

## Summaries, Discussion Questions, and Links to Articles for:

### “Topics in Education: Ramifications for the EFL Classroom”

#### A Collaborative Workshop, Facilitated by Matt Ehlers

##### Article 1

**Title:** [Gestures fulfill a big role in language](#)

**Website:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/05/120508152000.htm>

**Summary:** Dutch and American researchers have found that gestures can help enhance understanding of what someone is saying. Performing actual actions on different things, on the other hand, tend to impede comprehension, since they tend to involve quite a few things going on at once, which makes the lesson more complex. (So, for example, students in an ESL class might understand the word “stirring” better if the teacher uses a “stirring” motion than if they get a spoon and a cup filled with water, and stir that; whereas the former would be simpler to understand, the latter would involve a lot of other things going on at the same time.)

In other words, gestures can help a teacher improve their students’ comprehension of what’s being said, but it’s probably best to keep them simple, and to avoid making them unnecessarily complex. And, above all, it’s best to avoid actually acting on different things, since that makes what’s being taught too complicated.

**Plain English Summary:** Hand and body gestures can make it easier to understand what someone is saying. However, acting on something (using real props) can make understanding more difficult.

##### Questions for Discussion

1. In your opinion, are these findings relevant to teaching English as a second (or foreign) language? Why, or why not?
2. What would these mean, for students in your classes?
3. How can you use this study's findings to help your students learn English more effectively?
4. What are some gestures you could use, when teaching a class?
5. Should students practice the gestures you demonstrate, while you teach? Why or why not?

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##### Article 2

**Title:** ["I'm bored!" - Research on attention sheds light on the unengaged mind](#)

**Website:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/09/120926153032.htm>

**Summary:** According to the article, boredom can be defined as “an aversive state of wanting, but being unable, to engage in satisfying activity,” which arises from failures in one of the brain’s attention networks.”

In other words, when we feel bored, we appear to believe that we can’t do what we really want to do, due to something in the environment, meaning that we have trouble paying attention to whatever it is we are doing. Thus, when we’re bored, we have less motivation to do the task at hand that we are supposed to do, and our attention wanders.

So, it sounds like boredom is stress-related, and can do serious harm to us. Put another way, being bored means that a person is under stress.

**Plain English Summary:** Boredom means that someone wants to do something but they can't, so they are under stress. Thus, it can be harmful.

### Questions for Discussion

1. In your opinion, are these findings relevant to teaching English as a second (or foreign) language? Why, or why not?
2. What would these mean, for students in your classes?
3. How can you use this study's findings to help your students learn English more effectively?
4. What questions could you ask your students to determine whether or not they're bored?
5. How could you ensure that your students would tell you how they're actually feeling?

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### Article 3

**Title:** [Music underlies language acquisition, theorists propose](#)

**Website:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/09/120918185629.htm>

**Summary:** Based on an analysis of research studies that analyze how infants process sounds, as well as how brains distinguish between different sounds, Rice University researchers argue that language is, simply, one form of music. They also suggest that this might explain certain other phenomena, such as why music therapy helps people with speech and reading disorders, or why music can help stroke victims recover their use of language.

**Plain English Summary:** Research suggests that language is one kind of music. And, this might be of use, when helping people learn (or relearn) a language.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What are your thoughts on this study?
2. In your opinion, are these findings relevant to teaching English as a second (or foreign) language? Why, or why not?
3. What would this mean, for students in your classes?
4. How can you use this study's findings to help your students learn English more effectively?

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### Article 4

**Title:** [Learning is not a spectator sport](#)

**Website:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/09/150914220526.htm>

**Summary:** Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) researchers have determined that students in online courses learn more effectively if they do interactive activities in addition to both reading course materials and watching lectures, than if they simply watch videos and do course readings. Among other results, they tend to get higher final exam results, plus they also learn. And, they also have a higher completion rate than the ones who don't do interactive activities. The differences remained, even after adjusting for other factors, like participants' educational background, or how much they'd known about the course's topic prior to taking it.

In other words, the study offers proof that students learn better by reading, watching, and doing something than they do solely by reading and watching it.

**Plain English Summary:** People do learn by reading and watching something. But, they tend to learn better if they also do activities related to what they are learning.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What are your thoughts on this study?
2. What can ESL instructors do in class, to help students learn better? That is, what else can they do in class, aside from lecturing, requiring students to read from the textbook, occasionally showing videos, and the like, so as to help students learn better?
3. What sorts of activities could we plan, to help improve student understanding of the materials we are trying to teach?
4. As well, what sort of support system could we help implement, so as to help students better understand what they are supposed to be learning?

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### Article 5

**Title:** [Teaching a Foreign Language? Best Teach In the Accent of the Listener](#)

**Website:** <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/02/100216101326.htm>

**Summary:** A study done at the University of Haifa in Israel has found that it is easier for students to learn a second language if it is taught in the listener's accent, rather than in one of the target language's original accents. Thus, it appears that it is easier for people who are learning a foreign language, like English or Korean, to learn it from someone else who speaks it with their own accent.

**Plain English Summary:** It is easier for people who are learning a foreign language, like English or Korean, to learn it from someone else who speaks it using their own accent.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What are your thoughts on this study?
2. What do you think this means, for students in your classes?
3. How do you think you can use this study's results in your own classes?
4. If you have a Korean co-teacher (or co-teachers), or if you work with Koreans who teach English at your school, how can you encourage them to speak English in class, rather than Korean?
5. If you are a Korean who teaches English, what do you think of this? Would you rather teach English to your students by using English, or would you rather use Korean? Why? Why would you want to teach your classes in English? Also, why would you want to teach them in Korean?