

Bill Littlewood



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About the speaker

Biographical Sketch: Bill Littlewood worked for several years in secondary schools and teacher education in the UK, where he was also a member of several professional committees for modern language teaching and was elected President of the British Association for Language Teaching. He was also involved in Council of Europe projects. Since coming to Hong Kong in 1991 to join an EFL curriculum project, he has worked at tertiary institutions and is currently Honorary Professor at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Prof. Littlewood has served on several government committees in Hong Kong, including the Key Learning Area Committee for English Language Education. His books *Communicative Language Teaching* and *Foreign and Second Language Learning* (Cambridge University Press) have been used widely in teacher education and translated into several languages, including Korean. He has presented many plenary papers at international conferences and published widely on applied linguistics and language teaching.

About the Presentations

Don't you want to shake hands? (Pecha Kucha)

Well ... yes and no. Two interpersonal moments which can be occasions for misunderstanding between members of different cultures are the act of shaking hands and the use of "yes" or "no." In this presentation, I Bill illustrates some such instances. However, they show not only the influence of cultural factors but also the importance of individual choice, awareness, and active interpretation in negotiating moments of potential misunderstanding.

Developing Principles and Strategies for Communication-Oriented Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has long been recommended as the way ahead for language teachers in Korea. However, the recommendation has often led to uncertainty and misunderstanding. For example, it has been interpreted to mean excluding grammar teaching, teaching only speaking and always using group work. Many teachers have felt uncomfortable with it and questioned its suitability in their own situations. Even if CLT is now questioned as a package of ideas suited to every classroom, most teachers identify with its underlying message: that our mission is to teach communication skills through activities that are engaging to the students. This message serves as an orientation in developing varied ways of teaching which are suited to specific learners, teachers and contexts. The present paper distinguishes three main approaches to converting this communicative orientation into more specific principles and strategies for implementing context-sensitive practices. One approach is to develop a 'teacher-generated theory of classroom practice' (Senior, 2006) based on accumulated experience. Another is to start from theoretical accounts of the nature of learning and use these as a principled basis for a 'theory of instructed language learning' (Ellis, 2005). A third is to elaborate on the pedagogical implications of the communicative orientation mentioned above and design a methodological framework through which specific classroom activities are seen in relation to students' goals and adjusted to their learning needs. This talk concentrates on the third approach. It outlines a framework in which one dimension locates classroom activities along a 'communicative continuum' according to how they relate to the goal of communicative competence. A second dimension addresses the need to stimulate engagement, at all points along the continuum, by considering factors such as motivation, individual differences and affective needs. The strategies that emerge through this framework are tested and refined through our ongoing practice.

Using Collaborative Learning Techniques to Encourage Participation in Classroom Interaction

A common stereotype of Asian learners is that they are reluctant to participate in classroom interaction and prefer to learn passively. However, surveys indicate that most tertiary English learners in Asian countries (including Korea) hold positive attitudes towards working in groups and value classes in which discussion and critical thinking take place. So why do they often appear to be passive? Students themselves see the main obstacles to participation as shyness, fear of being wrong, insufficient interest or knowledge in the subject, and insufficient time to formulate their ideas. They advise teachers to attach greater importance to creating an informal atmosphere, giving encouraging responses, and ensuring that topics engage students' knowledge and interest. This paper will focus on some ways in which collaborative learning techniques can help us to structure class room interaction in ways that minimize some of the obstacles and open space for greater participation. The techniques include "jigsaw" and "expert jigsaw," "think-pair- share," "three-step interview," "forward snowball," "reverse snowball," "constructive controversy" and "numbered heads." They provide interactional structures which require and support contributions from all students in nonthreatening contexts and, since they involve learning through purposeful talk, they also provide rich contexts for the development of cognitive and communication skills.

Using Students' Metaphors to Explore Perceptions of Second Language

This presentation can be seen from three perspectives. First, it describes a way of combining individual and group activity as a basis for communicative activity, which is related to students' own interests and experience. Second, this activity serves to stimulate students to develop awareness of their second language learning experience and perceptions. Third, it can be seen as a small-scale classroom research study into how advanced second language learners perceive second language learning. In the study, 30 advanced learners of English as a second language (in this case, native speakers of Chinese) were first asked to describe their experience of second language learning by completing this sentence frame: "Learning a second language is like _____ because _____." This produced 32 metaphors for second language learning. In groups they were given all 32 metaphors, asked to select and rank the five which the group thought reflected most closely their experience, and describe the features of second language learning that the metaphors capture (i.e., the "grounds" of the metaphors). The outcome of this stage was 11 sets of five metaphors accompanied by the grounds given by the groups that had selected them. Finally each metaphor from this stage was given a score indicating how strongly the learners identified with it. Taken together, these metaphors provided a profile of the communal experience of second language learning within the class.