

More is Less: The Use of Brevity in L2 Writing

By Warren Merkel III

The process of developing proficiency in English as a second language (ESL) writing can be viewed as a series of building blocks. Students learn the alphabet, orthography, sentences, and paragraphs, all of which lead to a finished product. As students progress towards different goals, they face a number of challenges, such as syntax and grammar, as well as different types of sentences and awareness of genre forms. In the intermediate to advanced stages, once students are able to express themselves moderately well, they often focus on clarity, unity, coherence, transition, and varied structure, to name a few.

However, one aspect of second language writing that tends to get overlooked is brevity. As students' vocabulary increases, as they write about more advanced topics, and as their sentences become longer and often more complicated in structure, verbosity sometimes supplants economy. As a result, students often feel that this "sophisticated" writing is necessarily better; consequently, advanced-level student writing can become bloviated, confusing, and in general, unpleasant to read.

This workshop will first define brevity and its significance before engaging participants in a few quick exercises on brevity. It will then move on to an explanation, discussion, and quick practice of a writing contest entitled "55 Fiction" started by New Times magazine in San Luis Obispo, California. The rules for the contest are simple: submit a short story

that contains all the elements of a story (characters, plot, conflict, etc.) in 55 words or fewer. Finally, the workshop will discuss how writing with fewer words instead of more can be adapted to intermediate- to advanced-level English classrooms in Korea to benefit both student and teacher.

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, 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. Before 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. In the fall of 2013, he will begin a doctorate in Foreign Language/ESL Education at the University of Iowa (USA). Email: merkelthree@yahoo.com

(Warren Merkel is presenting on brevity in writing at the July 13th Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL Chapter meeting at Chosun University.)

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- **Regular 1-Year Membership** (40,000 won).
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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

Young Learner Activities That'll Knock Their Socks Off !

By Jacob Boer

The national elementary public school English curriculum puts a tremendous emphasis on playing short games with almost every teaching hour in the classroom. For young learners, games are introduced as a low-stress alternative to time spent on rote memorization. This is great because having fun and using your imagination comes natural to children. Often though, the book provides insufficient material or a complete absence of fun activities for the teacher to use. In this talk we will revisit what children want from a game and how a teacher's objectives can also be met while playing them. Games to be demonstrated



include Time Chair, SPY Game, Cover-Up, Point for Points, Lotto Lines, and Phonics Fun.

THE PRESENTER

Jacob Boer has lived in South Korea for four years. Like many who came before him, he only thought he would only stay one year. But he has found Korea to be a very exciting land with many great opportunities. Jacob currently teaches the elementary school level with E.P.I.K. and lectures for special teacher training courses for the Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education. He also lectures at native teacher training workshops and at orientations for new E.P.I.K. teachers about lesson planning for the elementary school curriculum and PowerPoint use in the ESL classroom.

(Jacob Boer is introducing this new set of young learner games, that he has created and test-driven, at the July 13th Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL Chapter meeting at Chosun University.)

Chapter Members in the News

- April 21.** Viva May Cabrerros brought into this world her first child. She named her daughter Rovin Jenell. The child is growing well, and her parents are as happy as can be.
- June 22.** Julien McNulty left for Leysin, Switzerland, to begin his graduate studies in Applied Linguistics. He will be returning in August.
- June 22.** Doug Stuber's most recent Solo Art Exhibition opened at PDG Gallery in the Dana Medical Arts Building (5th Floor), Nongseong-dong, Gwangju. It will be running through the end of July. [See photo at right.]
- June 28.** Dr. David Shaffer presented at the International Symposium on Education, Psychology, Sociology, and Tourism at the Courtyard Marriott Times Square in Seoul. He was session chair and presented on *Language Learning and Teaching with Technology: Student Use, Teacher Beliefs*.
On June 14th, Dr. Shaffer also presented at the Korean Association of General Education (KAGE) Conference at Seoul National University. His presentation was titled *Motivating Factors for Professional Development in NESTs in General Education Programs*.
- Mid July.** Numerous Chapter members have answered the 2013 KOTESOL International Conference's call for presenting proposal to the Conference's program committee. Presentations are now going through the rigorous vetting process, and acceptance notices should be sent out very soon. Premier presentations of two of these submissions are planned for our September 7th Chapter Meeting.



Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL July Meeting

- Time: Saturday, July, 2013, 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. Future membership is welcomed.)
- 2:00 pm:** PRESENTATION 1
More is Less: The Use of Brevity in L2 Writing
 Warren Merkel, III (Chonnam Natl. University, Gwangju)
- 2:45 pm:** Refreshment Break
- 3:00 pm:** PRESENTATION 2
Young Learner Activities That'll Knock Their Socks Off
 Jacob Boer (Gwangju EPIK, Elementary Ed. Program)
- 4:00 pm: Swap-Shop Session**
 Share your Teaching Ideas, Classroom Activities, and ELT Games, Books, etc.
 (Open to All Attendees. Handouts welcomed.)
- 4:30 pm:** Announcements / Drawing for Door Prizes / Closing

Upcoming Chapter Events

August 10, 2013. Chapter Meeting

- *Memorable Vocabulary Teaching and Learning*
 Jessica Magnusson (Gwangju Natl. Univ. of Ed.)
- *Guided Reflection Teacher for Busy Teachers*
 Roger Fusselman (Seoul Chapter)

August 24, 2013. Chapter Social Event

Venue to be announced

September 7, 2013 (1st Sat.). Chapter Meeting

Presentations by two Chapter members
 Selected Presentations to the Intl. Conference

Upcoming KOTESOL Events

August 31, 2013.

KOTESOL National Council Meeting
 Venue to be announced

September 14, 2013.

**Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter
 Mini-Conference, Busan**

September 18, 2013.

**Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter
 Cheonan Mini-Conference**
 Cheonan, Chungnam

October 12-13, 2013.

KOTESOL 2013

The 21st Korea TESOL International Conference
Exploring the Road Less Traveled:

From Practice to Theory

Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul

- Pre-Registration Begins: August 1

Speakers: Tom Farrell, Dick Allwright, Graham Crookes, Willy Renandya, Jun Liu, Lillian Wong, Bill Littlewood, Sue Garton, Curtis Kelly, Charles Browne, Jihyeon Jeon, Gabriel Diaz Maggioli
 Web: <http://koreatesol.org/ic2013>

Upcoming Korea ELT Events

2013 KEES Annual Conference

Teaching and Assessing English Speaking and Writing
 August 7, 2013; Hannam University, Daejeon

2013 PAAL International Conference

Insights into Theory and Practice from Diverse Educational Perspectives
 August 19-20, 2013; Ajou University, Suwon