

TEACHING ENGLISH IN KOREA

THE NEWSLETTER

THE
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OF ENGLISH
TEACHERS
IN KOREA

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This third issue of the newsletter of the Association of English Teachers in Korea includes a report on the Annual Meeting of AETK, an article reporting and discussing the results of surveys of English language students' opinions about their teachers, and the first of a series of short articles describing a useful teaching technique.

For future issues, articles on the topic of teaching English in Korea should be sent to this address:

c/o Dwight Strawn
K.P.O. Box 740
Seoul 110

Manuscripts should be no more than six pages of double-spaced, typewritten copy. Notices of interest to the membership should be received four weeks before publication date. The next issue will be distributed the first week of August.

The Annual Meeting

At the Annual Meeting of AETK held March 17, 1982, the following officers were elected for the year March 1982 to March 1983:

President:	Dwight Strawn, Yonsei University
Vice-President:	Moneta Prince, Soongjun University
Secretary:	Chung Dong-su, Sogang University
Treasurer:	William Stevenson, Sogang Institute
Members-at-Large:	Benjamin Weems, Seoul Foreign School Kim Suk-ryea, Uijongbu Middle School

In addition, the suggested budget for the 1982-1983 year was approved and the proposed Constitutional amendment was also approved. Article V, Section B, of the Constitution now reads:

The Co-ordinating Committee shall consist of the officers, the immediate Past President, the chairpersons of all standing committees, and two members elected at large.

What Other People Do

(Editor's note: From time to time the newsletter will print descriptions of teaching techniques found useful in the classroom. The following guide to scoring essays written in English by Korean university students is offered by Mr. Robert MacPherson, for six years a full-time lecturer in the English Department at Sungkyunkwan University. Mr. MacPherson offers this scheme of marking as a guideline that may be useful for others who are faced with the same problem--how to decide what weight to give the various sorts of errors Korean students making writing short essays in English in order to arrive at a fair-marking system that will clearly indicate to the student where his problems lie. The assumptions behind the scoring guide are that the basic principles of paragraph organization (definitions of unity, development, and coherence) have been taught and that the student essays will be a maximum of two single-spaced handwritten pages. Each student receives a copy of the guide so that he will know how the grade for his essay was derived.)

Writing Scoring Guide

To the student: Your essay will be graded according to two criteria: organization/content and grammar/vocabulary/spelling. You will receive one numerical score for each. To derive your grade, add the two scores and multiply the result by 4--e.g., 15 (for organization/content) + 10 (for grammar/vocabulary/spelling) = 25 X 4 = 100 = A+

I. Organization/Content

- 15 - Good, clear, balanced structure (beginning, body, ending) with interesting, creative treatment of the assigned topic. Unity is provided by relevant supporting detail and smooth transitions. Composition is clear and informative.
- 13 - Satisfactory structure. Treatment of topic is clear but routine. No indication of additional sources for development. More supporting detail is needed for topic.
- 11 - Adequate essay structure. Treatment of topic is somewhat general and/or vague. Topic sentences are sometimes not supported. Transitions are sometimes weak.

- 9 - Weak structure. Basic composition parts (beginning, body, ending) are evident but lack balance. Topic needs clarification. Transitions weak. More development (supporting detail) needed. Weak unity.
- 7 - Defective structure. One or more composition parts missing. Unity is lacking in attempt to address one topic. Total composition appears vague or incoherent.
- 5 - Little structure beyond individual sentences. Topic unclear. Paper rambles from generality to generality. If specific facts are presented, their relationship to the topic is unclear. Paper lacks unity and development.

II. Grammar/Vocabulary/Spelling

- 10 - Moderately complex grammar with occasional errors that do not obscure meaning. Variety of sentence types (simple, compound, complex). Accurate use of appropriate vocabulary. Correct spelling and punctuation.
- 8 - Occasional grammar errors that may cause some obscurity. Variety of sentence types. Occasional misuse of vocabulary that does not cause obscurity. Correct spelling. Some punctuation errors.
- 6 - Tendency to depend on one sentence type and simple vocabulary. Frequent grammatical errors that obscure meaning. Misuse of articles and prepositions. Some spelling and punctuation mistakes.
- 4 - Frequent grammar errors in verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and/or pronoun reference. Frequent errors in spelling and punctuation. Incomplete sentences.
- 2 - No sentence is accurate. Very basic vocabulary. No apparent control of basic grammar. Rampant errors in spelling and punctuation.

Mr. MacPherson regards this guide as still experimental. For instance, he believes Section II on grammar, spelling, and vocabulary needs better definition and perhaps more subdivision and would welcome suggestions, criticisms, comments about improving the guide as a whole. He may be reached through the English Department at Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul.

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The newsletter would be interested in receiving critical reviews of teaching texts that anyone may have used in the classroom. Such reviews should include the kind of class for which the text is intended, its content and organization, its usefulness in the classroom, its shortcomings, its availability in Korea. Sharing such information and opinions extremely valuable to any teacher of English. Please contribute.

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What Students Think

(Barbara R. Mintz, the contributor of this article, has been Director of the Language Teaching Research Center since December 1976. Previous to her present position, she was a visiting lecturer in the English Department at Sungkyunkwan University, Fulbright Exchange Lecturer in TESOL at Yonsei University, Seoul National University, and Pusan National University, and Language Specialist for Eighth United States Army.)

What students think about their teachers has been the subject of investigation from 1976 to the present at the Language Teaching Research Center. Even though the teaching arrangement at LTRC may be different from that elsewhere (an LTRC class is made up of twelve adult students who meet daily for seventy-five minutes for an eight-week term), I strongly suspect that the results of the surveys we have taken would correlate well with the results of similar surveys taken elsewhere among adult students (adults here includes a large number of university students). At any rate, the results of these surveys should give any teacher food for thought.

In 1976, our survey concentrated on asking students (orally, in Korean) what they thought about our teaching materials. We did, however, include four questions about what students thought about their teachers:

1. How qualified do you think your teacher is as a teacher of English?
2. What do you think of his personality?
3. How sincere do you think he is about his work?

Of the fifty-four people we asked (one person from each adult class), six described their teachers as well-qualified, thirty-six as qualified, nine as qualified, three as not qualified; three thought their teachers' personality was very good, forty-one as good, nine as "not bad," one as boring; five thought their teacher was very sincere, forty-four rated their teachers as sincere, one thought his teacher was rather insincere, one thought his was insincere.

In November 1978, we decided to explore what students thought about their teachers in rather more detail. We asked our students to rank from one to five the five most important qualities a teacher should have. The survey reached 387 students. The results are listed here in rank order:

	Percentage of Responses	Resulting Rank Order
sincerity	80.4	1
teaching ability	78.0	2
correcting mistakes	73.1	3
establishing a good class atmosphere	66.4	4
teaching experience	45.2	5
participating in outside activities	32.6	6*
knowledge and intelligence	30.0	7
use of teaching materials	28.2	8
preparation for class	26.9	9

friendliness to students	16.8	10
punctuality	11.9	11
class composition**	10.9	12
clothing (what the teacher wears)	.8	13

*Male respondents believed participating in outside activities together was important; female respondents did not. Not one woman marked this item.

**Class composition refers to the fact that the age range of students in our classes may be quite wide--college freshmen may be in the same class with middle-aged businessmen. Moreover, a male office clerk may find himself the only man in a class of housewives.

In December 1980, we repeated this survey. Though the percentages varied somewhat, the resultant rankings were identical to those of the 1978 survey. (Women still didn't think it was important to participate in outside activities with their teachers.) We are aware that some of the questions overlap in category: preparation for class and use of materials, for instance, could be included in teaching ability; punctuality and friendliness to students in the idea of sincerity.

In these three surveys we had directed student answers by requiring them to think about particular qualities from a list we had prepared. Since December 1981, therefore, we have distributed a non-directive survey at the end of every eight-week term asking students (in Korean) what they think about the classroom activities they have experienced, their teacher, and asking if they have any suggestions for the improvement of our program. The answers they give to question six are the most relevant here. Question six asked,

Would you like to have the same teacher next term? Yes
Why?

We have received answers to this question from almost a thousand students. When students answer yes, their reasons for saying so are always personal about the teacher's character, personality, or teaching ability. If students answer no, they give two kinds of reasons for saying so--either a belief that a change of teacher is good in principle or a personal criticism. Almost always both compliments and criticisms are phrased in terms of a teacher's character or personality, again almost always in terms of whether or not he displays sincerity (). This result correlates well with the ranking of sincerity as the most quality a teacher should have in the 1978 and 1980 surveys.

I became aware of the importance of the quality of sincerity and its meaning in the Korean context quite early. When students complain to me about a teacher, they always begin by complaining about his lack of sincerity. Being perhaps a behaviorist at heart, I insist that students tell me what the teacher does that makes them think he is insincere. (Students have said this about people I know would be offended at this attack on their integrity.) In this context, according to what students say, sincerity carries with it the idea of diligence. Lack of diligence is expressed by a teacher's looking at his watch frequently in class, by being late, by being absent, by seeming to be unprepared, by yawning or looking bored, by, in general, seeming not to be interested in what's going on in class. If, indeed, a teacher displays any of this kind of behavior, I would agree that he lacked sincerity.

However, students have sometimes accused a teacher of being unprepared when I knew for a fact that he was one of the most diligent preparers on the staff. Why, then, would students think he wasn't? Because, I came to believe, he seemed not to know what he was doing. He was too easy-going, too relaxed, too, shall I say, Western in his manner with a class. In addition, we may have a true cultural difference at work here. If a teacher happens to say to his students, "Oh, I'm a little tired today. I stayed up too late last night watching television," he may elicit a few sympathetic nods and will think that he has shown that he's only human too--he's being sincere. His students, on the other hand, may think the opposite: his is not being sincere in his role as a teacher.

Since the cultural similarities and differences between Western teachers and Korean students are both various and real, it seems wise for any of us engaged in teaching in Korea to be aware of them, to be aware, especially, of what our students may be thinking but not saying unless a crisis occurs. Frequent sampling of what opinions they have about what goes on in the classroom may be not just interesting but vital.

Committee Actions

Co-ordinating Committee

At a meeting on April 17, 1982, the Co-ordinating Committee appointed the chairmen and members of three standing committees:

Publicity Co-ordination: Benjamin Weems

Program Committee: Moneta Prince, Chairperson
Lois Sauer
Lee Hee-sook

Publications Committee: Barbara Mintz, Chairperson
John Holstein

Program Committee

1. Besides the business of the Annual Meeting, the meeting held on April 21, 1982, featured a video tape recording titled, You Can Take It With You. On the tape (presented through the courtesy of the American Cultural Center), Dr. Robert Di Peitro, Chariman of Languages and Literature at the University of Delaware, introduces the viewer to an EFL class practicing conversation discourse through the use of American literature.
2. Future meetings

May

Topic: Korean Students Learning English: Personal, Cultural and Linguistic Variables

Dr. Edward F. Klein
Fulbright Exchange Lecturer at Sogang University
Associate Professor of EFL at the Hawaii Pacific College

Time:
May 19, 1982
7:30 p.m.

Place:
Galaxy Room
Chosun Hotel

Anyone interested in the work of the Association of English Teachers in Korea is invited to attend the meetings.