



The Gwangju Communicator

Newsletter of the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter of Korea TESOL

December 2012

Implementing Writing Activities into the English Classroom in Korea

By Warren Merkel

Of the four skills, writing tends to receive the least amount of focus in English classes at Korean public schools. Students may find it boring. Teachers may lack the confidence to incorporate it into classroom work or the desire to correct student output. Writing may also be overlooked if it's not a component on examinations. As a result, textbook writing activities are often relegated to the end of the chapter. Whatever the reason, ignoring the written word means vital learning opportunities are lost; writing helps to store grammar points and vocabulary in long-term memory and also provides a more comfortable, communicative vehicle for students who prefer to express themselves nonverbally.

However, with the forthcoming implementation of the National English Ability Test (NEAT), writing will become a compulsory component of elementary and secondary English language testing. This may pose two challenges for teachers. First, because NEAT preparation guides have not yet been widely distributed, teachers may still struggle to teach writing. Second, once expectations of the NEAT writing component become clearer, teachers may simply "teach to the test." In other words, the only writing they'll teach will be geared toward NEAT results. Regardless of the current status of NEAT, it's important for teachers to know how to create their own writing activities when the ones in their textbooks don't suffice.

This hands-on workshop takes a look at a chapter from a typical Korean public school English textbook (a current, non-NEAT-driven textbook) and addresses the

lack of writing skills development in the following manner: first, by showing teachers how non-writing activities can be converted to writing activities; second, by limiting the preparation time required for such activities; and third, by showing how correction can be done in a student-led, collaborative approach. The textbook chapter in question is for middle school students, but high school textbooks can be used in a similar fashion.

THE PRESENTER

Warren Merkel is currently a visiting professor and teacher-trainer at Chonnam National University in Gwangju, South Korea. His interests include contrastive rhetoric, the view of plagiarism across cultures, and the role of brevity in writing, the last of which led to his first publication, "Make Every Word Count," in *Language Magazine*. Prior to working in Korea, Warren studied in Germany, taught in Japan, worked for a translation company in New York, and earned his master's degree in TESOL from the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont. Email: merkelthree@yahoo.com



(Mr. Merkel is presenting on the implementation of writing activities into the secondary school curriculum at the December 8th Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL Chapter meeting at Chosun University.)

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■ Joining Korea TESOL

Who May Join: English teachers of any level or nationality are eligible to join KOTESOL. We welcome native and non-native speakers teaching at primary schools, secondary schools, language institutes, colleges and universities, and other organizations. University students may join as student members.

What Memberships Types Are Available?

- **Regular 1-Year Membership** (40,000 won).
- **Lifetime Membership** (400,000 won). Student and International Membership options also available.

How to Join: Apply by using the online membership form at <http://www.koreatesol.org/>. On the front page, click on "Join KOTESOL" in the menu, and follow the directions.

Alternately, paper membership application and renewal forms are available at Chapter meetings for those who prefer making a hard-copy application with Chapter assistance.

Membership payment may be made by:

- Bank transfer to **KOTESOL**: Korea Exchange Bank account number 630-006952-841
- Payment in cash to the Chapter Membership Officer at a Chapter Meeting

Good Teachers and Bad Coursebooks: Adapting Materials to Fit Your Class

By Henry Gerlits

What's wrong with following the textbook? New teachers of English, at all levels, often find themselves with a textbook and seemingly simple instructions from a superior: teach one chapter in this book per week. As teachers we all sometimes feel constrained by the textbooks we are required to use in our classes. These textbooks might be too easy or too difficult for our students; the activities might be too dry, repetitive, childish, or perhaps clearly inspired by outdated theories of language acquisition. For a new teacher, the first taste of ineffective textbooks comes when a lesson falls flat, even though the teacher followed the textbook's instructions carefully. How can a new teacher develop the discernment and intuition to know what activities will or won't be successful in a classroom?

In this presentation, we'll consider a page each from 3 popular textbooks. We'll brainstorm effective ways to modify these activities, given advanced prep time and also on the fly for those "can you teach this class in 10 minutes?" situations. We'll also examine the language acquisition theories underlying our choices and textbook modifications. At the core of our endeavor is the assertion that teaching is not merely a "teacher-proofed" adherence to a textbook, but a culturally responsive instruction in which teachers respect different ways of using language in the classroom. It is important not only to respond to the students' national culture but regional and individual classroom cultures as well – and only the teacher him/herself has the ability to recognize and modify textbook activities according to student wants and needs.

In the first half of the presentation, I will display slides of a page or two from an English learner's textbook and pose the following questions:

1) What is one positive point you see in this book's approach? Why? 2) What's a negative point? Why? 3) How would you teach these pages in your class? We will explore three books, two at the adult level and one at the elementary school level. After a discussion in small groups, we will debrief as a large group and write attendees' ideas on the board. With ideas from the audience participation stage of the presentation on the board, I'll connect these ideas to current methodologies and good practice in the classroom and focus on several themes that guide my own textbook modification.

As good teachers, bad textbooks are only as bad as we allow them to be. With the right sorts of modifications and an eye toward student needs, even the worst required texts can be an asset in the classroom!

THE PRESENTER

Henry Gerlits (MA in Applied Linguistics, University of Massachusetts Boston) is presently an



instructor in the English Literature Department at Gwangju University. He has been teaching since 2005 and has lived and worked in Korea, Japan, and his native Boston. His research interests include language acquisition, classroom management, and materials

design. He is a member of the National Membership Committee and the 2012 International Conference Committee. Email: henry.gerlits@gmail.com

(Mr. Gerlits is presenting on adapting coursebook materials at the December 8th Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL Chapter meeting at Chosun University.)

Chapter Members in the News

Dr. David Shaffer was at JNUE in Jeonju on November 24 to present at the 2012 GETA (Global English Teachers Association) International Conference. His presentation was on the use of language learner journals and portfolios for promoting learner autonomy. Later in the day, he traveled to the Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter Symposium and Thanksgiving Dinner, where **Julien McNulty** presented a group of activities that one can execute with little or no prior preparation. Also attending the Dinner were William Mulligan, Ynell Lumantao, Lindsay Herron, and Jessica Magnusson, our newest member.

Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL December Meeting

- Time: Saturday, December 8, 2012, 1:30 p.m.
- Place: Chosun University (Gwangju), Main Building (본관), Room 5210.

■ Schedule

- 1:30 pm:** Sign-in and Meet-and-Greet (Admission is free. Membership is encouraged.)
- 2:00 pm:** PRESENTATION 1
Implementing Writing Activities into the English Classroom in Korea
Warren Merkel (Chonnam National University)
- 2:45 pm:** Refreshment Break
- 3:00 pm:** PRESENTATION 2
Good Teachers and Bad Coursebooks: Adapting Materials to Fit Your Class
Henry Gerlits (Gwangju University)
- 4:00 pm: Swap-Shop Session**
Share your Teaching Ideas, Classroom Activities, and Language Games.
(Open to All Attendees. Handouts welcomed.)
- 4:30 pm:** Announcements / Drawing for Prizes / Closing
- 6:00 pm: Chapter Year-End Dinner**
GIC (Gwangju Intl. Center), Cheon-il Building, Downtown Gwangju

Upcoming Chapter Events

January 19, 2013. Chapter Meeting

- *Drawing Blanks: Five Paper Activities for When You Have Nothing*
Julien McNulty (Chosun University)
- *That's NEAT: 5 Communicative Activities for Teaching NEAT Speaking Preparation*
Nico Lorenzutti (Chonnam Natl. University)

February 16, 2013. Chapter Meeting (3rd Sat.)

- *Error Correction Techniques & Activities*
Catherine Peck (Chonnam Natl. University)
- *Classroom Activities* by Jacob Boers

March 9, 2013. Annual Chapter Conference

With the KOTESOL Reflective Practice SIG

Upcoming KOTESOL Events

January 12-13, 2013

KOTESOL Leadership Retreat
Daejeon

January 13, 2013

National Council Meeting
Daejeon

March 30, 2013

Seoul KOTESOL Chapter Conference
Preparing for Tomorrow: Real Ideas for Real Classrooms
Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul

Upcoming Korea ELT Events

2012 International Conference for the Korean Association for Corpus Linguistics

December 10-11, 2012; Busan

2012 ELLAK Global Conference

Border, Translation, and Convergence in English Language and Literature
December 11-14, 2012; BEXCO Center, Busan

KAPEE 2013 International Conference

Promoting Creativity in Primary English Ed.
January 19, 2013; Seoul Natl. Univ. of Ed.

The 35th Language Testing Research Colloquium

Broadening Horizons: Language Assessment, Diagnosis, and Accountability
July 3-5, 2013; Seoul