language courses could help international students become more engaged in the culture of South Korea and in the social activities that they desire."

6. Acceptance Finding
Student EH lists ways to build possible consensus and acceptance:
"Communicating and promoting the plan to university administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Get feedback and address any concerns to ensure successful implementation."

Student F suggests the following under this step:
"In this case, Hanyang University needs to take action by including the Korean language course in the curriculum for international students to create more opportunities to participate in social activities and to be more immersed in the culture of South Korea. Moreover, a buddy program could create a welcoming environment for international students by providing an inclusive and respectful environment for all students, regardless of their nationality or background."

Discussion and Conclusion

Ultimately, the CPSM allowed the students to pinpoint the key issues and work through possible solutions to the problems they encountered while studying at their university. As mentioned above, the causes of many of their problems were related to the lack of information and support. The main source of information and support other than fellow students is the International Office, which offers "to deal with problems for international students, and also provides a dedicated freshman tutor to provide students with pre-enrollment guidance. [Also,] … the International Office has a special mailbox and consultation office, which can receive all the questions and opinions of international students, and then reply one by one, and communicate by phone. [However,] … there are a lot of students, and the staff is limited, and the help they provide is limited. They will only provide help within their ability, and will not go brainstorming. [Further,] … for the different problems encountered by students in different school years, they will also give different solutions, but usually let students contact in another place. Therefore, I think the attitude of the International Office is not good." (Student AL, from China)

▲ *The author with international students.*

Thus, even the university department tasked with helping international students is not fulfilling its assigned duties fully, which leaves many students relying on either other students or what they can figure out for themselves. It is no wonder, then, that they are turning to programs like the Korea Immigration and Integration Program (KIIP) to help them overcome the barriers to pursuing their studies by teaching them about the language and culture of Korea more effectively … there have been more international students taking the classes, with the figure rising 17.3 percent on year to 2,780 in 2018. Even the mayor of Seoul has stated that "international students attending Korean universities … [are] top candidates for permanent residency … [and], are a 'foundation' from which the Seoul Metropolitan Government can explore effective immigration policies" (Lee, 2023, para. 4, 6, 12).

Naturally, students look to their home university for the necessary support during their studies but such support may not always be available. In such cases, they need to look elsewhere for the necessary resources and information. First, they should become better informed about what student life is really like in Korea by talking to those who have been here already or by joining online groups for these types of students. There are a number of these on Facebook, for example, but many are categorized as agencies or consultants. Second, they can come with a group of fellow students or try to meet other local and international students while they are here. Some nationalities are large enough that they have their own student associations on campuses around Korea so joining those would be a good idea. Finally, if they want to see changes, they need to share their experiences as international students both while they are here and after they return home so that future students can make an informed decision about whether to study at a university in Korea or not. In addition, a discussion of this topic in two Facebook groups targeted

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at foreign professors at Korean universities in late June of last year elicited a number of potentially useful responses regarding how students like mine can be supported and informed more effectively. These included related articles (e.g., Yan & Reynolds, 2022), a variety of suggestions including building and relying on the informal networks that groups of students form for themselves at various academic institutions echoing what has already been said above, and perhaps most useful of all, the South of Seoul program, which has a virtual welcome kit for international students that is being updated currently but can be found at https://blog.southofseoul.net/category/new-arrivals-in-south-korea/study-abroad-in-korea/.

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Monitoring During Tasks: A Framework for Fairness

By Andrew Griffiths

Introduction

This article will describe a framework that allows teachers to quickly and efficiently monitor their students during tasks that produce some form of output suitable for understanding whether students are achieving the learning goals of the class. While all teachers monitor their students, their monitoring can end up being somewhat piecemeal and negatively impact their students' learning experiences. For example, if a student needs assistance but has not been monitored properly, then the teacher may not be aware of their need for assistance at all.

This article will provide a remedy for this by providing a framework to monitor all students quickly but reasonably thoroughly. This then allows the teacher to allot appropriate assistance time to the students who need it most. I believe this framework is also a more equitable and fair method of monitoring students, allowing each student an equal chance to get attention from their teacher and allowing the teacher to thus fairly allot assistance time as it is needed.

In this article, *monitoring* will refer to the teacher's act of "observing and making assessments of what is happening in the classroom during learning activities" (Richards & Schmidt, 2011, p. 374). For example, a teacher walking around the classroom listening to students saying a dialog in pairs, or checking over a student's written work, are examples of monitoring and show where the framework might be used.

The act of "monitoring" should be understood here as distinct from the act of "assisting." For example, if we monitor a student who is achieving the learning objective without need for help, then we might not be inclined to assist them, especially if there are other students that require assistance more urgently.

Finally, while assisting can cover many things – clarification of instructions, assistance with task completion, positive praise, encouragement and so on – in this article, we will most commonly use *assistance* to denote "helping students who are struggling with the content of the task." For example, helping students with pronunciation problems during a pronunciation-focused exercise. This does not exclude other forms of assistance from happening (as indeed they should), but it does mean placing a slightly higher focus on task achievement-related assistance than on others.

What Is the Problem?

Monitoring allows a teacher to formatively assess and adapt instruction in real time and to see who needs assistance the most. However, in my experience, not all teachers make their monitoring methodical or thorough. For example, I have often seen teachers getting caught up monitoring and then assisting one student and then spending less or no time with other students, or monitoring and then assisting students on matters that weren't relevant to the learning objective.

Figure 1 is a real-life example of incomplete monitoring. Students who were achieving the learning objective were marked with "O," while those who were struggling were marked with an "X." Finally, the teacher's walking path during the task is shown in red.

Figure 1. An Example of Incomplete Monitoring
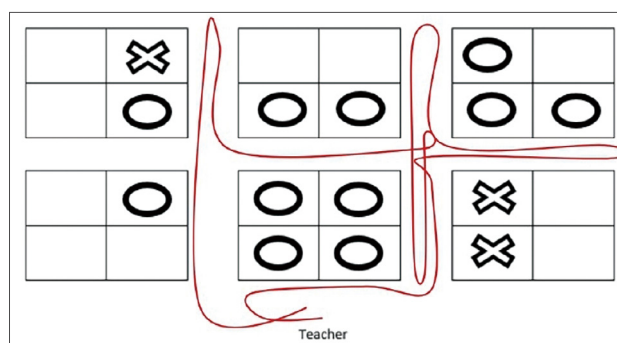
Note how the students monitored in Figure 1 were all on the "walking path" of the teacher. This is natural, and so far, so good. However, most of the students on the outside edges did not get monitored. The lower-right group (with two Xs) was the group where the teacher lost monitoring time by assisting (twice!), and while many monitored students did achieve the learning objective, it was at the cost of not monitoring over 40% of the rest of the class. This then had the consequent effect that many unmonitored students struggled in the following activity, which the teacher couldn't predict because they didn't know there was a problem. In actual fact, the upper-left and lower-left groups had experienced more difficulties than the teacher had imagined and had required more assistance than the teacher realized.

This is not intended as criticism; these are understandable mistakes to make. Classrooms are hectic places, and no teacher is perfect. Indeed, the inspiration for developing this framework came from an awareness of my own limitations and failures in monitoring my classes. I am sure I am not the only teacher who has had students "fly under the radar" before! And yet the problem remains, and it is the students who ultimately suffer. Is there thus a better way to monitor and so assist students? I believe there is.

What Is the Solution?

In my experience, most teachers monitor as such: first, the task is implemented. Second, the teacher informally monitors and assists students who need or ask for help. Finally, the task is stopped by the teacher. Note here how monitoring and assisting take place in close proximity to one another. This, in my experience, is where teachers lose the chance to monitor equally and fairly: It is all too easy to get caught up helping one student or one group.

The framework I propose instead fundamentally splits the act of monitoring and assisting, which are two

separate things. First, the task is implemented; second, the framework is implemented to monitor all students to systematically understand who needs assistance. This then results in the teacher knowing precisely where and to whom assistance should be provided. Third, the teacher then provides that assistance to the students who need it (all students should be monitored equally; but not all students will subsequently require equal assistance). Finally, the task is stopped by the teacher.

Of course, this is not to understate the importance of assisting the students or to suggest that monitoring is more important. Assisting students is an absolutely critical element of effective teaching. However, it is critical that the teacher know precisely where this assistance should be provided. That can only be answered by effective monitoring beforehand and, as such, is the primary focus of this article.

The framework does not take long to implement – perhaps 3–5 minutes for a class of 20–30 students. It does, however, take practice to do well. I argue that the resulting equality and parity in monitoring is fairer to our students, all of whom deserve a just portion of their teacher's attention, as well as being a better way of understanding who requires assistance the most urgently.

The following section shows the implementation of the framework in more detail.

...if we monitor a student who is achieving the learning objective without need for help, then we might not be inclined to assist them, especially if there are other students that require assistance more urgently.

The Framework
Step 1: Space and Time
The first thing needed is a task that gives the teacher space and time to monitor the students. For example, if the students are working in pairs doing a gap-fill exercise, the teacher can monitor them. However, if the teacher is leading a pattern drill at the front of the class, they will be too focused on leading the class to monitor effectively. A task is needed where the students are focused on each other or working with a resource like a worksheet, not focusing on the teacher.

The teacher should also focus on their walking path before beginning monitoring. As the previous example shows, it can be all too easy to accidentally focus more attention on some groups over others. In my experience, I find the best walking path is one that begins at the edges of the class or at the back, and slowly makes its way to the front and center. Whatever route is chosen, it must obviously cover the entire class.

It is critical that the task lasts long enough that the teacher can monitor effectively, and it is also helpful if the task has output that is visually or aurally easy to observe. A good example of a task that lends itself to efficient monitoring is a color-coding activity (see Figure 2). Color-coding allows a teacher to see quickly whether a student has achieved the learning objective by seeing whether the colors a student applies to a worksheet match the teacher's copy.

Figure 2. An Easily Monitored Color-Coding Activity
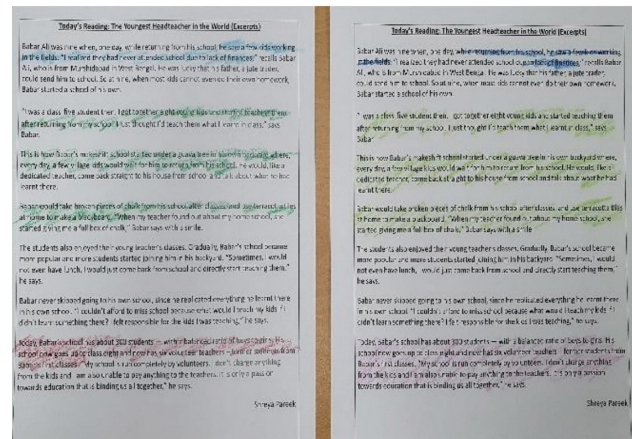
Step 2: A Criterion for Success
The second thing to focus on is what output would show that the students had likely achieved the learning goal for the task. This criterion can usually be found in the learning objectives for the class. It is critical to pare the learning objective into a simple, quantifiable criterion that will give a yes/no answer to the question "Is it likely the students have successfully completed the task?"

For example: The learning objective for a class might be "The students can speak using the present continuous." This rather wooly objective can be made slightly more explicit by a task description such as "Students work in pairs to make a short dialogue using the present continuous." However, this still does not give us a strict yes/no signal that the students have successfully completed the task. An appropriate criterion for success would be, in this case, something along the lines of "I hear students speaking two sentences using the present continuous."

Note how the teacher only needs to hear two sentences – no more. The reason is simple: In a normal classroom situation, teachers haven't got the time to monitor any more deeply than this (twenty students would mean listening to forty sentences – no small job for the teacher in the space of a few minutes!). Two sentences are not, of course, an absolutely assured indication of success – but classrooms are busy places, and teachers have a lot of students. Two sentences would thus be a sufficiently adequate sign of achievement under such circumstances. Similarly, a student struggling over making only two sentences would be a sign that assistance was needed.

As such, the framework cannot prove without doubt that a student has achieved the learning goal – only that it is likely that they have. In my experience, however, the framework proves correct more often than it does not. And after all, we can only do the best we can with the time that we have. It is thus important to only focus our attention on the criterion for success. Monitoring and then assisting on other things is inefficient. For example, there is no time to monitor

and then assist a student on pronunciation if the present continuous exercise is based around fluency.

Many teachers find this section the hardest to implement. It can be very easy to begin assisting students during the monitoring stage. It is, after all, our natural inclination to want to help students! The teacher must, however, take the time to monitor each and every student in the class *first*, before assisting the individual students who need it. If a student asks for help, I find the best thing to say is "Try first, and I will come back soon to help." My students have gotten used to this, and I always keep my promise to come back. Furthermore, some forms of simple assistance – for example, praising effort or giving encouragement – can sometimes be given out here, so long as it doesn't detract too much from the primary focus on monitoring. Time is of the essence: Students will need assistance later. Yet the quickness within which the framework can be implemented is such that the delay is no longer than 3–5 minutes.

Step 3: A Way of Recording Data
What I am looking for in my monitoring is the answer to one question: "Who needs assistance?" However, since there are many students in most teacher's classes, we need a way to record who we have monitored so that we can remember who needs assistance. I find there are a lot of faces and names to remember, and it can be all too easy to let someone slip through the cracks if I'm not systematic.

The technique I use to remember everything is a student map, which is essentially a map of the room with markings for each desk. Here is an example of a student map for a class of six groups (24 students), with the bottom ("Teacher") representing where I would stand at the front of the class. As before, I mark "O" if a monitored student is achieving my criterion for success and an "X" if they are struggling. Recording needs to be simple; there is no time for extensive note-taking.

Figure 3 is an example of a class that has mostly achieved the learning objective:

Figure 3. A Completed Student Map

Teacher
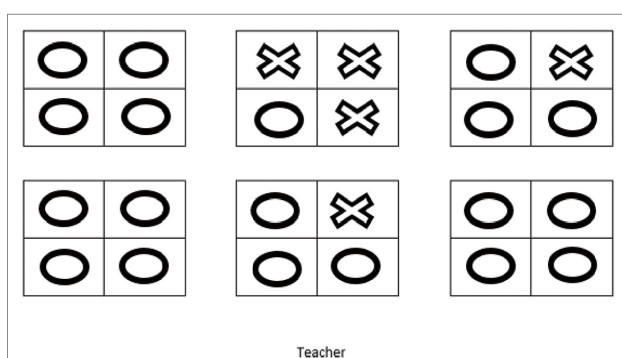
Following completion of monitoring using the framework, I can see that it is the back row middle group, as well as a small number of other students, that urgently need assistance. If the map had significantly more Xs, my reaction might be different: A majority of Xs would probably lead to my pausing the entire class to clarify matters to everyone rather than to individuals.

Once the student map has been finished, three to five minutes have passed. For the teacher, it's been a busy time: listening, looking, checking – monitoring, in short – at high

> **What I am looking for in my monitoring is the answer to one question: "Who needs assistance?"**

speed. In my experience, it can be a bit of a blur! However, the end result is this: a completed student map, and knowledge of where assistance is needed most. My priority would be assisting the back row middle group, followed by the remaining struggling students. That being done (and students hopefully now achieving the criteria for success), my attention can then become a little freer, offering more praise, encouragement, and suggesting further work to students who have finished. By the end, a good ten minutes may have passed, and much will hopefully have been achieved by both teacher and learner.

Conclusion
The payoffs of using this framework have been, in my experience, spectacular. For a little extra effort, a teacher can get the best of both worlds: the equity of each student receiving attention through monitoring, while those in most need are identified and assisted accordingly post-framework.

It is very easy, especially in big classes, to hear a loud chorus of voices during a drill, or to see a class with its heads down during a worksheet exercise, and assume that everything is going well. Sadly, there are layers to our classrooms that can only be uncovered if we really observe our students as individual learners – as they indeed deserve. With the help of this framework, I have been able to get to know about all the students in my class. That, in turn, has led to my being able to apply assistance fairly and equitably.

As mentioned before, assistance is a critical part of teaching. The time given to us to assist students, however, is sadly finite. It is therefore equally critical that we distribute our assistance in the fairest and most efficient way possible. In my opinion, this can only be achieved with effective monitoring beforehand, and it is my belief that this framework contributes significantly towards attaining that goal.

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Dropping Knowledge: Hip-Hop Pedagogy in the ELT Classroom

By M.C. Birch Jr.

Laying Down the Beat: How Hip-Hop Revolutionized My Classroom

The journey to remix education with the beat of hip-hop started with a single spark on a day much like any other in a school in Tokyo, Japan, where I teach academic English to junior and senior high school students. It was the soulful chorus of "Ooh Ahh (My Life Be Like)" by the rap group Grits (2002) that transformed my English language teaching (ELT) classroom into something extraordinary. This was the moment I realized my role as an educator extended far beyond conventional teaching. I was here to inspire my students to find their passions in life and to discover and chase their dreams.

This revelation came to me as I decided to lead by example, blending my love for hip-hop with my passion of being an English teacher and transforming my classroom into a vibrant stage where linguistic skills and cultural expressions dance together. The song "Ooh Ahh (My Life Be Like)" resonates worldwide, featured in everything from movies to sports events, thus exemplifying how hip-hop transcends cultural and geographical boundaries, which underscores its untapped potential as a pedagogical tool, bridging worlds and connecting with students on a profoundly personal level.

> **I aim to share the transformative power of hip-hop in engaging students and reshaping the educational landscape.**

At its core, this exploration is fueled by my adventures in the hip-hop scene, as DJ MAJESTiC, mixing beats, and as a rapper, delivering verses, captivating crowds, and selling merch. These experiences have perfectly set me up to deliver a fuller explanation of hip-hop culture. From the history to the art of deejaying (scratching and mixing beats) to the art of the emcee (laying down flows, crafting rhymes, and commanding the stage), I have been able to incorporate hip-hop into my English classes. The blend of hip-hop and traditional teaching enriches my English classroom, a place I have been for almost two decades.

This approach immerses students in a linguistic and cultural journey that mirrors the complexities and nuances of real-life experiences, proving that when education mirrors the vibrancy and diversity of the world outside the classroom, learning becomes a dynamic, shared adventure. Join me as I lay down the beat for a pedagogical remix that aims to redefine language education across Asia and beyond. Through this article, I aim to share the transformative power of hip-hop in engaging students and reshaping the educational landscape.

Hip-Hop in the Classroom: Learning with Lyrics

My quest to deeply engage students has led me to integrate hip-hop into ELT, creating a vibrant bridge to modern culture. As Christopher Emdin (2010) put it, "Hip-hop may also serve as a tool for quickly sparking a student's interest, or – as teachers who endeavor to build student interest in a lesson often assert – a 'hook' to draw students into a topic prior to a more thorough academic discussion" (p. 9). My students do not come from the culture that has shaped many hip-hop artists in the United States, but they are drawn to the expressive power and the themes of struggle, aspiration, and community that are often seen and felt within hip-hop. It transcends its origins and resonates with students from diverse backgrounds, including those across Asia.

Emdin's work shows the complex relationship that young people from urban areas often have with educational institutions. He identifies that a disconnection arises from a disconnect with the conventional educational models (Emdin, 2010). This is exactly what I have seen in many ELT classrooms. When students experience a disconnect from school, they frequently find a strong connection with the world of hip-hop and seem to have an outward disdain for the educational system, which conceals a deeper desire to be fully involved in classroom activities (Emdin, 2010). Through my experience teaching in East Asia, I have seen this disconnection; it seems to come from a lack of interest not in learning a second language (L2) but in the traditional models that are used in many ELT classes. In traditional language learning classrooms, there is often a focus on grammatical rules, vocabulary lists, and textbook exercises. Through the classes I have seen taught in Asia, there has been an emphasis on repetitive drilling, direct translation, and passive learning. In my classes, I want to bring something new and interesting for language learners. I want to encourage active participation, critical thinking, and improve conversational skills.

By integrating elements of hip-hop into my teaching, I am working towards creating a classroom that celebrates cultural diversity and encourages students to bring their full identities to the learning process. A defining moment in my classroom came when we turned our attention to the song "Children's Story" by Slick Rick (1988), where his storytelling and rhythmic mastery opened a new realm for students. This song has

▲ *A view of the author's classroom and DJ decks.*

been sampled numerous times by some of the most popular artists, including Eminem and Nas. "Children's Story" has also been featured in movies and video games. Using songs like this in the classroom helps students to not only engage with a significant part of hip-hop history but also helps with developing a wider vocabulary, reading comprehension, and conversational fluency. Moreover, this song is a narrative tool that helps students to engage in discussions about societal pressures, decisions, and their consequences, enhancing empathy and critical-thinking skills.

To bolster the students' grammatical skills and sharpen their reasoning abilities in their L2, I asked them to think about the characters' decisions and to think about what they could have done differently. This type of activity is perfect after reviewing conditional forms and modal verbs. The students were able to apply grammatical concepts in everyday communication and in a real-life scenario. Students who had been hesitant to speak up were now animatedly dissecting the lyrics, eager to contribute their insights. This contributed to their fluency and confidence in using English. This experience with "Children's Story" transcended traditional drills and written exercises, showcasing how hip-hop can help to create a collaborative

▲ *Another view of the author's classroom and DJ decks.*

learning environment, stimulate emotions, and foster a deeper understanding of the human condition while improving language skills. After exploring "Children's Story" and its underlying themes, a student shared a newfound insight: "I never realized that a song could be more than just something fun to sing along to." He was surprised to find out that something that sounded like a simple tune could provoke deep reflection on life and societal pressures, while also reinforcing the grammar concepts we had recently covered in class.

The universal themes in hip-hop resonate with my students, echoing the sense of struggle and aspiration that transcends borders. By bridging their own cultural narratives with those found in hip-hip, students find a voice in their L2. The adaptation of Emdin's (2010) theories to the East Asia context has been vital in demonstrating the universality of hip-hop as a pedagogical tool, especially for students who might seem disengaged. It creates a learning space that is reflective of students' experiences and helps students to explore the global language of English.

Freestyle Rap Sessions as Pedagogical Tools
The art of freestyling, brought to the mainstream's attention through Eminem's biopic, *8 Mile*, offers a unique educational opportunity for language learners. In the movie, he often competed in something called "rap battles," where one

rapper would challenge another in one-on-one freestyles. Freestyles should be something you have not written down before or some say it should be something that has never been recorded or performed. The question on many minds may be how this can be used in an English classroom working with L2 students, especially in East Asia. I have found that it allows students a unique way to engage with English, inviting them to take risks and fully embrace their learning journey. Once students connect with the opportunity that freestyling in class provides, they are empowered in a way that traditional speaking exercises are unable to offer.

Within my teaching methodology, I mix linguistic exercises focused on poetry and rhyming with freestyle activities. These are engaging warm-ups at the beginning of class. Before introducing students to freestyling, we work with songs that we have already dissected in class. In small groups, students pick a line and then challenge themselves to modify the subsequent line by changing the ending to a different rhyming word. Initially, they may only change a word or two, but as their confidence grows, they progressively craft new lines and in some cases, eventually, entire verses. This process of modifying and creating new verses is a bridge to freestyling. It familiarizes students with the rhythm and flow of the language in a supportive setting. As they become more comfortable with playing with words and constructing lines, their hesitation diminishes. This leads to the use of structured activities, for example, group rhyming exercises. In one activity, students sit in a circle, and a student will start by saying a word. Then, each student in turn says a word that rhymes with it. I am there to offer support if needed. Once we exhaust possible rhymes, the next student chooses a new word, and the process repeats. As students gain confidence, we take steps towards a true freestyle session.

Once we are ready to begin freestyling, I will play instrumental hip-hop beats from artists such as J Dilla, Madlib, and Preppy. The first freestyle activities are collaborative, such as "call-and-response." The students also sit in a circle for this activity. As the facilitator, I deliver the opening line, e.g., "I looked in the sky." Then, a student continues by delivering the next line that rhymes with the initial line, such as "I looked with my eye." The sequence continues with each subsequent student adding a rhyming line. An example continuation might be "I saw that jet fly." To challenge the students, I will jump in and alter the rhyme scheme at strategic points by integrating a line with a different ending sound, for example, "And, man, was it fast!" Throughout the exercise, I try to maintain the rhythm and intervene as necessary to assist students who are struggling. Aligning with Vygotsky's theory, Donato (1994) stated that these sessions provide the "collective scaffolding" necessary for students to reach beyond their current linguistic capabilities, supported by the collective energy and creativity of their peers (pp. 45–46).

These exercises are not merely for amusement; they are strategic pedagogical tools designed to ease students into the complexity of language use in a playful, low-pressure environment. I want the students to feel that they have the freedom to make mistakes and even act silly because it is for fun and to connect with each other. This is not something that happens on the first try, but through the support of the teacher and classmates, each student starts opening up to the possibility of coming out of their shell. This helps them to hone their language skills and gets them used to and comfortable with making mistakes. This type of activity encourages students to expand their vocabulary to find new words and phrases to rhyme or add to their songs. I want my students to consistently improve their L2 competence, and through freestyling, they are doing that while also gaining a deeper connection with English and how culture influences it.

While these brief in-class activities introduce the concept of freestyling, I invite students to come during my office hours within the school day or after school to partake in deeper freestyle sessions. Here, I try to create an authentic cypher atmosphere, where each individual can feel free to contribute to the collective flow of creative expression. In these extended sessions, the art of the MC (rapper) becomes a canvas for linguistic experimentation, where students are able to think and use their L2 in a way they probably never imagined. Once, after a session, a student reflected, "I just realized I can actually think in English without translating from [my native language] first." It was all happening in the flow of the music. This helps students to find their own unique voice in their L2.

The students who embrace and enthusiastically engage in freestyle practice have shown improvements in fluency and willingness to communicate. This observation suggests that the interactive nature of freestyling fosters a more relaxed and confident use of English. By experimenting with its structure and vocabulary, sometimes blending it with their first language to create unique lyrical expressions, students are able to build their own motivations while enhancing confidence and engagement with English. This method not only enhances their language skills but also helps them overcome the fear of making mistakes. In essence, the freestyle element of my classes complements the academic rigor by offering a space for linguistic and creative exploration, demonstrating that learning English can be both intellectually stimulating and fun. Freestyling encourages students to use English in a dynamic, creative way, transforming potential anxieties about speaking into opportunities for genuine communication and connection.

Hip-Hop Language and Cultural Narratives
Hip-hop in ELT also provides students with an understanding that there is not a type of English that can be called "native." Many language learners aim to mimic a specific accent or dialect, often feeling discouraged when they perceive a gap between their speech and that of "native" speakers. By opening doors to new types of English, educators are able to make the process of sounding like yourself and not trying to be someone else a much smoother endeavor.

Hip-hop, with its differences of regional dialects and slang, serves as a powerful tool to dismantle these insecurities, celebrating the diversity of English as a global language. Hip-hop allows young people, especially those who are not African American, to become familiar with African-American English (AAE) terms, expanding their language skills in the process (Chesley, 2011). Through learning some of the words and phrases, and the background of how they came to be, students will be able to broaden their understanding of English and of the underpinnings of culture that is attached to language. The best way to achieve this is through active engagement (Chesley, 2011).

In my classroom, we begin with a lyric excerpt that features AAE. For instance, this line from the song "I Can" by Nas (2002): "I know I can (I know I can) / Be what I wanna be (be what I wanna be)." This is a great place to start with language learners because it is easy to understand and provides a positive foundation for discussion. I find that students quickly grasp the idea that *wanna* is a contraction of "want to" because it is not only AAE but is also commonly used in informal Standard American English, which they often hear in the media. To check for understanding, students work in small groups making sentences using *wanna* and share them with the class. This often leads into a lesson on the contractions *gotta* and *gonna*, which are repeatedly used in the song "Good Day" by Nappy Roots (2008). Analyzing these words within the context of the song in small groups helps the students to grasp the meaning and usage. After mastering the contractions *wanna*, *gotta*, and *gonna*, which are prevalent in everyday English, we move on to the contraction *gon'* from the song "Blessings" by Chance the Rapper (2016). *Gon'* has the same meaning as *gonna*, but it is uniquely AAE. Understanding this contraction deepens students' awareness of linguistic variations and prepares them for authentic communication scenarios.

"Hip-hop culture is essentially a democracy-building practice" (Banks, 2015, p. 249). Integrating hip-hop into teaching practices can democratize the classroom, allowing students to contribute their perspectives and encouraging critical thinking and dialogue. Education should be a collaborative process where students have a say in their learning experiences, reflecting the essence of democratic participation (Banks, 2015). In my classes, the students choose how they will demonstrate their mastery of the material. Rather than imposing a singular method of assessment, I encourage them to decide how they wish to showcase their understanding. As a form of assessment after reviewing a variety of new words and phrases, the students often choose to show their understanding or mastery through creating short skits using their new vocabulary. This type of exercise enables them to actively use and critically engage with the vocabulary, which seems to boost their confidence and fluency. This also mirrors Banks' (2015) advocacy for an educational environment that "reflects and speaks to the cultural values of participant learners" (p. 250). The process culminates in recording their performances, which we will watch in class. This provides them with a fun and interactive review of the material. In line with Banks' views on hip-hop pedagogy, my methodology goes beyond simply teaching language. Through nurturing a culturally responsive space, I want my students to take ownership of their learning journey by becoming creators, not only consumers, in the classroom.

> Once students connect with the opportunity that freestyling in class provides, they are empowered in a way that traditional speaking exercises are unable to offer.

Beyond the new vocabulary that students can learn through hip-hop, the narratives found in these songs often cover the artists' struggles for expression and identity. In my classroom,

dissecting these stories has opened up avenues for rich dialogue on topics such as race, social justice, and personal identity. An example of this is in the song "CC4" by Lecrae (2022). In the song, he shares his reflections on social justice, the state of religion, and the individual's role within broader societal contexts. After listening to the song and looking through the lyrics, I ask the students if they can explain certain topics and AAE that might seem difficult, for example, *y'all*, *the hood*, *aw*, *naw*, *ain't*, etc. If no one can explain, I jump in and then ask questions to check understanding. One of the topics I ask the students about is the Black Lives Matter movement, which is covered in the song by mentioning Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. The lyrics seem to be a personal reflection and response to societal issues. In small groups, the students discuss how the artist frames his identity within these struggles and what messages they think he aims to convey. This is followed with a class discussion and/or writing assignment where students are encouraged to share their interpretations of the song. Analyzing this song in the classroom can spark discussions on a wide range of topics: from the role of religion in public life to the ways in which individuals and institutions navigate the complexities of identity, belief, and action. Lecrae's (2022) challenge to his listeners, to reflect on their actions, to confront their biases, and to actively engage in the work of healing and unity, offers a profound opportunity for students to engage with their own thoughts and feelings on these subjects. This leads to the classroom becoming a safe space for students to discuss topics they do not feel comfortable bringing up in other classes.

In shaping a classroom environment that champions inclusivity and student agency, I draw upon the foundational elements of critical hip-hop pedagogy (CHHP) as outlined by Akom (2009). This pedagogical approach harnesses the participatory nature of hip-hop to dismantle traditional power dynamics, fostering a learning space where each student's voice serves as a cornerstone of the educational experience. As such, the classroom transforms into a microcosm of democratic practice that echoes the liberatory praxis Akom (2009) identifies as central to CHHP. This involves using the cultural relevance and expressive power of hip-hop to engage students in a way that is meaningful to them, promoting a more equitable and responsive educational experience. This method aligns very closely with Banks' (2015) perspective, which sees cultural reflection and participatory learning as pivotal in fostering a dynamic, inclusive classroom environment. The implementation of CHHP in my classroom comes to life when the students collaboratively create a poem or rap that explores themes of identity and social justice. In one memorable project, groups of students chose current global issues that resonated with them, such as climate change and gender equality, and crafted poems (raps) that incorporated both standard English and AAE to express their stances. This activity showed their linguistic skills and allowed them to critically engage with and articulate their thoughts on complex topics. In presenting their pieces, they exercised their voices in the classroom's democratic space, reinforcing the liberatory praxis central to CHHP. This poetry project, reflective of Banks' (2015) participatory learning, moved beyond traditional

assessments to empower students as creative agents in their educational journey and as active participants in a global dialogue. Through such practices, the classroom evolves into a place where cultural narratives are explored, diverse voices are amplified, and students confidently navigate and challenge societal narratives, fully embodying the democratic ethos of CHHP outlined by Akom (2009).

Drop the Mic: Remixing Education
As we reflect on the journey of incorporating hip-hop into ELT, it is clear that this vibrant culture serves as a bridge to deeper linguistic proficiency, cultural understanding, and global empathy. My experiences have shown that hip-hop can revolutionize the ELT classroom, making English learning more relevant, engaging, and impactful for students.

This pedagogical shift requires educators to transcend traditional teaching roles, becoming guides who navigate and learn alongside their students in a global classroom enriched by cultural diversity. Hip-hop challenges us to dismantle educational barriers. In doing so, we prepare students to become informed, culturally aware individuals ready to engage with and contribute to the world. Through hip-hop, we invite students on a journey of discovery, connection, and transformation, highlighting the culture's ability to educate and inspire.

Now, I turn the mic over to you. Whether you are an educator or someone passionate about language and culture, I invite you to join this movement to push the boundaries of traditional education. It is about building bridges between cultures, languages, and hearts. Are you ready to change the beat of ELT and make learning a truly global, inclusive, and inspiring journey? The stage is yours!

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A Review of *New Ways in Teaching with Humor* by Rucynski Jr. (Ed.)

Reviewed by Christopher Miller

Beyond the Funny Video: Incorporating Humor in the Classroom
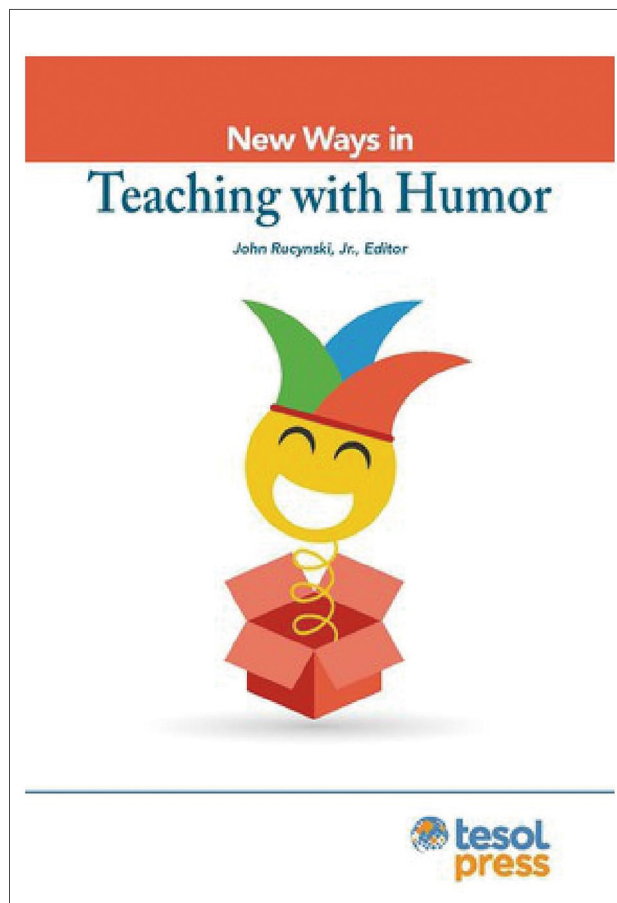
Humor (associated with learning) is like a chauffeur: It helps drive the message home. Humor aids memory (Schmidt, 1994) and learning (Garner, 2006). Thus, *New Ways in Teaching with Humor* (henceforth, *Humor*) from TESOL Press covers a topic with a high degree of relevance to language teachers.

The book is divided into seven sections: humor and language development (27 activities), word play and puns (10 activities), comics and cartoons (8 activities), jokes and joke telling (12 activities), sitcoms and movies (13 activities), internet resources and digital literacy (14 activities), and finally, parody, satire, and sarcasm (10 activities). The book is a compilation of submissions from 89 contributors covering most (if not all) age and ability levels. This book is part of the second generation of the New Ways in Teaching series from TESOL Press. The first generation was published for the most part in the mid-to-late 1990s. The format is similar to the first generation and includes activities prefaced with quickly referenceable information about level, aims, class time required, preparation time, and additional material resources (which may be) needed. However, the latter editions feature fewer editorial comments, especially as introductions to specific sections, and author bios are absent.

Something similar was tried prior to *Humor* in 2002. Peter Medgyes' *Laughing Matters* provided 132 activities (*Humor* "only" 94 activities) for injecting hilarity into the classroom. These two books have significant differences. Most obviously, the increasing penetration of the internet into many aspects of formal education could not be addressed in *Laughing Matters*. In contrast, the current work under review features activities utilizing memes, YouTube clips, and hashtags. Medgyes' work draws on older source material including poems, folklore, and historical references, such as quotes from contemporary individuals about a variety of well-known figures, such as Shakespeare, which did not age well. Whereas *Humor* uses more modern source material like modern music and sitcoms. There are a number of activities that are highly similar including the use of epitaphs, riddles, ambiguous headlines, knock-knock jokes, and sarcasm training.

The strength of this volume lies in the plethora of ideas for providing non-traditional content and materials, which then may be utilized in teaching standard aspects of a language curriculum. For example, absurd, yet real, warning labels for teaching imperatives; the TV sitcom *I Love Lucy* for recognizing intonation and participial adjectives; puns to raise learners awareness of polysemy, homophones, and homographs; and knock-knock jokes to practice connected speech.

I have tried out several of the ideas in this book in my classes during 2023. The activities fostered active participation, constant engagement, and occasional student enthusiasm. For instance, "When headlines go bad"; this activity requires students to discuss the potential dual meanings of a newspaper headline, such as "Complaints About Referees Growing Ugly." Another successful example was "How do you get to...". This activity derives from a 1950s American joke: A: Excuse me, how can you get to Carnegie Hall? B: Practice, practice, practice. I instructed students to customize that joke for a more local context. That required modeling, communication of expectations, and extensive scaffolding, but not many students competently completed the task. Hence, the procedures provided by the authors were something that I had to significantly adapt to my specific context – that is, don't expect to implement many of these ideas in the manner in which the contributor articulates them to achieve optimum results for *your* classes.

That being said, the procedures given by the contributors are full of competent, engaging, research supported instructional techniques. These pedagogical strategies include info-gaps, pre-reading strategies (i.e., predicting, activating background knowledge), pair-shares, sorting tasks, dictations, a diverse array of graphic organizers, gallery walks, and conscious-raising deductive instructional strategies, to list just a

few. In that sense, this collection helps reinforce in the professional reader an awareness of effective pedagogical techniques.

Rarely does a book review draw attention to the strength of the references. However, this book with its niche focus on humor has a wealth of references that are bound to stimulate the curious reader for a variety of reasons, both humanistically and pedagogically – whether the latter concerns be theoretical or practical. There are citations about the dynamics of irony (Colbrook, 2004), the acoustic features of sarcasm (slower, lower, louder; Rockwell, 2000), as well as taxonomies of humor (Schmitz, 2002; Petkova, 2013). Theoretically, monographs arguing for a greater role for language play (Cook, 2000) and humor (Bell & Pomerantz, 2015) in the classroom are sure to stimulate reflection on the reader's professional practice. My personal favorite, due to its clarity and eminent practicality, is Washburn's (2001) *Using Situation Comedies for Pragmatic Language Teaching and Learning*. If you want to help intermediate and advanced learners to achieve greater proficiency using advanced English in contextually appropriate ways, check out Washburn's brief article – only six pages!

Many activities often focus heavily, if not exclusively, on "awareness raising." I counted 44 out of 94 total activities which had some emphasis stated in the aims that were akin to that objective. The consciousness-raising activities included standard L2 pedagogical concerns: grammar, pronunciation, linguistic awareness, as well as "culture." Culture can be a vague construct. Some aims pertaining to more culturally oriented elements were relatively clear, such as greater awareness of irony in language, "understand the nuances and elements of humor across cultures" (p. 227), or "develop awareness of the regional and cultural variations of gender stereotypes" (p. 268). Others lacked precision or didn't connect well to larger L2 instructional concerns such as "learn about the rich comic repertoire of Charlie Chaplin" (p. 231), "use drama in the classroom" (p. 39), and "understand and enjoy humor in English" (p. 274). The latter two items are potentially fine *means* for language or becoming more competent sociolinguistically, but aren't suitable objectives in classes predominantly concerned with learning an L2.

Additionally, many of these activities are for advanced learners. There are 44 activities in this text that are acknowledged by the contributors as intended for advanced learners – at least partially, but with frequent caveats that materials can be adapted for other levels. However, without extensive adapting and scaffolding, it seems unlikely that most learners will be able to generate lengthy, semi-impromptu tall tales, or write brief parodies of arcane or even modern songs in 15 minutes that parallels the rhyming structure of the original. Other activities, such as one for practicing sarcasm, should be used with delicacy. Unquestionably sarcasm is likely prevalent in all languages. There are universal prosodic features to it. There are even arguably benefits to deploying sarcasm (Gino, 2015). However, there is also likely to be L1 interference in what contexts sarcasm is appropriate and how to deliver it. Thus, the potential for miscommunication when an L2 speaker delivers sarcasm is high. Sarcasm can often cause great offense. Should language teachers be promoting the productive use of sarcasm? Sarcasm is highly relevant when addressed as an awareness-raising activity. Though, I question the value of training students in the art of sarcasm. However, ultimately it is preferable to have an excess of activities with limited or questionable use rather than an overall dearth.

There were a few layout and editorial decisions that made the reading and referencing (this is a reference work after all!) of this work less smooth than it might otherwise have been. For instance, in the aims, there are language inconsistencies, such as interchangeable use of *low* and *beginner*; and even *tertiary* is listed as a level (p. 61). There is no index; the references are listed at the end of each contribution. This often entails more scanning for the harried professional. Furthermore, this volume is organized thematically rather than by pedagogical function. Referencing this work would be smoother if an appendix listing the activities by function were included. Such categories might consist of grammar, functions, pronunciation, teaching culture, etc. In contrast to several other volumes in the second generation of the New Ways in Teaching series, this volume does not come with extensive web-based resources. For instance, in the *Speaking* volume, there are a large number of educational materials listed online in a companion website that the interested practitioner can download. The *Games* volume goes one step further providing video demonstrations of the activities discussed in that book. At times, it feels as though Rucynski is more a compiler than an editor.

Despite a small number of relatively minor frustrations, this work opens up new ways of thinking about teaching and gaining situational interest (Grabe, 2009) among students. This book provides effectively engaging teaching activities for a broad range of contexts and levels. Moreover, the contributors offer insight – provided in brief and accessible chunks – into how humor is relevant for instructing our learners. I highly recommend *New Ways in Teaching with Humor*. If you fail to procure and peruse a copy for yourself, your learners, quite literally, may fail to get the joke.

The Reviewer

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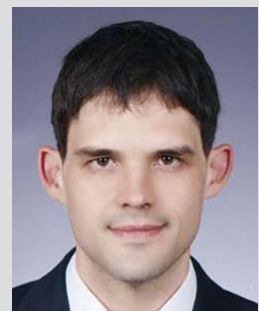
**A list of references can be found here: https://t.ly/xKAdd

A Review of *Teaching L2 Composition* by Ferris and Hedgcock

Reviewed by Andrew Shepherd Nelson

Writing well in a foreign language is not only a challenging skill to master but is also a challenging skill to teach. Teaching writing in a foreign language, including paragraph writing, essay writing, and other types of academic compositions, may cause great frustration and a sense of inadequacy for educators, especially if they are unfamiliar with how to best teach this subject. A resource that can help those who are struggling in this way is the book *Teaching L2 Composition* (4th ed.) by Ferris and Hedgcock (2023).

The book is divided into nine chapters that guide readers from theoretical information about writing, population, and context considerations (Chapters 1–4), to the practical elements of teaching writing, including course design (Chapter 5), assessment and feedback (Chapters 6 and 7), error treatment and improving accuracy (Chapter 8), and finally, the development of language skills within a writing class (Chapter 9). The content of the book is user friendly, which helps to balance the difficulty of the subject. For example, each chapter opens with Questions for Reflection and concludes with a chapter summary of the main points. After the summary, suggestions for further reading and resources are provided, followed by application activities that offer the reader the opportunity to reflect in depth upon their own assumptions about writing or provide detailed assignment tasks that a teacher can use in class. For example, at the end of one chapter, readers can find a writing portfolio assignment with clear directions and rubrics.

Chapters 1 and 4 stand out as highly useful for teachers and demonstrate the depth and breadth of this resource. Chapter 1 posits that as much as teachers need to understand the explicit writing rules of the target language, they also need to understand their students' native language writing systems. This chapter goes into great detail about the differences between writing systems, for example, the degree to which there is a one-to-one correspondence between a written character and a sound (transparency versus opaqueness) or whether the language is read right-to-left or left-to-right. This chapter also includes a useful table that gives an overview of these differences. Such information about students' native language writing systems can help educators make informed choices about what to emphasize in their writing lessons.

Chapter 4 acknowledges that reading skill and writing skill are mutually supportive, and it makes a good case that academic literacy instruction must integrate both. The authors argue that these skills should not be separated: Composing skills will emerge from exposure to and meaningful interaction with textual material. Furthermore, combining reading and writing instruction in the classroom should be done early, they state, so that the learners' proficiency in these two skills can develop and mature simultaneously. Also, a long list of online collaborative tools is provided that students can use to combine these two skills, for example, by writing, reading other students' writing, and writing a response. Some of these tools are Google Docs, Loop, and Parlay.

Strengths: This book is quite informative, and all the chapters are relevant. As an L2 writing instructor of more than six years, I was surprised to learn new content and glad to review information that I already knew. As such, this book can be a great resource for the experienced and inexperienced writing teacher alike. Furthermore, as the book's focus is on the general theory and practice of teaching writing in any foreign language, it can be useful for anyone who teaches foreign language writing, not only those teaching EFL or ESL. Finally, the book is available as an e-book, which is beneficial for teachers working across the globe.

Weaknesses: This book is dense and not easy to skim, which might be considered a disadvantage for teachers who do not have a lot of time to dedicate to reading. However, these teachers can still benefit from just using the practical materials found at the end of each chapter. Experienced teachers may find some parts of this book to be over-explained; however, this same abundance of explanation may be beneficial to novice teachers.

To conclude, educators who are experiencing frustration with teaching L2 writing and are looking for ways to teach it better should certainly consider adding *Teaching L2 Composition* to their library.

The Reviewer

Andrew Shepherd Nelson is an English teacher at Yachay Tech University in Urcuquí, Ecuador, where he employs a teaching philosophy that includes helping students become self-directed learners. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance and a Master of Arts in TESOL, both from the University of Wisconsin–River Falls, USA. Email: nelson.composition@gmail.com

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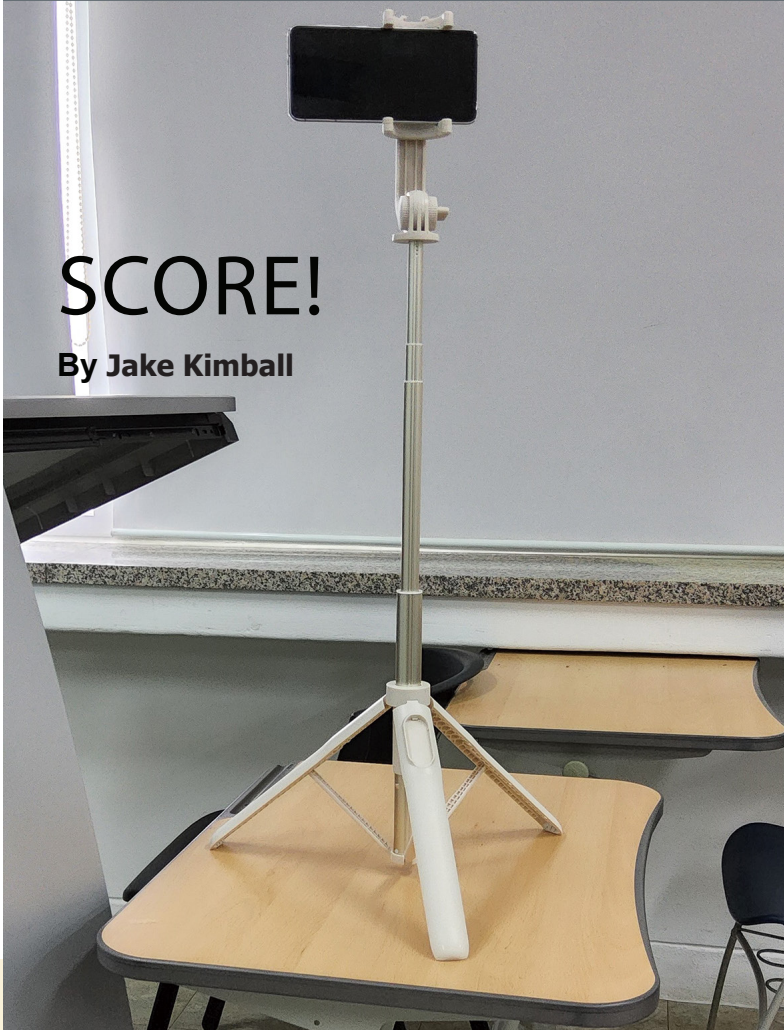Gwangju National University of Education
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The Classroom Connection

SCORE!

By **Jake Kimball**

Let's talk about how you feel about your job, your career. I think it's time to assess your job satisfaction and progress with professional development. Think about it. Are you as engaged in your work as you were when you first started out teaching? Do you still have a bounce in your step and that twinkle in your eye?

It is common for teachers to be buoyed by the ebb and flow of teaching. Research by Michael Huberman (1989) characterized the life cycle of a teacher. He identified patterns common to those in early, mid, and late careers. In short, the stages are nonlinear and recurring. We can and do experience periods where we feel invigorated, then stagnate. Eventually, teachers move on from disillusionment and pursue what we think of as best practices. KOTESOL demographics indicate that our members have a range of teacher experience and credentials. Therefore, it seems appropriate to explore ways to reflect on our classroom practices more meaningfully. After all, anecdotal impressions, though well intentioned, are a poor substitute for objective, data-based inquiry.

Within our readership, undoubtedly there are novice teachers beginning their careers who might be looking for ways to expand or extend their teaching skills and teacher knowledge. There are expert teachers as well. They might appreciate tasks for rejuvenating their interest in teaching or maybe even hit on ideas for mentoring. Richards (2015)

outlines the five stages of teacher expertise (novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, expert), noting what separates the novice from the expert. How then does one progress from one stage to another, other than through formal teacher education courses? And how does a teacher prevent the catastrophe of repeating one year of experience twenty times? The short answer is professional development.

Professional development is something of an umbrella term encompassing several strategies for refining our knowledge and skills. The best starting point, though, is with yourself. Find out more about your own teaching. That would necessitate being observed or engaging in self-observation. Observing and analyzing one's lessons are a productive way to develop a more nuanced understanding of the classroom as an ecosystem. And hopefully greater self-awareness advances your pedagogical competency from one stage to the next. Is there a way to connect our classroom practice with who we are and where we are as teachers? I think so.

SCORE is an acronym for "seating chart observation records" (Nunan, 2009). It is a general observation scheme that can be used to record a wide range of activities that go on in a classroom. The beauty of SCORE is that it can be tailored to one's own context or specific research questions being investigated. However, SCORE is more of a visual-based observation tool that works well with video recordings. Trying to obtain clear, accurate audio recordings from a natural, authentic classroom feels like a Sisyphean task. If you have never recorded your own class, I can assure you that there is an enormous amount of chatter and indistinct, overlapping noise that gets recorded. That is why SCORE maps make classroom inquiry a somewhat gentle entry to observation. Despite some limitations, a SCORE observation map can be a springboard for insight and growth.

What You Will Need
To get started on this project you will need a means of recording your class. A smartphone or tablet will do fine. Find a place with a good vantage point for filming classroom interaction. The mere presence of recording equipment in your class will likely result in a more orderly classroom, with learners suddenly demonstrating their best behavior to give you what you are looking for. However, in my experience, that novelty soon wears off. That is the Hawthorne effect – the very act of being observed changes behavior.

As a matter of convenience, I recommend getting a tripod to support your recording device, one with a long enough extension that it can be placed unobtrusively on a desk or even the floor. An internet search for "selfie stick tripod" (in Korean, 삼각대) should present a variety of affordable products. These days some tripods have Bluetooth

capability. Some are designed specifically for smartphones and others only for tablets.

Next, since we are recording snippets of classroom interaction (from one activity of about 10 minutes to a whole class of about 50 minutes), it would be prudent to obtain a micro-SD card. Depending on your camera's resolution setting, a 10-minute recording may require 3–5 gigabytes of storage, whereas a 50-minute recording may require 15–20 gigabytes or more. Regardless, ensure you have sufficient storage space.

There is one more item we need: a seating chart. The quick and straightforward way is to search the internet for a seating chart template and download one that you find best suits your classroom layout. Another option is to create your own using Excel or Word. For example, a desk is simply a square or cell with darkened borders. Make them large enough to notate. This graphic can be printed and marked up when you watch your video. A tablet is quite convenient for marking up an image, too.

Self-Observation
Step 1: Record your class. Yes, for some of us, it can be off-putting to see and hear ourselves in action. No worries – be brave. One option is to record a whole class. Press record and let it go. A second option, a more manageable one, is to record a single activity from start to end so that you include transitions, too.

Media ethics are required here. Do get consent from students or advise them when recording. Our learners are part of the observational process. They should be advised of the recording, its purpose, and what will happen to the data.

In the past, I was never lucky enough to do this kind of project with a colleague or co-worker. I think that given the opportunity, I would prefer to do this as part of a team; not only is there an accountability aspect motivating us to follow through on the project, but there is also the added benefit of exposure to diverse views or opinions and our shared experience. As the ole' saying goes, "Two heads are better than one."

Step 2: Watch the video and mark the SCORE sheet to indicate interactions in class. That would include the teacher talking to the whole class; for example, giving directions or explaining. It also means noting individual learners' responses and initiations. In addition, record students doing an activity, engaging in pair work, group work, or even sleeping.

To record or notate classroom dynamics, you will need a legend, a system for consistently marking interaction, times, and movements. When I first made SCORE maps, I tried using lines, arrows, stars, checks, and numbers. The key is to be consistent. To give you a better understanding of notations, see the symbol key provided in Nunan (2009, p. 273).

Figure 1. Key to SCORE Data Symbols
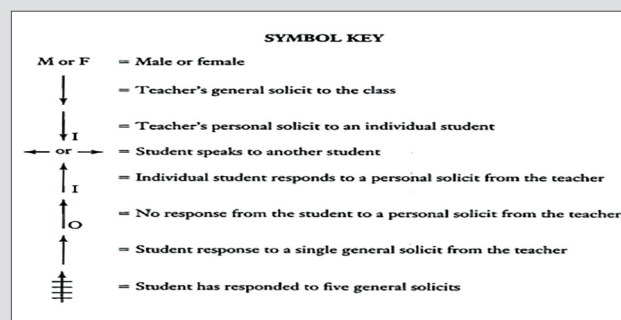
Step 3: Analyze the SCORE map. What stands out? There are many different observation schemes or checklists to work from, but many of them are too broad and unwieldy. And time consuming. To start, choose only one research question to investigate, one aspect of a lesson. I recommend calculating teacher talk time (TTT). Or determine where your action zone is. How about measuring students' time on task?

Step 4: Reflect. While all the steps taken here to investigate your class will contribute to your professional development, this step is the lynchpin. It is the cornerstone of self-directed learning. This step requires critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and evaluation on your part. Referencing only the issue you are investigating, what does your SCORE chart indicate? Was the amount of TTT appropriate for the circumstances? Are your students off task? Why is that? What would you do differently – if anything? Is anyone left out of class? How can you make your lesson more inclusive? If you spent the whole class behind a lectern, how would your lesson have changed if you had meandered about the classroom or taught from another position?

SCORE mapping gives us observational data. Hard data, not subjective intuition. It is worth our time to identify critical incidents and create an action plan. We can identify our strengths and weaknesses. Teacher observations do not need to be stressful evaluation tools. They are simply records of activity. Yes, it takes time to watch a video of our lesson. And it takes even more time and effort to record interactions. Of course, there is a pedagogical payoff. Insight gained from SCORE mapping is a win-win for both you and your learners. More importantly, when you invest in this kind of activity, you are engaging in meaningful work – not to mention the action research cycle. And this kind of professional development leads to teacher agency and job satisfaction.

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The Columnist
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The Development Connection
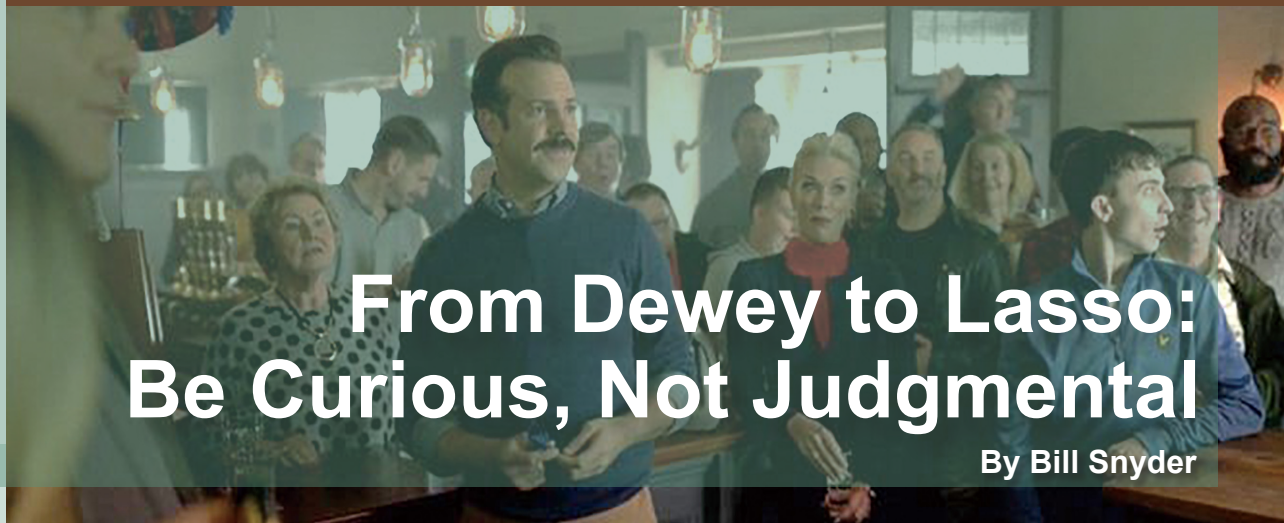
From Dewey to Lasso: Be Curious, Not Judgmental

By Bill Snyder

I've been curious about curiosity for a while now. In part because I wonder sometimes if my own curiosity is really good for me. I don't think my curiosity is quite as dangerous as the kind that kills cats, but I do wonder if my curiosity sometimes distracts me too much from what I really should be focused on. I'm the kind of person who falls down rabbit holes on the internet. I have spent a lot of time looking up all kinds of weird stuff, like the career statistics of obscure baseball players, histories of various ancient empires, and other assorted minutiae that I become interested in at any particular moment. Wikipedia and I are well acquainted.

A few years back, out of my curiosity about curiosity, I picked up a copy of Ian Leslie's (2014) book *Curious: The Desire to Know and Why Your Future Depends on It,* and I did gain some satisfaction from it. I learned that the aspect of my interest that jumps from topic to topic, scooping up odd facts but not pursuing any in depth, is known as *diverse curiosity*. The name seems appropriate. This kind of curiosity is a diversion, frequently a tool for procrastination. While the bits of information I accumulate make me good at pub quizzes and Trivial Pursuit, the knowledge itself isn't a real source of professional growth because it is not well-connected into any framework that I make use of in that part of my life. In short, I gained some understanding of an aspect of myself, but it didn't really seem like my future depended on that information.

Another book I picked up at the time, Susan Engel's (2015) *The Hungry Mind: The Origins of Curiosity in Childhood* provided me with other insights into curiosity. While Engel's book is specifically focused on how curiosity emerges and can be nurtured in childhood, I took note of some things that I could connect to my professional learning needs. First, Engel connected curiosity to our need to resolve uncertainty, pointing out that the limits of a person's comfort with uncertainty is a good neutral measure of their level of curiosity. As I've noted before in these columns, uncertainty is a hallmark of teachers' work. Teachers grapple with unknowns on a daily basis, and I hope that the experience raises our curiosity about how we can best shape our practice to deal with this circumstance. Engel also points out the connection

between curiosity, surprise, and anxiety. Curiosity arises out of the unexpected, when we are surprised by something. But surprises are not always pleasant and can cause negative effects, like anxiety. When people are anxious, their curiosity is reduced, and they are less likely to explore resolutions. The unknown can trigger anxiety as well as curiosity, and having a context where it feels safe to explore may be a necessary condition for people to act on curiosity. This insight reinforced what I felt about teachers needing proper support for professional development.

My curiosity was sufficiently sated by this reading that I left the topic and moved on to other things, keeping what I'd learned about myself and about learning in my mind. Recently, though, two things have brought me back to curiosity. First, as a diversion after work, I watched the television series Ted Lasso, about an American football coach hired to manage an English football (soccer) team. And second, Sarah Mercer and Miroslaw Pawlak (2024) just published an article focusing on the construct of language teacher professional curiosity (LTPC). The confluence of these two things led me back to curiosity as a topic for this column.

Late in the first season of Ted Lasso, a scene takes place in which Ted, the main character of the series, hustles the former owner of the team he manages at darts. The former owner is bent on harassing the new owner, his ex-wife, and Ted makes a bet with him that, if Ted wins, will foil the former owner's plan. Ted pretends to be ignorant of darts and falls behind badly in the match. Finally, while Ted delivers the final three darts (2 triple 20s and a bullseye) to win the match and the bet, he cites a quote from Walt Whitman that he saw painted on his son's elementary school wall: "Be Curious, Not Judgemental," and delivers a soliloquy on how people have underestimated him because they weren't curious about what his abilities might be. They judged him based on appearances, didn't ask questions to challenge their judgment and learn more.

Mercer and Pawlak's article introduces the concept of language teacher professional curiosity (LTPC) and

examines it through interviews with 12 Austrian and Polish language teachers. This research starts from the realization that language teachers differ in their willingness to participate in professional development activities. Some actively seek out opportunities for professional development while others avoid them. The reasons for avoiding professional development are varied and sometimes reflect practical concerns, such as time pressures. But another important factor may be the teacher's personality and just how curious they are about some aspect of their profession.

Mercer and Pawlak link curiosity to the personality variable openness to experience, which can reflect interest or a search for novelty. Mercer and Pawlak acknowledge that their sample is small and likely not representative of the general teacher population, but still, a number of interesting results emerged from the interview data. They found that curiosity motivated these teachers to pursue new knowledge and seek out challenges, but was also a way to avoid boredom. What was important for teachers for being able to satisfy their curiosity were a personal sense of agency and contextual autonomy. Believing in one's own abilities and having the freedom to pursue subjects of interest encouraged teachers to pursue professional development opportunities, either independently or via more formal programs. And while stress could dampen curiosity or the ability to act on it, satisfying their curiosity was a source of positive emotion for the teachers.

The result that struck me the most, though, was the link between teachers' curiosity and openness to reflecting on their practice. In this sense, curiosity and openness to experience reminded me of Dewey's (1933/1998) discussion of open-mindedness as one of the fundamental attitudes underlying a reflective approach to thought. Dewey saw open-mindedness as an active state represented by "alert curiosity and spontaneous outreaching for the new" (p. 31). Being open-minded requires moving away from preconceived judgements and acquiring a willingness to consider that one might be wrong, take in new information and perspectives from others, and think reflectively about new possibilities. Reading Dewey like this, he sounds a bit like Ted Lasso.

In contrast to diversive curiosity, Leslie (2014) suggests that much of the development of modern life has been supported by *epistemic* curiosity, a more explicitly focused form of curiosity that leads us to build knowledge in different areas and use it in our lives. This form of curiosity is akin to the kind of curiosity that Dewey (1933/1998) labeled *intellectual*, in which a person's focus moves from asking questions to seeking answers. And it is the kind of curiosity that Engel (2015) argues

we need to nurture and help mature from the diversive curiosity that marks childhood. Epistemic/intellectual curiosity requires continuous effort to inform ourselves in more detail about whatever topic we are pursuing. In making this effort, we go beyond the surface knowledge gained in satisfying diversive curiosity, which may serve us well at the pub quiz. Diversive curiosity can serve as an entry point to some new area of knowledge, but it is in satisfying epistemic curiosity that we develop the specialized knowledge that we recognize as expertise.

The development of teaching expertise should be a long-term goal of teacher professional development. If epistemic curiosity is essential to achieving this outcome, then we should be curious about the nature of teachers' curiosity. Mercer and Pawlak's article is a good place for starting to think about this topic. Their research was limited. LTPC needs to be explored in more ways, in wider contexts. At a practical level, we need to support the curiosity that already exists in many teachers and promote its development in others. Teachers should be provided with working conditions that support their agency, grant them autonomy, allow them to reflect on their practice,

and change their minds. This is the foundation of open-mindedness, epistemic curiosity, reflective practice, and teaching expertise.

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The Columnist

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The Brain Connection

Something Interesting That Neuroscience Teaches Us About Reading Proficiency

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

Okay. You are teaching a reading course this year, and your students are doing the work but also struggling. Other than changing the readings, what could you do that might improve their reading proficiency. Teach more vocabulary (probably what most teachers do), have them work on grammar (also common), have them work through comprehension questions (but this is really an assessment rather than a proficiency builder)?

Any of these will aid reading proficiency to some degree, but it is kind of like teaching someone how to be an artist by having them learn the names of paints and types of brushes. It is not quite enough. Instead, let us look at reading from the perspective of neuroscience and see what we can find there.

> ...we need to take a step back and look at the brain's basic way of processing the world: It does so by predicting.

To do so, we need to take a step back and look at the brain's basic way of processing the world: It does so by predicting. Processing sensory input from zero is just too hard for that little organ, too wasteful of cognitive resources, so the brain relies on predicting instead.

If you are in Starbucks, you expect to see Starbuck drinks. The mental models for the Starbucks drinks are already activated in your brain even before you walk into the store. Then, when you see a person holding something small and white, with just minimal sensory input, your brain stops looking and tells you that it is a Starbucks coffee cup, filling in the rest of the details top down. The cup you "see" was only partially seen by your eyes, with the rest passed down to your sensory areas from the part of your brain that manages internal mental models. Your eyes caught a vague outline and your brain automatically filled in the rest. In that way, it could shift its cognitive resources to other things. The way our brains paint the world is so efficient, so fast.

In that particular situation, being in a Starbucks shop, our brain was aware that an encounter with a Starbucks cup was likely. After all, that is exactly what you experienced many times before in other Starbucks shops. Your brain uses Bayesian inferencing (Aitchison & Lengyel, 2017) to determine that in a Starbucks shop, something small and white in someone's hand is likely to be a cup, but once in a while, might be a napkin or cell phone instead. Once you decide, your eyes confirm. Your brain did not predict it would be a rabbit, so if it is, you do a double-take during confirmation, derailing your cognitive processing, and spending a lot of energy readjusting your perception.

This skill in predicting allows your brain to instantly understand anything it is seeing, hearing, or experiencing with just a smidgen of sensory input. Interestingly, your brain does this for language as well; it predicts.

At the sentence level, the starting words in a sentence help the brain activate models that tell it what the following words are likely to be. If you hear a start like *The boy ate...*, then the possibility of what is coming next is

instantly reduced to a much smaller word set, mostly food (but if the next words are an unexpected *9*, *10*, *11*, you again do a double-take). In other words, grammar itself is a tool our brains have created to aid predictive processing. So are common phrases and idioms, like *get out of hand*, *make a projection*, and *be careful*. These chunks of language, which we gain automaticity over, help us predict and thereby reduce processing. If you are a language teacher, I think you understand what I am talking _____.

Reading is also a prediction game, which is why certain structures and styles make this incredibly difficult task easier to accomplish. There is much more to being able to read a page of text than just being language proficient (as any of us who read research papers know). There are also much larger discourse and content structures that help your prediction machine. They help you pre-activate likely models of language and meaning – the same way being in a Starbucks shop made you ready to encounter a Starbucks drink.

To learn more about some of these structures, go to our MindBrainEd Think Tank website at mindbrained. org and download our "Reading Structures," "Discourse," and "Predictive Processing" issues. We at Think Tank Headquarters are ecstatic about those issues, and we guarantee that if you read them, you will come away with a different understanding of what reading is and how to teach it. In the meantime, as you read this magazine, pay attention to how

I don't know if anyone has ever listed these larger structures in one place, so I will attempt to do so off the top of my head, knowing I will miss some. So, a list of reading structures that help us predict what we are reading, filling in between the lines, include

1) **discourse structure rules** (expository, narrative etc; paragraphs and topic sentences; transition words; titles & subtitles, and so on) – since these give us an overall frame to fill in;
2) **genre, author's writing style, or plot type** – so that we can guess where the piece is going (thanks, Harumi Kimura and Amanda Gillis-Furutaka);
3) **content that relates to existing subject area knowledge** – so that we can simulate the situation by activating the right models for the content (maybe this is the most important);
4) **common phrases** – that allow chunking and automaticity to take place;
5) **illustrations.**

Do you see where we are going with this? As mentioned at the beginning, it is common for teachers to teach reading by having learners work on vocabulary or grammar (as did I), unaware of the importance of these larger, less visible structures. But what we now know about the brain tells us that just focusing on basic language proficiency is not enough. The larger structures are important too, especially because many of them are not shared across languages.

all those factors in the list above affect your own comprehension and ease of reading. Then mail me!

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> **This skill in predicting allows your brain to instantly understand anything it is seeing, hearing, or experiencing with just a smidgen of sensory input. Interestingly, your brain does this for language as well; it predicts.**

The Columnist

Curtis Kelly (EdD), professor emeritus of Kansai University, Japan, founded the JALT Mind, Brain, and Education SIG. His life mission is "to relieve the suffering of the classroom." He has written 35 books, over 100 articles, and given over 500 presentations. This article was based on one he wrote for the MindBrainEd Think Tanks, so please subscribe! mindbrained.org

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