

AETK BULLETIN

No. 6 (March 1988)

The Association of English Teachers in Korea



USING SENIOR STUDENTS AS TEACHERS IN BEGINNING CONVERSATION CLASSES

By Ruth Stewart

Like most English teachers teaching in a small university, I was plagued by the size of the freshman and sophomore English conversation classes. Despite various teaching methods which gave the students maximum opportunities for speaking, they still had very little time for individually guided speaking practice.

One year at the beginning of the semester, several senior English majors appeared in a sophomore English conversation class due to a scheduling mistake. After arranging a time for the seniors to meet, we came to the always awkward situation of "leaving". Sensing the unease I blithely suggested that the seniors stay and help me. They looked dubious but realized it was an easy way out of the leaving dilemma.

I introduced the course and the first exercise for getting acquainted and then broke the class up into small groups. There was one senior student to each group of four or five sophomores. The introductory exercise was simple and was not threatening to the senior students.

The small groups functioned well under the guidance of the seniors. I visited each group and was surprised at how productive they were. At the end of the class I asked the senior students if they would like to continue helping me. They were enthusiastic and all agreed. It was arranged that they would receive credit for the course. The next week they returned with several more seniors who had heard what was happening and wanted to participate. With more seniors we were able to average about three sophomores to one senior in the small groups.

The rationale for use of the seniors was simple. Peer learning is a natural part of learning and is used in many methodologies. However many of the seniors were studying to be teachers. They had completed most of their course work and soon would be doing practice teaching. The peer aspect of the relationship made it one of ease, while the maturity and background of the seniors made them reasonably competent teachers.

Hastily reviewing my lesson plans, I rewrote them giving the students maximum time with the senior teachers. At the beginning of each class I would introduce the lesson in the usual way, emphasizing the special forms to be studied. Briefly, I would point out areas to the seniors I wanted them to stress. At

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MARCH AETK MEETING

The March AETK meeting will feature a presentation by Dr. Byong Won Kim of the Pohang Institute of Science and Technology on the topic "A Realistic Approach to English Language Teaching." The meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 1988 at 7:00 PM, at the Yonsei University Foreign Language Institute.

1988 TESOL SUMMER INSTITUTE

The 1988 TESOL Summer Institute, offering courses for graduates and undergraduates taught by distinguished faculty from around the world, will be held in Arizona, USA, in two sessions (June 13-July 11 and July 9-August 8). For information, write to TSI '88 Co-Director, Joan Jamieson at Box 6032, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, USA.

JALT '88 International Conference on Language Learning/Teaching

The Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) will sponsor the 14th JALT International Conference on Language Teaching/Learning at the International Conference Center, Kobe, on October 8-10, 1988. The Conference will feature presentations dealing with all aspects of language teaching and learning, a job information center, and book exhibits by major ELT publishers. Proposals for papers, demonstrations, workshops or colloquia relevant to the teaching and learning of foreign languages are warmly welcomed. Guidelines for submission and further details may be obtained from the JALT Central Office, c/o Kyoto English Center, Sumitomo Seimei Bldg 8F, Shijo Karasuma Nishi-iru, Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto 600, Japan. TEL: 81-75-221-2376; FAX: 81-75-231-3767. The deadline for proposal consideration is June 1, 1988.

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PUTTING LIFE INTO CLASSWORK

By Gertrude Ferrar

A problem with education is that in many fields there is a great deal of talk, but not much doing. Situations and things just aren't really there, yet much of the time when we are out in the 'real' world and talking about things, the things are really there, and those are the stimuli which bring about the talking. Only the most talented are able to make us "see", "smell", and "feel" the Valentine's Day gift of a bouquet of flowers or of playing on the beach in summer, and even the talented can't make it very real with words alone. Yet people learn language best when they associate the language—not just vocabulary but structure as well—and what they are learning with real situations and sensations. There are no sunny beaches or 365 day-a-year St. Valentine's Days in the ivory tower, so the problem is to bring reality into the classroom in some practical fashion.

For years LATT has experimented with various ways of doing this and none of them has ever been particularly successful; in fact, many of the ideas we had were eminently impractical. Recently, however, we found THE BOOK, or at least that is the way we feel about it. True, we do not use it as we found it; we've cut it up and pasted it into lessons that fit our program, and that's what anyone might do.

THE BOOK is *Action English Pictures* (Alemany Press, copyright 1985). The publisher grants permission to reproduce the pictures for classroom use. The pictures are a delight. Our hero looks somewhat like Col. Blimp and we have given him the name Mr. Philpot for reasons obvious to any teacher of English in Korea. Mr. Philpot, as depicted in the LATT lessons, has a rather large extended family and a working wife who is a doctor. Although we have never made a point of it, Mr. Philpot himself is a househusband.

It is possible to take one page of pictures and make a story out of them, as:

1. Mr. Philpot wanted to buy a warm overcoat, because it would be cold soon.
2. He went downtown and went windowshopping for a coat.
3. He saw one that he liked in a window, so he went into the shop.
4. He took the coat off the rack.
He took the coat off the hanger and put it on.
5. He looked at himself in the mirror.
6. The coat was too big, so he took it off.
7. He put the coat back on the hanger, and hung it back on the rack.
8. He tried on another coat.
9. It fit, and he liked it.
10. He looked at the price tag.
11. The coat cost \$100.
12. Mr. Philpot decided to buy it.

The same series of pictures can be used allowing the students to produce their own versions of the same story. Ideas in any series of the pictures can be put together using connectives to produce compound and complex or compound/complex sentences. For example, *He went into a shop after he had seen a coat that he liked in the shop window.* Or the students can use the pictures as the basis for asking each other questions: *Why did Mr. Philpot need a heavy coat?*

Each series of pictures can be adapted for use at whatever level your class is, and the book itself gives plenty of ideas on how to use the pictures. It might be pointed out that it is a good idea to give the characters names and then to stick to those names, since students begin to 'know' the characters, and if the teacher has made the characters likable and interesting, these lessons begin to assume the character of a special treat. In fact one of our students proposed that we start a Mr. Philpot fan club. And no wonder! It livens up the class day tremendously to have the people and the situations 'real' and to have them such that students can empathize with them. Every student—almost all of our students are adults and post-school age—can sympathize when Mr. Philpot feeds the baby too much and the baby spits up all over his front. It's a real life situation many a student has met up with, and one which most students would not be able to describe in English. Nor would a teacher's description of the situation lead to a clear understanding of all its details.

THE BOOK is a gold mine of real life situations: booing the villain in a movie, falling down and scraping a knee, sewing a button on a jacket, wiping up spilled milk, forgetting to put the ice cream back in the freezer compartment so that it melts, sweeping up broken glass, making toast, starting a small fire on the kitchen stove, mailing a letter, withdrawing money from the bank. All the teacher needs is imagination, a few copies of the book, paper, glue and a copying machine to create an endless source of material for practicing tense, vocabulary, idioms, prepositions, structures and all of the things we need to practice to learn to speak and write a language.

THE BOOK has 110 pages and most of them are picture pages. Each page tells its own story. With imagination the basic number of stories can be increased by mixing pictures from different pages to make up new stories.

The author: Gertrude Ferrar is director of LATT (Language Arts Testing and Training) in Seoul.

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the beginning of the course I was quite directive with the seniors but soon found it less and less necessary. Some of the seniors became quite creative in leading the groups.

Some of the small groups were very cohesive and I allowed natural selection in the formation of the groups most of the time. On occasion I would suggest a rearrangement of certain groups if I felt the mix was not productive or there seemed to be personality problems. This, however, was minimal.

The primary advantage of this method was that the students had much more speaking time and more individual attention. More material was covered than usual in a group of this size. The sophomores responded well to the seniors and there were few absences in either group.

The advantage for the seniors was that they had an opportunity to teach. Many of them became quite confident about what they were doing. They also

learned new teaching methods and their previous learning experiences in conversation were reinforced. They asked for help when questions arose they could not handle easily.

Although no systematic evaluation was done, the overall verbal response at the end of the semester was positive. The atmosphere within each class session seemed to bear this out. The grades ran slightly higher than usual but I am not sure this increase would stand up under statistical scrutiny.

As a teacher, I enjoyed the challenge of working with a different teaching situation, especially one which gave a partial solution to the problem of big classes. I am presently attempting to work through more specific lesson plans for this form of teaching incorporating appropriate evaluation measures. I would especially like to hear from anyone who has tried or tries this method.

The author: Dr. Stewart teaches at Kangneung University in Kangneung.

ASSOCIATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN KOREA
Membership Application (Annual Dues ₩10,000)

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(Send membership applications with dues payment to AETK, c/o Paul Cavanaugh, Yonsei University Foreign Language Institute, 134 Shinchon-dong, Suhdaemoon-ku, Seoul 120-140.)