

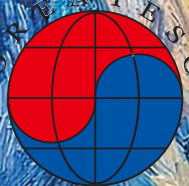
The English Connection

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KOTESOL
대한영어교육학회



Contact us:
KoreaTESOL.org
TEC@KoreaTESOL.org



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Suggestions and Contributions:

tec@koreatesol.org

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Teaching Conversation: Walking the Talk

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

I will go out on a limb here and say that the vast majority of KOTESOL members teach one form or another of English conversation. Perhaps your course is labeled “Practical English” or “General English,” “Business English,” or even “Debate,” but chances are it contains an oral element, one that focuses on students speaking and improving their English communicative skills. Common dynamics to try to do this and replicate English conversation in the classroom are seated partners talking in pairs, or maybe small group discussions. We know these dynamics well; all the methods and techniques we as language teachers have acquired and fine-tuned to keep students motivated, to keep them talking, are at the heart of every TESOL degree, conference presentation, and workshop (though sadly this seems to be decreasing year by year). But I will ask you this. How well can *you* hold a conversation? How effectively are you able to converse with others? You likely talk the “talk” and teach it, but can you walk the “talk”?



“English conversation” includes two obvious elements: “English” and “conversation.” While language educators usually focus on the “English,” (the grammar, the vocabulary, the accuracy, because we’re natives of it, or at least really good at it), the importance of honing “conversation” skills cannot be overstated. Having good conversation skills strengthens our interactions with others through meaningful and enjoyable conversation. They can foster positive social connections. Conversation skills allow us to communicate more effectively, and this can promote understanding, empathy, and mutual respect. Developing conversation skills can boost self-esteem, as we are able to express ourselves more clearly and better engage others. This confidence is bolstering, thus fostering more engagement and increased social connections. We feel good when we talk to others, and want to do it more. Good conversation skills contribute greatly to “people person” skills overall, contributing to effective collaboration, leadership, and networking. Is it any wonder how Dale Carnegie’s 1936 *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is one of the best-selling books of all time?

But how does one teach the “conversation” in “English conversation”? Is the gift of gab just that – an innate trait some people are lucky enough to possess, a relatively inherent characteristic we either have or don’t? I’ve attended my share of social events; it certainly seems that way. And what about the so-called “L2 persona”? Can we as teachers help bring out a different person when speaking English, a learner that, despite linguistic errors, speaks confidently and fluently, perhaps even more so than when speaking their L1? Or should we just take a behaviorist view and keep practicing, letting a sort of L1 positive language transfer take effect? Let’s take a look at some basic conversation skills that may make a difference.

Awareness of Various Responses

So often classroom conversation is just a series of Q’s & A’s (sadly just a list presented as such by the teachers. And yes, I’m guilty of this, too). “Ok, students! Answer these 10 questions with your partner. You have 10 minutes. Go!” Rather than a tennis rally of back and forth – Question 1, Answer 1, Question 2, Answer 2, etc. – try *repetition* as a response, in order to show knowledge and understanding of the subject. Student A might ask, “How was the rest of your day after I left?” Student B can respond, “The day, after you left? I finally got home by bus.” Or *elicit* more information with a follow-up question: “What about you? What did you do?” Making a *connection* might be possible and always a plus, which identifies similarities between conversation partners. Student B might have responded, “I left, too! I guess we both were bored.”

Encourage Turn-Taking

One of the main strategies of having a good conversation is the trade off of talking and listening, with the common assumption that a conversation is a dialogue, a discourse, a group effort. We have all, sadly, known the feeling – stuck in one’s role in a conversation, set in stone, with a long-winded speaker selfishly holding the floor and a passive listener just nodding their head. The “back and forth” is missed, and interaction and social connection decreases. Having *self-awareness* to the duration, sequence, and speaking style of your conversation is a key strategy. Trying to speak more, or trying to speak less, can be a mental insecurity, a weight on one’s self-esteem, but this balance is a cooperative effort that conversation partners need to work out. Verbal and non-verbal *cues*, such as pauses, voice intonation, falling pitch or volume (like trailing off), and body language can help signal these turn-taking points. Or even more explicit turn-ending markers like *yeah* or *anyways...*

Good Listening Skills

Listener responses, also called *backchannels*, are verbal messages that a listener gives to the primary speaker while the primary speaker is speaking. Providing this feedback shows that the listener is *engaged* in the interaction – something all too often missing in native speaker conversations but lacking more so in classroom L2 conversations. Backchannels can function as signs of comprehension (*oh?, ok*), positive opinions (*yeah, ok*), and showing continued attention (*mmhmm, uhuh*, and even the insipid Korean *uhh*).

Obviously, as English language teachers, we set out to employ methods and activities to improve our learners’ English speaking skills. And accuracy will improve along the way, with positive learning environments, motivations, and interesting methods, to mention just a few. But in this context, conversation skills serve a different yet interconnected purpose. They emphasize the ability to effectively communicate, engage with others, and maintain interpersonal interactions. This, I believe, holds greater importance because native-speaking listeners can often overlook minor grammatical errors from language learners. But like other social skills, such as etiquette and cultural norms, poor conversation skills can’t be as easily forgiven.

Authentic spoken interaction can be a mess. I’d be the first to admit this. Rhetorical questions, false starts, interruptions, overlapping, and repetition underline the high social engagement that speakers and listeners contribute in English-speaking conversation. Thus, we as teachers might find it difficult to locate teachable moments in this seemingly chaotic exchange. Reminding students to be self-aware of the basic conversation skills I’ve mentioned above may be of more help than we realize.

President's Message

Convivial Collaboration, Connections, and Community: Building Bridges with KOTESOL

By Lindsay Herron KOTESOL President

As the weather starts to cool, KOTESOL is heating up! There's a lot to look forward to this autumn. First, the 2024 ESBB International TESOL Conference & KOTESOL National Conference promises to be quite a spectacular event – longer and more global than any past KOTESOL national conference and also the first to be hosted by the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter. This three-day event includes a pre-conference tour of Jeollanam-do, around 100 in-person sessions, asynchronous videos for participants to enjoy at their leisure, attendees from all over the world, and built-in social and networking opportunities.



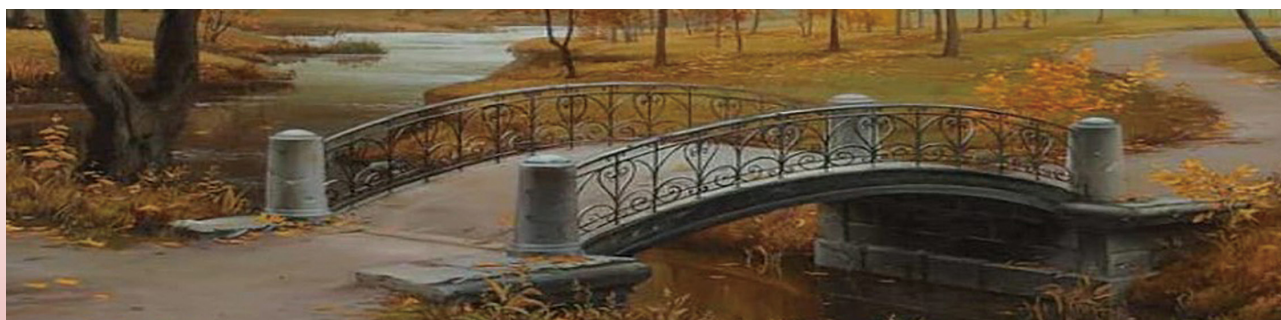
The theme of the conference, "Transcending Borders, Building Bridges: Compassion, Connection, and Criticality in the 21st Century," is one that particularly resonates with me. This theme, to me, explores and encapsulates some of the core questions of contemporary education: How can we, as educators and scholars, help to make the world a better place? In an era that seems increasingly intolerant and isolating, how can we help cultivate connection, communication, and community? How can we better equip students to face the future with flexibility – to be compassionate but critical, courageous but humble, creative but conscientious?

The theme also reflects a hope that this conference will complicate the concepts of barriers and belonging on a variety of levels. On the surface level, of course, it indicates our need to connect and collaborate – as educators, scholars, and global citizens – across borders and beyond boundaries, shifting and reshaping concepts of belonging as we find mutual inspiration and a sense of shared purpose. On another level, the theme encourages participants to consider education beyond the confines of the classroom, beyond traditional notions of research, and beyond narrow definitions of what "counts" as learning. Personally, I'm eager to see how the tendrils of these topics intertwine throughout the weekend – including in the sessions by KOTESOL's featured speakers, Jocelyn Wright (Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter) and Kevin Kester (Seoul Chapter), both respected scholars in the still-nascent field of peacebuilding education.

In many ways, the ideals espoused in the theme are also at the heart of many KOTESOL endeavors – not just at this conference, but year-round! This autumn, KOTESOL members can renew their sense of community and belonging in many ways, such as by participating in KOTESOL Connections Day (KCD). At KCD, members can meet many of the volunteers whose time, energy, and effort make KOTESOL possible; share their own experiences and ideas for the organization; and explore how they can contribute in productive and personally meaningful ways. Another way to get an overview of KOTESOL and feel more connected to our many initiatives and programs is to read our new online-only publication, *Happenings and News (HAN)*. *HAN* highlights and celebrates the achievements of our national committees, chapters, SIGs, and members, offering a glimpse into the collaborative and hard-working community that is the bedrock of our organization. Similarly, members are welcome to participate in the annual business meeting (ABM), which will be held online on November 1. At the ABM, we will vote on any proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, enjoy a retrospective of the year's highlights, present awards for service, and announce election results. (Keep an eye on your email inbox for a ballot in early October!)

Finally, I'm pleased to spotlight a few more opportunities for building bridges – both in Korea and abroad. Within the KOTESOL community, we can look forward to the usual mix of engaging and highly anticipated regional conferences hosted by various chapters, as well as the first slate of events hosted by our new Incheon Chapter, formally approved by the National Council in June. Also, as usual, KOTESOL is sending representatives to a plethora of partner conferences around the world, and we encourage our members to participate, as well. Domestic conferences of note include the 2024 KAMALL Annual Conference, which will be held September 28 at Seoul Women's University, and the 2024 ALAK International Conference, which will be held at Seoul National University on October 12. International partner conferences coming up include the 32nd MELTA International Conference (September 21–22, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia); the 17th National TEFL/13th Mongolia TESOL International Conference (September 27–29, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia); the 70th TEFLIN/17th CONAPLIN International Conference (October 23–25, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia); the 2024 ELTAI Annual Conference (October 23–26, Assam, India); ETA-ROC 2024: The 33rd International Symposium on English Language Teaching and Learning (November 9–10, Taipei, Taiwan); the 22nd AsiaTEFL International Conference (November 15–17, Chiang Rai, Thailand); and JALT 2024: The 50th JALT International Conference (November 15–18, Shizuoka, Japan).

Have a wonderful autumn, and I hope to connect with you in person soon!



Reflections on Guy Cook's Plenary at the 2024 KOTESOL International Conference

By William (Bill) Littlewood

In his plenary at the 2024 KOTESOL International Conference (available online via the KOTESOL website), Guy Cook gave a stimulating discussion of ways in which functional, utilitarian trends have nowadays come to dominate much of TESOL. He contrasted this with the more non-utilitarian (humanitarian) philosophy that guided language teaching in its earlier years, when it was closely linked to the understanding of literature and left more scope for activities based on imagination, translation, and language play. He emphasized that both the utilitarian and the non-utilitarian ethos have a role to play. Each may offer more appealing experiences to different learners and indeed may complement each other in the same course.



I became vividly aware of this potential complementarity of functional and non-functional approaches to language learning when I first traveled to Italy for a holiday trip. At that time, my only exposure to Italian had been through my love of opera. I had listened to my favorite arias so many times that the words and music had penetrated into my being. The situations in operas were not such as one encounters in "real life," but in Italy, I was amazed that the language I had internalized during these experiences allowed me to use Italian in a surprisingly wide range of "real-life" situations. To take one example: I could never use *che gelida manina!* (what a frozen little hand!) in a real communicative situation, but the language pattern had become so much a part of my inner self that it could convert itself effortlessly into variations such as *che bella*

statua or *che bella vista*, if I wanted to communicate those meanings.

Before this experience in Italy, I had become immersed in the communicative (functional) "revolution" in language teaching. I remember a seminal conference on the functional approach, which took place in Reading (UK) in 1981. Here one needed to be very brave to suggest, even tentatively, that grammar may still be an important factor in course design. I once did so, and the scornful words of one lady in the audience still ring in my ears: "Perhaps the gentleman does not realize that functional courses no longer need to take account of grammatical factors." Her words reflected the common orthodoxy, which was new at the time: In the communicative approach, which knew the answers to all our problems, learning grammar was a thing of the past, and all the language we taught had to be "realistic." Any suggestion that useful learning could be based on the words and music of operas would be closely allied to blasphemy, and if I really did find that I could make functional use of what I had learnt through listening to operas, surely the fault must have lie not with the functional doctrine but with me as a learner?

Since then, I have become more catholic in my beliefs and, like Socrates, "know that I know nothing." But teachers have to at least *pretend* to know something, or they cannot operate in their teaching job. Guy Cook gave us a framework for "knowing something" but still operating with flexibility.

This may mean adopting different approaches with different groups of learners. Taking my own experience as an example (but not a model!), the utilitarian ethos was dominant in many EAP courses that I taught, where we focused on developing useful skills, e.g., for writing and making presentations. On the other hand, it was the non-utilitarian ethos that permeated courses that I taught to students of music, where we set out to engage the imagination and stimulate creative expression through materials such as proverbs and folktales. But students (like teachers!) are multidimensional, and we do not necessarily have to compartmentalize our approaches. So except in courses with a very specific functional focus, we can appeal to learners as "whole persons" by combining the utilitarian and the non-utilitarian ethos.

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One convenient framework for doing this is the unified model of human motivation described by Pincus (2024). The detailed arguments in Pincus's article are complex (the article is available online via the link in the references below), but in broad outline, and with some changes that I have made in terminology, the model argues that human activity may be oriented towards four broad domains: (a) *intrapersonal* (orientation towards one's own self), (b) *interpersonal* (orientation towards the social world), (c) *instrumental* (orientation towards the material world), and (d) *transcendent* (orientation towards a reality beyond the "here and now"; Ackerman, 2021, is a useful introduction). These domains generate four orientations, which are also important sources of motivation:

1. Self-oriented motivation (e.g., intrinsic interest in the topic or activity, desire for self-development),
2. Practical motivation (e.g., perceived usefulness, extrinsic motivation, a wish to gain good academic grades),
3. Socially oriented motivation (e.g., friendship orientation, interest in other social groups, the desire to engage in interaction), and
4. Transcendent motivation (from the realm "beyond the here and now," e.g., involvement with music, imaginative texts and religion).

These motivations are best conceived not as four distinct sets but as four motivational currents that may sometimes operate separately (e.g., a person may focus single-mindedly on improving grades or mastering effective cohesive devices) but more often flow in combination with varying strengths (e.g., reading and discussing poems may have the simultaneous purposes of developing language skills, interacting socially, and stimulating self-awareness).

Guy Cook's arguments in his plenary suggest that trends in language teaching today may be most strongly linked to the third (practical) source above, less strongly to the self- and socially oriented sources, and only weakly to transcendent motives.

But when I recently asked groups of advanced Chinese learners of English to suggest metaphors that characterize for them the process of second language learning, I was happily surprised to find that they reflected strongly the transcendent qualities inherent in learning a second language. As examples (more of which can be found in Littlewood, 2021):

- Learning a second language is like discovering an unknown path because it will lead you to a brand-new world you have never met before.
- It is like opening a new window, and you can take a peek into a different world.
- It is like looking out through a telescope, because it allows us to see a larger and farther world.
- It is like diving in the ocean because it is both exciting and unpredictable to explore a new zone.

As Guy Cook indicated, the functional, utilitarian path is by no means the only direction that the "communicative revolution" could have pointed us along. In any case, communicative language teaching itself is now much more broadly conceived than it was at its outset (Littlewood, 2022; Littlewood & Wang, 2022). One could easily conceive, for example, a communicative course where

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units start from the language in songs or poetry and simultaneously (or subsequently) give opportunities for learners to activate this language for utilitarian purposes (as exemplified by my own experience in Italy).

Perhaps it is now time to write a new book on communicative language teaching, one which integrates this wider perspective into a truly *catholic* blueprint for communicative course design.

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The Author

William (Bill) Littlewood is a professor emeritus at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Up until his retirement, he was involved in foreign language education at various schools and universities in England, Wales, and Hong Kong. He has published widely in this field. Email: wlittlewood9@gmail.com



Current Trends in Native Speaker Requirements in EFL Teacher Recruitment

By Eun-Young Julia Kim

Introduction

Native speakerism has long been entrenched in ELT. Countries in East Asia, especially South Korea (Korea hereafter), have been a site where such linguisticism has been particularly visible (Jeon & Lee, 2006; Mahboob & Golden, 2013). Defining a native speaker is not a straightforward task because nowadays multilingualism is common among English speakers. However, many East Asian countries have traditionally sought after teachers from so-called “inner-circle countries” (Kachru, 1990), including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Ireland, where English originated through settlement rather than colonization.

The last few decades, however, have seen a shift in perspectives among ELT scholars and professionals to prioritize candidates’ experience and training rather than nativeness when recruiting teachers. Although other

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constituents, such as administrators and policymakers, may not be fully on board with this new perspective, the nonnative English-speaking teacher (NNEST) movement, which sprang up in the late 20th century, has made an impact on increasing awareness of unfair hiring practices that have dominated in the EFL context. TESOL’s 2006 position statement affirmed the profession’s commitment to oppose “discrimination against nonnative English speakers in the field of English language teaching” (TESOL International Association, 2006).

Despite this advancement, several researchers observed native speaker ideology continuing in the ELT job market well into the 21st century. For example, in 2010, Selvi reported that over 60% of the ads from TESOL.org and about 74% of the Dave’s ESL Café ads specified a native speaker requirement. Similarly, a few years later, Ruecker

and Ives (2014) found that native speaker requirements appeared in more than 80% of the ELT job ads they analyzed.

In Korea, several government-initiated programs, such as EPIK (English Program in Korea), TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea), and TEE (Teaching English in English), further contributed to perpetuating native speakerism (Jee & Li, 2021). While current job ads in TESOL.org are devoid of native speaker requirements, it would be worthwhile to investigate if changes are also happening in the EFL job market, particularly in Korea, where native speaker ideology is most visibly present.

The Study

The current study analyzes 237 ads from two popular EFL recruitment websites – TEFL.org and Dave’s ESL Café Korean Job Board – posted in November and December of 2023. The 77 ads from TEFL.org advertised positions in Asia, Europe, and Latin America, and the majority are for Asian countries, such as China, Korea, and Japan. One-hundred-sixty ads from Dave’s ESL Café Korean Job Board advertised positions for all levels of English language learners – from preschool to college.

In order to examine the prevalence of native speakerism, the presence of a native speaker requirement was tallied on a spreadsheet. Then, the qualifications sections were analyzed to identify other preferred qualities for EFL teachers specified in the ads.

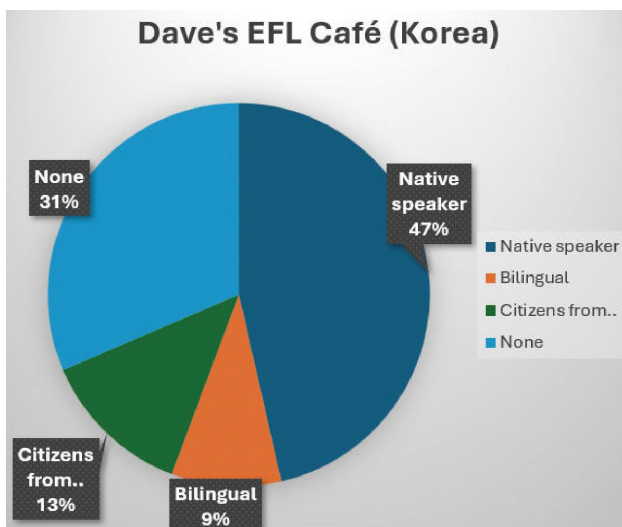
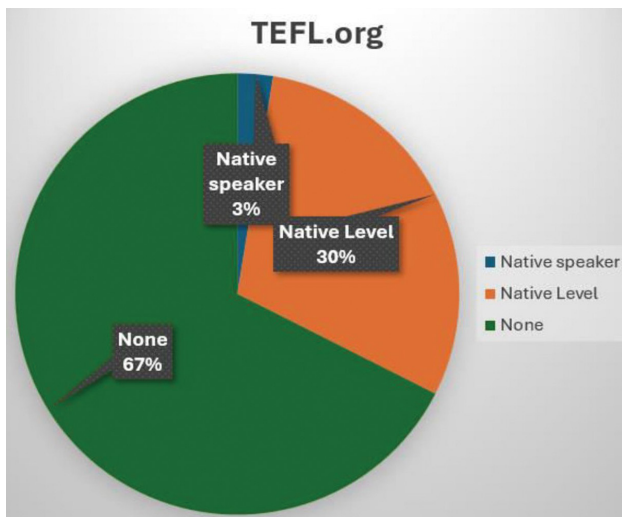
Findings

One notable feature of Dave’s ESL Café Korean Job Board was the sense of heightened competitiveness. Unlike those on TEFL.org or those one typically sees on other job boards, the titles of the ads from Dave’s ESL Café Korean Job Board often consisted of several sentences promoting the positions, and many contained emojis and symbols hollering for attention. Scanning through the posts clearly suggests that recruiters are competing with one another to lure candidates to their sites. Further elements of competition were seen as recruiters used their Anglo affiliation as a selling point. For example, Pine Tree Academy emphasizes being “Canadian owned”; Embark Recruiting touts having “American curriculum” already prepared; and Doctor English Academy states it’s “American owned and operated.”

The requirement of being a native speaker was still present in many of the ads, but it was considerably less compared to the numbers reported by other researchers a decade ago. Selvi’s (2010) study showed that 74% of Dave’s ESL Café ads contained a native speaker requirement. The results from the current study of Dave’s ESL Café showed that 47% of the ads contained such a requirement, 13% mentioned countries or visas, and 31% did not mention any native speaker requirement. Compared to the findings from Ruecker and Ives’ (2014)

study, which found native speaker requirements in more than 80% of the ELT job ads they analyzed, only 3% of the ads from TEFL.org analyzed in the current study mentioned a native speaker as a requirement, while the term, "native level," was used in 30% of the ads. Most of the ads from TEFL.org did not include any mention of nativeness (see Figure 1). Although close to half of the ads still listed nativeness as a requirement, the numbers indicate a noticeable decline in the explicit mentioning of native speaker preference.

Figure 1. Native Speaker Requirements on Two EFL Job Boards



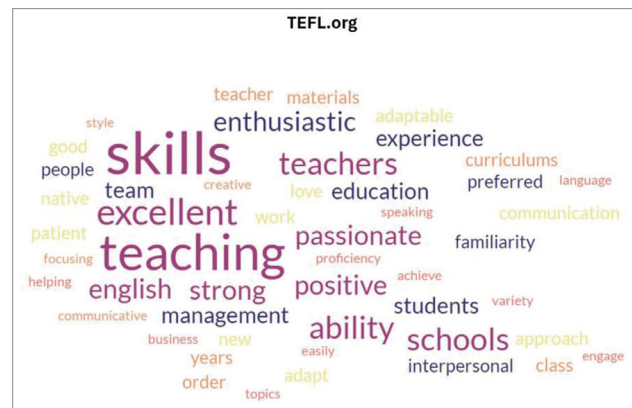
Another notable finding was the preference for bilingual teachers. Dave's ESL Café contained a dozen ads preferring Korean-English bilingual teachers or those with conversational Korean language proficiency. One recruiter limited candidates to those with at least intermediate-level Korean proficiency.

One thing that has not changed from 10 years ago is that teaching experience is still not required for most of the positions advertised. In the current data, only around 10% of the jobs required relevant teaching experience.

Desired qualities mentioned in the ads were combined to identify some of the most preferred qualities. As shown in Figure 2, qualities such as "communication,"

"diversity," "technology" (Dave's ESL Café), "passion," and "enthusiasm" (TEFL.org) were most sought after.

Figure 2. Desired Qualifications on Two EFL Job Boards



Discussion

The data indicates that fewer recruiters are including the native speaker requirement in their EFL teacher recruitment ads, compared to 10+ years ago. In addition, despite the relatively small percentage, Korean-English bilingual teachers are being desired by multiple recruiters in Korea. This could suggest that the "White monolingual teachers," once considered as ideal EFL teachers, may be beginning to lose a competitive edge. Several ads specified a preference for *gyopo*, which is a Sino-Korean term referring to Korean-heritage individuals from inner-circle countries. Korean-English bilingual *gyopos* are likely to have both language skills and cultural understanding, which can significantly benefit students. They can also bridge the two cultures more effectively than monolingual English-speaking teachers, especially when dealing with challenging situations with parents.

The findings from TEFL.org showed a reduced emphasis on native speakers but a greater emphasis on possessing native-level English proficiency. A question that begs to be answered is how "native-level" is defined. Certainly, achieving native fluency, such as the C2 level, would not only be challenging but also unnecessary for most EFL teachers. Classes for beginning English levels, in particular, would greatly benefit if the teachers spoke the students' first language. Students learning basic English sounds and sentences also do not necessarily need to be taught by teachers who have the native speaker's intuition. In fact, hiring confident, capable nonnative teachers of English can help foster the notion for students that one does not have to be a native speaker to have a sense of ownership

Each policy and hiring decision that places one's birth country as the most important qualification thickens the glass ceiling not only for nonnative English teachers but for students.

of and confidence in English. This can empower students and nonnative teachers alike and help cure the sense of perennial incompetence and inferiority that plague many Korean speakers of English. Having nonnative teachers as role models can be a helpful antidote for such an ailment.

The data also show that most recruiters are looking for teachers who are passionate, enthusiastic, and possess strong communication skills and knowledge of technology. They also emphasize commitment to diversity as an important qualification. If all of these qualities are indeed important, it would be highly illogical if well-trained, dedicated local teachers, who can speak the students' language, were not allowed to compete on level ground with inexperienced, monolingual native English-speaking teachers. Each policy and hiring decision that places one's birth country as the most important qualification thickens the glass ceiling not only for nonnative English teachers but for students.

We should note that the absence of the native speaker requirement in the ads being analyzed may not necessarily mean lack of preference for native speakers in the actual hiring process. Recruiters may still choose a native English speaker over a nonnative teacher who is equally well qualified and even exceeds in certain qualifications. Regardless, the fact that fewer ads explicitly mention native speaker requirements and that the value of multilingual teachers is being recognized seems to suggest that there may be hope on the horizon for nonnative English teachers.

Conclusion

It would be naïve to have a convoluted sense of optimism in thinking that the EFL teacher hiring ground will level any time soon in Korea (see, for example, Choe & Lee, 2023, for American English dominance); programs such as EPIK still require that only candidates from certain countries are qualified to apply for a teaching job. And in day-to-day reality, many nonnative English-speaking teachers – including those who possess superb English skills – feel as if they have to prove themselves as

legitimate English teachers. Much work is still ahead of us until we can successfully educate our administrators, local and national policymakers, and students, as well as ourselves as teachers, that so much is at stake in the policies that discredit nonnative English teachers. As the advocacy of TESOL.org has made a positive impact on hiring practices in the U.S. and globally, I am hopeful that organizations such as KOTESOL and its local chapters can work together to help national and local authorities and school administration to make sensible policies in teacher recruitment and hiring.

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The Author

Eun-Young Julia Kim is an associate teaching professor in the Center for the Study of Languages and Cultures at the University of Notre Dame, U.S.A. She coordinates and teaches in the English for Academic Purposes and the TESOL programs. Her research interests include global Englishes, second language writing, critical discourse analysis, and the intersection of language and religion. Email: ekim27@nd.edu




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Classroom Ideas: Authentic Listening and Speaking Fluency

By Christina Savvidis

In early 2023, I started my first university teaching position in Korea. I honestly didn't know what to expect. All I knew was that I would be teaching speaking and listening courses. I was handed a textbook and sent off.

On day one of using it, I knew it wasn't going to work. The listening material was outdated and contrived, and the speaking tasks elicited bare minimum effort from my students; so started my self-propelled journey into curriculum development. What I came up with stemmed from my experiences as an ESL instructor in the US, my MA TESOL studies, cultural knowledge having grown up in a Korean household, and my own language learning experiences. As a result, my courses became exceptionally popular amongst the undergraduates and provided a fresh perspective to language learning for my students. Through this article, I would like to share some of the elements I incorporated into my curricula that you can add to your own teaching repertoire.

Using Authentic Listening Material

I have a strong distaste for inauthentic listening material. Think robotic, fabricated dialogs of English speakers with unbearable acting and cheesy lines that make soap operas seem Oscar-worthy. I admit I'm quite prejudiced against such material. At the same time, I can't deny that there is a place for this type of material in language learning, but I don't believe Korean higher education is that place. These students have already studied skyscrapers of vocabulary and grammar. They have the foundation they need for authentic material, but they are deprived of the authentic context they need to develop listening fluency. Then, when they fail to understand a fluent speaker, even with all the studying they have done, their confidence spirals. This is hardly surprising; in their typical English classrooms, Korean students are listening to inauthentic material that does not reflect the speaking rate, intonation, or connected speech of natural, fluent English. A clear indication of this is the English listening material that is used on the Korean CSAT. Sample CSAT listening material contains awkwardly slow speaking rates, robotic speaker intonations, and tends to exclude most connected speech patterns (듣기채널, 2022).

environments "in which the psychological demands placed on the learner resemble those that will be encountered later in natural settings" (Segalowitz & Lightbown, 1999, p. 51). Luckily, I am not required to prepare my students for a large-scale standardized exam, and I have the luxury of designing my own assessments to focus on listening comprehension of authentic material.

All of the listening materials in my class are originally designed for native English speakers. In fact, I simply use YouTube videos, songs, movies, and podcasts. When choosing them, I consider the contemporary and cultural relevance of their topics.



A frame from the video What's It Like Being an International Student in Korea in 2021? (Asian Boss, 2021)

Examples include an episode from the Huberman Lab podcast interviewing a former hostage negotiator (Huberman, 2023), a mini documentary about the hydrogen energy industry (Axios, 2021), and a street interview of international students in Korea (Asian Boss, 2021; see photo.)

I take steps to make these more digestible for my learners. First, I limit the amount of text I use in class. To do this, I do not look at video length; I look at text length as it is a more direct indicator of how cognitively demanding foreign language content will be. For my intermediate learners, I generally aim for 500 words or less. Advanced classes get up to 1000 words.

Next, I run the text through a vocabulary profiler to evaluate its lexical difficulty and select vocabulary items to teach. This is a step I take to prepare scaffolding for my learners. A vocabulary profiler analyzes the text to determine how rare each word is. Profilers use corpus-based vocabulary frequency lists to make this determination. I use the Compleat Web VP created by Professor Tom Cobb from

All of the listening materials in my class are originally designed for native English speakers.

To address this skill gap, we need to provide transfer-appropriate learning environments. In other words,

the Université du Québec à Montréal (Cobb, n.d.). The vocabulary profiler gives me a good idea of what words my students may not know, but it misses fixed expressions, idioms, collocations, and phrasal verbs. So, I also manually check the text for other lexical items that may not be easily understood by learners. Currently, I don't have a set system for determining listening difficulty, but I intuitively decide based on the perceived rate of speech, strength of accent, and the percentage of low-frequency vocabulary. Then, I can decide where in my course to sequence this material. More difficult material is scheduled for later in the course, while easier material can be viewed near the beginning.

Regardless of all this tinkering, I still expect the material to be challenging for my learners, so I do a few other things to mitigate the difficulty. I provide some schema-building information. In other words, I introduce basic background information on the video topic. I also tell students what type of video it is (interview, speech, conversation, etc.), the title, the length, the accents and the rate of speech (i.e., slow, normal, fast). Moreover, I only expect them to answer a main idea question after listening. I do not expect them to understand details. I expect them to develop their understanding of quick, connected speech by reading the transcript after their first listen and defining a set of vocabulary I select for them. I also highlight some reduced and connected speech patterns that can be found in the video. Then, they must demonstrate that they can catch the lexical details from these videos on their exams.

It might sound strange, but yes, on my exams, I use the same listening material that I have already shown during class. This gives students incentive to listen to the videos again and further calibrate their ears to connected and reduced patterns. Repeated listening outside of class will allow them to pause and replay as needed. In doing so, they can focus on different aspects of the text and develop greater automatic recognition of sound patterns (Goh & Vandergrift, 2022, p. 219). This also helps reduce listener anxiety on exams because they will be familiar with the video and know what they need to prepare for. On their exams, they complete partial dictations or, as I call them, transcript completion questions, from the videos. Students are required to fill in blanks in the video transcripts as they listen. The blanks are sometimes a single word, sometimes multiple words. I select the blanks to assess vocabulary items and understanding of linked and reduced speech. Due to the amount of text we cover in class, there is no concern of students simply memorizing the transcripts. Figure 1 is an example of what my students see:

Figure 1. Transcript Completion Assessment Example

Transcript Completion Practice
Hydrogen

Hydrogen is the first element on the periodic table. It's the most abundant element in the entire universe. And it's really reactive.

And it's explosive and it's hard _____.

That also means it bonds with other elements, and rarely exists as a single energy carrying atom in nature. So, to get it, we have to separate it from oxygen, carbon and other elements in things like water, fossil fuels or renewables. Now, doing that requires a lot of energy. But once we have hydrogen, it can be _____. And some electrified cars and trucks are using it already.

We're at the very beginning of a trend now, where I think you'll start to see a lot more hydrogen fuel cells.

Vehicles can use hydrogen fuel cells _____. Inside the fuel cell, hydrogen mixes with air to make electricity. That powers the car, and water comes out the tailpipe.

The correct answer for the first blank is "to *manage*," with *manage* being a vocabulary item for the course. The second blank is "used as *fuel*." For this, *fuel* is a target vocabulary item and "used as" includes consonant-vowel linking of two words, which is a target lexical segmentation skill for my course. In this way, I can assess aural recognition of vocabulary and lexical segmentation skills.

Speaking Fluency

At my university, undergraduates are offered paired-skill courses. There are courses that cover both reading and writing, while I teach the paired-skill listening and speaking courses. I decided to approach and assess each skill separately. One of the priorities of the speaking portion of my courses was the development of speaking fluency.

In an EFL setting, students have sparse opportunities to speak, and this complaint is echoed from students and teachers alike. In my mind, this meant that my classroom had to be largely dedicated to speaking tasks. Some might say that vocabulary and grammar are the bulk of the material to be learned when studying a foreign language and that this is what a language course should focus on. But, let's be honest; those are things that can also be easily learned outside of a classroom nowadays. It's the 21st century, and teachers are no longer the sole communicators of knowledge. However, technology has not quite replaced the value of face-to-face human communication, and this is where a classroom environment can shine.

As much as possible, I dedicate at least half of our class periods to conversation activities focused on developing fluency through student pre-speaking preparation and task repetition. Here, when I write "fluency," I am referring to Segalowitz's (2010) definition of *utterance fluency*, which is the observable speaking behaviors that signal efficient and proficient communication (e.g., few pauses, articulation rate, etc.). For a better theoretical understanding of fluency development through the lens of automaticity and practice, see Suzuki's (2023) edited volume *Practice and Automatization in Second Language Research*. Suzuki covers an extensive amount of empirical research supporting the use of skill acquisition theory principles in the foreign language classroom. Pre-speaking preparation and task repetition are both covered in her volume (pp. 146–149).

Pre-speaking preparation simply consists of giving students time to think about their answers to conversation prompts, look up any vocabulary they might need, and take notes for themselves. After introducing the conversation prompts, I give students explicit instructions on how to prepare for the conversation: (a) Think about your answers, (b) look up any vocabulary you need, and (c) take notes to help you during the conversation but do not write a script. After 5–10 minutes of preparation, the conversation activity begins.

Every conversation activity has task repetition built into it. This means that students are given the opportunity to repeat their responses multiple times. This might seem redundant and boring, especially for the listener in a conversation, but this redundancy is prevented by timed group rearrangements. After a set time limit, I move students around so that they can answer the same prompts with a different set of classmates.

I primarily use two group rearrangement methods, and both can be used with a variety of speaking tasks (e.g., storytelling, expressing personal opinions, roleplays).

Every conversation activity has task repetition built into it.

The first one is designed for rearrangements of groups of three, which I learned from Dr. Keith Folse's (2006) book *The Art of Teaching Speaking*. Each student in a group is assigned a letter: A, B, or C. After conversation time is up, all A students move clockwise to the group next to them and all C students move counterclockwise. Thus, from the beginning, it is important to place groups in a rough circle formation. Now, what if you don't have enough students to make perfect groups of three? You can create a group of two with just an A student and a C student. Figure 2 is a diagram of how this works.

Figure 2. Rearrangement of Groups of Three

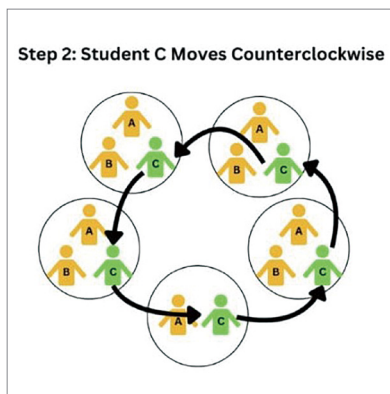
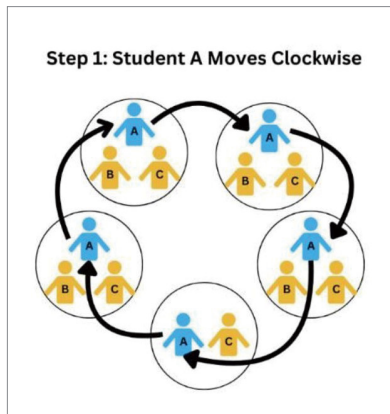
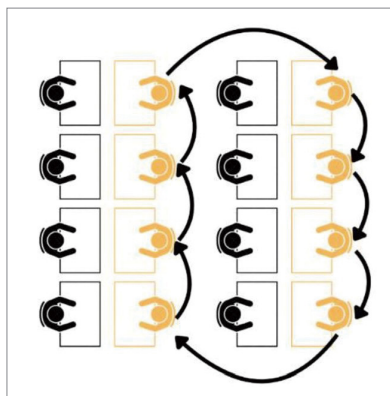


Figure 3. Rearrangement of Pairs



Final Thoughts

All the techniques discussed here have been central parts of my courses, and I'm happy to say that they have been warmly reviewed by students every semester. In my first semester, I had the highest rated course out of the 349 offered in my department. Furthermore, my course section ratings have never fallen below 4.5 with most of them averaging above 4.8 out of 5. In their reviews, students

This rearrangement creates completely new groups giving students the opportunity to repeat the task with different classmates.

The second rearrangement method is simpler, and you may already be familiar with it. It is designed for pairs and is commonly used for speed dating events. Students create two parallel lines and are paired up with a student in the opposing line. After time is up, one line shifts so that new pairs are created. Figure 3 illustrates this setup.

I have also seen this done in a circle formation where students form two concentric circles. If you don't have an even number of students, I recommend you join the conversation as well!

have cited the variety of interesting listening material, the engaging speaking activities, and development of confidence in their English ability. It is clear that students have enjoyed the courses and found them useful.

Supporting listening and speaking development is not an easy task, and it's been overshadowed by reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary instruction, especially in the Korean EFL context. No matter what kind of course you may be teaching, you may have the opportunity to include some authentic listening or fluency-focused speaking activities. When those opportunities pop up, give these methods a try. Happy teaching!

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The Author

Christina Savvidis is a visiting assistant professor at the Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology. She received her MA TESOL from the University of Central Florida in 2022 and has been teaching for six years. Her research interests include speaking and listening automaticity, and language learner psychology. Email: csavvidis@unist.ac.kr



Strategies to Implementing Task-Based Language Teaching in the Korean Context

By Michael Duddy

Introduction

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) represents a shift in language education from traditional, grammar-focused instruction to a more dynamic, communicative approach. It emphasizes the use of real-world tasks that engage learners in meaningful communication, reflecting how language is used in everyday life. This pedagogical method, which gained prominence in the 1980s, is lauded for its potential to enhance language acquisition by fostering practical language use and interaction.

In South Korea, English is a crucial component of the educational curriculum, becoming a mandatory subject for grades 3–6 in elementary schools in 1997 (Kwon, 2009). The adoption of TBLT, therefore, could significantly improve students' communicative competence. However, the implementation of TBLT in South Korean classrooms poses unique challenges due to cultural, institutional, and policy-related factors. In this article, I explore the perceptions of native English teachers (NETs) regarding TBLT and identify the obstacles they encounter in applying this approach in elementary schools.

There is potential to provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers in South Korea, helping to bridge the gap between innovative teaching methodologies and traditional educational practices. By understanding the beliefs and experiences of NETs, we can develop strategies to support the effective integration of TBLT in South Korean classrooms, ultimately enhancing the quality of English language education.

Students may be reluctant to participate actively or challenge the teacher due to cultural norms that emphasize respect for authority and a more passive learning role.

Background

TBLT, within the framework of communicative language teaching (CLT), involves the completion of meaningful tasks that require students to use the target language authentically. Research has shown that TBLT can lead to significant improvements in language skills by engaging students in tasks that mirror real-life communication. Van den Branden (2006) has described a task as "an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective and which necessitates the use of language" (p. 4). Ellis (2009) states that for any language teaching activity to be considered a task, "the primary focus should be on meaning" and that "there is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language" (p. 223). Samuda and Bygate (2008) go on to

explain a more thorough definition at the institutional level, stating that TBLT refers to "contexts where tasks are the central unit of instruction: They drive classroom activity, they define curriculum and syllabuses, and they determine modes of assessment" (p. 58).

The role of the estimated twenty-four thousand NETs working in South Korea (Bentley, 2020) is critical, as they bring native language proficiency and diverse teaching methodologies to the classroom. However, the effectiveness of implementing TBLT is often hindered by several challenges.

Firstly, South Korean educational culture traditionally emphasizes respect for authority and hierarchical relationships, which can affect classroom dynamics. This teacher-fronted style of teaching can make it "very difficult to get students to participate in class activities" (Li, 1998, p. 691). Students may be reluctant to participate actively or challenge the teacher due to cultural norms that emphasize respect for authority and a more passive learning role. Students are more accustomed to teacher-led instruction where the teacher is the primary source of knowledge and students are expected to listen and absorb information rather than actively engage, which contrasts with the interactive and student-centered nature of TBLT.

Secondly, Korea's education system was founded on the principles of Confucianism, which are very different from the education systems of many Western countries (Ho, 1994). The South Korean education system places a strong emphasis on rote learning and memorization, aiming to achieve high scores on standardized tests. This focus can be at odds with the principles of TBLT, which prioritize communicative competence and practical language use over memorization of grammatical rules.

The third challenge is institutional constraints. Schools may lack the necessary resources, training, and support to implement TBLT effectively. Teachers often face large class sizes, limited classroom time, and a lack of materials specifically designed for task-based learning. With a number of tasks centered around group or pair work, it may be difficult for teachers to maintain control of the class, monitor the groups efficiently, and ensure that the students are communicating in their groups in order to complete the task (Littlewood, 2007). This appears to be especially difficult in a monolingual class, which makes it easy for students to disengage from the task and communicate in their L1 (Rakab, 2016).

The fourth challenge concerns educational policies, which often prioritize standardized testing and traditional teaching methods, which can conflict with the principles of TBLT. Teachers may feel pressured to cover specific content for exams, limiting their ability to incorporate task-based activities. Shim and Baik (2004) discuss how teachers in South Korea are "caught between government recommendations on the one hand and the demands of

students and parents for a more examination-oriented classroom instruction on the other” (p. 246).

Classroom dynamics can be a fifth challenge. Cultural norms and student attitudes towards learning can influence the adoption of innovative teaching methods. In classrooms where students are accustomed to passive learning, introducing TBLT requires a shift in classroom culture to encouraging active participation and collaboration. Classes that encourage passivity on the part of the Korean students may lead to difficulties during the task and presentation stages of a task-based lesson. In many cases Korean students are unwilling to take risks in oral communication in order to save face, which often results in students communicating using the very basic target language they have at their disposal (Lee, 2005). Failure to take risks and engage in communication with members of the group goes against the principles of TBLT.

Studies such as Barnard and Nguyen (2010) indicate that while TBLT holds promise for improving language education, its successful implementation in South Korea requires addressing these multifaceted challenges briefly touched upon above. By understanding the context and constraints, educators can better tailor TBLT to meet the needs of South Korean students. Barnard and Nguyen’s (2010) study provides a framework for adapting TBLT to respect the local educational culture while gradually shifting towards more interactive and communicative language teaching practices. This approach ensures that the potential benefits of TBLT are realized in a way that is sensitive to the sociocultural realities of South Korean classrooms. They argue that TBLT’s success is heavily influenced by the educational culture and the established norms within a given context.

Overview of a Phenomenological TBLT Study

In order to gain more insight on NETs views on TBLT implementation, I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study in private elementary schools in two cities in South Korea. The research design involved semi-structured interviews with NETs and classroom observations to gather comprehensive data on their beliefs about TBLT and their experiences with its implementation. The participants were six NETs. These teachers were selected based on their lack of experience with TBLT. The reasons for this choice was firstly to get unbiased initial perspectives on TBLT and secondly to identify the potential barriers faced by teachers unfamiliar with TBLT. However, the participants had diverse backgrounds in terms of teaching experience, educational qualifications, and familiarity with the South Korean education system.

Data were collected through interviews and classroom observations. Interviews focused on teachers’ perceptions of TBLT, the challenges they faced, and their suggestions for improving its implementation. Questions included (a) What are your overall impressions of TBLT? (b) How do you perceive its effectiveness compared to traditional grammar-based teaching methods? (c) What challenges have you encountered in implementing TBLT in your classroom? and (d) What support or resources do you think would help in better implementing TBLT?

Classroom observations aimed to document the differences in student engagement and learning outcomes between traditional grammar lessons and TBLT lessons. Four of the participants’ classes were observed. Observations were carried out in both the grammar lesson and the task-based lesson totaling 5 hours and 20 minutes. The observations

were structured to capture various aspects of classroom interaction, including student participation, teacher–student interactions, and the types of tasks used in TBLT lessons.

The data from the participants interview’s were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns in the responses of the participants. The 12 interviews totaled 4 hours and 43 minutes. Once all the interviews were conducted, the audio was transcribed and time stamped with the help of an online program (sonix.ai) and thoroughly checked by listening to the recordings a second time and editing were necessary to ensure the transcripts were an accurate reflection of the audio. The transcripts were converted to a Microsoft Word document and then edited down into a one-page segment for each participant containing the key information taken from each interview. I grouped the data into different themes, and then I grouped the data into five major categories: teachers’ beliefs, institutional policies, grammar lesson, task-based lesson, and TBLT summary. The data were then presented as tables, and these tables were then used to interpret the data and draw conclusions. The analysis focused on understanding the teachers’ beliefs, the challenges they faced, and the potential solutions they proposed. The study revealed several key findings from the interviews and classroom observations.

The first theme in participant responses was teacher beliefs. NETs generally viewed TBLT positively, recognizing its potential to improve students’ communicative skills. They appreciated the emphasis on practical language use and student interaction. However, they also expressed concerns about the feasibility of TBLT within the existing educational framework. One of the NETs, “James,” noted that while TBLT aligns with modern pedagogical principles, its implementation requires significant adjustments in teaching practices and classroom management. During the interviews he said, “Convincing the parents and principal would be difficult because of the rigid English-only policy” [James, post-lesson interview, January 29, 2021] at his place of work because it was the expectation of the principal that Korean should not be used in the English classroom, which contradicts the outcome of a study conducted by Swain and Lapkin (2000).

The second theme was institutional policies. Rigid curricula and a strong emphasis on standardized testing were identified as significant barriers to the adoption of TBLT. Teachers reported feeling constrained by the need to cover specific content for exams, which left little room for task-based activities. During his interview, “Paul” mentioned that institutional support for TBLT was often lacking, with insufficient training and “little resources for it” [Paul, post-lesson interview, January 29, 2021] being provided.

The third theme was classroom dynamics. Students showed varying levels of engagement in TBLT lessons. During classroom observation, I noted that some students thrived in the interactive and communicative environment, while others were hesitant to participate due to fear of making mistakes or cultural norms that discourage active classroom participation. Teachers observed that students who were accustomed to passive learning found it challenging to adapt to the more active and participatory nature of TBLT. “Barry” commented that “the students were always raising their hands and asking for help, I told them I couldn’t help and to just keep working and try their best, but it was difficult to not step in and assist them.” [Barry, post-lesson interview, January 22, 2021]

The fourth theme was grammar lessons vs. TBLT lessons. During classroom observation, I observed that traditional grammar lessons were more structured and teacher-centered, with a focus on rote learning and repetition. These lessons typically involved direct instruction, followed by exercises that reinforced grammatical rules. In contrast, TBLT lessons encouraged student interaction and the practical application of language skills. Tasks used in TBLT lessons included role-plays, problem-solving activities, and collaborative projects. I observed that these tasks were effective in promoting communication and that they required more preparation and adaptability by teachers. This was highlighted in “Paul’s” interview where he cited a lack of time as an issue in implementing TBLT: “It’s a lot of work, isn’t it, really? As I say going back to the whole thing about more time, we all want more time. We don’t have time to teach what we’re doing.” [Paul, post-lesson interview, January 29, 2021]

Suggestions on Implementations

This article, including the overview of the study above, highlights the need for a supportive environment to facilitate the successful implementation of TBLT in South Korean schools. The following detailed recommendations outline specific actions that can be taken to address the challenges brought forth by the participants of the study during their interviews and to enhance the implementation of TBLT. These recommendations are rooted in the real-world experiences and challenges shared by the teachers who I interviewed and classes that I observed. By taking these steps, I am suggesting that educators and policymakers can harness the benefits of TBLT to provide a more engaging and effective language learning experience for students in South Korea.

1. Professional Development

— Schools should develop and implement comprehensive professional development programs that focus on the principles and practices of TBLT.

These programs should include workshops, seminars, and hands-on training sessions that allow teachers to practice designing and delivering task-based lessons. A study by Jeon and Hahn (2006) found that a lack of training was one of the main reasons TBLT failed when teachers tried to implement it in a middle school setting. Training topics should cover (a) theoretical foundations of TBLT and its benefits, (b) practical strategies for integrating tasks into the curriculum, (c) classroom management techniques to handle diverse student dynamics, and (d) assessment methods that align with TBLT objectives.

— Establish collaborative learning communities where NETs and Korean teachers can share experiences, resources, and best practices.

Regular meetings and peer observations can foster a supportive network that encourages continuous learning and professional growth. Teachers can observe each other’s classes, provide constructive feedback, and discuss the challenges and successes. This ongoing support could help teachers refine their TBLT practices and stay motivated.

— Establish mentorship programs that pair experienced NETs with novice teachers to provide mentorship and guidance.

Mentors can offer practical advice, share successful strategies, and support new teachers in overcoming

challenges related to TBLT implementation. Mentorships ensure that new teachers have someone to turn to for ongoing support, which can be crucial during the initial stages of implementing TBLT. This kind of guidance and support helps build the novice teachers’ confidence and competence over time.

2. Curriculum Flexibility

— Advocate for revisions to the national curriculum to allow for greater flexibility in teaching methods.

This includes reducing the weight of standardized tests in the overall assessment and providing teachers with the autonomy to incorporate task-based activities that align with TBLT principles.

— Develop guidelines for integrating TBLT into the existing curriculum without compromising essential content.

This can involve creating task-based modules that complement traditional grammar instruction and providing examples of how tasks can be used to reinforce language skills. Something “Michelle” believed could work at her place of employment was that a task-based class “once a week” would work, but she also suggested that “a complete overhaul of the syllabus would make them [her employers] nervous.” [Michelle, post-lesson interview, January 29, 2021]

— Work with educational policymakers to create supportive policies that encourage the use of TBLT.

Policies should address issues such as class size, resource allocation, and teacher workload to create an environment conducive to task-based learning.

3. Cultural Adaptation

— Institutions should provide training for NETs on cultural sensitivity, and the specific cultural norms that influence student behavior in South Korea is essential.

The Korean education system has its roots in Confucianism, which emphasizes respect for authority, collectivism, and academic excellence. Understanding these cultural factors can help teachers design tasks that are culturally appropriate and engaging for students.

— Foster a student-centered learning environment that encourages active participation and collaboration.

Strategies to achieve this include (a) implementing ice-breaker activities and group work to build a sense of community, (b) encouraging students to take on leadership roles in group tasks, and (c) using positive reinforcement to build students’ confidence and willingness to participate.

I personally encountered parents with the belief that the teachers should not deviate from the lesson in the textbooks, and if they did, some parents would complain. Engaging with parents in the educational process by informing them about the benefits of TBLT and how it supports their children’s language development is important and would help them better understand what is happening in the classroom. Workshops and informational sessions can help parents understand and support the use of TBLT at home.

4. Teacher Collaboration

— Encourage collaboration between NETs and subject teachers to create interdisciplinary projects that incorporate TBLT.

For example, an English task could be integrated with a science project, allowing students to apply language skills in a broader academic context.

— Implement co-teaching models where NETs and Korean teachers plan and deliver lessons together.

This collaboration can help bridge the gap between different teaching styles and create a more cohesive learning experiences for students. The lack of understanding and collaboration was an issue highlighted by “Paul” when he discussed how his Korean co-teacher was more of “an enforcer of the English-only policy” and not really working in unison with him. [Paul, post-lesson interview, January 29, 2021]

5. Resource Allocation

— Allocate funds for the development and purchase of task-based teaching materials.

This includes textbooks, digital resources, and tools that facilitate interactive learning, such as language labs and educational software. At the time of the study, “Paul” reflected on the lack of resources at his place of employment and the time constraints this would put on teachers trying to allocate two classes a week to TBLT: “*Journeys* is the book that I’m currently teaching, and to create TBLT for two lessons a week that we would have to make, there is no time, so that’s the difficulty there.” [Paul, post-lesson interview, January 29, 2021]

— Ensure that schools have the necessary infrastructure to support TBLT, including adequate classroom space, technology, and access to multimedia resources.

Investing in a conducive learning environment can enhance the effectiveness of task-based activities.

6. Policy Advocacy

— Engage various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, parents, and students, in discussions about the benefits of TBLT and the need for supportive policies.

Building a broad base of support can facilitate policy changes that promote innovative teaching methods.

— Conduct ongoing research to evaluate the impact of TBLT on student outcomes and gather data to inform policy decisions.

Sharing success stories and empirical evidence can help build the case for adopting TBLT more widely.

Conclusion

The study represented in this article provides valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of NETs regarding TBLT, highlighting both the potential of this approach and the obstacles that need to be overcome. In addition, the recommendations outlined above offer a roadmap for enhancing the quality of English language education in South Korea, ultimately helping students achieve greater communicative competence and preparing them for the demands of a globalized world.

The successful implementation of TBLT in South Korea requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the unique challenges of the local educational context. By investing in professional development, revising curricula, fostering a supportive classroom culture, and advocating for policy

changes, educators and policymakers can create an environment that maximizes the benefits of TBLT.

By embracing TBLT and addressing the challenges identified in this article, South Korean schools can lead the way in practical language education, setting a model for other countries to follow. The integration of TBLT, supported by thoughtful policy and practical strategies, can transform the learning experience for students and significantly improve their language proficiency.

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The Author

Michael Duddy has been residing in South Korea since 2011 and is currently teaching at Chonnam National University, Yeosu Campus. He holds a master’s degree in TESOL from the University of Birmingham, reflecting his deep commitment to English language education and cross-cultural communication. Email: michaelduddy44@gmail.com



The AI-Based Classroom and Social-Emotional Learning

By Seo-yoon Choi

In the field of education at present, AI has become a daily topic of conversation. Even in our daily lives, "AI" has become a natural and quite familiar term. It's hard to remember what life was like before AI, as almost everything that makes our lives convenient is now attributed to AI. However, strangely enough, while AI doesn't feel unfamiliar, it also doesn't feel particularly close, despite being frequently mentioned.

The Ministry of Education is speeding up its efforts with the vision of "customized education for all" to support differentiated learning levels for students. They are pushing AIDT (personalized learning, interest and immersion, diversity and data, and the application of advanced technology). The AI digital textbooks being developed are scheduled to be introduced in 2025. The construction of digital infrastructure in schools is already largely completed. Soon, a plan will be implemented to provide one device per student for third- and fourth-graders in elementary school, as well as for first-year students in middle and high school, starting in 2025, which is now less than six months away. When 2025 arrives, AI will be met in the learning environment.

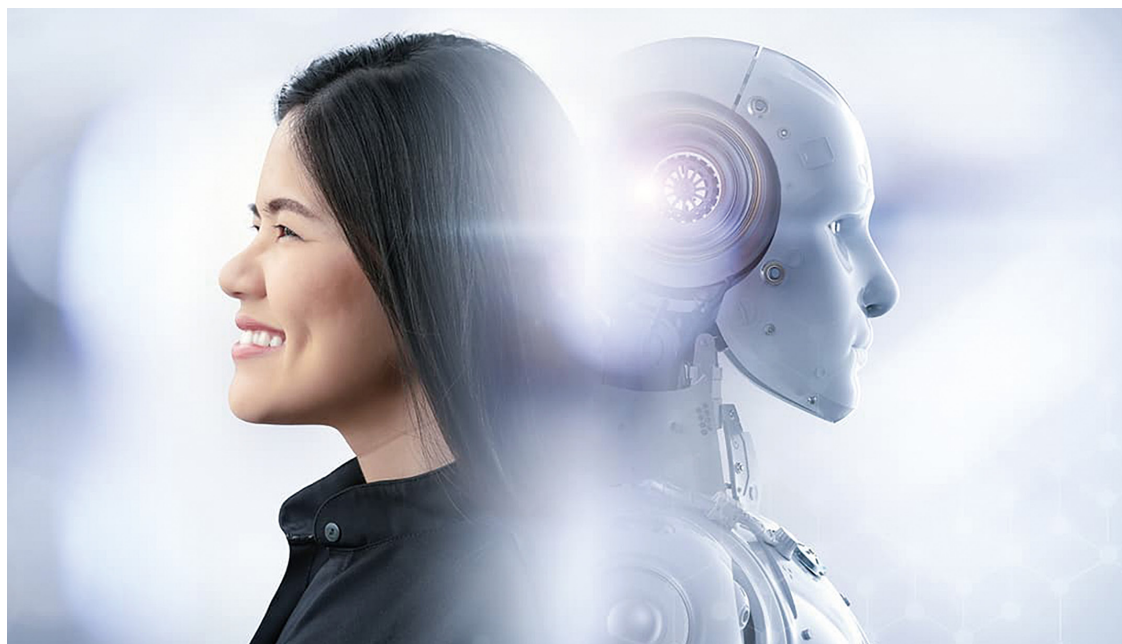
In the field of education, there are teachers who welcome the introduction and application of the latest technology, those who oppose it, and those who are not well informed about its trends and developments. No one yet knows which direction schools will take. However, the common concern of administrators, teachers, and stakeholders is whether our children will manage AI or whether AI will manage our children.

A year ago, I wrote a column on the topic of "High-Tech and Social-Emotional Learning," suggesting that appropriate measures should be developed to effectively utilize high-tech in current education for students. Not long since, AI has now become so close to us that it seems like a study partner sitting right next to us, learning together.

Although humans have created and developed AI, it seems to possess abilities and talents far superior to humans. Generative AI absorbs information provided by humans and grows rapidly every day, demonstrating remarkable problem-solving capabilities and learning speed. Sometimes, it seems to be running ahead on its own, making it hard for anyone to keep up. Now, AI is set to enter our children's learning environment to assist with personalized education. The idea of personalized education suggests that AI will pinpoint students' weaknesses and help them catch up in areas in

which they lag behind, starting in 2025, taking over the teacher's role in this regard. What then will be the role of the teacher in such an AI classroom?

AI will first be applied to the subjects of English, mathematics, and information technology, and then gradually expand to other areas thereafter. I recently watched a video of a teacher conducting a lesson using AI. In the video, a student input their feelings as a command into the AI, and within a few minutes, the AI created lyrics expressing those emotions, composed the music, and produced a song. For those seeing this for the first time, it was an astonishing experience, and the reaction was "Can AI really create something this quickly?" Although it was presented as the student's work, in reality, it was AI that created it. As educators, we need to deeply consider whether creating a song that expresses one's emotions can truly be called an emotional-engagement learning activity.



The teacher conducting the lesson explained that the song was considered the student's work because the student had provided the commands and instructed the AI to modify the lyrics. However, the look in the student's eyes suggested disbelief. The astonished reaction wasn't focused on the student's skill in inputting commands but rather on the AI's ability to produce such a result with limited information. Students were even more amazed that, despite using the same commands, the AI produced different content for each student. Can students truly feel a sense of accomplishment and efficacy, and believe such results to be their own work? Can listening to a song created by AI about oneself and sharing feelings about it with friends truly achieve the social-emotional learning (SEL) goal of understanding others? Wouldn't a project where students deeply explore themselves, ponder, and carefully create their own work be more meaningful and authentic to them? From the

perspective of a digital native, my deep digital-immigrant concerns might seem excessive.

AI certainly appears to be a remarkably intelligent companion. However, it's the people who created AI who are even more intelligent, leading one to truly wonder if this is not the best way to proceed. According to the teacher using AI in their lessons, initial worries about AI are quickly replaced by amazement at the significant help it provides, leading to more frequent use despite initial skepticism. This raises several questions in our education system: "To what extent can we utilize AI?" "To what extent can we entrust tasks to AI?" and "To what extent is AI doing the work for us?"

AI doesn't just acquire knowledge; it quickly learns and expresses human emotions, reads emotions, and responds accordingly. In an AI-based classroom, students will likely ask AI about SEL-related topics. Some programs have already been developed with the intention of teaching SEL using AI.

For instance, if a student inputs a message into AI saying that they are upset because they have no friends, the AI will quickly understand the meaning of the emotion "upset" and respond with "You're upset and feel like crying because you don't have friends." If the student then asks the AI what they should do, the AI will advise them to try to make friends.

The essence of education lies in the interaction between teachers and students, not in the interaction between students and AI led by teachers. SEL should be achieved with both teachers and students as active participants.

If the student says they don't know how to make friends, the AI will provide examples of social skills and encourage the student to try step by step. It will guide them through the process without making any mistakes. This is the kind of advice that a homeroom teacher or a counselor would typically give, but now AI is taking on a significant portion of this role, comforting the student and providing solutions.

It takes less than a minute for AI to offer an alternative. Let's imagine a situation where students are consulting with their teacher. After scheduling an appointment, the student waits to meet the teacher. The teacher and student exchange brief greetings before starting the consultation. They sit face-to-face for about 30 minutes or more, sharing thoughts and working out solutions to the student's problems, experiencing a range of emotions in the process. In contrast, the time it takes for a student to input a command and receive a

response from AI is just a few minutes, giving little time for contemplation and presenting solutions as if deep thinking isn't necessary. If a student inputs the desired command, the AI might even ask how they are doing. Although it may not convey the warmth of human interaction, it can offer some level of intellectual comfort.

In reality, SEL is a comprehensive approach that supports students' mental health and holistic development. It involves educationally intimate experiences where teachers and students, and students and their peers, interact to recognize and express their emotions, and understand each other's feelings. The key element here is "educational intimacy." We experience intimacy when we share our hearts with sincerity, and as emotional bonds build, trust in others develops. This emotional strength is a lifelong support.

During the SEL process, students become aware of their emotions and think, "What am I feeling right now?" "Am I angry? Sad?" "How can I best express my feelings in this situation?" They experience a range of emotions simultaneously. By sharing their feelings in interpersonal relationships, they also learn how to regulate their emotions and how much to express.

By observing friends' various facial expressions, listening to their tone of voice, and watching their actions, students learn to recognize whether their friends are happy, sad, angry, or worried. They learn to empathize and show consideration. Through these experiences, they form a positive self-image and develop the ability to resolve conflicts and make responsible decisions in cooperation with others. The process of SEL is learned and experienced throughout life, and it is applied according to the situation.

The Ministry of Education is promoting the "Teacher-Led Classroom Revolution" by selecting "leading teachers of the classroom revolution" and providing them with training. On June 12th, I attended an online business briefing by the Ministry of Education's Teacher Training Division in which they requested that pre-service teachers be educated about AIDT before they enter the teaching field. Aspiring teachers, who dream of becoming educators, must adapt to digital tools and encounter AI before they even meet actual students. The pre-service teachers I met last semester were filled with grand dreams of meeting students and sharing their teaching philosophies before starting their student teaching. It is clear that their goal was to connect with students, not AI. However, the type of education we will soon be facing involves AI-based classrooms led by teachers.

There are also concerns about students getting closer to AI, such as through AI-based textbooks and AI-based classes. It is not yet known whether teachers will be able to provide personalized classes in an atmosphere where students can use AI and receive education at the appropriate level. It is still unknown whether students will be able to hear and understand AI in class, whether AI will be able to repeat explanations in words that students can understand, or whether a situation where AI instantly informs students of solutions without giving them time to think can have a positive effect on students' ability to learn social emotions. Considering all this, how can AI be used to help students learn social emotions?

Students learn social-emotional skills throughout their entire school day and through lessons in all their subjects. They experience cooperative interactions by expressing themselves and understanding their friends to achieve the human ideals



When incorporating AI into social-emotional learning, certain elements must not be overlooked. We must understand and accept each student's feelings and ensure that teachers retain their roles without relegating them to AI. This is requisite for humane and happy lives and futures for our students! We should guide students to choose and decide from the options AI proposes, ensure that AI-based education does not become all-encompassing, and always remember that social-emotional learning should be student-centered, fostering a classroom environment where students autonomously lead, while at the same time, maintaining their mental health.

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each subject aims for. In an AI-based classroom, however, the concern is that instead of asking friends, "What do you think?" and understanding their thoughts and differences through interaction, students might start asking, "What does your AI think?" and rely on AI for responses.

We are well aware that we cannot resist the rapid advancements in IT and the generative AI trends brought on by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However, it remains uncertain whether digitizing everything is the best approach for all students. Will all students need to adapt to digital tools to fit into their school environment? There are still students who are more comfortable with analog methods and for whom analog-style learning is more suitable, yet the time is coming when they will likely have no choice but to embrace digital learning.

AI is not meant to replace teachers but to lead instructional innovation and assist in students' lives and development. This raises a question: Have we asked the students? Do they prefer personalized education taught by teachers or by AI? The essence of education lies in the interaction between teachers and students, not in the interaction between students and AI led by teachers. SEL should be achieved with both teachers and students as active participants.

The Author

Seo-yoon Choi is an assistant professor at Sookmyung Women's University's Graduate School of Education and has worked as a counselor conducting a social-emotional improvement group program for children and adolescents. In the clinical field, she has worked mainly with children who are slow to develop, and consults on career counseling and interpersonal skills with teens. As principal supervisor for the Korean Counseling and Psychological Association, she is striving to cultivate junior counselors by taking charge of education and supervision, and provides parenting counseling and parental education lectures for parents. Email: wejoy@hanmail.net



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Are You Enthusiastic About Language? Prove It!

By Frederick Dunn

I suspect it is common that when we hear “enthusiasm” in terms of teaching, our minds are quickly filled with the classic stereotype of the kindergarten teacher dancing in the room, eyes wide open, smiling, and using a full voice with some melody. These physical behaviors have been used to identify enthusiasm for more than four decades (Collins, 1978). Of course, depending on the classroom audience, the degree to which these enthusiastic behaviors take form will depend on the audience. I can still remember with clarity a eureka moment, early in my teaching career, that teaching is, in many ways, a performance. I was at a school with students ranging from preschool to middle school and having back-to-back classes: one of those classes consisting of rambunctious six-year-olds and the next class consisting of pre-pubescent teens that were too cool for school. You quickly become aware of how your physical behaviors of enthusiasm must change for the audience.

Yet, it would be shortsighted to think of enthusiasm as only those outward physical behaviors. Keller et al. (2016) informed about the cognitive state of enthusiasm that teachers hold in the form of enjoying the content that they are teaching. Frenzel et al. (2009) concluded that “classrooms that are characterized by [teacher] enjoyment of teaching and learning likely provide optimal grounds for overcoming obstacles and promoting positive development and achievement” (p. 712). Hence, an enthusiastic teacher needs to be more than outward behavioral gestures; they need to communicate that they truly enjoy what they teach, to further motivate students. An educator that only has outward behaviors of enthusiasm without the joy of teaching (or vice-versa) might be the equivalent of a phony from the perspective of the student. Hence, it is essential that students can recognize that the teacher has a joy of languages. Communicating the joy of teaching and learning languages with students is crucial for motivating students.

Despite my shortcomings and disfluent utterances when speaking other languages, I keep a certain level of enthusiasm for learning my students’ native languages:

Korean, Twi, Farsi, Spanish... and the list goes on. I try to keep my love of languages obvious and observable in class.

Some of the most successful ways in which I do this are:

- Ask students to help me refine my ability to identify tonal differences. For example, before class starts, I might ask Mandarin-speaking students to help me with 米 (rice) 蜜 (honey), 秘 (secret), and 迷 (mystery) – four varying tones of *mi*.
- When students depart from the class, you say goodbye with various departing statements such as in Korean 수고하세요 (Keep working hard.).



- Start a working dictionary of words that exist in your students’ languages but not in English. For example, a student might share a word such as *jung* (정, love). Or one of my favorites is *unana* in Mongolian. My student not only shared this unique word but also shared a Mongolian pop song by Vandebö (feat. Enerel) titled *Unana*. Students could be granted extra credit for their submission.

These examples have helped me communicate my enjoyment of learning and teaching languages; furthermore, these activities create a shared experience that allows me to relate to students while learning and reduces their affective filter. For example, before class starts, I practice my ability to make the correct tone in

Hence, an enthusiastic teacher needs to be more than outward behavioral gestures; they need to communicate that they truly enjoy what they teach, to further motivate students.

Mandarin for *mi* (米, rice; 蜜, honey; 秘, secret; and 迷, mystery). During these three to five minutes, students get a chuckle as I am convinced that I hit the right tone, but they quickly assure me that I am off. Twenty minutes later in class, the same student who was helping me with tones in Mandarin is now struggling with word stress in a compound English word. I give the student corrective feedback, and they try again, but they are starting to get a little red in the cheeks and let me know that they feel weird trying to produce the needed word stress. Now, we have a moment to share. I remind the student how silly I felt trying to produce the correct tones in Mandarin because it feels unnatural to me. The student laughs a little and then continues to practice placing the correct stress on the word.

One other area that is often overlooked in the TESOL field, but one in which I have found great success in communicating enthusiasm for language and teaching, is etymology. For understanding the history and development of the Korean language, I have found two books to be the most insightful: *Korean Language in Culture and Society* (2005) by Ho-min Sohn and *A History of the Korean Language* (2011) by Ki-moon Lee and Robert Ramsey. Lee and Ramsey mention a theory that Tamil and Korean languages might be of the same linguistic origin. When I brought this theory up in a classroom with international students that were of Indian and Korean descent, the conversation flourished into a rich conversation about the historical ties between Korea and India, including a marriage between an Indian princess and Korean king. As recent as 2018, the BBC published an online article about the legend (whether it is true or not, is disputed) that an Indian princess, Suriratna, from Ayodhya, married a Korean king, Kim Suro, and there are roughly six million Koreans that trace their lineage to this royal couple (Mandhani, 2018).

Having historical knowledge of languages not only demonstrates teacher interest in language but also

shows appreciation of other languages in what can feel like an English-crazed world. Another way that sharing etymological knowledge has been beneficial in my classroom is that it creates opportunities for students to find commonalities while negotiating meaning using English. For example, after I share the similarity of the word *weekend* in Mandarin (*zhou mo*, 周末) and Korean (*jumal*, 주말), the students start trying to find more words that they have in common, and the circle expands and an enthusiastic discussion in English starts about borrowed and shared words in Korean, such as the word for “horse” (*mal*, 말): in Chinese (*ma*, 马), in Mongolian (*mori*, морь), and in Japanese (*uma*, 馬). I see in my students a high level of intrinsic motivation. I can hear it in their tone and see it in their desire for me to learn about their language. They are confident about the subject matter (their native language/s) and want to communicate with me what they know or have discovered.

In sum, it is a disservice to the students to conceptualize enthusiasm as solely behavioral. Finding opportunities to share your love of language and teaching can act as a catalyst to stoke enthusiasm and motivation. Hopefully, some of my approaches for communicating a love of teaching language will provide readers with opportunities to communicate their enthusiasm of language and teaching with students. By doing so, we can create more meaningful interactions and increase intrinsic motivation for language learning.

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The Author

Frederick (Rick) Dunn received his MATESOL degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2019. He is currently a lecturer within the Oral English Language Program at Purdue University. He also taught in Seoul, South Korea, for roughly three years. His interests include learner motivation, virtual reality for teaching, and English language policy. Email: dunnf@purdue.edu



KOTESOL 2024 Elections

Which office are you running for?

The President presides at the Annual Business Meeting, is the convener of the Council, and is responsible for executing the business of KOTESOL and for promoting relationships with other organizations.

The First Vice-President assists the President in presidential duties and special projects, and works with the Chapters through their Council representatives to assist them in their business. The First Vice-President will also undertake such other responsibilities as the President may delegate.

The Second Vice-President organizes the annual KOTESOL Connections event, oversees and assists the Special Interest Groups (SIGs), oversees the Korea Teacher Training (KTT) program and its finances, and serves as the KTT liaison to Council. The Second Vice-President will also undertake such other responsibilities as the President may delegate.

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The Treasurer acts as a fiduciary for the financial affairs of KOTESOL, keeps appropriate bank accounts in the name of KOTESOL, maintains accurate records of the finances of the organization, maintains a list of KOTESOL members, prepares the annual operating budget, and manages all funds belonging to KOTESOL in an open and accountable manner.

The Nominations and Elections Committee Chair shall act as the Chief Returning Officer of KOTESOL and chair the Nominations and Elections Committee.

The International Conference Committee Co-chair assists the International Conference Chair in all of their duties in order to gain insight and experience to successfully organize the following International Conference.

Important Information

Nominations for the 2024 KOTESOL National Elections will be open from **September 1 to 27, 2024**. Elections will be held in **October (Voting Period: Oct. 6-27, 2024)**. Additional information on elected offices, duties, qualifications, nominating procedures, and voting can be found at <https://koreatesol.org/elections>.

Language Teaching Insights from Other Fields

Reviewed by Christopher Miller

Language Teaching Insights from Other Fields: Sports, Arts, Design, and More
 Stillwell, C. (Ed.). (2013). TESOL Press.
 189 Pages. ISBN-13: 978-1942223108

I must start with a confession. I'm a quitter. I transitioned from teaching social science to TESOL decades ago. I am far from alone in leaving one profession and joining the ranks of TESOL practitioners. Christopher Stillwell feels this aspect of the TESOL field is more strength than liability; he writes, "What would language teachers discover if they could tap into this

living library of their colleagues' knowledge and experience?" (p. 3). However, in Stillwell's estimation "the diversity of language teachers' experience ... is sadly rarely discussed" (p. 3).

Stillwell aims to remedy this dearth of diverse disclosure in the svelte 189-page volume from TESOL Press that he edits: *Language Teaching Insights from Other Fields*. I've often been curious about ways to leverage knowledge from non-TESOL and education domains into my classroom practice. In 2010, in my first year in the Land of the Morning Calm, I procured a copy of Robert Cialdini's 2006 work *Influence*, which

incorporates knowledge from psychology and sociology to aid in the art of persuasion. That book inspired me to consider ways to leverage "social proof" and "reciprocity" to engender more enthusiasm from my students. I was hoping for similar insights and concepts from Stillwell's volume.

The book is formally divided into four sections: (1) Recontextualizing the language classroom, (2) Dealing with challenges, (3) Teaching the four skills, and (4) Developing as a professional. Excluding the introduction this volume features 14 chapters. All contributors have varying degrees of experience in TESOL and bring enriched perspectives to the endeavor of TESOL instructional delivery either through alternative professional activity, such as bartending (Andrew Boon), running a martial arts training center (Anne Paonessa), or via hobbies requiring high skill, including whitewater rafting (Karen Blinder) and role-playing games (Roger Dupuy). Varied perspectives also come from deeper, somewhat less emphasized (at least in coursework related to TESOL certification) elements of professional development like public speaking (John Schmidt) and creating learner-friendly educational materials (Tammy R. Jones and Gabriela

Kleckova). The book occasionally succeeds in providing the reader with legitimate insights from areas outside of TESOL. However, even when the text falls short of providing outsider insights, there is still much of value to be gleaned by the motivated reader.

In contrast to Stillwell's formal sections, after consuming this volume, I felt the contributions could be classified into three ad hoc categories. Listed in order of least to most value for the reader, the three sections I audaciously demarcate are (1) Analogizing, (2) Providing access to the (somewhat more) arcane aspects of TESOL, and finally, (3) Genuine insights from other fields. Let's consider each in turn.

Analogizing

Articles in this category are full of "X in non-TESOL field is like Y in TESOL field" statements, or, as one contributor Sylvia Whitman acknowledges, are "overdone metaphors" (p. 69). We hear an emergency kit for whitewater rafting is like having a backup plan (p. 54) if a lesson doesn't work as intended; a belt system in martial arts is akin to learner portfolios (p. 27). This pattern is repeated elsewhere in the text. There is nothing much to criticize about the analogies and advice. Neither the metaphors nor the recommendations are groundbreaking. Such contributions are a rehash that most anyone with an MA in TESOL or advanced certificates in the field is already fully aware of.

I in no way wish to imply that these articles lack value. Many submissions include concrete activities, such as Li-Shih Huang's discussion of poster tours and research talks appropriate for graduate-level courses (pp. 83–84). Whitman provides a good series of activities that are all connected by the metaphorical theme of basketball practice for short drills focused on conversational turn-taking and reinforcing grammatical structures (pp. 112–118). Such metaphorical frames might heighten interest among younger learners if not overused. Whitman, in a separate article, provides useful guidelines for composition instructors pertinent to delivering feedback at various stages in the writing process (p. 72).

Obtaining inspiration from ideas originating outside of the field of TESOL is the implicit promise in these collected works.

Making the "Arcane" Accessible

These articles provide a clear entry point for relevant, but not foregrounded, aspects of TESOL pedagogy. For instance, Rawia Hayik provides a brief overview of critical literacy as well as concrete activities and texts to help foster this



orientation predominantly for younger learners. Activities cited include alternative endings, letters of critique, and stories of empowerment (pp. 129–130). Jones and Kleckova summarize principles of quality document design. They describe the well-established CRAP framework for document design: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity. Their article has a variety of images contrasting poorer and higher quality visual layout for documents (pp. 160–161) as well as illustrative anecdotes emphasizing the consequences of poor choices when visually designing documents, including learner misunderstanding, diminished motivation, and cognitive overload.

Quinn and Sholdt's article illuminates an aspect of the TESOL profession easily overlooked by a classroom practitioner, namely, student surveys. Who among us has conducted a student survey? Who among us has done it well? The former undoubtedly outnumbers the latter. Quinn et al. offer practical advice for writing surveys, while simultaneously not intimidating the reader. Advice, which I had never considered previously when developing end-of-course surveys for personal use, includes following closed questions with open-ended questions (p. 177) and being careful to not have items look too similar, such as using the same sentence stem to start a question. For example, the authors argue that in a Likert-style survey, starting every item with something to the effect of "I feel this course..." is more likely to promote comparatively more shallow processing than if the grammar and wording were varied deliberately (p. 175).

Genuine Insights from Other Fields

Obtaining inspiration from ideas originating outside of the field of TESOL is the implicit promise in these collected works. Stillwell's edited volume delivers on that promise in roughly 30% of the articles. Stillwell himself provides insight in his article on improvisational acting and the implications for promoting fluency development. For example, when an actor or actress responds to a statement from another thespian in an extemporaneous context, it is best to respond with "yes and..." as a way to, in Stillwell's words, maintain and "build momentum" (p. 92). John Spiri offers advice from his experience as a practicing meditator using methods derived from Buddhist principles. Spiri implores readers to maintain calmness and act compassionately towards students. Spiri offers concrete techniques to generate calmness, such as employing breathing techniques prior to the start of a class. In Spiri's estimation, being in a calm state positions the instructor to act more compassionately towards students (pp. 61–62).

Most inspiring for me was Dupuy's article focusing on the relevance of role-playing games for English language teaching. Dupuy discusses leveling up, avatars, character sheets, experience points, and equipment inventories. Equipment inventories refers to "weapons, armor, and special items that give the player a better chance to defeat foes" (p. 44). A combination of equipment inventory and experience points could work well, especially, just to provide a specific context, in a class geared towards reading skill development. An equipment inventory might be used to build students' awareness of foundational reading subskills, such as predicting, connecting content to other texts or personal experience, and generating elaborative inferences (see Grabe, 2009, for an extensive overview of strategies for L2 reading instruction). A teacher could provide students with experience points for every documented use of the reading subskills. Such an instructional strategy serves as a form of reinforcing effort and providing students with concrete evidence of progress. Both of the aforementioned strategies have long been recognized as cornerstones of high-quality classroom instruction (see Marzano et al., 2001).

More on Content

The format of this volume is very reader friendly. Tips are laid out in 76 clear, bold-titled subsections. Frequently, classroom activities are clearly identified with subheadings as well. This makes subsequent referencing a breeze. The text is full of anecdotes, whether as illustrations of a pedagogic principle, anecdotes from the classroom, or various forms of relevant self-disclosure. This makes for smoother reading. As the prolific presenter Curtis Kelly, who is no stranger to KOTESOL or mining insights from other fields to enrich language teaching, noted several years ago, "our brains are hardwired for stories."

Nevertheless, there are a few shortcomings in this work. The volume is most likely limited to submissions from contributors who have experience in ELT. Thus, certain TESOL relevant domains either were not addressed or could not be addressed. Personally, I was hoping for more insights from areas related to the impact of the physical environment on participant/student mood. For instance, it has long been understood that features of physical surroundings can impact mood and attitude (see Sapolsky, 2017, for a discussion of such features and their short-term influence on political orientations). I was left wondering what impact the colors in the classroom or its physical layout have on the quality of classroom participation and student affect. What about music? Specifically, what impact does the musical genre, rate, and volume have on interaction among learners? Stillwell hints at the potential impact of these types of features in our physical surroundings. In the introduction, he writes, "Might lowering or raising classroom drapes have an impact on conversation activities?" Alas, that highly pertinent question remains unanswered in the introduction and in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

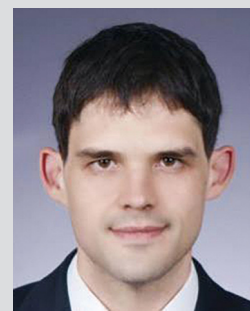
Full of activities and advice pertinent to TESOL practitioners working with a wide range of learners from elementary to graduate levels, this work is certain to fill the attentive reader with insight to integrate into classroom instruction nearly instantly after reading. I highly recommend it. TESOL may be full of "professional quitters," but, until finished, I doubt you'll want to quit reading *Language Teaching Insights from Other Fields*.

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The Reviewer

Christopher Miller is currently head native English-speaking teacher at Daeil Foreign High School in Seoul, South Korea. He has been affiliated with Korea TESOL for over a decade. He currently serves as the Seoul Chapter treasurer. Email: chriskotesol@gmail.com.



The Classroom Connection

Adapting to Learner's Needs and Interests

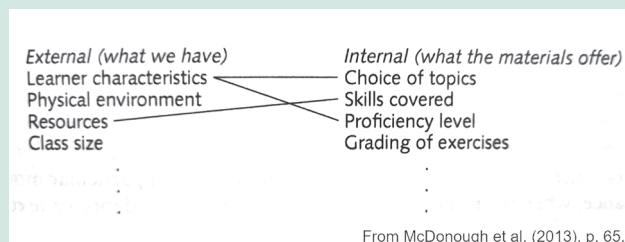
By Jake Kimball

I am a frequent conference goer. I love conferences. That includes catching up with colleagues and making new friends. And of course, there is the opportunity to hear about innovative ideas, methods, and teaching techniques. However, a common refrain I often hear is that enticement: "Hey, here is something you can use on Monday morning." To be honest, this is something that never sits quite right with me. I know the intention is noble: to inspire others with workable solutions. It supports the notion of teachers helping teachers. Yes, tired teachers deserve a helping hand, and one way to do that is to pass along tips and proven strategies. This is especially true if one is new to the profession. And I am all for that – in theory! What I have an unsettling feeling about is how we might implement that in practice.

Reflection Point 1: Do you share your teaching experience and classroom practice with colleagues and friends? Develop a plan to share what has worked for you.

Classrooms and learners are not one-size-fits-all. I cannot tell you how many times I tried out an activity with success with one class and then met with failure in another class, one that might have even had similar characteristics. This is a conundrum that puzzles me. Going back to "something you can use on Monday morning," perhaps part of the reason for my reservations is that we have not thought through ways of implementing activities, one that considers local students' needs and interests and how they might fit into the curriculum or lesson plan. We might hear about or read about a technique, and we simply try it without considering other principled issues. McDonough et al. (2013) go into some detail discussing the idea of *congruence*, that is, having a suitable match between a whole host of factors. Coursebook evaluation is beyond the scope of this commentary, but evaluation and congruence are intricately connected. In short, congruence is matching internal factors of coursebook/materials evaluation with external factors – the situation or circumstances we face with our learners in the classroom (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Matching Internal and External Factors



Reflection Point 2: How do you contextualize or adapt activities to suit specific lessons?

Several years ago, students were required to take six credit hours of English, three hours each semester. Later, that was reduced to only three credit hours. Currently, students only need two hours. Aside from downgrading the relative importance of English, it seriously impacts what can realistically be taught and learned in such an abbreviated period. This reduction in hours has led me to re-evaluate my own classroom priorities and benchmarks. Do I still need to prioritize language and skill benchmarks? Or is it better to add more weight to motivation, learning preferences, and strategy development instead?

Motivated, competitive students are easy to teach; of course, this does not obviate the need for a competent instructor. But I do find they are more likely to engage with whatever material we present to them. It is the less motivated, the *demotivated*, that benefit from materials and activity adaptation. It is worth noting that legions of students experience demotivation from primary school onward (Kim, 2011). While this elephant in the room is rarely given page time in ELT publications, it is a hot topic of conversation in staff rooms and pubs, where astounded teachers gripe about a litany of offenses committed by disengaged, alienated learners. This brings us back to how congruence factors have impacted our learners who display an array of avoidance strategies when tuning out: wearing

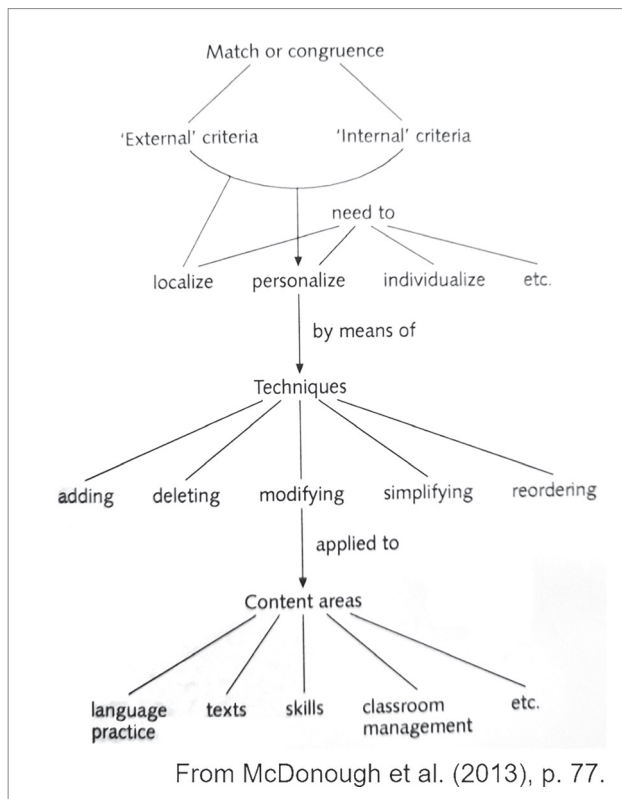
earbuds in class, scrolling smartphones continuously, skipping lessons or just walking out of class, sleeping, or sitting in the back of class where they expect to avoid participation.

Reflection Point 3: Where do you stand between teaching the nuts and bolts of language achievement benchmarks versus cultivating a winning classroom culture? In other words, what is more important to you as a teacher: skill development or happy students?

Admittedly, I now routinely entertain doubts about my own content. Given my age and cultural background, I wonder how out of touch I am with the new generations of students. Honestly, am I in a position to select relevant, interesting, and engaging content that my students relate to? In the past, I secretly rolled my eyes at coursebook writers who could not let go of references to the Beatles or Michael Jackson. I have always felt that teachers imprinting their own special interests on lessons is a bit of a disservice to our students. Now I am told that League of Legends is passe, so what does that say about me, as I roll my eyes once more and begin editing my PPTs?

Reflection Point 4: How do you know what content engages your learners? Where do you draw the line between what students need to know to succeed and what students want to be entertained with?

Figure 2. Congruence: Factors to Consider



It is that time of the year again. A new semester starts, and every level of education is about to usher in a new cohort. Whether that is at university or in the public school system, you likely have unfamiliar faces and names to memorize. The private sector works to a similar beat, with students and parents traveling the hagwon circuit looking for some kind of secret sauce. In wrapping things up, I am reminded of a reference in *Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms* (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020), where it was quipped, "Teachers can take a horse to water but they can't make it drink; however, they can make it thirsty." This encapsulates the need to adapt our coursebooks and materials to learners' needs and interests before it is too late.

It is the less motivated, the demotivated, that benefit from materials and activity adaptation.

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The Columnist

Jake Kimball is an instructor at Semyung University. Within KOTESOL, he is the facilitator of the Classroom Management SIG. His interests include classroom dynamics and willingness to communicate. He enjoys journaling to maintain a reflective mindset. And when he finds time, he can be spotted hiking the Haeparang-gil, Korea's coastal trail. Email: ilejake@gmail.com



The Development Connection



Reflecting on Teaching Reflective Practice

By Bill Snyder

I've been having some trouble with reflective practice in the Practicum course I teach. I want to use this column to explore the problem of teaching reflectivity and work towards a solution I am going to try out. I assign students in my master's level Practicum course to keep a reflective journal over the course of the semester. In the Practicum, the focus is meant to be on their practicum teaching experience and what they are learning in terms of developing their teacher identity. I require roughly 300 words per week, with students allowed to write about topics of their choosing most weeks. I supply students with a short guide to what they might focus on in their reflections, with occasional, more specific focuses related to course material in certain weeks. I make this requirement because I believe in the importance of reflection as a part of students' professional development as teachers in relation to the contents of this course. And yet, I have found myself in increasing conflict with this approach over time. I wonder whether the time that goes into reflection is well spent in relation to returns for my students in learning about teaching. I also worry that the process promotes performativity over critical practice.

First, doing the work involved in reflection can feel like a burden to both me and my students. I often find myself too busy with various responsibilities to do what I would consider an adequate job of providing feedback on what my students write, which I have to acknowledge is discouraging for the students in terms of continuing to reflect. If I can't meet my responsibility to the process, how can I expect students to maintain the process at all? This problem might be resolved by revising the quantity of reflections required in relation to other assignments. Doing this might ease the burden of the process on both me and the students, but I worry that might also be downplaying the importance of reflection, something I don't want to do.

The burden of reflection for students goes beyond the time it takes. Really reflecting is difficult, and some students struggle with getting the hang of what is involved in being reflective. One recent student spent much of the time in his reflections telling me what had happened in our class meetings rather than exploring his practicum

teaching experience and what those events meant for him and his teaching practice. Moreover, many students struggle to move beyond saying how an event made them feel to exploring what actions caused those feelings and what they might do to support maintaining or changing their situation. Doing these things may be starting points for being reflective, but I feel like too many students get stuck at this level and don't advance in their reflectivity. Again, perhaps the fault is mine here. Maybe the guidance I provide is insufficient. I could provide more explicit models of effective reflection, but I worry that students will end up imitating these, treating them as formulaic texts, without giving much thought to the process.

A further possible problem with the reflective journals struck me recently while reading Jenny Odell's (2019) critique of the attention economy, *How to Do Nothing*. She quotes Gilles Deleuze to the effect that forcing people to speak, especially when they do not have anything to say, is more repressive than silencing them. Required reflection may be coercive enough to produce dutiful but empty performances. Maybe my students are responding as best they can to a required assignment when the reality of their situation is that they are so overwhelmed by the classroom as novices that the best they can do is recall the events that occur in front of them or what they felt as things happened when forced to write in response to it each week. My students are finishing up master's theses at the same time as they do their practicum, carrying out and concluding data collection, analyzing that data, and writing up the results. For them, this work may add to the pressure they feel to produce in writing and prevent them from fully developing what Dewey (1933/1998) called a reflective disposition, the open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility that are the mark of a reflective professional teacher.

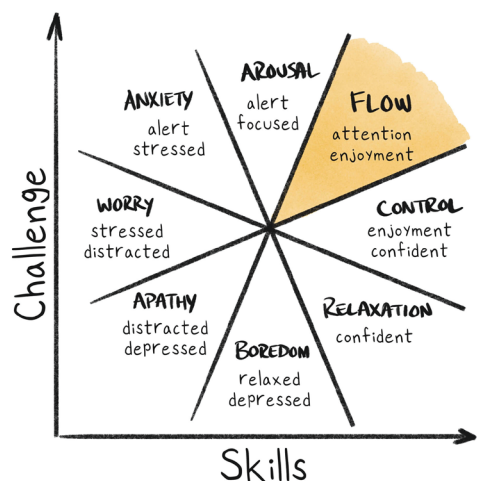
Perhaps providing students with the guidance I have been and then leaving them to write when they feel that they have something critical to say may produce better quality reflections. But I don't see any guarantee of this, nor that any reflection will come at all. Maybe it is the case that sometimes we need to be made to do things to learn what we can do. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990), the founder

of flow theory, tells the story of a man who resented having to attend classical music concerts as a child with his father, who was a great fan. But it was through this experience of continual exposure that later in life the man was able to call to mind scores that he had learned and use the music to get through moments of tedium in his work. Is it possible that requiring students to practice reflection now, even if they do performatively and at a low level, is sowing the seeds for later, more critical reflection in situations when they have the time and energy to invest in reflection and can make use of the basic skills that they have acquired? Maybe. But I wouldn't want to bet on this change happening. Forced performativity can lead just as well to complete dismissal of what has been required.

of what a critical incident is and helping my students learn to identify them for themselves. I would also probably ask only one, at most two, students each week to present an incident. I also need to guide the students through how to listen to each other effectively and organize the discussion space so that all the students can contribute in turn to a discussion of the incident, perhaps initially by asking a question to the reporting student before opening the discussion more widely. In the end, I could ask the reporting student to write a description of the incident, a summary of the discussion, and some concluding thoughts.

I think such an approach to teaching reflection could resolve many of the problems that I have been encountering with encouraging reflective practice in my practicum class. This approach would let me continue to teach and insist on reflection from students but aim to make the process more manageable for the students and for me. The use of a critical incident could ensure that each student has something to talk about in their turn and make students feel less pressured to perform out of nothing. The design of the discussion could teach good listening skills for further reflective practice to all students. The use of discussion in class would move reflection from being an individual, written practice to a shared dialogic learning experience for all. Finally, asking each student to write only when they had presented rather than weekly would reduce the writing burden on them at a time when they are already very busy.

Will this work in terms of promoting better reflection? I'll learn some next semester, and I'll reflect on that experience to continue trying to improve in what I do.



Perhaps the solution to all these difficulties with reflection is changing the medium from writing to speech. Mann and Walsh (2013) argue forcefully that the use of written production for reflective practice has become institutionalized, resulting in many of the flaws mentioned above, especially the performativity of response by teachers when made to reflect. They propose spoken, dialogic approaches as a more productive way for teachers to engage in reflection. Spoken interaction with peers or a mentor have the benefits of providing spaces for "collaborative discussion where thoughts and ideas about classroom practice are first articulated and then reformulated in a progression towards enhanced understanding" (p. 303). It is this dialogic process that supports the learning from reflection on experience that Dewey (1938) championed.

For me, taking this approach to heart means using part of class time for discussions around critical incidents that students bring to class from the classrooms where they are doing their practice. I have been asking students informally at the start of each class to talk about how their teaching week went in their classes and using this as a basis for discussion. I need to structure this more formally than I have in the past, starting with a clearer explanation

The use of a critical incident could ensure that each student has something to talk about in their turn and make students feel less pressured to perform out of nothing.

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The Columnist

Bill Snyder is a professor in the International Language Education Program: TESOL at Soka University in Japan. He has worked in teacher education for over 25 years in the US, Korea, Turkey, Armenia, and Japan. His current research focuses on the lives and wellbeing of teachers across their careers and on the mentoring of novice teachers. Email: wsnyder7@gmail.com



The Brain Connection



Locus of Control and Learned Language Helplessness

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

Locus of Control and Learned Helplessness

Locus of control is a concept developed in the sixties that plays an important role in education. It represents the way people see control of their lives. People with an external locus of control feel that outside forces control their lives, that they have little choice in how they live and what they do. A person with an internal locus of control feels they are in charge of their own actions and that they hold the steering wheel to their lives.

Internal Locus of Control	External Locus of Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are more likely to take responsibility for their actions• Tend to be less influenced by the opinions of other people• Often do better at tasks when they are allowed to work at their own pace• Usually, have a strong sense of self-efficacy• Tend to work hard to achieve the things they want• Feel confident in the face of challenges• Tend to be physically healthier• Report being happier and more independent• Often achieve greater success in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blame outside forces for their circumstances• Often credit luck or chance for any successes• Don't believe that they can change their situation through their own efforts• Frequently feel hopeless or powerless in the face of difficult situations• Are more prone to experiencing learned helplessness

Obviously, on the continuum of locus of control, our students tend to exist on the external, not the internal side, especially when they are young. They may seek autonomy, especially in their adolescence, but we make sure they know how to “behave” in school. This chart, based on the research, shows the characteristics of these two orientations (Verywell Mind, June 2024):

Due to age and situation, it is hard for our students to have an internal locus of control, but as they get older, we should encourage that perspective. It has huge advantages in life and learning. People with an internal locus of control are more likely to be emotionally stable, more likely to enjoy positive experiences, and more likely to have higher self-esteem. They are also more motivated to engage in learning. In fact, an internal locus of control leads to a growth mindset, the most beneficial for learners, while an external locus of control leads to a fixed mindset. According to Carol Dweck (2006), students with a growth mindset believe they can learn anything if they put in the work, while those with a fixed mindset believe they are limited by a fixed level of intelligence and skill.

Helping learners become autonomous shifts their locus of control from external to internal, resulting in happier students who are more willing to learn. One of my favorite authors, Harumi Kimura, wrote an article about that for our August 2024 MindBrainEd Think Tanks (available at mindbrained.org), in which she explains how she could reach out to distraught learners, all repeaters, having failed that particular English course at least once before. The students she faced were dismal, often absent, and just did not want to be there, but she found a way to turn that attitude around. She used innovative books in a creative way.

Many of her students showed signs of learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is the sad condition where an individual, having failed so many times from escaping punishment, pain, or failure, just gives up trying and accepts the pain. Seligman's (1972) research with animals showed that when they are given repeated shocks in cages with no route of escape, they eventually just gave up and suffered. They did not even try to escape even when a way out later appeared.

Learned helplessness exists all around us, in toxic workplaces, marriages, chronic illnesses, and often in our language classrooms, where it is the foremost barrier to learning.

The illustrations and these symptoms of learned helplessness can be found on the Verywell Mind (2023) website.

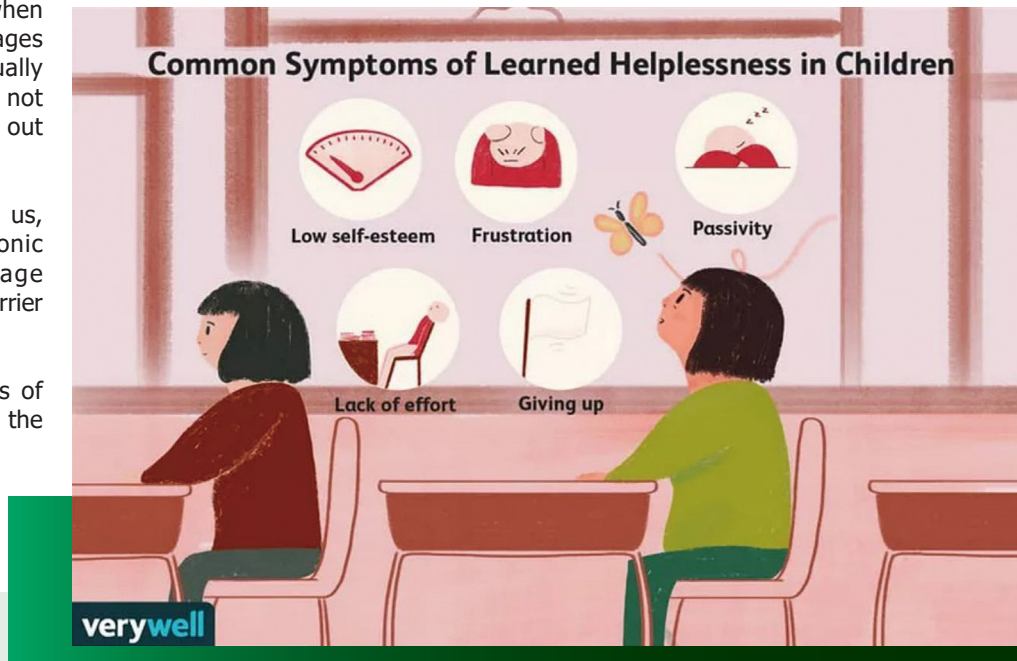
- Avoiding decisions
- Bad attitude
- Giving up quickly
- Inability to tolerate frustration
- Lack of effort
- Low motivation
- Passive behavior
- Poor self-esteem
- Procrastination
- Refusing to try

Learned language helplessness is naturally more common in countries like Japan and Korea, where it is much harder to learn a foreign language than in a place where the language is all around you, like the US or Australia. That is the way our brains are built. Despite good intentions, our brains reject learning something it does not feel an immediate need for. So, it is not uncommon for a learner

...an internal locus of control leads to a growth mindset, the most beneficial for learners, while an external locus of control leads to a fixed mindset.

who did poorly in their middle school English classes, despite trying, to believe they are unable to learn the language at all, and zone out in every following class. That is particularly true in societies that (a) use traditional brain-incompatible language teaching approaches, (b) emphasize hard study and severity, and (c) mix learners of all different proficiencies together, so that the boy from the countryside is surrounded by city youth with language

school experiences and experiences abroad. It is no surprise that many of our students learn to feel helpless in learning a language. They fail no matter what they do, and then in future language classes zone out, not even trying.



In fact, I confess, I was just such a student myself. I remember trying to study Spanish in middle school and doing miserably, and then coming to believe that my brain was not good at learning any language. This was a belief I paradoxically clung to in Japan, even though I became fluent in speaking the language. I never learned to read because I thought I wouldn't be able to.

There isn't much we can do to combat learned language helplessness other than remind our learners that they can learn a language, as they have with L1. Harumi Kimura found that taking the emphasis off of study and having her course repeaters do creative fun things with the language often changed their attitudes. That could include story writing, mystery solving, or in her case, creative interactions. By making language a conduit rather than the target, we can release instead of constrain them and let them shine in other ways.

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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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