Planning Lessons for Children

Planning. We do it every day: we plan for retirement; we plan for the weekend; we plan trips, meals, weddings, and heists. Teachers plan lessons. We plan to increase the probability of success.

For teachers new to the profession, the concept of planning is generally about designing a roadmap of sorts. Creating a lesson plan is building a framework of activities *before* they take place in the classroom. This kind of planning begins and ends before the bell rings. Teachers typically write down an objective before walking into class. More often than not, the objective tends to be a language form (*wh*-questions, adverbs of time, prepositions) or a function (e.g., telling time, making requests) and likely follows a set syllabus; in many circumstances this amounts to simply completing a set number of coursebook pages per day. Next, there is input to consider. What kind of text or materials will serve as the vehicle for reaching the day's objective? Maybe a short reading passage, some songs, or a crossword puzzle. The next question to consider is how you will implement your activities. Do you read aloud or silently? Do learners work independently or in pairs or in a group? Will you have students circle their answers and go around the room round-robin style

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Planning needs to accommodate real-time classroom decisions.

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checking answers? Finally, pick up the CD and gather some markers and any realia, or teaching aids, such as flash cards or puppets. You are ready. Sounds easy, doesn't it?

Armed with a schematic of how events will flow from beginning to end, why then do some well-planned lessons not go according to plan? In my experience, having an arsenal of activities to choose from is insufficient guarantee of success. Additional planning needs to accommodate decisions that will take place in real time as events unfold in front of you, for better or worse. Further planning is also required as part of the post-class reflection as you assess the effectiveness of your lesson. Thus, effective planning takes into account traditional pre-class lesson planning, but also during-class and post-class planning phases.

Anything can happen during class, especially when teaching children. Even something as trivial as a mosquito can wreck havoc on the rhythm of a smooth class. Secondly, each class has its own unique culture, interests, attention span, background experience, etc. Thus, teachers must prepare for a host of common classroom management issues. To illustrate, my regular classes know how to complete pair work. Once they are assigned a partner, they immediately go to their partners and complete their work undistracted. They end by telling me, "We're finished." Very recently, I

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started teaching a new class. After modeling how to complete a pairwork activity, I assigned partners. They all began on cue, but they all stopped immediately, looking at each other quite confused. It turns out that these students were accustomed to teacher-centered classroom procedures where students speak one at a time and only when asked a question. Multiple groups of students all talking simultaneously broke protocol. This breakdown required on-the-fly decision making. Do I give up exasperated and move on to the next activity? Should I pretend they all did a fine job and continue as planned? In my case, I had everyone stop and return to their seats. I then called up two pairs of students to stand in the front and back of class. I stood in the middle. I made hand gestures signifying a race, and said, "Ready, set, go!" Next, I called up two more pairs, standing in the four corners of the room and repeated the activity. Finally, I called the rest of the pairs and we successfully completed the activity. Yes, it took the rest of class to implement the pairwork activity and the rest of my plan was shot. However, the next class included pairwork, and that class went like clockwork?fast and efficient. My lesson plan did not go as planned, but it was still productive.

What about post-class reflection and planning? Hopefully your lesson plan has room for notes somewhere at the bottom of the sheet. This is where you can write your comments about what worked well and why, as well as what went wrong and why. When you assess the effectiveness of your lesson, what would you change? Did your students meet the day's objective? How do you know? What material needs to be reviewed in the future?

Planning is an essential skill for all teachers. To not plan is to plan for Plan B.

Managing Bad Apples

They are the bane of teachers attempting to perform their duties in the face of very taxing circumstances. These "bad apples," disruptive students, typically enter the classroom as individual troublemakers or possibly even as a group challenge. Strangely, the issue of misbehaving students is seldom a focus of teacher training or resource books; however, the issue frequently crops up in staffroom discussions, on discussion boards, in meetings, and again in dark pubs well after our timecards have been punched.

The first step in solving any behavioral difficulties is to uncover the root of discipline issues. Sometimes it is actually teacher behavior that sets off problems, for example, talking too fast, using words and phrases students are unable to comprehend, ineffective questioning techniques, lack of modeling, insufficient instructions, etc. On the other hand, it could be the students. Unsuspecting teachers may not know that some students misbehave because of larger difficulties at home, or with peers, or because they have special needs.

In my case, I have found that the best initial solution is to move to a listening-based curriculum. In many contexts, this means adopting a coursebook with an abundance of listening activities. For teachers who do not use coursebooks or texts that are primarily listening-based, supplement your materials with additional listening grids, worksheets, and dictation tasks. This works for me because I am able to engage all students in class for the whole class period, leaving little or no time for students to disrupt their fellow classmates. Also, less able children do not feel threatened. Speaking, sharing their writing, reading aloud, answering comprehension questions, or translating are frightening experiences to children who know they cannot succeed to the same degree as their classmates. Rather than face public humiliation, they cause trouble.

Next, create rules and enforce them. Brainstorm a list of most frequent infractions. Then, on index cards or construction paper, write up rules or expected conduct in both English and Korean, and provide very simple rationales kids can understand. Whenever rules are broken, hand out cards to the students.

Another recommended tactic is arranged seating. Break up students who hijack your class, moving them not too far from each other, but far enough away to prohibit too much off-task behavior. Refer to students by their Korean given names. This helps to develop teacher-student rapport and instills mutual respect. My students, even very young learners (VYL), appreciate that I know them as unique individuals.

Winning over the most villainous delinquents takes time and effort. Often, these children are on a quest for attention. So, give them attention. Be certain to include them in activities with which they can succeed. Give them leadership roles whenever possible. Comment on small things and count objects in their pencil case with them. This ritual not only

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leads to teachable moments for everyone in class, but is also the holy grail of natural, spontaneous, authentic interaction.

Reflect on your class and on the moment things took a turn for the worse. What were you doing? In all likelihood, you were talking or explaining for an extended period, leading to student boredom, and finally, off-task behavior. Or only one student was engaging with your activity while all the others were idle. Words of caution: *Idle hands are the Devil's tools.* The solution is to engage students in group activities, dramas, roleplays, choral repetition, etc.

The old Dale Carnegie classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People* applies to children, too. "Be lavish with your praise," he said. "Praise them for their effort and success." A smattering of big smiles, the thumbs up, a *Wow!* or *Excellent!*, high fives, secret handshakes, stickers, and other motivators motivate, win friends, and influence people.

Alleviate boredom by completing your activities before their attention span ends. For younger students or false beginners, keep activities under ten minutes, then move on to another activity. As they get older and increase their ability, lengthen time spent on activities. Also, plan your lesson with a series of active-passive-active or passive-active-passive activities.

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Get Real!

Over the summer I had an opportunity to observe a number of classes in a number of contexts, my own included (via CCTV). One characteristic that stood out was the over-reliance on imparting knowledge to students, of filling the proverbial "empty vessel." Noticeably absent was a sense of authenticity, in both the selection of materials and interpersonal interaction.

In my experience, the debate on authenticity, by and large, is often reduced to the concept of task authenticity (Nunan, 2004); i.e., is this activity's design set up to mirror real-world tasks native speakers engage in? A second, but less traveled, avenue of discussion revolves around realistic content; i.e., is the content or text authentic for native speakers? I believe that the concept of authenticity deserves further exploration and investigation. Lee (1995) outlines five factors of authenticity. Given the length of a one-page article, readers are encouraged to follow up on these two references. In lieu of a longer exploration, let's highlight some of the salient issues through a lesson plan.

Imagine a lesson built around the concept of time, daily routines, and after-school activities. These are themes found in any typical course book. The content presented to students is a short reading passage, serving as a unit review. In the story, two children go hiking and discuss their day's schedule. For all teachers observed, the reading passage served as the core activity. Some teachers simply had students listen to the passage; they then moved on to the next unit. Others set up preparation activities and added a follow-up stage (summaries, essay writing, Q/A, role play). In theory, this last group of teachers was doing exactly as they had been trained. However, one aspect of the lesson, learner perception of the text, was not considered. Observations indicated that *learner authenticity* and *the teacher factor* were not valued. Students mostly interacted mechanically with the text, and teachers generally interacted mechanically with the text and students.

The first time I taught this lesson, my students failed to buy into it. The second time around, I designed a different but related activity as the core activity and demoted the reading passage to a preparation-stage activity. We read and listened to the story. Students then circled times and underlined activities to draw their attention to what the lesson goals were. This preparation activity took about 10 minutes.

The revised lesson worked wonderfully and engaged my 11- and 12-year-old students. First, I drew a t-chart, with one column heading *time* and the other *activity*. I then taped a picture of Sponge Bob beside the chart. Next, I called to the board two students and gave each a marker. I then told a short story about Sponge Bob's day. As they listened, one student noted times, and the other students wrote down activities. Sponge Bob, Bart Simpson, *real students* in your class, Pokemon monsters, or Spiderman are authentic personalities to children. They will capture students' attention. "Mary" and "Larry" do not. Eleven- and twelve-year-old students are also very keen to know what their classmates are doing or not doing.

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Next, have students take out a notebook so they can make their own t-chart and write up their own daily routines. For oral presentation, I like to have confident students come up to the front of class and tell us about their days. Beware, though. There is a danger that students will simply read a list from their notebook or recall from memory (7:00 get up, 7:30 breakfast, 8:00 school, etc.). Building on this simple oral presentation, have another student come up front. Now draw a Venn diagram on the board and have students compare and contrast their days and let them fill in the diagram themselves. Other students can do the same in pairs at their desks. For a real-world follow-up activity, try negotiating a time for a birthday party.

Lee's *teacher factor* also plays a crucial role in a successful lesson. During an oral presentation, teachers often take on a non-invasive role, letting students develop their fluency, or correcting student errors when they crop up. Perhaps this is why some lessons fall apart and lose learner authenticity. Instead, try interjecting some commentary personal to the student. One student talked about going to swimming class, to which I replied, "Oh, I can't swim." This created more class interaction. In short, *the teacher factor* is having a genuine interest in both students and the text.

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Total Physical Response Cards

Recently I have been finding that many of my students lack some of the basics regarding daily routines and common actions. To improve this situation, I went back to my file cabinet and took out my TPR (*Total Physical Response*) cards. These flashcards I made myself, by brainstorming a list of common routines and useful commands my students might perform on a regular basis. Over the years, I have cut out illustrations from coursebooks and printed clipart images from the Internet to glue on the blank cards with commands under the pictures. Simple commands include *open the window, play the piano, drink orange juice, do homework*, etc.

With TPR, the verb is king, and learners develop comprehension skills before output is expected. This method is often used with beginners who may benefit from a less stressful introduction to language learning. In short, your students start off listening and doing, and the teacher gradually allows students to take on the teacher's role when they start speaking.

The most common activity teachers can do with these cards is *Simon Says*. As students gain proficiency, teachers should be allowing students to take on the role of issuing commands. My students always had difficulty thinking of commands spontaneously. With TPR cards, learners have access to a large variety of commands and routines. *Charades*, the guessing game, is a similar activity you can use. Most students tend to scream out answers. For this reason, I put starter phrases on the board so that students can say, *I think you're ____ ing* or *It looks like you're _____ ing*.

Another activity my students enjoy as a warm up or review is *Slap*. Place 2-4 cards on a table. Two students place their hands on their heads. The teacher or another student calls out a command, and then students have to race to slap the card that was called. For large classes, make groups around the room, and let them play independently.

TPR cards offer opportunities galore for pattern practice as well. Activities practicing past, present, and future tenses are easy to set up, as are adverbs of frequency (*always, usually*), time sequencing (*before, after, first, next*), and modals (*can, might*). To make mechanical drills more fun, use students' names instead of *he/she/they*. One successful technique I have used is placing four TPR cards on the board with tape or Blu Tack. Students make teams near the board. One student from each team races across to the board

saying the correct sentence. They return quickly and say their sentences again. Here, I usually remove one of the cards. When they finish, they tag their teammate to go. It is fun for students, but it is also productive fluency practice, which incorporates chunking.

Writing activities are easy to implement. I normally place several TPR cards on the board and have students practice with some quick mechanical drills. Then I ask them to circle, underline, or draw a square around whatever grammatical pattern I want students to learn.

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What about a more open-ended creative writing task? Try *Wacky Tales*. Pass out TPR cards to each student or group of students. You will also need to have one character card for each student or group. I use cartoon characters, such as Sponge Bob, and movie characters from *Transformers*, etc. in order to generate more student interest. Although the TPR cards might read *carry the books, feed the cat*, and *throw a baseball*, students are encouraged to change them. My students love reading out their stories where they have changed their TPR card examples to ones more ridiculous such as *carry the car, feed the dinosaur, throw a watermelon*. For older students, I use Korean entertainers and singers as characters.

Finally, writing or giving instructions is another TPR activity. These can be very difficult, so this type of task is best used with intermediate and advanced students. Have students give instructions to local places of interest and use maps or other realia. Write instructions for cooking ramyon or making a sandwich.

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Start Writing

Getting children to begin writing and enjoy the process is often a challenge. Writing is a productive skill requiring a commitment to both accuracy and content. Many of my young learners become easily frustrated when they do not have the productive ability to write out their ideas and thoughts. Others find that the time and attention needed to think and write taxes their attention spans. This leads to dilemmas in the classroom. My learners tend to take the path of least resistance, writing only what words and patterns they do know; they finish up quickly without activating new words and patterns. Another frequent obstacle is with materials. In general, many writing books and worksheets focus primarily on manipulating grammar and rarely make it past sentence-level discourse. What follows are some ideas for promoting writing with young learners. These have worked for me, so I hope they work for you, too.

Learners tend to take the path of least resistance.

For young students who are new to writing but already have the ability to write words and copy sentences, I begin with picture-based writing activities. Copy eight to ten pictures and paste them on a worksheet. Next, write one or more sentences relevant to each picture. The students' task is to read the sentences and match them with the pictures, writing out the sentences next to or below each picture. While this is indeed a controlled writing activity, it does require more cognitive activity than simply out-of-context copying. Adding layers of complexity is easy. First, add additional sentences about each picture. Be aware that placing too many sentences in a box or area can be too cognitively demanding and time-consuming. For efficiency, place three related sentences next to one picture, or six sentences with two pictures. Second, scramble the words and have students unpack the sentences.

As mentioned earlier, many students take the easy way out of writing, limiting themselves to easily accessible vocabulary. This leads to simple sentences littered with the verb *is*. In this case, I like to adapt short stories and essays from their reading texts. I delete the verbs and other content words for them to write in. The deleted words should be collocates, words with a high statistical probability of matching with the word before or after. Like the above activity, this exercise is also controlled. For promoting independence and creativity, adapt the same reading texts, this time deleting specific

content words and whole phrases. Leave one long line (_____), or one line for each word (____ ____ ____) if you want students to discover grammatical patterns. Students then use their imagination to rewrite the story to their own liking. In the original story, *Lucy rode her bike to the park in the morning*, students are free to change the story content; for example, *Jung-hoon drove his truck to the zoo in the afternoon*. The finished project, which many students enjoy reading aloud to their classmates, is often humorous and motivating for the whole class.

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Writing for a purpose is often neglected. Writing postcards, invitations, notices, letters, applications, email messages, and requests for information may all be new tasks for students. Provide students with sentences they need to insert into the writing structure. Include a few signal posts or cohesive devises so that they can actually complete the task. This type of assignment requires a bit of logic and moves students from sentence-level discourse to a focus on function and organization.

Editing has always been a stumbling block to better writing. Once my students put their ideas on paper, they often see no reason to rewrite a piece of writing. I like to provide students with a passage containing mistakes and, more importantly, room for improvement. One idea is to offer students a paragraph with errors. Advise students they must find ten mistakes and then correct them. However, this activity tells students in a not-so-subtle manner that editing means fixing grammar mistakes. Vary the activity with other editing changes; e.g., to improve sentences with better, thicker descriptions and lexical alternatives.

Writing can be easy, fun, and productive. Start writing with your learners and discover how writing not only feeds on other skills but also translates into improved skills in other areas.

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Making Lemonade Out of Lemons

Lemons are great. They're chockfull of vitamin C, and they prevent scurvy. Ask any pirate. Nevertheless, on a hot summer day, there is nothing as tasty as lip-smacking, icy lemonade. That is how I feel about many coursebooks. They are useful tools and facilitate learning. However, there is a widespread practice of "teaching the book." Teachers and learners complete activities in a chapter or unit in lockstep. Sound familiar? If so, I have a solution that may interest you.

The most noticeable characteristic of coursebooks is that they all organize content by themes. *Sports*, for example, is common. Equally similar are the activities: *Read and say. Listen and say*, etc. Content? *Do you like soccer? No, I don't* and so on. That is a good start for the presentation of content and initiation to the concept of sports, but do not stop here and continue on to the next unit. For me, this point is the opportunity to make lemonade out of lemons.

After working our way through the coursebook unit on sports, I supplement the unit with a hands-on project. Teachers need about 5-10 minutes of click-and-print preparation time, and this activity takes only one class period to complete. You need some paper or a poster, glue, scissors, and colored pencils. If you are short of materials, you can use the board. To prepare, find 5-6 sports-related pictures online, or cut them out of a book or newspaper.

You can offer integrated skills in an authentic and motivating manner.

Then, you need to enlist your students, because your role is to facilitate and direct, not teach. First, tape the sports pictures in a row on the board. Next, call two students to the board. Give each a marker. They are the secretaries who record students' *yes/no* data under the sports. Next, have one student go around the room asking classmates the question from the unit: *Do you like baseball?* Call another student to walk around asking about the following sport: *Do you like golf?* This way, many of your students have a chance to participate, even shy students. This is the data collection part of the project.

Next, it is time for students to analyze their data. First, get your large poster/paper. Make a common bar graph on it. Put numbers on the vertical axis. For smaller classes, increase by one. For larger classes, increase by five or so. Under the horizontal axis, have your students glue the clipart/pictures you previously taped to the board. It works best to ask one student by name to go to the board, saying, *Min-gyo, go to the board. Pick up baseball. Okay. Now come here.* Ask students to count how many liked baseball. How many like baseball? After that, model the procedure, then have your students color in the number of students who like baseball. Moving on to the next sport, ask another student to go to the board to get the next picture. They glue. They count. They color. Repeat until you have done all of the sports. Your 7- to 8-year-old students have just analyzed data and surreptitiously been introduced to the power of bar graphs. They reviewed numbers. They listened and spoke. They worked as a team to accomplish a task. They have hopefully been presented with quality input when you modeled instructions. The final stage is presenting the data, while holding up the bar graph for everyone to see. By now, time is running out.

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Instead of "teaching to the book" and limiting many students to a diet of "listen and repeat," you can offer integrated skills in an authentic and motivating manner. You have made lemonade out of lemons. Ah! Simple and refreshing.

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A Slave to Lesson Planning

In keeping with the spirit of the upcoming International Conference, I would like to tackle the notion of pursuing professional excellence as a teacher of young learners. My first thought brings me straight to a quote by author Jayne Moon, who noted in her book *Children Learning English*, "We tend to see and observe things in our classroom in the way we have always seen them. Previous experience colors what we want to see. So if we want to change, we need to see things in new ways."

Initially, a personal inventory of teaching and learning beliefs is an essential catalyst for change. I favor Lightbown and Spada's inventory found in *How Languages Are Learned*. Every year or two, I take time to reflect on my answers. This annual task has been particularly productive for me because it has led to gradual but important classroom changes in procedure and practice.

It is vital to end on a high note.

Early on, I learned that experience and conventional wisdom were coloring my view of lesson planning. Class ought to begin with an inspiring warm-up activity, something fun, interesting, and speedy. This sets the tone of the class and gets students involved and motivated to learn. This is critical, as they need time to acclimate themselves to an English environment. It is also vital to end on a high note, so that students leave class with a positive attitude about learning English. I religiously followed this advice, found in teacher resource books, coursebook manuals, and articles. Co-workers and supervisors agreed. By popular consensus, that was the ideal format. For quite a while I was detailing my lesson plans down to the minute, beginning with an active warm-up and closing a lesson with a bang. The in-between moments were also meticulously accounted for, when I learned that children's attention spans are generally limited to about 5-7 minutes. Calculating for a 45-minute class, I had room for a warm-up, about four activities at most, and a warm-down.

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On the bright side, students enjoyed themselves. I could tell because they were winded and they left smiling. My classes were active and everyone participated. Accumulating hundreds of games or activities in my notebook felt like a satisfying achievement. Every day was new for my students and me. I was proud of my lesson plans. Much of my teaching and planning became mathematical and the clock was my best friend. However, that phase of my teaching career is now mostly regrettable. In hindsight, my lesson plans rarely worked because the timing was always off. Teachers in neighboring classrooms complained mine was too noisy. Worst of all, there was no discernable difference in my students' improvement compared to other teachers' students.

To the drawing board I went. Noticing how rambunctious my students could be even before they entered my class, I rethought the idea that all classes should begin with a fun, active warm-up. Do all of my classes benefit from more speed and energy? How long should I spend on a

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single activity? Do I have to cater to their 5-7 minute attention span, or should I try to lengthen it to 10-12 minutes or longer? While some classes benefited from a quiet, serious activity as soon as the bell rang, others could have used an adrenaline rush. I decided to make flexible lesson plans. When I entered class, I observed my students' behavior. I then decided if it would be better to begin with an active or a passive activity. After reorganizing the activities in my lesson plans, I found classroom management a much easier task.

When I first started teaching children, my classes were predominantly a series of high-energy activities peppered with games. Now, when possible, I try to follow either an *active > passive > active > passive* routine or sequence them *passive > active > passive > active*.

Pursuing professional excellence has been a satisfying struggle for me. It takes time, effort, a lot of trial and error, and a willingness to solve problems.

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Expanding Vocabulary for YLs

Vocabulary learning is one area Korean students, parents, teachers, and administrators like to think of as their strength. It is common for learners to memorize long lists of vocabulary words and then be tested. This is a commendable start. Many students do have a fairly large receptive vocabulary, enough to understand the gist of a reading or listening passage. Unfortunately, this type of learning gives students, parents, and teachers a false sense of security. All too often, words are glossed over, repeated a few times orally or in writing. Better books on the market provide a matching exercise or a sentence completion task. As teachers, we can provide additional tasks and activities to consolidate word learning.

Listen and Repeat is a classic activity. Many native English-speaking teachers vilify this activity as a time-waster with no communicative payoff. With beginners, I find it an essential first step. I believe it gives my students confidence and valuable practice with words. Instead of playing a CD and having students listen and repeat loudly, start with the classic L&R, and spice up the activity with pair work. I like to provide a meaningful, yet mechanical context. Students work together in pairs asking: *What's number 4? What's number 12? How do you spell_____?*

All too often, words are glossed over.

Tic-Tac-Toe has many variations. I like to draw nine squares on the board. Option 1: In the squares, write vocabulary words. Make two teams, and call one student from each team to the board. Play rock, scissors, paper. The winner provides a definition or explanation of the word and, if correct, draws their team symbol in the square. Option 2: Write words in the squares. The teacher describes a word and students guess the word. Don't allow students to shout out the word. I find it more useful if students use a sentence such as *I think the answer is _____.* Option 3: Write a Korean translation in the square, and have students say the word or phrase in English. But students should say, *_____ means _____in English.* Option 4: Leave the squares empty. Write definitions on an index card. Students come to the front of class and read it. The other students on the team guess.

Syllable activities are not used frequently enough. Option 1: Have students write vocabulary words in their notebooks, dividing words into syllables. Option 2: Draw category lists on the board, allowing for 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-syllable words. Students add words from their list to the correct category. Students say aloud (as dyads or whole class) how many syllables a word has, i.e., *"Pencil" has two syllables. I think "orange" has two syllables.* Option 3: Learners test each other by asking *How many syllables does_____have?*

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Listen and draw makes for a fun activity but can be time-consuming. Using the words from your list, ask students to draw a place (e.g., jungle, classroom). Most YL vocabulary lists are thematic, so this is the easy part. Now, ask learners to draw related objects on the word list. Be sure to tell them where to draw. Not only will they make use of the words on the list, you can add adjectives, colors, prepositions, etc. Here is an example: *Make a bird, a happy parrot. Color its feathers purple and green. Draw an alligator under the parrot. The alligator is hungry, so give him a big mouth. I'd like it to have a long, curly tail. Add big, sharp teeth. This alligator likes kimchi. Put a piece of kimchi between its teeth.* Notice how I make requests of the students using a variety of verbs, not just *draw.*

Flashcard activities are a wonderful way for students to manipulate words and phrases. Picture cards can be found in your Teachers Guide or images are also available online at ESL Flashcards and at ESL-Kids. Successful activities for me include alphabetizing the images and then saying them quickly; a speed game where two students put their hands on their head, and then slap the card I say or describe; placing the image on the board and making a word web of related vocabulary; storytelling or story writing; spelling bee, etc. There is also the classic game of Memory.

Rather than routinely assign lists of words for your young learners to memorize, treat them to your choice of the above fun activities to expand their vocabulary.

Differentiated Instruction

In the previous *Young Learners* column, I wrote about level testing students for placement purposes. Yet classroom reality for most teachers is a mixed-ability grouping of students. In fact, even level-adjusted classes are mixed-ability classes to some degree, as individual students' different personalities and interests influence classroom dynamics. This variance becomes more conspicuous when we recognize our students' multiple intelligences. One way to deal with mixed-ability classes is through differentiation, which means tailoring or personalizing instruction according to the needs of students.

The first solution to the mixed-class dilemma is to respond with a unique set of materials and resources, to adjust curriculum content to meet the needs of diverse learners. The traditional classroom learns in lockstep from the same set of materials, the same bank of questions, the same worksheets and flashcards.

Even if you cannot adapt your curriculum, you can change your teaching techniques.

Unfortunately, with mixed-ability classes, students respond differently to our content and materials, with reactions ranging from comfort and ease to boredom or frustration. A case in point is when some students are unable to complete writing or speaking activities based on a reading passage. Perhaps the reading passage is too difficult for some. Do all of your students have the productive skills to complete the activities?

Here are some tips for differentiating your classes. Try assigning a number of different activities that cater to different learning styles and individual interests. For example, graphic organizers suit students with different learning styles. Many of these can be found online. Teachers can also rewrite an unabridged version of a passage to make it more easily understood. Another option is to highlight pertinent information for students. This draws learners' attention to specific information, but they discover answers for themselves.

Pre-teaching vocabulary may benefit some students. Giving explicit directions orally and in writing is necessary for some students who may not fully understand a task. By providing visuals or models, we can improve students' understanding very quickly. When students fear making mistakes or performing in front of their peers, I provide prompts for them to get them started. Request shorter answers from these students rather than completely grammatical sentences.

Many young learners and teenagers have never been exposed to task-based learning activities or other communicative approaches. For some, they have only experienced grammar translation or Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP). While some learners are capable of authentic two-way communication and excel at open-ended tasks, some students will benefit from what they feel is a more structured approach, one requiring more listening and repeating. Is there any reason why we cannot make our classes more eclectic by making use of more than one approach in a given lesson?

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Questioning techniques are also easy to adapt in a differentiated classroom. Factual, or display questions (i.e., the *wh*-questions standard in most classrooms), test learners' ability to recall information. They are closed questions requiring less of a cognitive load. In contrast, open-ended questions are higher-order questions requiring students to reflect on their knowledge and process information. In a differentiated classroom, questioning techniques vary over a continuum: knowledge, comprehension, application, inference, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

I think it is still rare to find teachers that take the extra time needed to prepare resources and worksheets or adapt materials to suit learners' needs. In the real world, classrooms are still a onesize-fits-all experience. Nevertheless, even if you cannot adapt your curriculum, you *can* change your teaching techniques. However, there is a caveat to all of these tips and strategies to differentiate your classroom. It is dangerous to apply them to groups of students for long periods. At some point, learners will progress and the crutches we afford them need to be removed so that they can walk, and then run, on their own.

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Placement Tests for Young Learners

Raise your hand if your institution uses placement tests to put students into appropriate classes. Now raise your hand if your institution does not differentiate students by ability. I'm guessing that the majority of readers fall into the second category.

Based on anecdotal evidence, public schools generally do not separate students into appropriate ability levels. First, many schools lack sufficient staff and appropriate resources. Secondly, schools reportedly wish to bolster students' self-esteem. Leveling students means that some children will inevitably *lose face* by being placed in a lower-level class. As a result, teachers sometimes face situations where students who have studied abroad are in classes with students who have not yet mastered basic phonics.

There are several commercial options for ascertaining student levels. Unfortunately, the ones I know of are designed for assessing adults. Where are the ones for young learners and teenagers? I have not seen any other than what is available in coursebook teachers' guides.

The purpose of a placement test is to differentiate students' ability in order to place them in suitable classes. It is not to make diagnostic assessments of proficiency. In theory, most programs for young learners are promoted as general English courses, teaching the four skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing. In practice, courses often focus more on reading, vocabulary, and grammar. With this in mind, it is important to construct placement tests that elicit the kind of information that will be of practical value. Let's look at some options, which may solve the placement test dilemma. Or maybe not!

One way is to give out blank sheets of A4 paper and ask students to write every word they know in English in a short period of time. At first, I thought this procedure was preposterous. Unbelievably, this was actually a revealing activity. It is a quick and efficient way to assess vocabulary, spelling ability, and phonics in only 15 minutes. Try it with several different classes, noting word frequency and spelling. There should be a significant difference by level.

Another simple solution is to begin with the students' grade and age. That will limit class choices. The next step is to select a coursebook or reading book being used in available classes. Have students read a passage or dialog, and then ask questions about it. Should students answer in writing or orally? Should test-takers deliver answers in English or Korean? What do we do if the learners answer questions using Korean instead of English? Do you place them in a low-level class even though they had a passive understanding of the text? Ultimately, decision-making will depend on individual circumstances at your institution.

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Another solution is to review various coursebooks in use at your institution and ask if there is either a placement test or achievement test available. You can often find them in teachers' guides. Achievement tests are related to your curriculum and elicit information based on published objectives within your coursebook program. They include short sections on listening, phonics, reading, sentence-level writing, and speaking tests. My inquisitive nature prompted me to trial a handful of tests to make placement decisions. The test results were informative on their own, diagnosing individual skills. However, I was disappointed that total scores and suggested coursebook levels routinely overrated students' ability or knowledge of English. Too often, learners' aggregate scores placed them in coursebook levels far beyond what I would be comfortable teaching from in class.

Placement testing is no easy task. Finding valid and reliable tools for decision-making ended up being more complicated than I had expected. In the next issue of *The English Connection*, I will follow up on this theme with a discussion on differentiation, a strategy for dealing with mixed-level classes.

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Managing Classroom Chaos

Regardless of how well we teach, there are always better ways to implement more productive and efficient lessons. As an outsider to your classes, sharing specific, workable solutions to individual problems is not a surefire remedy in every instance, given that many different factors cause classroom chaos. In many instances, we blame students for being wily, disinterested, and in the worst cases, simply incorrigible. In short, it is the students' fault. Teachers also hold administration accountable for its lack of institutional support, inadequate in-service training, and general culture of malaise for not promoting discipline among the student body. This time, it is the employer's fault. We can also attribute culpability to parents, an unfortunate home life, diet, or sleep patterns. Now it's a parental flaw. We can even impugn the local culture. Now it's society's shortcoming. Indeed, sometimes contributing variables are beyond our control. Other times, there are teacher behaviors we can identify and modify.

Rather than point fingers, try investigating your class to uncover actions which may be promoting a classroom culture of misbehavior. Here are some areas to begin exploring.

Although planning an unpredictable routine is an oxymoron, this is exactly what I try to accomplish regularly. Children work better within a routine. They are at ease, and they are better able to accomplish tasks with which they are familiar. Adding variety and change to elements within a set routine is important so that the tasks themselves do not grow stale. When students perceive activities as having worn out their welcome, they look for outside stimulation, which inevitably leads to mischief. Do you give enough variety within a set framework of activities?

Another concern of mine is seating arrangement and interaction patterns. Once I get to know my students, I tend to arrange seating so that close friends are not near each other. When close friends sit together, they tend to disrupt my class. My students often become distressed when they cannot work with their friends or they are partnered with the opposite sex. As a solution, I have them work with their friend as a partner for a brief time and other partners later. This compensates for not being in close proximity to their friend.

One hallmark of an ideal lesson is maintaining engagement and on-task behavior. Have you thought about why your students are off-task and talking about Super Mario rather than engaging in your lesson? Some teachers talk far too much. This excessive teacher talk is another common reason for off-task behavior. If the lesson is being delivered entirely in English, it is even more crucial to make your content understandable. Also, when teachers write on the whiteboard, set up activities, or find tracks on a CD, etc., we use up short but critical chunks of time preparing. This transition period between activities is an opportunity for student misbehavior. As a solution, try facing your class at all times rather than turning your back to them, especially when writing on the board. Plan ahead: Know

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what track you will play on the CD, print extra copies of any supplemental worksheets, make a lesson plan, and make sure the CD player and any tech tools are in operating condition.

Another effective technique is writing time limits on the board when students are doing individual work. Before I did this, my students were slower, off-task, and fooled around. Now that I write time limits and countdown remaining minutes and seconds, my students are much more engaged, and we accomplish more work in every class.

Teachers inherit classes from other teachers. Sometimes those classes are very difficult to manage if the former teacher was liberal in allowing off-task behavior. I allow some Korean speaking in class if it is related to the task at hand. However, when I hear Korean being used as unrelated filler and useless commentary and joking, I am very quick and even militant about rooting it out. Body language showing reproach works well - crossed arms, an evil eye, raised eye brows, scowl, and silence. Even my youngest students quickly understand me when the door opens and I say while pointing, "This is the Bear class. The *Gom* (Korean: *bear*) class is outside."

Finally, students stray off-task most often when they are in receptive mode, when they are sitting at their desks learning through osmosis. I do not expect my students to sit for 45 minutes and quietly absorb knowledge and wisdom I impart to them. Instead, I try to make my class interactive and participatory. This means students will be standing, sitting, walking, modeling, changing partners, writing, circling, drawing diagrams, answering questions, listening and doing, etc. When they are actively learning and engaging in tasks, they have less time to misbehave; i.e., the chaos is managed.

Possibilities for Pair Work

Sometimes colleagues ask if it is possible to implement pair work with young learners. Teachers in both public and private language school settings have suggested that getting students to interact with each other in pairs or small groups is often difficult. In public schools, where large class sizes are the norm, teachers find organizing and monitoring pair work overwhelming. They say it is next to impossible to police all the groups, ensuring that students are not only working on assigned tasks, but also using English. Private language schools usually have classes with enrollments ranging up to 12 or 14 students per class - smaller, but not a guarantee of effective classroom management.

What can you do to foster pair work and group work in your young learner class? First, it is important to prepare students for pair work and small group interaction. In some cases, students expect the teacher to lead the class while students take on a more passive role. I always model activities with my students before asking them to do it themselves. Afterwards, I ask two or more students to do the activity. When students complete the activity successfully, I know that other students may also be able to complete it. Modeling builds knowledge of pair work routines.

Modeling builds knowledge for pair work routines.

Secondly, arrange students in a formation conducive to pair work or group work. My favorite formation is the traditional row. This works best for me because I like students to change partners often without getting up and moving around. Students can practice dialogues with the person to the right or left, and the next time they can work with someone behind or in front of them.

Problem solved? No, not when students are speaking Korean instead of English. Teachers need to be proactive in monitoring students. Sitting at a desk or staying in one area of the room is an invitation for trouble. I normally hover within earshot of all my students and walk around monitoring them. This way, I get more on-task behavior from my students. When this just is not possible for whatever reason, try using the *yellow card / red card* approach. Laminate large pieces of colored paper (yellow and red) and distribute to one person in each group, the designated referee. When someone speaks Korean, the referee holds up the yellow card. If students continue using Korean, the referee stands up holding the red card. If more than half of the class has been served with infractions, it is time to stop the activity and move on.

Another consideration is content. Engage your students in activities that

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are fun, meaningful, and achievable, as it facilitates on-task behavior. Dialogues presented in course books are probably the most common use for pair work. Unfortunately, to children, they may not be entirely fun or meaningful. Questions and answers, or agency pairs, are useful. Tear A4 paper into quarters and pass one out to each student. The students then ask and answer five questions written on the board. To save time in large classes, pass out one paper per group. This way, each student in the group can ask one question to the interviewee. Afterwards, have the whole group move to the front of the class and talk about the answers. When they go to the front, they can refer to the questions on the board to jog their memories.

Poster projects are enjoyable tasks. These projects normally involve a combination of art, reading, writing, mathematics, and some kind of research or surveying. Try to expand course book topics by adding poster projects, allowing students to dig deeper into a theme. Some of my best classes have involved asking students to research animal habitats, continents and climates, and planets. They like designing how-to illustrations, asking their moms for recipes, writing postcards to imaginary characters, etc. If possible, post the results for everyone to see.

Pair work and group work are not impossible to implement. While it may be challenging in some circumstances, it is not impossible.

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Spicing Up Word Lists

Memorizing vocabulary lists is a rite of passage for most EFL learners. This is a common task even for young learners. In addition to the supplementary vocabulary books used in many curriculums, vocabulary lists find their way into other materials, ranging from song and chant books, coursebooks, to even graded readers. I certainly bear no grudge against memorizing vocabulary. Building a bigger and better vocabulary makes for a solid foundation. However, I do find discomfort in seeing so many learners, at such a young age, limited to traditional learning approaches and strategies.

Students learn in many different ways, and one way may not be suitable for all learners. Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is increasingly a household word for trained teachers. Traditional methods used in the Korean context take for granted that all learners be "linguistic" smart, or good with words. However, what about students showing signs of being smart in other ways? Are they being left behind? How can you spice up vocabulary learning and accommodate learning styles? Here are some ideas that have worked for me.

Learning vocabulary is more than just word recognition.

To add variety, I add communication and cooperation. First, I teach students how to ask questions such as *What's number 10?* or *How do you spell X?* Then students work in pairs to quiz each other. I also allow them to look at their word list, if needed. Students must quickly scan for the right word. Once learners have been introduced to prepositions, it is also possible to ask which words are above or below other words (e.g., *Where's Y? It's under X.* or *It's before Z.*). For learners setting out on the path to literacy, these simple exercises help to develop useful, productive skills.

Learning vocabulary is more than word recognition. Sometimes we observe learners who read and recognize words but do not know meanings. One of my favorite activities is the Guessing Game. The teacher describes a word form the list, and students guess the word. In most classroom and training sessions I have observed, this game carries very little interactive value. When I use it, my students must always make sentences when they guess the answer (e.g., *I think the answer is X!*) The same is true for Charades, Pictionary-like games, and even Bingo (e.g., *Is there a P?*)

Sometimes I give lists of words to students and ask them to divide the words into syllables. The word *syllable* is easy to teach when we include examples on the board accompanied by a tap on the desk with our fingers or a pencil, snapping our fingers, or clapping to syllable beats. Students practice with me, tapping their desk, snapping their fingers, or clapping. Soon they can do it on their own.

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Crossword puzzle generators are easy to find online. Input the words you want for the puzzle and print. Sometimes I write fill-in-the-blank sentences for clues; sometimes I write L1 equivalents as the clues. For younger students, a picture will do. These can be from the materials being studied or printed from a web site such as Google Images.

Listen and Repeat is sometimes shunned for being boring, repetitive, and mechanical. In many cases, this is a whole-class exercise where the class responds in unison. Instead of steering clear of Listen and Repeat, this exercise can be used responsibly and effectively to develop fluency, reading speed, and pronunciation. To add spontaneity, I divide my class into groups - rows, columns, or individuals, depending on class size. I then randomly point to each group, who must say the word. It is fun for students, especially when I point quickly and move to the next group. Smaller groups make it easier to identify students who need more help with pronunciation.

To sum up, memorizing lists of vocabulary need not be dreary and mechanical. Secondly, not all students learn the same way. We can accommodate our students by planning activities that cater to a wider range of learning styles.

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Building Fluency With Pictures

These days, many children begin learning English at a very early age. Through a combination of innate talent with languages, small class sizes, and access to trained teachers and plenty of comprehensible input, these children are becoming surprisingly adept at English by kindergarten or first grade. Unfortunately, this situation is an anomaly. In research parlance, we call them *outliers*. This is because the vast majority of students learning in typical EFL contexts simply do not have access to ideal learning conditions. As a result, the goal of spoken fluency not easily achieved.

In my experience, one factor inhibiting spoken fluency is the lack of context. Another is insufficient working memory, not being able to keep content accessible for production. Contemplating these factors, I began thinking about how to help my orally challenged students. This conundrum solved itself during the course of an ordinary class, when I instinctively began drawing pictures to assist students in recalling short stories.

How to Do It

Here is one example: I was using *Super Kids*, Book 4. The students varied from 3rd grade up to 5th grade elementary school, but I have also used this same retelling technique with children much younger. The objective of the exercise was to practice *r-controlled* vowels via listening, reading, and writing. The exercise appears at the end of a unit, so it also serves as a grammar and vocabulary review. The instructions state, "Listen. Write *or*, *ar*, or *ur*. Read." Here is the content, 37 words in total. *"We're in New York. We went to a big p_ _ k today. I saw a small t_ _ tle in the water. I went to a candy st_ _ e. I had a candy b_ _. My new friend Kai had one, too."* After completing the exercise as suggested, I wanted my students to tell the story. My goal was to have students retell the story naturally, not read it aloud while referring to the text. Memorizing and retelling it haltingly as their rolling eyes scanned the ceiling for lost words was also something I wanted to avoid. Therefore, I drew six pictures on the whiteboard and had students close their course books. This series of pictures served as an initial crutch. Admittedly, my own art lacks what I call the "Picasso Effect," so I have substituted it with the professional images below.

At first, the results were dismal. None of my students could string together the sentences in a coherent manner. They practiced with partners several times, but had to look back in their books. One by one, they stood at the rear of the class and tried individually, a very scary proposition for some. Nevertheless, I repeated the same procedure in the following chapters. This story has a successful conclusion. Over time, they improved. The students who faltered a few months ago are now chattering away at retellings, often without the benefit of pictures. Moreover, this retelling skill has transferred to natural speaking situations during class. They are telling their own stories, and with more fluency and confidence.

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Caveats

There are options for making the most out of this teaching technique. Try arranging the pictures out of sequence. Another option is to erase one or two pictures in the middle of the story. Have students retell the stories from a distance, rather than sitting at their desks. One reason I have students speak from the back of the class is to force them to project their voices. Secondly, their peers are not watching them so closely. This makes public speaking less daunting. Think about using a variety of pictures to stimulate content. I used the Statue of Liberty to represent New York, but other abstract landmarks or symbols, which may stimulate discussion. To make this activity easier, add key words under the pictures or allow other students to help them by providing portions of the content they cannot remember. Finally, to personalize the content and make it more meaningful, have students embellish with their own adjectives or clauses. Also, change some of the content so that it reflects your students daily lives, friends, hometowns, favorite candy, game, or animal, etc.

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From Superficial to Superb

When I first began teaching, I experienced a great deal of difficulty in implementing effective lessons, regardless of my planning. I was also inept at managing classes and I did not know why. Was it my fault? Was it the material or the activities? Was it my organization or sequencing of activities? Maybe I should blame my students and deny culpability? Ultimately, my ineffectiveness as a teacher resulted in low levels of student achievement. In fact, many of my students went through the entire *Let's Go* or *Super Kids* series, producing little proof of learning and even less evidence of acquisition - not to my satisfaction anyway! Fortunately, since my first introduction to the EFL classroom, I have improved my teaching and it now shows in my students' progress.

Reflecting on my initial transition from novice to experienced teacher, I must admit that studying the teacher's guide helped me the most. It offered concise pedagogical overviews, bridging both theory and practice. In addition, I found an enormous bank of practical activities, supplemental worksheets, assessment packages, and solutions to common problems. The teacher's guide even provided scripts for less confident teachers as well as caveats for seasoned teachers wanting a challenge.

Problems / Solutions

After two years of superficially making my way through course books, I finally decided it was time to peruse the dusty teacher's guide on the shelf. Over the course of two years, feedback from students and teachers indicated that I talked too fast. At first, I said, "Not me!" I was conscious of my speech rate, and I was certain that I had slowed down to a comprehensible rate. Obviously, I was incorrect. My efforts at speaking slowly were short-lived, and I unconsciously began talking faster. To compound the problem, the content of my speech was riddled with idioms and other native speaker-like features. When I tape-recorded my class, I was stunned by my *teacher talk*. Referring to the teacher's guide, I looked specifically for samples of teacher dialogues, which exemplified features of *foreigner talk* or *caretaker speech*. Using some of the sample scripts from the teacher's guide, I practiced using shorter utterances; I exaggerated my pronunciation with more stress and intonation; I used simpler vocabulary to get my point across and less complicated grammatical structures - ones my students were being exposed to. Then, there were techniques for repeating topics and patterns. The result? My students understood much more of what I was saying, enjoyed class more, and completed activities more effectively. In hindsight, I am thankful for having a teacher's guide as a resource.

Another problem I had was supplementing coursebook activities. Unsurprisingly, progressing quickly and superficially through coursebooks does not facilitate learning or acquisition. This kind of roadmap provides an insufficient amount of input and exposure to language. Unfortunately, as a beginning teacher, I was superficially covering material by only completing activities in the student book. In my teacher's guide, I found literally hundreds of extra games and activities, flashcards, worksheets, and other ancillary materials to supplement the

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coursebook. Not only that, but the teacher's guide gave suggestions for where and when to recycle material. The result? I acquainted myself with a storehouse of useful activities; I added more content to my classes; the pace of class slowed to an acceptable level where all stakeholders were satisfied.

Assessment was also an early problem for me. I clearly saw the product of my students' work, but the process was not as apparent. I knew when they made mistakes and errors, but while writing evaluations, I had difficulty pinpointing specific trouble areas. The teacher's guide had a bank of ready-made chapter tests, mid-terms, and finals, and I gave these to students. Based on the results, I was more or less thorough in covering material. I also used the test results to track student progress, which caused me to pay closer attention a student's known trouble spots during class. If the teacher's guide bank of tests were not available, I would not have taken the time to make my own.

If you are having difficulties acclimating to your classroom environment, need more variety of classroom activities, or need to develop your classroom management skills, I suggest readers refer to their teacher's guides. They are one means of making your life as a teacher easier and more effective.

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When Words Fail, Music Speaks Volumes

Music is like a burst of minty fresh breath. This rings especially true when conversation falters or fails. What are the benefits of songs and chants, and how can teachers use them effectively?

The Common Denominator

The joy of music is universal. In all fairness, some students in your class may not appreciate music, but largely, most children enjoy catchy tunes and lively rhythms. Unlike adults, who may have developed specific musical tastes over the years, children's music seems to be universally appealing to children, with cross-cultural similarities in melody, lyrics, and topic. Thus, I am reasonably certain that songs and chants would be a hit in every YL classroom, regardless of class size.

In Practice

Beginning class with a song as a warm-up is a standard lesson plan tactic. Often, the choice of song is a review, a song or chant introduced earlier, or maybe a new song reviewing a recently taught target language objective, i.e., a particular grammar structure. Songs and chants are also independent activities and tasks in their own right. The majority of coursebooks on the market these days include songs and chants highlighting forms, functions, commands, etc.

Teachers may sometimes have difficulty maximizing music's potential. The first problem is that some teachers do not enjoy singing, and they are reluctant to engage in songs and chants. That is unfortunate because these teachers are only shortchanging their students. The second problem is that of not exploiting songs and chants to their fullest. Put simply, playing a CD or tape once and moving along to the next activity is insufficient.

Here, then, are some tips and techniques for making the most out of songs and chants. First, allow students to listen to the song silently in order to learn the words and melody. Realistically, we cannot expect students to sing confidently without being familiar with the song. Next, young learners who are beginning readers will also do well by reading the text aloud without the music. This is also a good opportunity for teachers to assess students' reading ability and pronunciation.

Now, the fun begins during the organizational phase. Break up your class into two groups, an A team and a B team, or assign team names. Place individual students into groups, making sure to balance teams to include both males and females, and quiet and loud students. Another key is to have students stand up. When standing, students sing better. In addition, this involves authentic and genuine communication between students and teachers. Learners are listening closely for their names and instructions, where to go, and what to do. This organization stage provides opportunities for students to state preferences and likes and dislikes, and to listen for and follow directions. In short, expose students to various commands: *Junghoon, come here. Minjung, you're on Team A. Hyunmin, go to the Cart Rider Team. Stand next to Sumin.* When they follow your directions, it means they understand your message. If there is a breakdown in communication, repeat instructions, but use different words and add body language, e.g., point to where you want someone to go.

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The final part of organizing the song is assigning parts of the song to each team or group. Again, to exploit the song to its fullest, you need to do more than just sing the song. For example, alternate lines for each team so that Team A sings lines 1, 3, 5, 7, and Team B sings lines 2, 4, 6, 8. Teams A and B sing the chorus together. The teacher acts as an orchestra conductor, gesturing to each team when it is their turn to sing. Inevitably, some students will sing the wrong lines or lip sync to avoid singing. When this happens, stop the CD or tape and try once more. Again, these are moments for genuine communication and interaction.

After a successful song, pick out a group of four, six, or eight to go to the front of class to sing it one more time. Based on your quick assessment of students' participation, chose a mix of strong and weak singers, but remember not to push reluctant singers who have stage fright. Over time, they will become more comfortable with singing.

Songs and chants are a great way to learn the language and have fun. Keep these tips and techniques in mind when orchestrating songs in your classroom. With enough practice, your students will develop fluency and a sense of rhythm and intonation.

The Author

Jake Kimball is a young learners and teens instructor who can't carry a tune. Though musically challenged, as Director of Studies at ILE Academy in Daegu, he incorporates songs and chants into the curricula of the school's various programs. The areas of ELT program evaluation and curriculum issues are music to his ears. His biggest challenge is keeping in tune with the ELT world around him and balancing educational ideals with classroom realities. Email: ilejake@yahoo.com

Literature and Teenagers: A Hot Topic

Each year for the past eleven years, the International Reading Association has compiled a list of reading-related issues or topics and designated them as "hot," "not hot," "should be hot," or "should not be hot." Of the 28 topics, the highest ranked for this year is literature and teenagers. One of the reasons for the entry is that *No Child Left Behind* and *Reading First* laws in the US, which cater to the assessment of young learners, have had the unintended consequence of siphoning money and attention away from the reading needs of teenagers. Coincidently, some of the very same issues plaguing US schools also trouble Korean classrooms.

Clearly, there is a need for the use of more literature in teen classes. Teaching to the test presents one problem: There is neither time nor space in the curriculum for developing reading skills and strategies or getting beyond the first level of Bloom's taxonomy of learning behaviors. As a result, students rarely read literature unrelated to iBT TOEFL training or content-based topics. Literature and reading for pleasure are unaffordable luxuries. Secondly, students and parents tend to regard extensive reading as unproductive, and instead prefer intensive reading passages using short, difficult content-based articles.

On way to overcome these objections is to add graded readers *and* supplemental materials. The *and* is very important, as your supplemental materials may ultimately determine whether implementing an extensive reading program with teenagers is possible in your institution. Here is an example lesson of what I did with one of my classes.

Choose a graded reader, or even better, let your students choose their selection. While some extensive reading teachers suggest that each student select their own book that interests them, we tend to choose books and read in lockstep. The book for this lesson plan is Jack London's *Call of the Wild*. It is 80 pages and has a lexical index of 1000 headwords, Stage 3 in Oxford's Bookworms series. Although slightly above some of my students' level, the book's content and plot was still very readable.

Prior to reading, visit Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) and enter key words or phrases such as "Call of the Wild," "Jack London," "Yukon," "Klondike Gold Rush," and "Iditarod Tail Dog Sled Race." As the articles you access are most likely too difficult for this age group, it is best to rewrite the information in a style and manner appropriate for your own students' ability and distribute these papers to students. These handouts are a constructive source of background information from which students can draw on while reading *Call of the Wild*, and they provide intensive reading that students and parents desire.

Next, read the book and complete the pre-, during-, and post-reading exercises in the back of the book. Most publishing companies also provide free handouts and tests or quizzes on their web sites if you sign up. In some cases, audio books and videos may be available if the book is a classic or a popular contemporary.

For additional post-reading activities, begin by having students create a map and reconstruct Buck's journey from California to the Yukon. In groups, have students present a narrative of events. I also

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have students complete various graphic organizers, such as time lines, Venn diagrams, cause and effect charts, compare/contrast matrixes, character trait charts, etc.

Once students have read and digested the *Call of the Wild* and can discuss or write about related issues and themes, it is time to tackle iBT TOEFL-type activities. iBT TOEFL is becoming something of an obsession in Korea, and creating TOEFL-like tasks adds to prestige and ultimate acceptance of your extensive reading program. As an example, use one of the discussion questions as a Type-2 Speaking task, where the TOEFL test taker defends a position using details and examples to support their answer; e.g., *In the first chapter of* Call of the Wild, *a poor gardener who needs to support his family sells Buck for $100. Knowing what you do about Buck's life as a sled dog and the difficulties of poverty, was the gardener right to sell Buck? Use details and examples from the story to defend your opinion/position*. There are unlimited possibilities to create tailor-made iBT TOEFL-like speaking and writing tasks. The key is in marketing your supplemental material as iBT TOEFL practice, and your students and administrator are certain to approve and continue its use.

Regardless of how much supplemental material we create, our students could certainly profit from reading more literature, whether it is classic or contemporary.

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Assessing Young Learner & Teen Abilities

Assessment and evaluation of learners goes hand-in-hand with teaching and learning. It is crucial that our assessments eventually find their way into the program, curriculum, or classroom instruction. Most often, we do this via formal testing. Teachers and parents tend to place an enormous amount of stock in the results of formal tests and quizzes, which are summative in nature. Summative assessments measure the amount of information students have learned after a unit or chapter or even at the end of a semester. Even young learners and teens face a barrage of testing on a daily basis.

As an alternative to formal tests or quizzes, informal assessments (formative assessment) provide teachers with a means of measuring and evaluating student performance. As teachers, we do this everyday while teaching. In the staff room, and at conferences and workshops, we talk about students and judge them based on our own personal classroom observations.

In evaluating young learners (YLs) and adolescents, it is critical to keep in mind the differences between YLs and adults, and the fact that we are assessing in a second language. All too often untrained teachers, and especially teachers without a background in children's education, tend to make speedy and irrational judgments about children's abilities or lack thereof. Interestingly, Piaget (Wood, 1988) conducted experiments on children's ability to understand questions posed by adults. Piaget came to a couple of conclusions: (a) The successful completion of a task is dependent on the required cognitive competence needed to complete the task, and (b) children have difficulty in understanding instructions. Piaget noted that although children may understand individual word units, they may have trouble perceiving adult requests as a whole. In essence, children perceive the world differently than adults and may interpret simple (to an adult) requests differently. Piaget worked with native speakers, so imagine the additional problems second language learners must have in working out instructions.

When assessing learners, we can observe whether or not they are completing activities successfully. If they are not navigating through activities successfully, does it mean they have failed and cannot complete the activity? Or does it mean we need to provide more scaffolding to ensure that learners know exactly what is required of them? The first piece of advice that comes to mind is "Show, do not simply tell." Also, provide a model for your class, perhaps with an individual student, before asking a whole class to participate.

Teachers need to be mindful that young learners have a limited, but growing, knowledge of the world around them; are more self-centered than adults; and are more in tune to global, holistic learning experiences. Readers may be inclined to say, "Of course, I know this." However, this kind of Ben Franklin truism is easily forgotten midway through class, when tempers are about to flare because students do not seem to understand the finer points of lesson objectives. For YL teachers, this means providing students with materials, tasks, and activities that they can work with successfully to completion, given their current level of language proficiency.

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One practical method for keeping track of student behaviors in class, which I already mentioned, is observation. Pinter (2006) suggests using a checklist for noting "competence," "non-competence," and "working on." She also suggests that teachers focus on linguistic skills as well as non-linguistic skills, such as motivation and interest. When making a checklist, include objectives from your coursebook and general "can-do" statements regarding pronunciation, general understanding, typical oral responses, literacy, participation, etc. This checklist will come in very handy for evaluations which are sent to parents either monthly or bi-monthly. Your checklist will also serve as a vehicle for building cooperation and interaction with your co-teachers. And finally, keeping long-term observation records provides more reliability and validity than a subjective and random assessment at the end of the month.

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Jake Kimball is the founder of the Young Learner and Teens Special Interest Group and has worked for many years trying to professionalize TYL in Korea. His professional interests include program evaluation and curriculum issues. As Director of Studies at ILE Academy, the hardest part of his task is balancing educational ideals with classroom realities.

Storyboarding Fun

Straying from the course book with supplemental activities is quickly becoming something of a luxury, and the same goes for expanding the syllabus to include related lessons - even if these activities further educational objectives. Despite pressure to cover more and more material in class and for homework, there is a way to spice up your classroom routine without excessive digression: integrate storyboarding activities. Storyboarding adds a dynamic means of integrating various skills while also exercising creativity. Although flannel works best for storyboard construction, other materials such as felt, or even construction paper, can be used to cover cardboard. For example, an A4 paper box container is all it takes to create a storyboard, a small one-act, one-scene stage that young learners can use in a number of ways, most notably with drama-related activities. Using storyboards with very young learners (under 7 years old) is quite common, but they can also be used effectively with young learners (7-12 year olds), too.

Step 1: To get started, find a cardboard box. I used an empty A4 copy paper box. Using a utility knife, remove one short and one long side panel.

Step 2: Next, glue flannel, or felt, material from a sewing shop, or even colored paper, to the inside of the box. Teachers can find any of these materials easily and cheaply. I prefer light colors such as sky blue because it will help to visually contrast with objects, which tend to be darker.

Step 3: Make objects and collect realia that will be used in your activities. These objects are the same as those you find in course books and storybooks. Ordinary lexical sets come alive when cut from swaths of cloth, felt, or flannel. Do keep in mind that this idea is ripe for extension. Ice cream cones can be numbered or cut to large or small sizes, leaves can be made in various colors and shapes, as can hats, people, buildings, animals, etc. Numerous Internet sites catering to flannel storyboarding offer professionally made accessories, but teachers on shoestring budgets have other do-it-yourself options. Over the years, I have collected many sample course books given away at conferences. As I am not artistically inclined, I found the pictures and figures in these course books to be perfect for tracing onto materials or simply cutting out. My students, on the other hand, are quite adept at artistic endeavors and enjoy making or coloring their own figures on construction paper or standard, white copy paper. Tape straws or wooden chopsticks to these figures to put on a play or produce a mini-drama.

Things to Do
Once your storyboard is ready for use and necessary items at your side, what is next? That depends on your lesson plan. Narratives are the most common activity. Folktales in the *Oxford Classic Tales* series are perfect partners for storyboards. Students can rehearse scripts from the activity books or make up their own. If students have sufficient

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productive skills, they can play *What If*. This is when students make alternative endings to stories or produce short skits based on What If scenarios. For example, *what if* the Gingerbread Man had successfully crossed the river? What if the magic cooking pot cooked another food, not porridge? What if the setting (time and place) changed?

Shy students find public speaking a stressful chore. Once TPR activities have run their course and learners are still operating in silent mode, give them hand puppets or finger puppets to use with storyboards. Many children are less inhibited with puppets or action figures. Also, teaching agency pairs to children is easy this way. Agency pairs are typical A/B conversations, where the second utterance is a highly likely or predictable response (e.g., greetings, requests, questions and answers).

This arrangement, incorporating storyboards with common activities, is much more fun and hands-on than round-robin questions. As an added bonus, classroom language is repeated often as the teacher gives instructions (*Come here. It's your turn. Who's next?*) Try making a storyboard for use in your classroom. The investment in time and energy is well worth the payoff.

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Educating Without Entertaining

Current generations of young learners and teenagers have generally been studying English since kindergarten, in some cases even earlier. They will have to continue studying English at least through university, and hopefully for the rest of their lives. One significant dilemma arising from this long-term obligation is motivation. How do we motivate our students with lessons that are fun, interesting, and educational without crossing the line into entertainment, or the gray area of edutainment?

I do not believe that English ought to be delightful all the time. Non-stop, action-packed games and excitement send the wrong message about learning English. Endeavors requiring some degree of proficiency or expertise necessitate blood, sweat, and tears eventually. Diligence and perseverance are the foundation of success, whether its language learning, sports, building a career, marriage, or friendship. Here, then, are some ordinary tips and techniques for motivating young learners without resorting to the court jester role.

Personalize content. Course books and materials are just a jumping off point. Most materials were produced not for the Korean market, but for a global market. One way to interest students is to adapt content to the Korean palette. Use your students' names and familiar topics in humorous situations and relevant anecdotes. I stress the word relevant. This means teacher talk that is on-task and leading to lesson objectives. In addition to keeping students' attention, this activates schemata and connects prior knowledge with new content.

Utilize your voice. Like it or not, teachers are center stage in the classroom. Keeping your students' attention will work better if you can speak slower than normal discourse requires; elongate and accentuate your speech; vary your rhythm and pitch; repeat what you say, but with alternate forms. Also consider taking on other personas you meet in the course of a lesson. Change your voice-high, low, male, female, rough and tough, etc. during dialogues. I am not suggesting a whole lesson of impersonations, but every now and again might add a degree of authenticity to stale dialogues.

Use visuals. Visuals help to make the incomprehensible comprehensible. Using visuals caters to students whose learning styles differ. Everyone benefits when you use the whiteboard, hand gestures, puppets, magazine pictures, realia, etc. Too often teachers simply talk or lecture and expect learners to follow along and understand.

Get up. Many teachers sit at their desk all period. Instead, walk around the room. Stand up, change chairs, sit down, go to the white board, and hover near potential trouble makers. Call on a variety of students and in different patterns so students do not know what to expect. If possible, change classrooms periodically for a change of scenery. If that is impossible, decorate your classroom with new pictures or post student projects on the wall; change student seating assignments; use pair and group work often enough so that students can change partners or groups; rearrange desks and chairs from traditional rows to other designs. These seemingly small changes will transform classes from humdrum to garden-fresh.

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Introduce Total Physical Response (TPR). There is nothing worse than expecting young learners and teenagers to sit still like mannequins for a whole class period. Young learners are not empty vessels. Listening to lectures does not automatically lead to learning, even for adults. TPR means kinesthetic learning, or performing physical actions, instead of passive learning through osmosis. Commands are the easiest to begin with. For example, instead of playing Simon Says, I play "Jake Says." After they know how to play, I change the game to (Student's name) Says. This way, students can be the leader. Making a large stock of cards with many commands to choose from is essential, otherwise most kids will limit their commands. These first lexical chunks are stepping stones to fluency. TPR can also be expanded to TPR Storytelling, including elements of drama. For songs, I often divide the class into teams, with each team alternating the chorus and other lyrics and performing a related action if possible. In short, students are out and about, listening to instructions, and learning actively.

Give praise. Young learners enjoy positive feedback for a job well done. Sometimes restless students who cause the most trouble are simply seeking attention. So give them your attention.

Smile. Smiles are contagious. Smiles are inviting and warm. Be happy to see your students. Even if you are in a bad mood, leave your troubles at home or in the staff room. Teaching, as is any job that requires interaction with fellow human beings, is service-oriented. And everyone loves a happy disposition.

Using Literature to Teach the Four Skills

By Eowyn Brown

There is a certain pleasure in finishing a book to which no one - not even young learners of English - is immune. In a post-course survey, nearly 85% of my young students reported that, having successfully read an English-language novel for the first time in class, they would definitely do so again. Beyond inspiring students, literature is also a vehicle for integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking. How literature can help teachers achieve such integration is the focus of this article.

Reading & Writing

Reading is about more than running ones eyes over a page and decoding text: Readers need skills. The publisher of the American College Test (ACT) summarizes these skills, saying that good readers are able to "determine main ideas; locate and interpret significant details; understand sequences of events; make comparisons; comprehend cause-effect relationships; determine the meaning of context-dependent words, phrases, and statements; draw generalizations; and analyze the author's or narrator's voice and method" (Learning Enrichment, 2005, para. 8). Activities which develop these skills might include predicting what will happen in next, discussing what is already known about the topic, summarizing what has been read, or deciding which details are most important to understanding the narrative.

The relationship between writing and reading skills is well-known, and is succinctly put by the Wisconsin State Reading Association: "Reading and writing are reciprocal processes. Writers can learn much about writing by reading. Likewise, readers can learn much about reading by writing" (WSRA, 1993, para. 2). Reading provides students with scaffolding, to use Vygotskian terms, which they are able to build on when they turn to the task of writing. Teachers can use themes developed in the novel as the basis for writing assignments. Such assignments may range from fact-checking questions (which require students to return to the text) to open-ended questions (which require students to go beyond what is explicitly stated).

Listening & Speaking

Anne Burns (2003, p. 22), in a study of second-language learners, discovered that "students were almost unanimous in their desire for teachers to read aloud to them." She credited the value of hearing fluent reading, especially correct stress and intonation patterns, and securing a model for imitation as possible reasons. Teachers would do well to exploit these benefits by reading short passages aloud to students. In the context of a novel, it can be quite compelling to read the first paragraph of the next chapter aloud to students at the conclusion of class, leaving them curious about what will happen next.

A literature-based course sidesteps the problem of the inherent contentlessness of language, that is, one must have something to talk about. When all students read the same novel, a common script is established. Furthermore, it is the nature of literature to raise provocative questions which can be exploited as a starting point for discussion. Because many students make an emotional investment in the novel they are reading, they are often willing to push their communicative abilities to the limit to defend their point of view. Teachers will find that

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speaking tasks which are introduced after reading, writing, and targeted listening activities on the same topic will be more successful than stand-alone tasks; in this way, teachers will also achieve the skill integration made possible in a literature-based course.

But Wait ... There's More

Literature has a unique ability to shift language from an end in itself to a vehicle for understanding. Consequently, reading has many benefits beyond language development. Research suggests that avid readers develop increased empathy and are more flexible in their thinking. To the extent that teaching language implies teaching values, one could do far worse than cultivating these attributes in the students we teach.

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Teen Writing Difficulties

By Jason Renshaw

A major obstacle for many Korean teenage students is that they steadfastly refuse to believe that they can ever become anything more than a very poor writer of English. This attitude stems from several causes, and describing them is beyond the scope of this article. However, what follows is a small collection of common writing difficulties middle school learners have when embarking on a program of initial writing activities. Simple suggestions for overcoming these difficulties follow.

Quantity versus Quality: Many students feel that the basic objective of a writing task is to fill up as much of a given piece of paper as quickly as possible. When, or if, this becomes the primary goal for a student, it is little wonder that the subsequent writing sample becomes repetitive and error-ridden. Solution: Teachers can overcome this issue by not setting page requirements and grading and responding to writing according to the value of its communicative content and style - not how much paper space it chews up. If anything, page limits encourage students to be more concise!

Too much dictionary use is likely to impede on the composition process.

New Sentence - New Line: Students need to learn how to write sentences one after another, with each new sentence beginning immediately after the previous one, not on the next line. If this skill is not developed, students will almost certainly struggle to write anything that resembles a paragraph; in short, budding writers need practice blocking sentences together into a chunk of sentences that develop a single idea or topic. Solution: Thankfully, Korean written language also employs paragraphs (albeit sometimes more loosely), so it is often a simple matter of reminding students to group sentences together instead of instinctively dropping a line. In many cases, the sentence line-dropping is often linked to the point made above about quantity - that is, some students see it as a convenient way to fill up more writing lines with less effort or output!

Hyphenate Anywhere: Note that in Korean written script, this is quite normal - even in electronic word processing format. Of course, without hyphens this can result in sentences that to an English reader appear as:

My name is John and I am thir
teen years old.

Solution: A simple solution is for the teacher to read the sentence aloud and say the two parts of the word completely separately. Emphasize the split word as two mutually incomprehensible pieces. Eventually, the skill of hyphenating according to syllable blocks can be taught, but at beginning stages it is probably more practical to simply encourage students to write full words to the end of the line, leave a small gap, and write the next word at the start of the line below.

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Bilingual Dictionaries: A boon or a bane in L2 writing classes, depending on your perspective and what you want students to achieve. In some ways, dictionaries are a lot like glasses: The longer you wear them, the weaker your eyes become, and the more you become reliant on their assistance. If the aim of a writing task is precision of meaning and possibly vocabulary growth, a dictionary is a useful classroom tool. If, however, the aim is improving general composition skills and thinking fluently in English, it needs to be pointed out that a dictionary is a doorway to translation skills. In short, too much dictionary use is likely to impede on the composition process and cohesion across sentences and paragraphs. Another problem is importing words and phrases wholesale from a dictionary entry - it can create very jumbled and hard to comprehend sentences indeed! Solution: Perhaps the best rule to enforce here is no dictionary use while writing! Use it during brainstorming activities, or even better, save it for later when reviewing or editing written work. And beware of electronic dictionaries which may exacerbate the problem!

Collecting and Storing Writing. In a perfect world, students will have writing books or journals pre-made and printed, but in reality, most classroom teachers will need to revert to using copied handouts on loose-leaf paper. These often end up folded in half and stuffed inside the back cover of textbooks, from where they rapidly degenerate into nasty, dirty balls of paper at the bottom of a school bag. Solution: Encourage students to bring plastic files or manila folders to class, in which they can store and access their written work for editing or reflection.

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Navigating the Whiteboard Jungle

By Aaron Jolly

When I first began teaching large middle school classes, I had problems. How could I navigate through the personally uncharted jungle of students' expectations, fatigue and boredom, cultural differences, and excessive Korean speaking - a tricky course made all the more difficult by my wanting to reach every single student. How could I overcome these difficulties and motivate my students to actively participate?

Keeping Up With Appearances

In our small private middle school, my class is different from any other. I am the only non-Korean teacher, and I draw comparisons to superstar footballer David Beckham. Other "foreign" secondary English teachers I have spoken to share similar experiences of being compared to Western pop-icons. Put simply, there is a buzz about being foreign that many NEST teachers commonly experience. There is an expectation, then, that expatriate teachers live up to the star billing in some way.

For me, one solution is to be dynamic. This may sound obvious, but do you actually know the popular websites your students visit, the singers they listen to, the names of the computer games they are addicted to, the nicknames they give each other, or who their favorite stars are? Knowing the answers to some of these questions can help you prepare stimulating middle school lesson plans.

The Carrot (Rice Snack) or the Stick?

Since there is no literal stick in my class, I put a lot of thought into the carrot and came up with bbongtwiggi, the cheap, full moon-shaped, puffed rice snacks the size of a paper plate, that you can buy from street vendors. *Bbongtwiggi* is so crunchy and "delicious" that 99.9% of my kids absolutely love it. When I bring bags of this into class to give out on prize day, there is a buzz of light-hearted excitement.

Another solution is to bring the atmosphere of game-play to the classroom. The class selects six captains who divide the class into six groups/teams, with each consisting of five or six students. After six weeks, I reward the top three or four highest scoring teams with bags of *bbongtwiggi*. This nominal out-of-pocket expense is a small price to pay for the resulting motivation and game show style atmosphere it stimulates. I give out points or play-money in every class, which is added to a running score total for each team. Rewards are also given for active classroom participation and English speaking.

No matter what the lesson plan is - from listening comprehension activities remodeled as quiz games, to card games that encourage spoken interaction, to role plays of functional dialogues, to plain old-fashioned grammar study - I award points or play money throughout the class. It helps me to get the students to focus on *me* when I want them to, but more importantly to focus on actively completing activities in English, not Korean.

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Sample Lesson: Coma Recovery Kit

Focus: The conditional *would*.

This is my adaptation of a sample lesson idea from Nolasco and Arthur (1987). Students imagine what they would like (or not like) to see, taste, touch, hear, or smell to stimulate their senses and aid their recovery from a coma. Students then ask their team members the questions "If you were in a coma, what would you like to taste?" "What would you like to smell?" and so on to complete their survey forms. During this time, I reward the teams with bonus points if they are not cheating on the survey and are actually asking questions in English. The exercise usually takes about 25 minutes. Later, I use the answered survey sheets to make a game. One team stays seated while one representative from the other teams stands up to try to guess "Who Am I?" from the seated team. It sometimes goes like this: "If this person was in a coma, they would like to smell Yeong-seop's dirty socks, eat pizza, touch a needle, and see Kart Rider images. Who is it?" The listening team representative who first calls out their team's name or squeezes a buzzer gets to answer; if correct they earn 10,000 points for their team.

The Author

Aaron Jolly, *Daejeon Chapter President, teaches at Dongseong Middle School in Cheonan. For a longer version of this article and more fun activities adapted for Korean middle school teachers, go to the new Lesson Plan section of the Daejeon-Chungnam Chapter website at www.kotesol.com /daejeon or contact him at* jollyaaron7@yahoo.com.au

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Constructive Use of Korean in the Classroom

By Kyoungwon Oh

Ever since English was introduced as one of the main subjects in the elementary school curriculum in 1997, English-only in the classroom has been a contentious issue. Using L1 in an L2 class is often thought of as unproductive and faces strong resistance from those in conservative camps who believe in banning L1. While English as a medium of instruction surely has its own merits in terms of providing target-language input, a majority of Korean primary school teachers employ a bilingual method, using both English and Korean, as there are some advantages to using Korean when used creatively and constructively.

Previous studies (Auerbach, 1993; Schweers, 1999; Kwon, 2003) suggest that the benefits of bilingual instruction in English education should not be underestimated. Use of the learners' mother tongue can be beneficial, one obvious use being the delivery of clear ideas on abstract and complex notions and detailed instructions that would be too difficult for beginners to understand in L2.

Using L1 helps learners to reduce affective factors such as stress and fatigue, thus diminishing psychological barriers to English acquisition. As young pupils are more prone to culture shock, they are likely to feel fear or apprehension when exposed to completely unfamiliar material. An appropriate use of the mother tongue may comfort them.

Use of the learners' mother tongue can be beneficial

L1 may also promote pupils' comprehension when it is used as scaffolding. Well-known Korean folk tales can be a useful resource for teaching English. Take, for example, the story of Heungbu and Nolbu. Teachers ask questions to determine how much of the story pupils know. With less familiar stories, the teacher may provide a more detailed account of the story in Korean. Then the teacher, using English, makes a list of questions related to the lesson. Pupils answer the questions in English. Although the course material is in Korean, this procedure prompts pupils to use English. Additionally, the teacher can use the story as translating material: Learners translate the story into English, thus promoting productive language skills (Nation, 2001). If pupils find the translation difficult, rephrase the L1 into an easier Korean sentence. Your students may feel a sense of triumph. Moreover, using a familiar Korean story makes pupils feel less nervous about the whole class and keeps them motivated.

Korean can be used to compare English culture with Korean culture. In practice, a simple and short cultural aspect may be explained and described in Korean to make it easily understood to pupils. Initially, a teacher gives explanations about the target culture in Korean, explaining distinctive cultural elements, asking pupils what they think of the cultural differences, and whether or not Korea has a comparable culture. After that, the teacher presents an English dialogue relevant to the target culture. Here is a sample dialogue.

David :   Oh, no! Look at that!
Minsung : What? What's wrong? It's just a black cat.
David :   Doesn't it mean anything to you? It's bad luck in my country.
Minsung : Really? I didn't know that. A black cat is not a sign of bad luck in Korea. Instead, we don't like crows. Crows are bad luck to us.

This dialogue is presented after the teacher explains a superstition about animals. Through dialogues like this, pupils not only understand and remember interesting foreign culture, but they also practice lexis, sentence structure, and

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grammar. Needless to say, well-designed dialogues are crucial.

Many people seem to have a blind preference for using English-only in the classroom. The use of Korean in the English class is not necessarily harmful to pupils; in fact, its wise use may lead to a better language-learning environment. Hopefully, this may contribute to encouraging more teachers to develop efficient ways of utilizing Korean appropriately in class without threatening the English learning process.

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Assessing Young Learners: The Formative Alternative

By Jason D. Renshaw

Assessment is generally a hot issue in all circles of language teaching, and is likely to remain so for a long time to come. A useful distinction in assessment terminology is often drawn between summative and formative assessment (Brown, 2004). Here I would like to briefly go over some of the benefits of applying a formative approach to assessment with Korean YLs, drawing on some of my experiences in applying a hybrid summative-formative assessment system in a private institute setting for YLs.

Generally speaking, a great deal of assessment for YLs in Korea tends to be summative in nature, where progress is measured at the end of a month or a couple of months of study according to test results. A key weakness of summative assessment is the fact that it "does not feed back into the next round of teaching" (Cameron, 2001). While this form of assessment is beneficial for reporting to management and parents, I have experienced a feeling of deep dissatisfaction with how much a single test score fails to say about overall progress. More importantly, I am concerned about how little summative test scores motivate learners from one lesson to the next by encouraging them to set goals for themselves.

Formative assessment, as opposed to summative, seeks to measure progress in a regular and ongoing way, with the overall aim of providing immediate feedback to learners and teachers. Formative assessment can have

> ## "The effects it has on ongoing motivation and willingness to improve are worth the investment of time."

important implications for learners' motivation, understanding of task demands, willingness and capacity to set and meet goals for themselves, and teachers' capacity to recognize learners' study areas in need of remedial work. Regarding YLs, Brewster et al. (2002) points out: "If pupils can see the progress they are making, it can help to raise their self-esteem and confidence, which is very important with young children."

The simplest way to make formative assessment seem to matter is to assign simple letter grades to students on a daily or weekly basis *along* with clear feedback as to why the grade was given and what a student can do to improve upcoming lessons. Having tried this out myself during a hectic winter session of intensive study in a private institute environment, I can confidently say that the effects it has on ongoing motivation and willingness to improve are worth the investment of time.

We gave grades to students to file into their workbooks that reflected participation, effort, and/or specific criteria for different sorts of classroom activities (e.g., listening exercises, writing and essay planning, group discussions). This was supported with one-on-one clarification and advice to "feed back" into the next round of teaching. Towards the end of the session, teachers had collected a rich array of tasks and grades to help them write up some brief comments for evaluations. Comments on learners' performance were placed in the back of the workbook and were openly available to parents and learners from the first day of the session. Summative grades for session tests were included in the same chart, but in a way that made them look as important as the ongoing formative grades.

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While the vast majority of our learners showed increased motivation and improvement as a result of this assessment system, I am not about to pretend that it is perfect or appeals to every single learner - some feedback from some learners indicated they didn't like getting feedback daily and much preferred to have one grade to worry about at the end of the session based on a test performance. Clearly, in a context where summative assessment is so regular and so all-powerful, some learners who have learned to cope with single grades may not appreciate a more day-to-day method that is possibly highly subjective across individual teachers. However, these learners have definitely been in the minority in the programs incorporating principles of formative assessment that I have run.

In terms of shifting teachers', learners', and parents' attention away from isolated test performances to the notion of improving, setting, and achieving short-term goals, an approach to assessment that incorporated ongoing feedback for current and upcoming tasks landed our program a definite thumbs-up. For all those YL teachers out there accustomed to summative-only assessment and looking for something to motivate learners (and teachers) on a day-to-day basis, I highly recommend some experimentation with formative assessment techniques!

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The Magic of TPR-Storytelling

By Yeon-seong Park

Young Learners

Edited by Jason Renshaw

Ever since 2001, when a colleague of mine in the Language Education Center at Chonam National University introduced me to TPR (Total Physical Response), I have been interested in this method. A presentation I attended at the 11th KOTESOL International Conference further widened my knowledge of and interest in the world of TPR.

Introduced by Dr. James Asher in the 1960s and 1970s, TPR enables students to acquire vocabulary in a manner similar to the way children learn their first language - by allowing students to pass through a silent period until they are ready to speak. However, TPR is not without some serious limitations: TPR predominantly focuses on the imperative mood, resulting in limited acquisition of narratives and descriptions. In short, TPR is good for beginner-level students. Perhaps partly as a result of this shortcoming, Blaine Ray developed TPR Storytelling (TPR-S) in the 1980s and 1990s and published *Look, I Can Talk.* In TPR-S, students make up stories using targeted verbs, for example: *There is a dog. There is a chick. The dog wants to eat the chick. The dog grabs the chick. But the chick offers the dog a sandwich. What a relief!* Through TPR-S, we can teach narratives and descriptions.

The young learner program at CNU's LEC is composed of one year of general English courses (*New Parade*), followed by one year of storytelling classes, and finally a one-year reading class. The idea of trying TPR-S came to me while I was teaching a reading class, and I found myself translating words and sentences into Korean. Even though students in my advanced reading classes had been learning English for more than a year, it was hard for them to understand *Time for Kids* in English. This was my opportunity to try TPR-S. I then made a proposal to the LEC coordinator, who gladly accepted my proposal and provided TPR-S materials and full support. My native-English-speaking co-teacher had already attended TPR

"Almost all of my students were speaking and writing in English with confidence."

workshops in the U.S. Thus, my expectations were high for this class. I could now implement books and methods in which I truly believed. I was waiting for a miracle to happen.

My classes numbered fifteen students, ranging from elementary school third grade to sixth grade. We met twice a week for two hours each class, one hour with me and another hour with the native-English-speaking teacher. We used McKay's *TPR-Storytelling* in the first session and Ray's *Look, I Can Talk* in the second. Generally, we used the following procedures:

1. Teach students American Sign Languag gestures and/or make up my own.
2. Tell a story using pictures and gestures.
3. Act out stories.
4. Show story illustrations on overhead projector.
5. Students tell the story in their own words.
6. Individual students retell the story to the class.
7. Comprehension check.

Students were eager to learn and enjoyed the class. We did, however, find some minor problems. For advanced students, McKay's book was too easy. The vocabulary was simple and only present tense verbs were used. To solve this problem, I thought of some effective follow-up activities. For example, students wrote stories using illustrations. I also composed pre-reading questions to encourage learners to make connections between their personal experiences and the targeted themes and language of the lessons.

Intern teachers, who often helped me, were my partner or a student's partner when we practiced hand gestures or retold a story. They were unanimously surprised at my students' level of English. Almost all of my students were speaking and writing in English with confidence.
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During my final TPR-S class, I organized a speed game to find out which students could tell complete stories the fastest. A majority of the students joined in voluntarily and enthusiastically. All of them could tell stories quite rapidly. It was the miracle that I had wanted to see and hear in my young learners. I was happy and pleasantly surprised by the results achieved through TPR-S.

After only four months, I could say without hesitation that TPR-S is one of one of my preferred teaching methods, and a method that actively involves students in the learning process. Now, I am considering some changes rather than conducting classes based solely on TPR-S. More specifically, I want to improve my reading program by adding a broader variety of topics - something I personally see as being necessary for my students. In future sessions, I plan to incorporate TPR-S's strengths into my other

reading classes.

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Dr. Yeon-seong Park holds a doctorate in English Literature from Chonnam National University where she is now teaches credit courses, as well as young learners in the University's Language Education Center teaching young learners. She also has a special appreciation for storytelling and TPR-S. As for KOTESOL service, she is currently Membership Coordinator for the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter. Email: pyspark@yahoo.com

Useful Websites and References

American Sign Language Browser: http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/browser.htm

Total Physical Response World: http://www.tpr-world.com

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However, the final decision really rests with each individual lecturer, who decides what new techniques and methodology he/she can introduce. It was very encouraging to read in the questionnaire that many lecturers have felt it worthwhile to introduce changes into their own classes. Reasons for this were various. Some felt that new techniques made the classes more interesting for their students; others felt that it was important to give students more practice in the listening and speaking skills. Others thought it was important for students to express their ideas more freely and become more active in class.

What has been so rewarding while working on this project is that the lecturers at the universities have been willing to listen to and evaluate new ideas. Of course, there are constraints, and one has to respect and work within the culture of the institution. Not all innovations are going to be wholly adopted, nor should they be. However, there seems to be a genuine interest in improving the students' level of communication among many of the lecturers in the universities, and this, I feel, is a key factor in influencing the success of the project. In the words of one of the lecturer's in answer to the question "Do you think that change is necessary in your institution?" - "Yes, mine is not always best. A wise person always learns."

In time, some of these changes may move upwards and influence decisions at a higher level.

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Zina Bowey holds a B.Ed. (Hons) from Exeter University and an MA TEFL from the University of East Anglia. She has been a teacher and trainer on British Council projects in Spain, The Sudan, China, Poland, and Northern Cyprus in addition to the DPRK.

Activity-Based Learning: A Tale of Two Cities

This is a tale of two cities - not Dickens' London and Paris, but China's Xi'an and, the USA's Orlando, Florida. Both of these cities you may have traveled to, actually or vicariously. Xi'an, China is where the terracotta soldiers have remained, obediently and perfectly aligned, since about 200 BC. Orlando is the home of Disneyland, the famous theme park. Which of these two destinations more closely mirrors your teaching context?

This is a crucial question to be answered before walking into class, as different approaches will result in widely varying outcomes. The terracotta class is similar to traditional classroom settings where the teacher teaches and students absorb. Interestingly, the belief that this is true only in Asian settings is somewhat of a myth. Investigations into American elementary schools indicate that I-R-F patterns of discourse also predominate there, especially in classrooms with inexperienced teachers (refer to Pan Asia Column on truancy, this issue). I-R-F (Initiate-Response-Feedback) discourse patterns describe the typical classroom speech event. The teacher asks a question, the student answers, and the teacher offers feedback.

Before justifying the need for more activity-based learning and teaching, a definition may be in order. Activity-based learning is an approach to learning that places the projects and activities at the core of the lesson. Most teacher-training books describe it as a child-centered approach.

"Projects and hands-on activities interest and engage learners."

However, I will take the road less traveled and promote the idea that it is project- or activity-centered. This I say because both student and teacher take equal responsibility for what goes on in the classroom. However, what goes on in the classroom is not driven by the teacher or learner, but by the activity. Unlike Task-Based Learning (TBL) and other Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches, the teacher is not a facilitator. The YL teacher has the sometimes unmanageable burden of managing students, modeling activities, and

development (ZPD). In this respect, activity-based learning implies that language learning is very much a social

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experience, hence the high regard for group work.

In practice, activity-based learning looks like hands-on group work. Admittedly, this description oversimplifies what is a far more complex approach (The devil is in the details!). To illustrate, I recently gave my students homework to "research" ten tourist hotspots in Daegu. After doing so, we ranked our findings and created and designed a brilliant brochure. This activity was a three-day event (15+ minutes per class), but only a subsection of a larger literacy-based ESL lesson plan.

This example shows that children excel when learning experiences are aimed at what children find meaningful and genuine. Tasks and projects provide the vehicle for interest and motivation that grammar does not (activity-based teaching does not preclude grammar!). Unfortunately, a sampling of popular textbooks on the market today finds that many are still structure-based; that is, they are organized around grammar in a linear sequence. This is especially true of children's textbooks. Furthermore, children often find little meaning or coherence in grammar ? and they should not be expected to. Foisting a learning approach on children that is actually meant for use with adults is a disservice to the children we teach. This is also where behavioral problems originate. Managing students is much easier when they are intrinsically motivated.

The main principle supporting an activity-based learning approach is that activities and content provide purpose and motivation for learning. Projects and hands-on activities interest and engage learners. Projects with a goal also absorb learners' attention and keep them on track. When they get off track, it is often because they are excited about the project, not because they would rather recount *Red Mask* tales or how to win at Maple Story. Finally, group projects

provide greater opportunity to meet individual learner needs through access to multiple intelligences. Even learners with a waning interest in English will find something special in the sweeping span of creative projects.

Activity-based learning is not so simple to implement. Both parents and teachers expect classrooms to be neatly lined up in rows and discourse to follow I-R-F patterns. Even our students expect this - that is the way it has always been. It is also not easy to allow content and activities to upstage target language objectives. Thirdly, teachers need to have the creative ingenuity and time to plan projects. And finally, the materials and space must be available. Admittedly, activity-based learning is not an everyday occurrence in my classes, but it is becoming a much more utilized approach in my lessons. If it's good enough for Lev Vygotsky, it's good enough for me.

To get started with activity-based learning, fill in the table below and go from there.

Theme: World Cup Soccer Solve				
Bloom's Taxonomy	*Activity*	*Function*	*Vocabulary*	*Grammar*
Label Predict Solve Explain Modify Conclude				

one from the hoards of mosquitoes as they slept. Refrigerators were a thing of the future; they were not to appear until every household already had a TV set. What little refrigerating was done was done with ice boxes. One had to be especially careful of what they ate in the summer to keep from getting sick. In addition to mosquitoes, rats were everywhere - in the bedroom ceilings, in the trash piles outside the house, in the corners of the neighborhood bar, running down the aisles of the movie theater. Rat poison was available at no cost at the local drugstore. If one's house had no water, the wash was done by a nearby stream. Even women who had water would still congregate at the stream to do the laundry and gossip. They also got together for kimchi-making in the fall - a major undertaking back then.

Prices were much cheaper three decades ago. City bus rides were 10 won; the almost unaffordable basic taxi fare was 70. I thought the rice meal *baekban* got its name because it cost *baekwon* (100 won). Ready-made shoes, shirts, trousers, and suits were not to be found but could be custom-made at reasonable prices. Many workers were envious of my monthly Peace Corps "salary" - a massive 25,000 won, of which 15,000 won went to my landlady for room and board. That gave me all of 10,000 won to live on each month. Salaries were paid in 500-won notes, the largest denomination printed at the time. Other notes were of 50- and 100-won values. There were 50-, 10-, 5-, and 1-won coins.

City streets have changed, too. Thirty years ago, almost every passing taxi was a Hyundai Pony - painted Saemaeul green, President Park's favorite color. There were many buses and a few jet-black government or company cars carrying high-ranking officials. The private-car rush was still 10 years off. Storefronts and companies sported their names in Chinese characters, even more so than English is used today. Pedestrians did not eat or smoke on the streets out of deference to their elders. Many streets did not have sidewalks, and were instead lined with open ditches.

Life in Korea thirty year ago was definitely harder than it is today, but people complained no more than they do today. Korea has drastically changed in education, technology, and lifestyle in those 30 short years, so much so that it is hardly recognizable. It is easy for one to say: You've come a long way, baby!

The Author
David Shaffer came to Korea in 1971 as a US Peace Corps volunteer. After four years of service, he gained a position on the faculty at Chosun University in Gwangju, where he is now an assocaiste professor. He has been a member of KOTESOL since its beginnings and is now active in publications editing and conference planning.⊕

Classroom Routines for Young Learners

Have you ever found yourself dealing with a seemingly endless barrage of native language, distracting behavior, or a lack of student interest rather than rapt attention, focused group work, and appropriate participation in games and activities? The difference between the two scenarios is not just luck.

Establishing effective and consistent classroom routines is one way to micromanage success with young learners. What is needed is careful planning, implementation, and enforcement of an appropriate behavior management plan. At the heart of behavior are parameters for behavior, procedures for following the lesson, and prompts for understanding what to do in order to follow instructions.

Parameters: All children need appropriate rules. Unlike adults, young children are in the process of developing classroom 'frame-theory' (general background knowledge specific to context or situation). Consequently, it is unfair to hold students responsible for expected behavior that has not yet been learned or has been poorly modeled. It is largely the teacher's responsibility to develop a system of rules that eventually become a "classroom script" (which is more detailed and sequential than a frame).

Three helpful words to keep in mind when setting rules are: simple, positive, and familiar. Simplicity of language is very important in light of children's developmental and linguistic limitations. Accompanying gestures or body language may serve as a comprehension crutch. Also, positive is better than negative. Instead of "Don't run," say "Walk, please."

Review simple class rules with students every day. When they see rules are important and worthy of review, they will pay more attention to them. Repetition need not be onerous or boring. In fact, "children do not tire of practicing a repetitive and rhythmic text several times a day, many days a week" (Peck, 2001).

Creative teachers set their rules to music, turn them into chants, or design contests. Students enjoy variety and creativity.

Finally, the key to making such simple rules work lies in their consistent reinforcement (Zeigler, 2002). Especially within an EFL environment, younger students may not have begun to grasp rules until they have noticed their enforcement. Instituting a reward system based on positive reinforcement not only enforces the rules but also helps students understand their meaning. To this end, young learners are often quite taken with simple things such as a smiley face next to their name on the board displayed for all to see.

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By Eowyn Brown & Jake Kimball
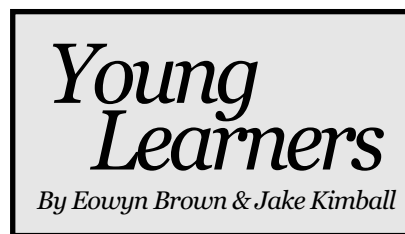
Procedures: Once you have established an appropriate range of behavior, the next step is finding a way to guide students through your lesson. Write your agenda on the board. As you progress through the lesson, check off finished activities one-by-one. This approach helps assure that students understand what is happening in the classroom at all times. A sample agenda might look like this: 1. Attendance 2. Class Rules, Song 3. Date 4. Homework Check 5. Lesson 6. New Homework 7. Recess Along with a checkmark, you may want to use a clap, chant, or song between activities. A special signal involving physical activity such as clapping or standing has the added benefit of breaking up the lesson for young children who tend to focus their attention in short, seven- to ten-minute blocks of time (Peck, 2001).

Prompts: Clear and simple requests from the teacher's perspective may sound like a stream of incomprehensible noise to our students. The teacher says, "Open your books to page 82." Students hear, "Blah, blah, blah." Repeating requests, while modeling, is quite helpful. Train students to answer your questions, too. When you have a chorus of answers, you know you are ready to continue.

The most important element of any signal is consistency. Once your meaning is clear, use exactly the same phrase or gesture every time so students understand exactly what is being asked of them. Clear directions help students to follow lessons and allow them to focus on learning.

There is one caveat about routines worth mentioning. Relying on them for too long can impede progress. Once students are comfortable with a routine, teachers can extend their learners' repertoire of routines by using more complicated language. This gradually complex input will eventually facilitate and promote language growth, hopefully, without frustration.

Children perform best when they feel safe, confident, and rewarded. Establishing the framework for appropriate behavior in your classroom, communicating with students about the activities of the day and making sure that students follow the lesson are the best ways to make sure their emotional concerns can be put aside and their language acquisition skills set to full throttle. The more students learn, the more they want to learn. Making your classroom conducive to learning reinforces this positive cycle for both students and teachers.

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Portfolio Assessment?

Originally used in fine arts programs for showcasing an artist's collection of work, the portfolio concept is increasingly being adopted for use in other fields, such as education.   Pre-service teachers commonly prepare portfolios before an employment search. However, portfolios are now gaining in popularity as an alternative assessment tool suitable for use with both young learners and adults.

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What exactly is a portfolio? At first glance, the portfolio seems to be a hodge-podge of completed papers and projects. And this may very well be the case. The simplest version of a portfolio is the showcase portfolio. It is also relatively easy to put together. Luckily, portfolios have the potential to be a far more complex and engaging product. A documentation portfolio can include administrative records, surveys or questionnaires, reflective journals, audio or video samples, test score results, writing samples, reading checklists, etc. These two types of portfolios are, well, portfolios. There is yet a third type of portfolio that takes the portfolio concept one stage further. Here, assessment features prominently. This evaluation portfolio is far more complicated, as its contents are aligned to specific goals or objectives set by external stakeholders. Portfolio contents are then judged and evaluated.

Why should teachers consider adopting or integrating portfolio assessment? Two reasons nudged me into piloting portfolios. First, one of the advantages of portfolio assessment is that a wider range of skills can be displayed compared with traditional testing methods. In Korea, multiple-choice, discrete item testing remains the unrivaled king of kings. Standardized, norm-referenced tests such as TEPS, TOEIC, and TOEFL have taken on a mythical life of their own as total measures of proficiency. While

standardized tests may indeed be valid and reliable indicators, I find them to be inadequate as a sole measure of language competency. Depending on portfolio content, assessment can accommodate reading, writing, listening, and speaking samples in a more integrative way. In fact, portfolio content is bound only by teacher and student creativity.

Secondly, portfolio content can more closely reflect classroom instruction. Rea-Dickens and Rixon, among others, note an incongruence of curricula goals and testing. "In general, however, a mismatch is frequently observed between curricular aims, pedagogy, and test content." This view is bolstered by a visit to TESOL, Inc.'s website where ESL K-12 standards are available.   The URL is http://www.tesol. org/assoc/k12standards/index.html. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development also lists broad goals such an appreciation of English, communicative competence, and sociocultural knowledge. In practice, these goals have more bark than bite. Thoughtful portfolios can bridge the gap between what is taught in class and assessment procedures.

Ideally, teachers and students negotiate a rubric for selecting and grading materials. This is the first step in the portfolio assessment process. Material should match educational goals and objectives required by your institution. Material should also demonstrate potential evidence of progress. Do you know the goals and objectives of your district, institution, or even your course book? Do the activities you use in class support those goals and objectives?

What exactly is the practical value of portfolio assessment? Learners, teachers, and parents all benefit. Students participate in creating, selecting and collecting material to be included. This means learners participate in the assessment process. Consequently, portfolios have the potential to promote learner autonomy, critical thinking skills, and creativity. Teachers are in a far better position to assess their students' capabilities and interests. Also, parents

(and administrators) can see first-hand what their children can accomplish in English as well as how productive they have been in class.

How do I make one? Methodically insert portfolio material into a binder, file folder, scrapbook, or album. Several trips to the local stationery store may be necessary before you find just the right stationery. For cyber-savvy teachers, even computers can be used to store portfolios.

If portfolios are so useful, why are they not more common? Portfolio assessment is not without its critics. Adequate teacher training is necessary to ensure that assessment remains a central and integral feature of the portfolio. A second hurdle to more widespread use is time. They are admittedly time-consuming projects. But this does not have to be, since students themselves do a great deal of the work in building their portfolios. Third, parents and administrators generally prefer to measure progress through quantifiable statistics. However, there is no reason why standardized test scores cannot be integrated with the portfolio assessment package. Everybody wins!

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The Sound of Silence

Young Learners
by Jake Kimball

Suh, Gong-ju & Jake Kimball

Silence. Silence is golden. Silence is nurturing. Think of harmony with nature. Imagine a Z*en*-like experience. Thoughts of temples, churches, or mountaintops spring to mind. Now, exchange this scenery with the context of a classroom of adolescents studying English. The sound of silence feels more like a bridge over troubled water.

With the best of intentions, teachers march into class. And frustratingly, teachers meet a wall of silence. Under these circumstances, the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) may appear to be nothing short of a Herculean effort. Student resistance to CTL methodology makes the Korean Ministry of Education mandate to implement forms of CLT in elementary and secondary schools more lip service than reality.

In Korean secondary schools, teachers sometimes have a difficult time with CLT. It is not uncommon to see an English class proceed entirely in Korean. In fact, it is surprising to find a teacher who teaches English through English-only. Often, blame for this lack of English use is placed squarely on the shoulders of Korean English teachers. It is claimed that they have not mastered the necessary skills or do not have enough confidence to conduct classes entirely in English. However, this is not always the case and not the only impediment to delivering a successful CLT lesson. Implementing CLT is difficult, especially when working with teenagers who have not yet acknowledged their own role in the learning process.

Why is this and what can be done about it? Is silence a 'problem' or is it really an invitation to reflect on classroom procedure? Can the silence be broken?

Firstly, silence is a natural avoidance strategy. However, it is certainly not a language learning strategy used by good language learners as identified by Joan Rubin. Silence is also a natural reality accepted by Dr. James Asher, who pioneered Total Physical Response (TPR). Clearly, we need to have more patience with our reticent students. We also need to train learners in the use of communicative strategies that promote second language acquisition.

In order to overcome the silence barrier, reflection may help us to discover why our students are not the chatterboxes we wish them to be.

Are the materials and textbooks suitable? Suitable means developmentally appropriate regarding grammar, lexis, and content. If materials are too difficult, students' lack of understanding may cause silence. Is the subject matter interesting, meaningful, and relevant to your students lives? If not, boredom and a reluctance to participate may set in.

One way of overcoming silence is the administration of a questionnaire or self-evaluation. The questionnaire may reveal underlying causes of student behavior. Uncovering students' attitudes and interests, providing them with opportunities to think about their language learning experiences, and encouraging them to be more autonomous in their learning opens avenues of dialogue between teacher and student. Questionnaires and surveys also provide a platform for qualitative assessment as well as a means for developing a rapport with students. How well do you really know your students?

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>
> **Other SIGs are available as well. Check page 24.**

As an example, a questionnaire given to students may reveal that students dislike English, that language learning is difficult, that students lack confidence, or that they do not know what to study or even how to study. Exam preparation may be a source of stress, leading them to dislike English (and other subjects for that matter). They may also feel discouraged when they have difficulty understanding English-only lessons. Once teachers discover why students are silent during lessons, a solution may be sought.

Another observation is that students often prefer lecture-based lessons to CLT approaches. If students do not understand English-only lessons, changes can be made in the delivery of lessons. Teaching useful classroom expressions and vocabulary are just the beginning. However, it may take quite a while for students to use these phrases in class. Some students never use English. Some students choose not to use English—even though they can!

Silence may be the result of peer pressure. After all, adolesence is a very awkward stage of human development. Teachers need to be aware of puberty's effect on the social dynamics of classroom inter-action. For some students, participation in a CLT formatted class is embarrassing and stressful.

The notion of classroom participation is also a foreign import that not all Korean students have bought into. It is a concept that teachers may need to 'sell' to their students. This is a cross-cultural issue that needs further attention.

Implementing CLT approaches, including English-only policies, is not unlike quitting smoking. The success rate for *going cold turkey* is not very high and it may be difficult and painful—but not impossible. The solution may lie in a gradual intro-duction to English through a series of reasonable expectations and tailor made lesson plans that fit one's class comfortably. While it is true that it is difficult for communication to take place in secondary English classes, it does not require a Herculean effort, only the persistence of Sisyphus.

September Symposium:
Managing Young Learners

Young Learners
by
Jake Kimball

Korea TESOL's first Young Learner Symposium, co-hosted by the Young Learner Special Interest Group and Seoul Chapter, was held Saturday, September 20th at Sookmyung University in Seoul from 2:00pm until 5:00pm. All KOTESOL members (and non-members), regardless of chapter affiliation, were invited (through the KOTESOL E-News) to attend this event, which is a warm-up to the International Conference in October. Our theme for the afternoon is 'Managing Young Learners.'

Although this was our first symposium, and dedicated specifically to the complexities of teaching younger learners, we are not alone. Two other professional organizations offered opportunities for professional development and reflection in the YL field this month. TESOL, Inc. hosts a YL Symposium in Rome, Italy on September 13th. The weekend's theme revolved around standards for young learners. On the 20th and 21st of September, further north in Germany, IATEFL's Young Learner Special Interest Group and the Department of Modern Languages of the Volkshochschule Bielefeld co-hosted a joint workshop/conference titled "Starting Now: English in Primary Schools - Practical Teaching Ideas."

This recent spate of young learner symposia and workshops indicates that Teaching Young Learners (TYL) is coming of age as a recognized area of specialization in TESOL. More and more books are being published for this niche industry within TESOL, as are more entries in professional journals and magazines. The international examinations body UCLES now offers a month long course, the CELTYL, which is equivalent to their renown CELTA, but specializes in the needs of young learners,

not adults. For individuals with a CELTA qualification, a YL extension is also available. In addition, several UK universities now offer an MA in TYL, or at least one or more modules dedicated entirely to TYL. This is all rather fortuitous. More professional training and development is surely welcomed--and timely, as is increased classroom-based research. More importantly, awareness of and attention to children's special needs lead to better classroom practice, higher student achievement, and potentially, greater job satisfaction.

The theme for our first symposium was 'Managing Young Learners.' This is somewhat of a blanket theme that covers a wide variety of issues and offered our presenters the opportunity to cater to a variety of teaching environments. Symposium attendees could choose between workshops focusing on very

presenter. She has 30 years of experience as a teacher trainer and curriculum developer. She spoke on 'Professional Development in ESL/EFL'. This presentation was suitable for all practicing teachers, regardless of one's interest and participation level in TYL.

Other workshops and presentations scheduled for the afternoon included the use of poetry in YL classes, children's discourse, general tips and strategies for working with young learners, and testing. As the afternoon wound down attendees had the opportunity to meet informally with the presenters, ask questions, or discuss topics of mutual interest.

The Young Learner Special Interest Group is a community membership. It is not often that we, as a group, are able to meet face to face. This event, generously co-hosted by Seoul Chapter, afforded us all the

plenary by Ritsuko Nakata, co-author of the popular *Let's Go* series

young learners (VYLs are 7 or younger), young learners (YLs are between 7 and 12), and young adults.

Many dedicated individuals volunteered their time, energy, and experience to make this event a success. The day began at 1:30 pm with a plenary by Dr. Park Joo-Kyung and a plenary by Ritsuko Nakata, co-author of the popular *Let's Go* series, with concurrent workshops following. Stanton Proctor, a teacher trainer and textbook author based in Korea, contributed his talents with a workshop on the development of creativity in children. Also, Richard Graham, was on hand to introduce his own unique approach to learning via music and song. Mr. Graham, who is based in Japan, operates a popular website *Genkie English* and often performs workshops for upwards of 700 students and teachers. Chris Gunn, a Korea-based teacher and creator of *Boggles World*, another popular ESL/EFL website, was presenting as well. Mrs. Emily Strauss was a special guest

opportunity to reflect on our role as YL professional, practitioner, or simply an interested supporter. Of course, this was a time to 'talk shop' about methods and approaches, theories of language acquisition, discourse types, curriculum design, and debate the efficacy of early instruction. However, engaging in less academic but equally relevant discussions germane to living and working in Korea was also much appreciated and felt to be cathartic. This timely symposium allowed us all to meet informally with friends and colleagues and forge new friendships and associations—to discover that our YL community exists beyond the confines of cyberspace.

> **For further information regarding YL-SIG events, contact Jake Kimball at (Email) ylsigkr@yahoo.com**
>
> **Did you get your KOTESOL E-News? Do we have your current email address?**

The Great Debate

Learning to read. What is the best method for teaching young learners how to read? Are you an advocate of Phonics or Whole Language? Or do you favor the "balanced approach," a combination of the two?

Young Learners

by
Jake Kimball

Phonics instruction, briefly, emphasizes the sound/letter relationship. Sounds, called phonemes, are linked with letters or combinations of letters, called graphemes. Once patterns are discovered, decoding the pronunciation of a word will follow. Newly encountered words can then be read independently. Phonemic awareness is generally considered a predictor of one's success or failure in reading and writing.

Two recent studies in the US appear to have confirmed that the Phonics Approach is superior to other approaches, at least in the context of native speakers of English. One study was conducted at the Houston Medical Center, and the other study was commissioned by the National Institute for Health and included follow-up studies to check for reliability. The second study has been influential in that it is the basis of the *No Child Left Behind* Education Act, 2001. The results of both studies strongly suggest that phonics instruction leads to faster learning and higher achievement in reading and writing.

On the other hand, the Whole Language Approach is still a fine alternative, especially since pure phonics instruction is seldom practiced. Whole Language emphasizes word recognition and encompasses a holistic learning philosophy that caters to children's literacy needs. Examples of this approach include the use of authentic reading texts, sight-word recognition (look and say), and shared reading with big books. Related approaches are the Language Experience Approach and literature-based approaches. Used together, the Whole Language Approach integrates skills and emphasizes meaning over form.

I have used both approaches to teach children to read. I have found success and failure with both. Admittedly, as research indicates, my students did, in general, learn faster through phonics instruction. In reading the above noted research, I noticed that the studies were conducted in the US with native speaking children. This, to me, is a red flag.

Let's reconsider the debate in EFL environments by looking inside a typical EFL classroom. If you have taught very young learners, it is likely that you have had classroom management issues to deal with. A word of caution for those of you who may find yourself teaching very young learners—explicit instruction in phonological awareness leads to student rebellion, then chaos.

Native English-speaking children have had years of exposure to English and its sound system. They can discriminate /l/, /r/, /p/, /b/, /f/, and /i/-/I/ (though it is not so easy). These, and others, are subtle sounds that Korean learners have difficulty differentiating. Native English-speaking children have already built a sizeable vocabulary. In fact, Anglin (in Nation, 2001) made conservative estimates of native English speaking-children's vocabulary at age six, eight, and ten. By these ages children have amassed a vocabulary (root words only) of approximately 3,000, 4,500, and 7,500 words respectively. This is an important consideration as many reading specialists believe that phonemic awareness grows out of vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, native English-speaking children enjoy shared reading and direct phonics instruction because comprehension is relatively easy. Once a native-speaking child decodes a word through phonics, they associate it with known words in their lexical inventory. Bridging form and meaning is not so much a problematic task.

On the other hand, our students are hearing and seeing English for the first time. And unlike native-speaking learners, once second language learners decode a word through phonics, accessing its meaning from their lexical inventory is problematic if the word is not known. EFL students tend to become inattentive because of this lack of comprehension. In my experience, balancing Phonics and Whole Language is necessary to provide the scaffolding that EFL learners desperately need. The more scaffolding our students receive, the more they will comprehend—and the better they will behave!

The next logical question is: What mix of Phonics and Whole Language is appropriate? The answer lies in continuous assessment. For very young learners with little exposure to English, I suggest emphasizing Whole Language initially. As time goes by, learners expand their vocabulary through exposure to storytelling, chants, songs, and TPR activities. Their comprehension of classroom language and commands should be improved. Also, rhymes, chants, and songs should have prepared them for

On the other hand, our students are hearing and seeing English for the first time.

beginning phonemic awareness tasks. If assessment indicates that learners have built up a sufficient stock of vocabulary, increasing phonics instruction is appropriate. As learners progress in their knowledge of phonics, even explicit instruction may be possible.

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Approaches to Young Learner Games

Most children, if not all, enjoy games. However, not all educators agree on the value of games. Consider the issues yourself by engaging in a series of teacher development tasks.

Young Learners

by
Jake Kimball

From the perspective of a child, games are fun and intrinsically motivating. To a child, games are serious business. Games are a microcosm of the adult world, as they are founded on rules and regulations. Games are crucial for children's development because games promote collaboration and negotiation and develop social skills and logical reasoning. And if one considers the element of fair play, games promote moral development.

On the other hand, some teachers and parents prefer that games remain sidelined in favor of 'real' teaching, especially in post-kindergarten classes where meeting lesson objectives are increasingly more important than the learning process. Games are mere time fillers at the end of class. Beyond motivation, opponents see games as having little relevance to good classroom practice. Besides, games result in an inordinate amount of L1 use that is difficult to police. Games, like privileges, become a quid pro quo—first, study hard, then, play games. **Task #1:** Record your beliefs about the appropriateness of games.

While I do favor the philosophical/theoretical nature of games, I have reservations about games not treated with the same seriousness as other 'educational' tasks. Poorly planned and executed games consume time that may be better spent. Consider also the psychological impact of winning and losing. Behind every winner with a smile stands a loser with a bruised heart and a potential emotional scar.

Here are two examples of how games can be detrimental to the classroom experience. While playing a vocabulary card game with a class of 6/7 year olds, one boy, unable to provide an answer, lost his turn (according to our rules). From that moment onwards, he pouted and lost interest, not only in the remaining minutes of the game, but also the entire class period. Changing the rules of the game solved that problem. By responding "*I don't know,*" the traumatic experience of competition can be avoided.

The second example concerns prizes and points. During team games, teams compete for points, stickers, or prizes. Occasionally, the losing team responds negatively with frowns, temper-tantrums, or more commonly, a refusal to take part in the game. Although it seems to be politically incorrect to give out points and prizes to children, it is difficult to equal the energy and involvement of a game with prizes and points. A solution to this would be to award prizes or points for participation, not winning. **Task #2:** Think about children and competition. Make a list of three games, noting any reward systems and their efficacy.

Task-based games are ideal for teaching and using routines, or natural, pre-fabricated speech.

There are two common approaches to designing and implementing games. The first approach is to orient games to curricula. These language games (often born of a structural syllabus) lose their luster with children quickly because even younger students can identify the teacher's pedagogical intentions. At this point the game becomes more of a teaching tool than a game. **Task #3:** Return to Task #1 and brainstorm three 3 variations of each game by modifying the rules, materials, or objectives.

An alternative approach is also available, one where learner-centeredness is a priority and emphasis on structure is secondary. Task-based games do not necessarily have to be anchored to a syllabus. They may be driven by authentic communicative needs such as explaining and clarifying rules of a game (by teacher or student), playing games for pure enjoyment, or a report or analysis of a game.

One of the first communicative strategies used by young learners, or any beginner for that matter, is the use of formulaic language (Cameron, 2002; Ellis, 1994). Task-based games are ideal for teaching and using routines, or natural, pre-fabricated speech. Children use them and generally acquire them easily. Task-based games provide an authentic context. **Task #4:** Refer to task #2. For each game, list ten phrases that will help your students engage in games by promoting interaction.

Games, like any other classroom activity, can be pedagogically and methodologically sound. Children want and need developmentally appropriate games that are challenging and promote communication and literacy. If used with discretion, games can be a valuable and effective addition to any YL lesson plan, regardless of the syllabus.

Task #5: Play a game with your students. Record the activity via tape or video recorder. Note when and where formulaic speech is, or should be used. Return to class and model the game, this time promoting the use of functional game language.

For YL SIG members' benefit, Tasks 1-5 have been posted to the SIG Yahoo Groups website (in the Research Files section), along with a useful list of game language. If you would like to make contributions or comments on these tasks, write to (Email) ylsigkr@yahoo.com For additional game resources, visit http://www.kotesol.org/younglearn/Resource_for_teachers.html

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The Right Stuff

The Right Stuff. Originally that was the title of a Tom Wolf book. You may have even watched the movie Apollo 13 starring Tom Hanks. But today's column is about using the right stuff in a young learner class. More to the point, it is about choosing and using developmentally appropriate materials that promote second language acquisition.

Teachers often ask why some students go through a whole textbook series and apparently learn very little. It is a complex question, but based on my experience I can say that the most common culprits are choice of materials and lack of repetition.

Children, and adults for that matter, often have not learned what they were taught because it generally takes more than one exposure to internalize language. Making progress through a textbook is important but rushing through provides few opportunities for recycling and extension. Our daily teaching routines may cause us to forget that the learning process is accumulative and lengthy.

Recycling and extending are essential components of the learning process. These processes entail constant review and graded input. At least once or twice a week I spend time reviewing previous chapters by redoing exercises or including previous content in vocabulary and grammar games. As time goes by I also increase the difficulty of task topics and my discourse. It is my belief that increased teacher talk time for beginners is beneficial. Learners need exposure to speech that serves as a scaffold. Through scaffolding, children acquire language and interaction patterns. I also participate in tasks so that students see and hear how to do activities. My participation affords me the opportunity to build a rapport with students and make informal evaluations of student progress. As learners improve, I reduce modeling and teacher talk time and emphasize learner autonomy.

Take, for example, the word "igloo." How would you teach this word in increasing complexity? Show a picture? Memorize the spelling? That is a good start but much more is needed to actually learn the word. Options are limitless. Creative teachers can draw on their knowledge of task-based learning or content-based instruction to expand lessons, thereby making them more interesting and memorable. In teaching to students' multiple intelligences, one could bring a tray of ice cubes to class and try to build an igloo and watch it melt. A large number of useful words can be taught using charts and mind maps. Believe it or not, most 9 and 10 year olds have little difficulty with the concepts of classifying nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

Over-estimating children's proficiency is also common in Korea. Studying difficult material may be a commendable attitude but it is not prudent if input is incomprehensible to the point where intake is unachievable. One possible reason is that many people mistakenly believe that children are like sponges, that they soak up information (including languages) like a sponge in water. That is a myth. If it were true, more children would be proficient in English. At the very least they would be making noticeable progress.

acquisition. Many course books base their syllabus on developmental sequences. I used graded readers based on that theory. I now question this strategy.

Last year I started collecting data on storybook narratives. The stories all used the present or present continuous tense, probably because it is a very convenient means of teaching through Total Physical Response. My students did not fair well on the retelling tasks and they were bored by the contrived stories. When I switched to authentic English children's storybooks, students became more enthusiastic about lessons. The visuals alone were powerful and entertaining. Later, students were more successful at retelling stories. Although the language in the stories did not follow acquisition stages, many students went through acquisition stages

Encountering even 2-3 unknown words per 100 words of text hindered student progress

Recent research (see below) on effective elementary education done in US schools is worth mentioning. Studies comparing the differences between high and low achieving students found students excelled when given texts easy enough to promote fluency and accuracy. Encountering even 2-3 unknown words per 100 words of text hindered student progress. Sometimes we teach best by simply through language practice, without introducing new language aspects.

In the last YL column I wrote about using literature in class. I mentioned that graded readers are books that are specially written for ESL or EFL students. That article was written for use with adolescents. With younger learners I would caution against using a steady diet of graded readers because they are too simplistic.

Most teachers know of research describing learners as they go through stages of

faster. Regarding this project, I am not ready to make conclusions about cause and effect. However, my initial finding is that students profit from exposure to a variety of discourse patterns.

With that being said, there is absolutely nothing better than to see and hear young students improving their English. If you have students who are not making progress, be sure they are using the right stuff.

For a comprehensive overview of current research in elementary education in American classrooms, read Richard Arlington's article The Six Ts of effective Elementary Literacy Instruction, available at http://www.readingrockets.org/article.php?ID=413

Using Literature with Young Adults

Young Learners

by Jake Kimball

Although teachers generally have free rein in conducting their classes, gatekeepers such as parents and administrators unwittingly exert a great deal of control over our choice of teaching methodology. Especially in the private sector, time constraints require teachers and students to complete a set amount of work in a specific time frame. Often there is little time for extending activities, reviewing, and recycling which is crucial for success.

Literature is one of those often over-looked avenues for multi-purpose tasks. Literature, usually restricted to very young learner classrooms, is infrequently used in young adult classes, and even less so in adult classes. That does not have to be. Many late elementary school and middle school students are at just the right age and proficiency where literature has the potential to make a difference in their reading habits.

One possibility is to integrate literature with an existing program. Literature comes in all shapes and sizes: cultured classics, children's fairy tales, teenage romance, movie adaptations, comics, drama, poetry, etc. Graded readers are widely available from major publishing companies. They are slimmed down, abridged books designed for ESL/EFL students. I recently went through *Great Expectations*, *Black Beauty*, and *Men in Black* with groups of advanced 5th and 6th graders and middle school students. These graded readers may be selected according to objectives, whether they are thematic (for Christmas we read *A Christmas Carol*), semantic, or grammatical. In addition to standard audiotapes, extra activities and teacher guides are available via companion websites. Busy teachers will find graded reader packages convenient and efficient.

If that were not reason enough, consider the idea that children's literature can be adapted for use in young adult and adult language classes. The first criteria to consider in choosing an appropriate book would be to determine whether or not adult characters are in the book and whether or not it contains universal themes. If so, focus on the adult's role on the book. Secondly, ensure that the vocabulary level and grammatical structures are slightly above your students' ability. Eliciting questions from mature perspectives and exploiting the 'generation gap' topic has the potential to generate interesting conversations or essays.

Using literature also provides a great deal of flexibility in methodology and activity choice. Integrating the four macro-skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) is relatively simple and any pedagogical practice or theoretical position on the nature of language may be applied to literature. Traditionalists devoted to grammar translation can use literature to their heart's content. Dialogues and drills, a common technique in the audio-lingualist's inventory, are easy to create and make for a wonderful student-led project. EFL adventurers wishing to explore Task-based Learning may also find literature useful but time consuming. Designing story strips for arrangement, drawing pictures to make comparisons or for a cognitive crutch in summarizing stories, and preparing creative writing activities, role-plays and interviews all take time.

Furthermore, using literature develops autonomy. My students feel empowered when they choose from several selections. Something that simple may encourage students. With literature it is quite possible to meet the needs of most learners and their preferred learning styles. A constant diet of 'take out your student book' can be de-motivating for both student and teacher. As an alternative, integrating literature ranging from *Sam-guk-ji* (3 Kingdoms) or *Aesop's Fables* to various chapters of *Harry Potter* inspires and refreshes.

Content, as suggested by the above books, is a very important factor in choosing a book. Literature can be far more interesting than a typical conversation textbook. Whereas young learner literature is playful and repetitive, adolescents and young adults prefer literature to be easily related to real-life. That is one of the major differences between children and emerging adults. Both children and young adults need exposure to a wide variety of literature to develop literacy skills and build schemata. Although it goes without saying that young learners are young and lack world knowledge, many teachers tend to forget this point.

Literature also leads to drama, and drama creates excitement. By placing students in near real situations, students tend to use gestures, facial expressions, and increased intonation and stress. They communicate with emotion. With a bit of luck improvisation may arise unexpectedly. Drama is a golden opportunity to interact with students through direction. Some teachers I know have based classroom dramas or role-plays on popular Korean TV dramas. This kind of activity may be time consuming but well worth the investment in time and effort when students' intrinsic motivation increases. The entire process is likely to contribute to second language acquisition processes and make learning more fun and memorable.

Clearly, there are benefits to using literature in class. Flexibility is one of its greatest strengths. Stories can be adapted to specific age groups or levels through editing or even questioning techniques. Cultural issues can be addressed through world literature and fables and tales from around the world. I like using literature for the creativity it allows me as a teacher and the potential for instilling creativity in my students.

A good place to start would be visiting the Young Learner Special Interest Group website at http://www.kotesol.org/younglearn/Resource_for_teachers.html.

Keep your eyes open for the forthcoming Young Learners' Symposium

Creating Young Learner Rhythm

Young Learners
by
Jake Kimball

Here is the situation: you have at your disposal an arsenal of pedagogically sound activities. You do your best and you network with other teachers. You give tips and also receive practical advice for good classroom practice. You read teacher resource books and surf the net for teachers' websites. But for some reason you still cannot control your class. Pavlov's dog springs to mind followed by a score of positive and negative reinforcement techniques. Sound familiar?

Good News/Bad News

There is good news and bad news. The bad news is that it is nearly impossible to *control* students. In fact, expect proverbial pigs to fly before you actually *control* students (especially very young learners) in a group setting. Periodic chaos or mild disruption is an inevitable and inherent characteristic of group membership. However, there is cause to smile. The good news is that you **can** effectively *manage* students.

Your first option for effective management is *wit and charm*. Everyone has wit and charm but in varying amounts. Those lucky enough to have a surplus of it may have an easier time teaching young learners. Secondly, *prepare thoughtful lessons* and know when to move on to another activity if students become bored, hyperactive, or a task is simply too difficult. Finally, and most importantly, *sequence activities* so that you create a rhythm.

Q/A

But what exactly is this rhythm, you ask? It is the alternation between active and passive activities; it is balancing group work, pair work, and individual work; it is sequencing fun 'games' and serious, roll-up-your-sleeves work one after the other. How should you sequence activities? That depends. Only you can answer that question, as classroom dynamics vary by context. Consequently, activities that worked effectively in one class yesterday completely fizzled in another class today. Here is something to consider though—for lively, spirited classes begin with a calming, passive activity. For seemingly sedate classes, start with an active, energetic activity.

YL-AR

Although action research for young learner teachers sounds like a project better suited to veteran teachers or professors, fear not. In today's action research project we will not pursue scientific theories. We need not dig out any heavy, methodology textbooks. We simply want to investigate, reflect, and improve our practice through effective change. This action research is for laymen and battle-scared veterans alike. Anyone can do it! And why should you do it? To understand how the sequence of your lessons affects student behavior. Hopefully at the end of this project you will improve your classroom practice, promote learning, naturally improve student behavior, lengthen their attention span, and regain your sanity.

Now gather your best cherry-wood pipe, London Fog raincoat, and Sherlock Holmes hat. It is amateur sleuthing night and there is a small matter to investigate which will require some fact-finding and reflection. I have an action research project worthy of your attention and time.

We will focus on one classroom problem only—classroom rhythm, or lack thereof. In order to investigate this, we must record each and every classroom event and its timing. For your convenience an action research worksheet has been added to the Young Learner SIG website. Go to http://www.kotesol.org/younglearn/, click on Action Research, and print the worksheet. Bring it to class. First, note your starting times. Then mark down events as they happen. Consider 'events' to be everything you do in class, including taking attendance, explaining instructions, doing pair work, and playing games. Be careful to remember any pertinent information such as individual student behavior, noise levels, time-on-task, amount of L1 use, physical activity, etc. Don't forget to write down your finish time.

Evaluation

If possible, ask a colleague to observe your class as unobtrusively as possible. Even better, record your class through audiotape or video. When you are finished, complete the worksheet on page two. Afterwards, reflect on how each activity contributed to the overall rhythm of your lesson. Restructure your next lesson plan accordingly. Go back to class with your revised lesson plan and record the day's lesson. Complete the worksheet again. Finally, compare the two lessons. If necessary continue observations and further reflection until changes are noticeable. It won't take long.

I know this works—both in theory and in practice. I recently investigated my own lessons for a particularly active class. Students were so active that the teacher I share the class with complained of migraine headaches. Apparently their enthusiasm to learn English was dreadfully overwhelming. As it turned out, I was using too many active, TPR oriented activities that left the students 'wired' for their next class. After evaluation I mixed in more individual work and always closed with a settling activity. Within one week all was reasonably quiet (and continues to be) and my co-teacher reported that her migraines had magically disappeared without Tylenol.

Case solved!

In lieu of publication (the final stage of action research), I encourage you to join one of KOTESOL's Special Interest Groups and share your experience in this project.

http://www.kotesol.org/younglearn/

Teaching Young Learners

This is the first in a series of articles specifically related to Young Learner issues and is aimed at Young Learner teachers and teacher trainers. In light of the fact that the most recent generation to undergo English education is freshly out of diapers, it is only natural that KOTESOL court this ever growing but underserved segment of ELT.

This of course begs the question, who are young learners? There is considerable debate over what age group constitutes young learners. To date, two groups of learners make up young learners: Very Young Learners (VYL) under 7 and Young Learners (YL) 7-12. Teenagers, who are not quite adults but no longer children, can be classified as well. For lack of an accepted, politically correct term I refer to them as Young Adults (YA).

The reason for this three-tier distinction is that each group has unique learning abilities that must be catered to in different ways. Jean Piaget's stages of intellectual development also justify this YL division (Pre Operational (2-7), Operational (7-12) and the critical stage of Formal Operations (12-adult)).

Being that this is the first instance of a new column devoted to Teaching Young Learners, I wanted to write something special to demonstrate that teaching young learners can be just as serious and academic a context as teaching adults. I wanted this column to trumpet the message that young learner teachers can be competent and professional and that the YL field itself is worthy of our attention.

After brainstorming, I decided to introduce you to Lev Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, and his Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). I drew up a mind map to include related concepts such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis (i+1), interlanguage, scaffolding, cooperative learning, and whole language learning. I wanted to wrap it all up in a neat, little, easy-to-understand package of social constructivist theory. That idea will have to wait for another day. Instead, I will relate a story about one of my earliest YL breakthroughs!

Show, Not Tell

My introduction to YL was a common one. I marched into class and started to teach a group of eight year olds. With the best of intentions, I got up in front of the board and *tried* to TEACH! Naturally the little miscreants crawled under the table, fell off their chairs, wandered around looking for an adventure. This scenario went on for some time. The straw that broke this camel's back was when I got *dong-chim*ed. If you are unfamiliar with this *dong-chim* practice, it is a devilish ritual perpetrated by Korean children in the spirit of proctological fun. To be honest, I lost my temper and acted much like a two year old myself. Anyway, my breakthrough came when the 'doctor' took his seat and the others followed suit.

In hindsight, it was a critical lesson in the dynamics of social interaction. Since there is a bit of a gap between what children can accomplish with and without our help, the trick is in giving just the right amount of support necessary to get them to the next level (i+1). By watching and learning from adults or peers, children build up a stock of cultural know-how, of thought, discourse, and behavior. In a ZPD nutshell, children's social development stimulates their cognitive development.

How has that changed my own teaching and learning? Well, my beliefs about my role as teacher changed. I no longer cling to the traditional role of teacher. A coach is a better portrayal. However, passing that baton of power to students was easier said than done. Luckily for me, classroom chaos is a thing of the past. My students now spend more time on-task and less time probing personal body parts. Of course, classroom management is not so simple. But transforming my role as teacher was a catalyst for further positive change.

Another way ZPD has changed my professional life is in my pursuit of

Young Learners
by
Jake Kimball

cooperative development. Learning is a collaborative process. General advice and teaching tips, networking, and relieving job related stress are all borne of collegial interaction. The larger issue is one of mentoring. And ZDP need not be restricted to the realm of children. Learning and growth do continue beyond infancy and adolescence.

A salesman I am not. But do let me share with you some opportunities for personal and professional development. Spearheading this new wave of interest in YL is the Young Learners Special Interest Group. It is open to all KOTESOL members. Exciting plans in the works include a possible YL Symposium, a newsletter or journal, teacher training sessions, and an employment database. To find out more, visit with us in October or go to http://www.kotesol.org/younglearn/. Also of interest is the TESOL E-List at http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/~tesl-l/.

Contact KOTESOL if you have a specific topic interest or if you would like to contribute. Your thoughts and comments are gladly welcome. If Lev Vygotsky and Social Constructivism pique your interest, go to http://pdts.uh.edu/ ~ichen/ebook/ET-IT/social.htm for additional information and classroom applications.

native-speaker and Korean English teachers on the Cambridge CELTA and DTEFLA courses and at the Seoul Teacher Training Center.

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