The English Connection

A Korea TESOL Publication

New Column:
On the BALL: Brain-Assisted Learning for the ELT Classroom

Feature Articles:
Pursuing Social Justice
Academic Listening: A Practical Approach
Tracking in the Classroom

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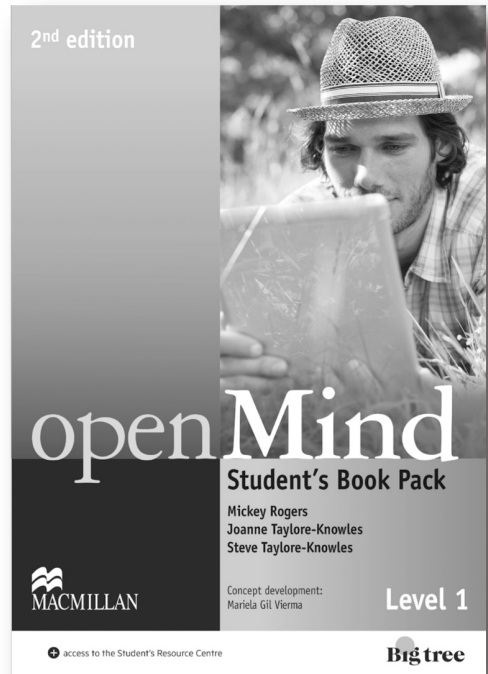KOTESOL Interview: Elizabeth May
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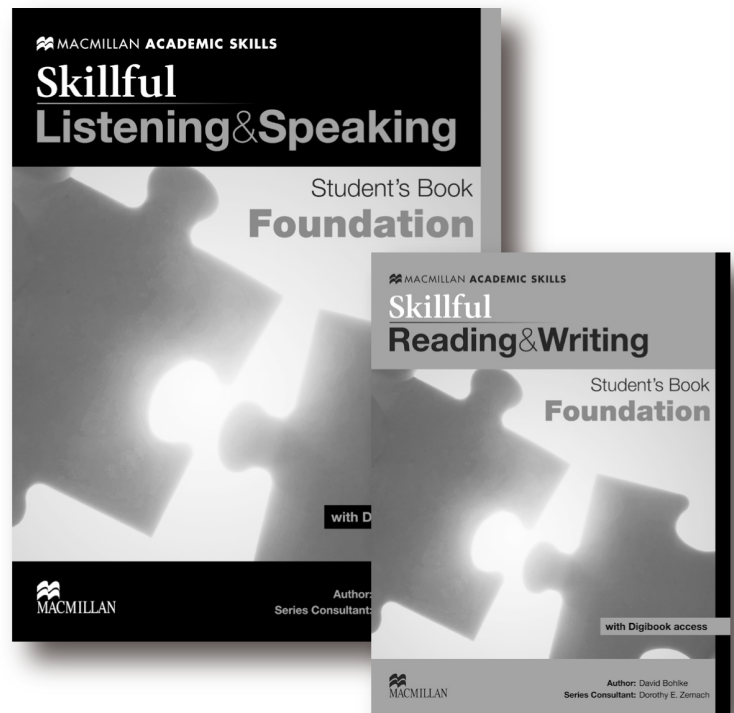*DEVELOPS COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL USE*

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The English Connection Editorial Team

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To promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons concerned with the teaching and learning of English in Korea.

KOTESOL
대한영어교육학회

Editorial

By Gil Coombe Editor-in-Chief

It's spring, and for many of our readers, this means a new semester – with new courses, new students, and (for some) new places of employment. Once everything has settled down and you're back in the groove, hopefully many of you will be starting to look at trying out new things in the classroom: a new activity, a new assessment, a new form of classroom management. If there is one thing I have learned, it's that nothing ever good comes of a teacher remaining stuck in their ways as the world (and more importantly, their students) moves on around them. In this vein, this issue provides some great articles that will hopefully encourage you to think more about your practice and spark some adventurous experiments within your own domain.

First up, Gordon West outlines social justice and how it can be incorporated into EFL teaching. This is followed by Dr. Sang Hwang of West Texas A&M University, who gives a rundown of the technology available for online storybook publishing in an EFL setting. Stephanie Ptak then discusses her experience with the tracking (or streaming) of students in Korean public schools with regards to English instruction. Next up is Naheen Madarbakus-Ring, who provides a host of ideas for the teaching of academic listening in the university classroom. TEC also has a sit-down with Steve Eigenberg, who has developed a novel method of wordlessly encouraging longer and more grammatically accurate English utterances from EFL students.

Rounding out the issue are three regular columns. Two of them you will be familiar with: the KOTESOL interview is with the always energetic and mercurial Elizabeth (Lizzie) May, and Tom Farrell returns with his sure-to-be controversial take on the value of teacher-lead research. However, new to TEC is a column by one of the gurus of neuroELT, Curtis Kelly, who will provide a series of articles on how neuroscience can be used to illuminate teaching practice. First up in this issue is something of immense importance to us all: sleep!

So, as you can see, this issue provides a wide variety of topics from which you may gain inspiration for the remainder of the year. Don't forget also that one of the best ways to reflect on your own teaching and become more involved in the EFL world is to write an article of your own to teach your peers about something that works exceptionally well in your class, or to provoke discussion on an issue of great importance to EFL in Korea. Send us a submission at tec@koreatesol.org and see your name in lights… well, print, anyway.

One last thing: keep an eye on the KOTESOL webpage for events hosted by your local KOTESOL chapters during the semester, and I hope to see many of you at the national and international conferences this year.

> **"If there is one thing I have learned, it's that nothing ever good comes of a teacher remaining stuck in their ways as the world (and more importantly, their students) moves on around them."**

President's Message

By Lindsay Herron KOTESOL President

Welcome back to an all-new semester! I hope everyone is rested, rejuvenated, and ready for the new term. This spring sees many outstanding opportunities for personal and professional growth with KOTESOL.

First, keep an eye out for outstanding regional conferences and local workshops hosted by our chapters. Then in May, KOTESOL is offering a unique twist on our annual national conference; instead of a single-day event, we are hosting "FAB 11 and KOTESOL National Conference 2017," a two-day extravaganza sure to offer something for everyone. On Saturday, May 13, attendees can choose from sessions presented by world-renowned neuroELT luminaries of FAB as well as the usual slate of top-notch concurrent sessions by KOTESOL members. Then on Sunday, the fun continues with a full day of neuroELT workshops hosted by FAB. The call for proposals is out now, and online pre-registration will open soon. Check our website for great discounts for members – including can't-miss deals on two-day conference passes.

If you're looking for additional opportunities for professional development, our domestic and international partners will be hosting a variety of events, all of which are listed in the "Events" section of our website. I'm also pleased to introduce our newest partner: the International Academic Forum (IAFOR), which hosts more than 20 events in 5 countries globally, and which now offers KOTESOL members discounts on IAFOR conference registration.

KOTESOL is making a special effort this year, our 25th anniversary, to help members make the most of our offerings. Look for increased activity on our online Job Board, more opportunities for networking at member social events, and more chances to get your students involved! In fact, if you teach university students, start thinking now about inviting them to apply for the Asian Youth Forum (AYF), a unique opportunity for future leaders to cultivate leadership skills, use English to communicate, learn about other cultures, and develop friendships with students from around the world. AYF will be accepting applications this spring, and the weeklong event will be happening in Seoul in October in conjunction with the KOTESOL International Conference and PAC 2017.

I hope your semester is off to a great start! I look forward to seeing you at one of the many wonderful events coming up this term. In the meantime, enjoy the spring sunshine and longer days – and be sure to take a moment to nurture yourself during the upcoming spring holidays. It's easy to get lost in the whirlwind of teaching, preparing, learning, growing, and volunteering; please also take some time to breathe, reflect, and relax!

> **"KOTESOL is making a special effort this year, our 25th anniversary, to help members make the most of our offerings."**

Defining and Pursuing Social Justice in English Language Teaching

By Gordon Blaine West

Introduction

"Social justice" has become a popular buzzword recently in English language education. This is evidenced by the recent publication of a book on social justice language teaching by TESOL (Hastings & Jacob, 2016), the founding of the KOTESOL Social Justice SIG, and the rise of groups like the International Society for Language Studies, which focuses on social justice issues. For me, these are encouraging and exciting changes. I was one of the many "accidental" teachers who came to Korea to teach English without having considered teaching as a career, until I read Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and realized there was a path for me in language education. It is important, however, given the rising prominence of social justice as a focus in language education, to examine and interrogate the concept.

> **"There are several different ways to make classroom decision-making and curriculum more democratic."**

Among the questions I think we should ask are "What is social justice?" "What is the place of social justice in language education?" and "How can we pursue social justice in English language classrooms?"

Concepts of Social Justice

Social justice previously rose to prominence in the field of education in the 1990s. At that time, North American scholars like Gewirtz (1998) sought to theorize what was at the time an underdeveloped concept when applied to education. Here, I want to first look back at previous discussions of social justice before building on them in the context of Korea's English language education. Social justice works as an umbrella term to encompass a wide variety of issues. It can refer to economic justice, identity politics, and issues of racism or gender discrimination, as well as environmental issues like global warming. In looking at these issues, those who are pursuing social justice are arguing for fairness of treatment, participation in political processes, or equal access to and distribution of resources.

These concepts of *equality* and *equity* have been especially salient in discussions of social justice in general education. From a liberal perspective, social justice in education has been sought in terms of providing equal opportunities for everyone (Gewirtz, 1998). Young (1990) offers a more useful, and more radical, conceptualization of social justice. Instead of looking at equal opportunity, or even the more extreme *equality of outcome*, she conceptualizes a version of social justice that seeks *equality of conditions*. Equality of conditions means that not only should people have the same opportunities, they should also not be hampered by a lack of privilege in seeking those opportunities. She identifies five faces of injustice that need to be confronted, which create uneven conditions of privilege for some at the expense of others: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. These overlap with Fraser's (1997, 2008) theory of social justice, which is divided into three areas: economic, cultural, and political, with the corresponding issues of redistribution, recognition, and representation.

It may then be more useful to understand social justice as an active process, as something that is or that should be established. Gerwirtz (1998) calls on educators to seek social justice by interrupting or subverting the five faces of injustice identified by Young (1990).

The Place of Social Justice in EFL

Before we go fighting for social justice, we need to imagine how this can be done in our position as EFL teachers in Korea. There are those who would argue that we are simply English teachers and have no business getting involved in political issues like social justice. This argument cuts to the heart of what we fundamentally believe about education. Those who argue that social justice has no place in education tend to view education as a technical process in which objective, non-ideological knowledge is imparted to students. I would argue (as does Freire, 2000), however, that education, and English education in Korea in particular, is a political process. The entire reason we are here teaching English is the result of a long and contentious history of political decisions and arguments. The preferences in Korea for North American English and for "native speakers" are two even more specific examples of how the field is political. There is no objective proof that North American English is the best form, and there is no evidence that native speakers are better teachers. These are political beliefs. Whether we like it or not,

politics is a part of the reason we are here and the students are in our classes.

Even understanding that politics is an inseparable part of education, some would say that engaging directly in politics or social justice debates in class can be a form of indoctrination or even cultural imperialism. However, even choosing to focus on "just teaching" necessitates taking a side. By default, it means supporting the status quo. There is no neutral position. I would argue that work focusing on social justice is more ethical because it acknowledges the political nature of our work, embedded in the curriculum and language we teach, rather than obscuring it in a mirage of objectivity. Further, as I will discuss more in the next section, dialogue is a key feature of critical pedagogy that takes social justice issues into account. Through dialogue, it is possible to encourage students to express and share their thoughts and opinions, acting as co-learners and facilitators, rather than standing as the sole source of authority in the classroom.

Finally, I would argue that, as teachers, we all care about and are invested in the success of our students. The focus on social justice for me stems from this concern. I think that we can all agree that we would like to see our students free from Young's (1990) five faces of injustice and to be fully able to exercise their agency and potential.

Building on this concern for student well-being and potential, we can examine a range of different ways to approach social justice in our classrooms. As social justice covers a wide number of issues, there are several different pedagogical methods through which social justice can be brought into the classroom.

Promoting Social Justice in EFL
If social justice is an active process, and if we should engage with that process, then we need to imagine how it can impact our teaching. Here, I will discuss what I think of as the 4Cs to bringing social justice into teaching practice at the different levels: *control, content, community,* and *change.*

In our own classrooms, we can look to critical pedagogy to examine the processes under which our classrooms operate (Crookes, 2013). Control is something that can be negotiated to make sure that our students have equal representation and recognition and to ensure a more equal redistribution of power. There are several different ways to make classroom decision-making and curriculum more democratic. You might simply seek student input on what topics are covered, or give the students choices on what kind of projects they will do. These are sound pedagogical

methods that many teachers already follow. If you want to go further, you can negotiate the curriculum down to individual assignments and even grading. In doing this, you can think about what kind of democratic model you want to follow. There is a more liberal democratic model, which often operates at the national level, of having representatives who take input from their constituents. In the classroom, this takes the form of more private ballot-based votes and gives the teacher a degree of control over the decision-making. A still more radical participatory democratic model allows for joint decision-making by consensus in the classroom. I have done this in classes where there has been little planned curriculum the class begins. I allow students to collectively decide what kind of projects they want to do, how they want to be graded (including peer- and self-evaluation options), and how they want to structure the class. One trade-off with this

approach is that it requires time. It takes time to help students imagine the different possibilities for projects or class structure. It also takes time to develop the rapport needed to successfully make decisions as a group. Giving some degree of control over the class to the students, though, helps to ensure they are not only more invested, but that their interests are better represented in the class.

We can also look at our content and the things that are taught in our classrooms. When considering student control, we should allow students to bring in their own content to the classroom as much as possible; however, it is often the teacher's role to select the texts and/ or supplementary materials to use during class. We can make a conscious choice to bring in materials that focus on topics like environmentalism, peacebuilding, race, or other social justice topics that fit our situation. We should also consider representation in the materials we choose. What roles, for example, do women have in our textbooks? Are they portrayed mostly in domestic situations or social situations? As a kindergarten teacher, I once had a student tell me he no longer wanted to pursue his dream of being a scientist. His

reason was that there were no Korean scientists, only Europeans and Americans, in our books and the books his parents read to him at home. Representation plays a large role in how our students perceive themselves and the world.

We can also use critical literacy (Janks, 2010) to interrogate representations in texts as a way to combat marginalization and cultural imperialism. Through critical literacy, students can learn to think of texts as socially constructed, political products, rather than being solely authoritative in nature. This allows them to critique and challenge knowledge and language presented in texts, and representations used in texts, rather than simply accepting and digesting them.

In addition to looking at decision-making and content we use in the classroom, we can practice community-building exercises as a way to help students collectively advocate for more equal redistribution, recognition, and representation. This can happen at both the classroom level and at larger community levels outside of the classroom. An example of this, presented by Jocelyn Wright (2015), involved having students connect with others via social media or go into their communities and create awareness-building campaigns for causes they cared about. To do this type of community-building, a broader conceptualization of the role and definition of a teacher is required, but is necessary if social justice is a focus of one's professional practice.

Finally, we need to think about action that can be taken at the different levels to seek social justice: the classroom, the school, and the broader community. Promoting social justice requires action. While changes might be small, even just at the classroom level, action should be taken to fight for social justice. In one instance, I had a class of university freshmen negotiate the syllabus and vote to remove the final exam, replacing it with a final project of their choosing. While this was a small change, allowing them to vote and make changes in the curriculum drove their involvement and created a positive atmosphere in the class. Another time, seeking to make changes at the school level, second-year students held a protest and wrote letters of protest to the director of the program about the unfair reward policies that were in place to promote student motivation by giving them prizes in return for stamps that they received for doing homework. They were upset by the arbitrary changes in policy that came suddenly and would limit what they had been promised. They chose what action they

wanted to take to address the perceived injustice, and I supported them. In the process, they used more eloquent language and were more motivated to use the language because they saw a reason for it and a need to communicate when they were fighting for change.

It is not always necessary for students to fight or protest openly as they did in the cases presented above. It is important though, to foster a sense of the possible in students, to "decolonize the imaginary" (Crookes, 2013, p. 195), or to help students imagine ways other than the status quo in which the world might work. Sometimes working to create this broadening of their world view is the change we need.

Conclusion

A deeper understanding of social justice can help teachers to better imagine how social justice might influence or change their approaches to EFL in Korea. Using the frameworks provided by Young (1990) and Fraser (1997, 2008) can help to show ways in which we can use critical pedagogy and critical literacy to fight against injustice in various forms. The 4C approach further gives a starting point for how to advocate for social justice through giving students greater control, approaching content differently, focusing on community-building for collective action, and striving for change in our teaching.

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Teaching Reading Skills Using Online Storybook Publishing

By Dr. Sang Hwang

It is of the utmost importance to introduce technology into the language learning environment today. With researchers recommending storybook reading for children to promote literacy development (Gillanders & Castro, 2011), online storybooks increasingly offer children the opportunity to experience storybook content in a technology-based format to enhance reading engagement and provide rich support for scaffolding. Online storybooks provide many more functions than traditional texts. In addition to commercial e-books, some websites allow users to create their own storybooks online. Publishing online storybooks offers students the benefits associated with ownership and provides real audiences for their creative work.

▲ *StoryJumper cover page sample (Evans, 2016)*

Website Review and Implementation for EFL learners

Students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL) would benefit from the use of online storybook publishing. Students may begin by enjoying the many already available storybooks online and challenge themselves by creating one that meets their unique desires. EFL teachers may create their own storybooks for their specific needs. Some websites offer very basic tools while others provide more options for advanced users, such as animations, sound effects, cartoons, comics, and video options.

1. StoryJumper: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeYSCNbT--g
StoryJumper is the most popular website for any age level and is easy to navigate. This website allows users to upload their own pictures. However, it is somewhat limited in terms of props, scenes, and character choices as well as being limited to a maximum of 16 pages in length. Advanced users may feel that it is too simple with too few options.

StoryJumper is a good website for EFL learners in that it reinforces daily lessons and can be utilized as a tool for assessment. In small groups, students may work on creating alphabet storybooks, or the teacher may create storybooks to teach sight words and target vocabulary words, including homonyms (homophones and homographs). This can be extended to teach phonics or to teach literary elements, including similes and onomatopoeia. With careful planning, online storybooks can cover almost anything in fun and creative ways.

2. StoryMaker: http://www.carnegielibrary.org/storymaker/embed.cfm
StoryMaker allows users to add animation and select different characters to perform certain movements. Users can choose a main character and a setting. For EFL students, the teachers may focus on one strategy at a time and practice it multiple times. Since this website allows users to animate and add sound effects, the EFL teacher may customize the storybooks depending on how a student can best learn phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. However, this website does not leave much room for creativity or individuality. It is somewhat limited in graphics, props, and story topics. Also, if users accidentally publish before they have proofread, they will have to start over to fix it.

3. Make Beliefs Comix: http://www.makebeliefscomix.com
The Make Beliefs Comix website is also user-friendly with a lot of freedom to play with and provides many options to make comics educational and fun. Using comic strips, the lessons may increase student engagement and add some humor to subjects. However, there is a limited text choice and only three or so panels should be used. Since Make Beliefs Comix allows users to create only three boxes, it would be a great tool for teaching the concept of main event sequences or main ideas in the beginning, middle, and end of stories. For EFL students, this can be effective for summarizing concepts learned in class. Because it offers dialogue bubbles, advanced students may also be challenged to write a script and act it out.

Teaching Reading Skills in the Balanced Literacy Framework

A balanced literacy program refers to a framework in which teachers integrate instruction with authentic reading and writing experiences (Tompkins, 2017). The five components of a balanced literacy program include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Online storybook publishing is perfect for developing all five of these requirements.

Phonemic awareness is especially important for language learners as it helps them in becoming

▲ **Make Beliefs Comix** *homepage*

successful readers and writers later on. By using storybook websites that offer animations and sounds such as StoryMaker, EFL learners would benefit from practicing the sounds that they hear. Teacher-customized sound books, alliteration, and rhyming books would help language learners practice target concepts on a regular basis.

Like phonemic awareness, phonics can be effectively delivered using online storybook tools. Besides StoryMaker, StoryJumper can also be useful as a way to create many sound books with good examples. Teachers may even include interactive components such as excluding the initial sounds of the CVC words and having students say the correct initial sound on the page.

All of the storybook websites in this article promote fluency, with the teacher modeling reading aloud and students echoing it back or reading it together in unison. Repeated reading may also help to develop fluency. For prosody practice, comic strips or cartoon choices such as Make Beliefs Comix can be beneficial as the class rewrites the story for the script, adds dialogue to the storybook, speaks in the characters' voices, and acts the story out.

Vocabulary is important as it directly affects comprehension. By listening to stories, children learn about syntax and vocabulary, which eventually reinforces comprehension. All of the websites in this article would help develop vocabulary skills.

To encourage EFL students to practice comprehension strategies, simply ask them to retell the story each time and ask them to revisit the texts independently to confirm their understanding of the story. Teacher-created storybooks would work perfectly as a way to support comprehension strategies and encourage students to read recreationally.

Discussion

Using storybook publishing websites in the classroom is a hit with students who are learning English as a foreign language. All of these websites promote similar goals, utilizing effective technology-based tools to establish literacy for all ages. These sites can cover all of the teaching areas, including reading skills, writing processes, literacy strategies, and other content area topics. Once the teacher understands the benefits and limitations of each website, they may select the appropriate tools for their students and for certain lessons.

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Equity Issue: Tracking in the EFL Classroom

By Stephanie Ptak

Tracking in the EFL Classroom

I worked as a "guest English teacher" in Seoul for three years, where I taught English to fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students at a public elementary school. For English class, the sixth-grade students were divided into three levels according to their abilities, and I taught only the highest track. The other tracks were taught by the students' Korean homeroom teachers and an aide who had all learned English as a second language, with varying English abilities among the group.

Hundreds of native English speakers are hired each year by the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (SMOE) in order to give all students the opportunity to learn English from a native speaker. Many students in the city attend after-school private academies, where they study a variety of subjects, including English taught by native English speakers. However, these academies are quite expensive and therefore inaccessible to many students. The SMOE hires native English speakers and places them at elementary schools to allow a vast majority of students in the city of Seoul to have the same opportunities to learn English from a native speaker.

By tracking the sixth grade, only the highest level of English speakers had the opportunity to be taught by a native speaker. Many of these students are in this track because they attend private academies after school where they learn English. At school, they then take many of the limited spots in the highest track, where their English improves even further. This creates a negative cycle that leaves out the students who do not have access to either private academies or the high track and thus cannot interact with native English-speaking teachers.

I thus believe it is unfair that the school tracks sixth-grade English classes. For many students at the school where I worked, I was their one chance to learn English from a native speaker, as they could not afford to go to private academies after school. In addition to this, the SMOE spends quite a large amount of money to hire native English speakers each year. This valuable resource is not being fully utilized. In addition, where I worked, there was no discussion about tracking or who taught which track.

Research on Tracking

In the United States, tracking began in 1867 with the Harris Plan in St. Louis (Percell, 2010). Since then, the popularity of tracking has grown and declined throughout the years for various reasons. Percell compares tracking in the United States to European countries, reporting that tracking is much more popular in the United States. She postulates that this may be due to the larger gap in racial and economic inequality in the United States.

A large number of studies have been done regarding tracking in the United States, with some interesting findings. In settings where students are tracked, students on average perform at a lower level than in a country where students are not tracked in the same subject. For example, in the United States, 8 out of 10 schools track students in math, but in this subject the average US eighth-grader falls behind students in Korea. In contrast, science is only tracked in around 20 percent of U.S. schools, but American eighth-graders are close to the best in the world in science achievement. This "suggests that tracking inhibits achievement" (Percell, 2010, p. 94). Many of the factors found in the studies summarized by Percell also apply to my teaching situation at the public elementary school. Therefore, I think it is safe to say that this evidence can be applied to my school.

The oppressed group in this case is the middle and low levels of the tracking groups. However, it could also be said that the high level is also oppressed because they do not receive the benefits of having a bilingual teacher in the classroom. According to Percell (2010), there are multiple mechanisms through which tracking has effects: instructional, social, and institutional. In terms of instructional processes, there is an "unequal allocation of educational resources, the instruction offered, student-teacher interactions, and student-student interactions" (p. 93). All of these hold true between the classes that I taught and did not teach in the tracked English program. This is unfair to all students because the nature of the public school is to give all students an equal opportunity in education.

According to Gamoran, higher groups receive more vocabulary input than lower groups (as cited in Percell, 2010). Higher groups also receive more interesting

teaching methods and materials (Percell, 2010). This is particularly true where I taught. Each group used different materials beyond the basic textbook. I tried to incorporate songs and different activities in my lesson, while I was aware that the other classes focused on the activities in the textbook. Students taught by Korean teachers experienced a more traditional Korean methodology in the classroom. In terms of English class, this meant that the students were strongly encouraged to memorize dialogues and only speak correctly; there was no room for error. I taught in the way in which I was educated and that I had learned to educate, which differs from the Korean methodology. Again, this is unfair because not all students have the opportunity to work with the same materials and learn in the way that would ultimately benefit them the most.

Oakes found that students in higher tracks "are taught critical thinking, creativity, and independence" (as cited in Percell, 2010, p. 94). I pushed towards this goal with the students in my group, devising activities where students had to think outside the box and come up with original work. This was quite difficult because up until this point the students were taught to memorize and copy the correct English in their books. However, I believe this benefited the track that I worked with, and it would have benefited the other students if given the opportunity to work in this way.

The students who were in the highest track were seen to be the best English students by the teachers. "Institutionally, tracking creates groups of students who are understood by teachers and parents as having certain qualities and capacities above and beyond the actual skills they possess" (Percell, 2010, p. 94). This holds true in the school where I worked, as my expectations were quite high before my first class upon hearing of the students' abilities from the other teachers. Some of the students did have relatively high levels of English; however, it was greatly exaggerated by the faculty. This does not benefit anyone, as students may be given unrealistic expectations and are therefore not working in their zone of proximal development. On the other side, the students in the lower levels did not have high expectations. Many

students slept in class while others simply said they did not speak English. When handouts were available, some teachers simply did not give them to students who were not doing well in class. There were unequal levels of expectation from group to group.

In Korean culture, many people believe that you can only learn English from a native English speaker. This is another reason why parents send their children to private after-school academies. Native English speakers have been teaching English at these private schools longer than the government has been placing native English speakers in the public schools. Even though I disagree that one can only learn a language from a native speaker, the culture perpetuates this belief, and I am living in this culture. In addition, school in Korea, especially in Seoul, is very competitive. The teachers believe they are benefitting students by helping to push the highest English ability students further forward. The competitive nature of the school makes it difficult to discuss tracking as an issue at school.

Possible Interventions
There are many possible solutions and steps to take in order to remedy the issue of tracking in the EFL classroom. The most extreme remedy would be to detrack completely. I believe this would be the most extreme course because the current system of tracking is not viewed as an issue at the school. Therefore, detracking may seem like a major change to the other educators. A more realistic remedy would be to allow the teachers of the different tracks to rotate groups for each class. This remedy keeps the student-to-teacher ratio low, which ultimately benefits students. This would allow all of the students to have an equal opportunity to work with each teacher, which would be beneficial to the students as well because each teacher has a unique teaching style. The Korean teachers also have varying degrees of English, but there are still definite benefits to these teachers working with the students. Another option that could be implemented at the same time is for the teachers to collaborate before classes in order to prepare together. Teachers could share their resources and bounce ideas off of one another. Teachers could also share what worked and what did

> **"For many students at the school where I worked, I was their one chance to learn English from a native speaker, as they could not afford to go to private academies after school."**

not work within their sections so that all the teachers could grow professionally while educating the students.

In terms of the cultural constraints, I did not feel empowered at all to address the issue of tracking in the EFL classroom. My official title was "guest English teacher," and it was made clear on a regular basis that I was not fully a part of the teachers' group. I was viewed as a temporary fixture in the school system, and therefore I felt it was not my place to raise any issues. The Korean school system is very competitive,

> "Looking back, I think I might have been able to push for the teachers to collaborate together when planning the classes."

and many of the English teachers believe that the tracking will help the highest group get ahead. My position was to help these students, and I did not think I should cause any problems. In addition to this, the language barrier made it very difficult for me to communicate with the vast majority of the people working at the school. I was unable to communicate with one of the English teachers whom I worked with who was not trained to teach English. Therefore, I thought addressing an issue such as this would be inappropriate in my school setting.

Looking back, I think I might have been able to push for the teachers to collaborate together when planning the classes. This would have allowed all of us to share our resources. It would also have boosted the students' confidence by them knowing that they were all expected to achieve in their class, rather than all knowing that they learn different material at a different pace in each class. The expectations would have hopefully helped student achievement to improve. This would also have helped the teachers, including myself, to grow professionally by learning from one another.

Conclusion

When I first began working with the highest track, I did not see it as an issue. I was simply doing the job that I was instructed to do. It was easier for me to work with a smaller number of students who had a higher level of English than to work with a larger number who had a large variation in their English abilities. However, as time went on, I began to see how this system was unfair to the students and myself. Not all of the students had the opportunity to work with all of the teachers, which was the goal of having a native English speaker at the school. This was unfair to me as well because I was unable to grow professionally in terms of learning how to differentiate in a classroom with varying abilities.

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The Author

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Academic Listening: A Practical Approach

By Naheen Madarbakus-Ring

Listening is as important as any other of the four skills when teaching within an EFL context. However, the receptive skills can often be deprioritized, be difficult to teach for educators, and be perceived as unmotivating for students. I decided to research this area in more depth to investigate how listening could be more systematically applied to lessons and explored how listening strategies could be implemented in academic English successfully. In 2015, I presented my findings and the materials created from that project at the KOTESOL National Conference.

When I started teaching the freshman course Academic English four years ago, I felt that many of my listening lessons were unfocused and uninteresting. Thus, I decided that there must be some theory that could be applied to help students develop their listening and help me as an educator to teach listening systematically. Theorists such as Flowerdew and Miller (2005), Nation and Newton (2009), and Vandergrift and Goh (2012) have researched various methods that used product and process approaches, cognitive and metacognitive usage, and also interactive learning to apply frameworks to listening lessons. Therefore, I wanted to use a combination of these theories to create a simple approach to help both educators and students employ listening strategies in lessons.

The analysis of several strategies and approaches resulted in creating a systematic framework that used a three-stage approach to listening that could be applied to any listening structure. Using a comprehensive structure of three 20-minute stages divided into pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening sections, a 60-minute lesson format could offer students practical and informed listening practice.

Table 1 presents some approaches that could be used for any audio-visual text to incorporate listening in the classroom. These are discussed in more detail below.

Table 1. Approaches to Teaching Listening in the Classroom

Pre-listening	While-listening	Post-listening
Predictions	Cues	Use Notes
Photo Speculation	Key Words	Journals
Vocabulary	Word Groups	Speed Summary
Keywords	Unknown Word Meanings	Draw Interpretations
Symbols/Codes	Interpret Gestures	Prediction Check
Systems	Use Paralinguistic Clues	Systems
	Listen for Voice	Discussion
	Use Systems	Reconstruction
	Use Codes	Transcript
		Gap Fill
		Reflection Questions
		Timeline
		Interview

Pre-listening Approaches

Traditional pre-listening formats have often focused on pre-teaching vocabulary. By using vocabulary boxes to introduce key words, students should be given the opportunity to use their dictionaries and to discuss the words' meanings and definitions with peers. Field (2008) also recognizes the importance of establishing the context to create motivation and presenting top-down thinking exercises, which allows students to activate schemata by comparing with prior experiences and provides a sense of familiarity regarding the context of the listening. Context can be introduced using a series of images in *photo speculation* so students can guess what the listening will be about (Figure 1). It's important for students to know what

Figure 1. *An example of a pre-listening handout based on photo speculation.*

the situation is, who will be speaking, and the topic of the text, as this is reflective of any real-life listening situation. Additionally, the pre-listening stage can also be used academically for educators to introduce specific skills or strategies to enhance their listening. Simple processes such as introducing and explaining how to use cues and keywords in note-taking or codes and symbols in time-saving systems can also be

valuable to students' listening training.

While-listening Approaches

Traditionally, listening practices would often employ general context and detailed comprehension questions to check understanding using product-heavy tasks. However, Vandergrift and Goh (2012) suggest evaluative cognitive approaches that heighten orchestration, which allows product tasks to be achieved using process approaches. Field (2008) advocates the use of conscious cognitive practices in while-listening stages, suggesting the use of previously introduced keywords from pre-listening stages and also encouraging the inferencing of unknown words. The while-listening stage also provides opportunities for students to engage with any systems and codes introduced previously to help understand the text further. In regards to audio-visual texts, students could

> **"There must be some theory that could be applied to help students develop their listening and help me as an educator to systematically teach listening."**

also use paralinguistic clues to recognize when topics change in speaking and listen for voice to determine the discourse function of the speaker. Depending on the focus of the lesson, listening strategies could be used for comprehension, voice, or paralinguistic training.

Post-listening Approaches

Traditionally, a post-listening activity was used to reinforce the new vocabulary taught by analyzing any grammar introduced or to reinforce the grammar through listening and repeating the text. However, more contemporary methods have turned to focusing on more functional language used in the text and looking specifically at the inferencing of words and comprehension by using tools such as the transcript. Nation and Newton (2009) challenge these traditional passive methods by recommending that interactive tasks be used in the post-listening stages. By using speed summaries, students can use the previously taken notes from the while-listening stage to confirm comprehension of the text. Predictions can also be

checked and their accuracy determined while drawing interpretations can help students express their own interpretations artistically. In other collaborative tasks, students can participate in discussions or answer comprehension questions in teams to create competitive scenarios while interviews can offer a discursive element to the lesson. More solitary reflective activities include students completing a timeline of events to understand sequencing or using journals to reflect on the content or listening approach while gauging individual opinions to provide some tangibility in listening learning.

In summary, the complex area of listening can be simplified by treating it as three systematic stages. A division of three twenty-minute sections, distinguished as pre-listening, while-listening, and post–listening, can offer educators a pedagogical lesson approach and provide students with tangibility and accessibility to the listening strategies needed. Pre-listening activities should focus on metacognitive reflective approaches to build confidence and broaden awareness of the text. Subsequently, while-listening tasks should activate cognitive selections as students use automatic processes to attend to listening. Finally, post-listening stages should be reflective and engage in active thinking processes to evaluate and determine the success of the completed task. Listening can be systematically approached and, with further knowledge and practice using the skill, can enhance learning for students in a productive and beneficial manner.

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The Author

Currently an assistant professor at Korea University, Seoul, **Naheen Madarbakus-Ring** has taught EFL in Japan, South Korea, and the UK. Naheen was recently shortlisted for the British Council ELTons 2016 Macmillan Talent in New Writing award and was awarded a special commendation by the British Council for her previous work developing a listening program using TED Talks. Her research areas include focusing on listening in EFL, including developing lesson and feedback materials, and employing listening strategies using different texts with different levels to create an effective EAP learning environment. Email: nring@hotmail.ac.uk

Richard "Steve" Eigenberg is currently an assistant professor at Busan University of Foreign Studies (BUFS) and has previously presented at the KOTESOL International Conference on his innovative use of hand signals in the Korean EFL classroom. **The English Connection** *asked about this technique and his time in Korea so far.*

TEC: First, what brought you to Korea?

Steve Eigenberg (SE): I love to travel. Korea is the fourth country I have lived in. My plan was to stay for one year and move on. I fell in love with Korean life, its pros and cons, and I'm now here in my eighth year.

TEC: You first introduced the use of hand signals in the classroom in 2009 while you were in the EPIK program. Could you briefly explain what hand signals you use and how they work?

SE: In addition to the past, present, and future hand signals, the subject, verb, "mo-mo," (or "blah blah" as I used to call them), and the signals leading the students through making questions are the most valuable. In addition, I added a component where I teach the students that almost all questions in English need two verbs, with *be*-verbs and subject questions being the exception. A subject question would be taught as:

> <u>Mr. E.</u> teaches English.
> <u>Someone</u> teaches English.
> <u>Who</u> teaches English?

All other English questions for low and intermediate speakers need two or more verbs, and walking them through the process of making those questions with the hand signals greatly improves their accuracy. It also allows me to do error correction without speaking, which reduces the difficulty faced by students who are trying to understand question form in a second language.

> Examples:
> (always have the form: *question word(s) if needed* + <u>one verb word</u> + subject + <u>finish the verb</u>)

> <u>Have</u> you <u>been</u> to the USA?
> <u>Can</u> you <u>help</u> me?
> *What* <u>have</u> you <u>been doing</u> lately?
> *When* <u>did</u> you <u>go</u> to Seoul?
> *When* <u>are</u> you <u>going to meet</u> the teacher?
> *What kind of Korean spicy food* <u>do</u> you <u>like</u>?

Something happened as the question signals evolved. I realized the "thinking" behind the signals was actually more important than the signals themselves. The idea

that all "non-subject," "non-*be* verb" questions use two verb words. *This really* helps the students when they understand this; the patterns of English sentences and English questions become much clearer for them.

TEC: Where did your inspiration for using hand signals like this come from?

SE: My first three hand signals [past, present, and future] were given to me by a mentor of mine, Anthony Hocking. Anthony was one of the first educational professionals that I met in Korea, and he helped me a lot. The next set of hand signals – subject, verb, and mo-mo – were inspired after I started using color-coded sentences in my PowerPoints. After giving them a visual clue of how sentences are formed in English, I could see progress from my students. Some amount of the inspiration also came from the time I spent working on scuba boats in the Florida Keys. I thought about how dive partners communicate under water with no spoken words.

> **"Every day, deliver the best product or class that you can."**

TEC: You have since made the move to teaching at the university level. Did you have to adapt your hand signals in any way for the new teaching environment, and what has the general student feedback been on the hand signals?

SE: I have used these signals in one form or another from middle school to adult learners without having to make any major changes. Last year, one of my lower intermediate students attended a special presentation I gave on the form *did* in sentences, questions, and hand signals. After the class, he told me it was the best English lesson of his life. He finally understood the overall form or logic of our language.

Other times, when I see former students and have a conversation, they often revert to the classic short answers we know so well in Korea. I shake my head to

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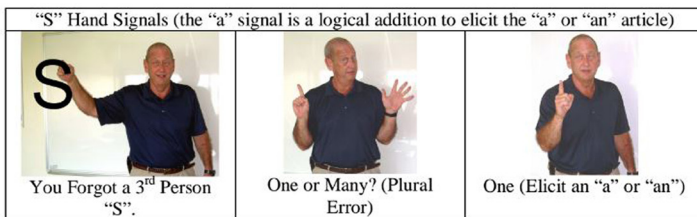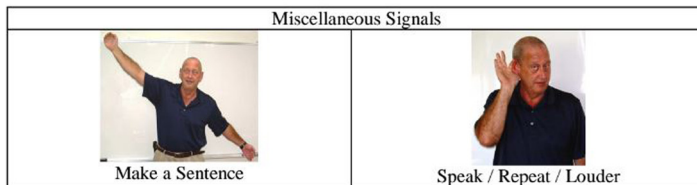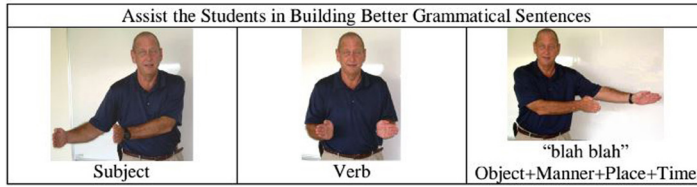
▲ Examples of Steve Eigenberg's hand signals for verb tenses and sentence-building (top), and questions.

it is optional. The subject can be conjugated into the verb. He said he decided to mandate the use of a subject and use the hand signals.

TEC: Are there any things teachers should be wary of when introducing hand signals for the first time?
SE: They are not *everything* you need. They will not explain the meaning of modal verbs. They will not explain the time meaning of present perfect verbs. They only demonstrate the form of English sentences and questions. They only address that issue. They provide an ad-hoc in-class tool for correction and demonstration of form.

TEC: What online resources do you regularly consult for either lesson ideas or to keep up with the profession?
SE: I prefer to use peers and people in the profession for new ideas. There are some grammar resources I use online, but I don't really use the Internet for lesson ideas. I also follow some Facebook groups for the occasional idea. As for pre-packaged lesson ideas, I like to use the resources that come with the books (preferably Cambridge or Oxford resources). Cambridge and Oxford I believe to be world leaders in English education, and I doubt I will ever come up with lesson ideas better than theirs.

TEC: Have you seen any improvement in English education in Korea in your time here?
SE: I think the recent changes to demand higher qualifications from native-speaker teachers has been a good thing. One example includes requiring a master's degree for university teachers. I hope Korea continues this trend by requiring valid TESOL or CELTA certificates or teaching degrees.

communicate "no," but with my hands in the "subject" position, they usually laugh and then give me good to perfect English. The laugh and quick transition to good English tells me that the hand signals had a lasting effect on the students.

TEC: What direction do you think other teachers could take from hand signals in the classroom?
SE: I know of one teacher at Busan University of Foreign Studies who teaches Italian and Spanish. He has adopted my hand signals for his classes. This originally surprised me as I know the subject is not required when speaking Spanish or Italian;

> **"You are a leader in your class and you alone. Make the differences you can in that environment."**
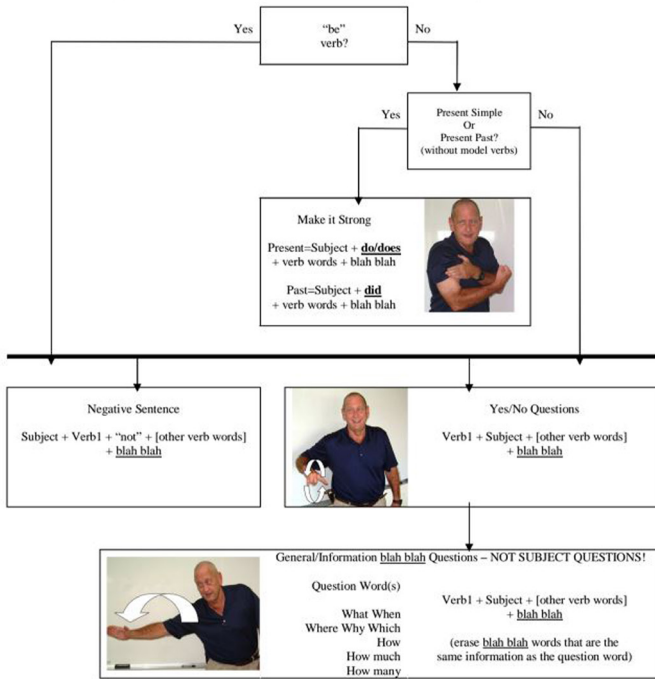
▲ Hand signals for scaffolding student oral production.

TEC: Since arriving in Korea, what has been the most useful professional development you have undertaken?
SE: Bar none, the CELTA was the best educational program I have attended in my life. Dollar for dollar and hour for hour, it was the most productive educational experience I have had. The CELTA truly teaches "how to teach."

TEC: What does the future hold for you?
SE: I am quite happy in Korea. I hope to finish my working life here and possibly even retire in Korea.

TEC: If you could give one piece of advice to EFL teachers arriving in Korea for the first time, what would it be?
SE: Always remember, it's about the students, not us. They live and compete in an extremely competitive country. Youth unemployment is high and their fears for the future are troubling for them. Every day, deliver the best product or class that you can. Separate any problems you have with your organization from the students. You are a leader in your class and you alone. Make the differences you can in that environment.

These hand signals, videos of their use in real classrooms, and the original KOTESOL presentation can be found at http://resume.tggroup.biz. Steve is very interested in doing an academic study using these hand signals to determine if learning outcome improvements can be proven. Steve is also willing to present this same information in person at other educational institutions.

• Read a more detailed introduction to Steve's hand signals in the *KOTESOL Proceedings 2012*: https://koreatesol.org/sites/default/files/pdf_publications/KOTESOL-Proceeds2012web.pdf

"Always remember, it's about the students, not us. They live and compete in an extremely competitive country. Youth unemployment is high and their fears for the future are troubling for them."

KOTESOL People: Lizzie May

Elizabeth ("Lizzie") May is Vice President of the Seoul Chapter of KOTESOL and has been involved in organizing sessions at the International Conference. She answered some questions for The English Connection *on her role in KOTESOL and her teaching career so far. — Interview by Julian Warmington*

TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?

Lizzie May (LM): I had been working in finance and had decided it wasn't for me. I completed a TESOL certificate and set out to have an adventure. It certainly delivered! I taught in the English program at the Princess High School in Thailand. My class sizes varied between ten and 60 students, which was an exciting challenge, especially for a brand new teacher fresh from her TESOL certificate program. I had some amazing experiences there; some were borderline surreal. If you catch me at a KOTESOL event, ask me about the hamsters, or the bamboo pole and craft knife!

I loved my experiences in Thailand but felt ready for a new challenge, so I decided to try a new country and start working towards making a career in TESOL. I had heard great things about teaching in Korea, and thanks to the rather limited TV options available in my Thailand apartment, I had also seen rather a lot of KBS World, so thought Korea would be a great place to try. That was five years ago, and I am still here and loving it.

TEC: What was your impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane, and when was that?

LM: I arrived on the coldest day of the winter in January 2011, so my first impression was mainly of the cold! However, as soon as I arrived, I found the director of the *hagwon* had arranged for one of my new co-workers to take me out for dinner. I was amazed at how caring all of the staff were; they really helped me feel at home.

Once I started work, I was amazed at the well-organized classes and how easy classroom management was. From 60 students to less than 10 was a huge difference in teaching style, especially as my previous role had involved no books.

TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea, and what do you do now?

LM: I love living in Korea. I love the people, the food, and the culture. I feel at home here. I love exploring all of the restaurants in Seoul; there is always something new to try. I run a book club, and each month we visit a different restaurant to try out some delicious food while we talk about the book we have read. I also organize a monthly meet-up group called "Seoul Sweet Tooths," where we meet to try out desserts at different cafés in Seoul. My partner is Korean, so I should probably also mention him. I enjoy traveling to the coast of Gangwon-do, where his family lives. It is great to be able to travel to the seaside so easily and to spend time with his family.

Currently, I teach at Kongju National University, in Cheonan. My role is to deliver the Freshman English program, as well as optional conversation classes and writing workshops. I really enjoy my job as it offers me a very varied teaching experience, and I have a lot of freedom in how I

deliver the course. I have been able to complete research for my second master's degree, focusing on the implementation of a learner management system (LMS). I also present as much as I can on the role of technology in TESOL, in particular regarding LMS implementation.

TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?

LM: I first became involved in KOTESOL about two-and-a-half years ago. I had started studying for my first master's degree and was searching for ways to help break into the university teaching field. I found KOTESOL recommended on a blog to help with networking. I went to my first meeting and was hooked! I found a wonderful group of friendly professionals who were so willing to help a fledgling like myself to improve and grow in the field.

Since then, I have run for office with the Seoul Chapter and am currently serving as Vice President. I have also had opportunities to present at workshops and conferences all over the country, which has been really exciting. When I first started attending workshops and conferences, I was in complete awe of the presenters. It is amazing to think, two years later, I am one of them!

TEC: Why should newbies get involved with KOTESOL?

LM: I have developed as a teacher in my classroom, as a presenter, as a researcher, and I have created a wonderful network of fellow educators whom I really enjoy spending time with, and who are a constant source of support.

As an educator, KOTESOL has exposed me to concepts, ideas, and classroom styles I wasn't aware of. At every single meeting or event I have attended, I have had at least one eureka moment!

Whenever I watched presenters before, I was always in awe of their knowledge and teaching ability. One of the first presenters I saw at my first conference was Scott Thornbury, who had come for the International Conference. I had just finished reading some of his work as part of a module for my postgraduate studies, so I was a little star-struck to meet him and listen to him speak. However, just two years later, I presented

at another conference, at which Scott was present. He later came to me and told me how interesting my idea was and that he was going to trial it in his classes as he had never considered it before. This made me realize how we are all learning, all of the time. It really broke down for me how no-one should be afraid to let their voices be heard at these events. I am so proud of myself each time I present because I am doing something I never thought I would.

However, for me the best part of KOTESOL is the people. Some of my closest friends in Korea are ones I have met through KOTESOL, and for that I am very thankful. I have met many truly inspiring educators, and I am very happy to be a member of the KOTESOL family.

TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?

LM: At last year's Seoul Chapter Conference, I was very proud to have been in charge of organizing the 10-minute take-away sessions. These sessions gave a chance for new speakers to present at a conference for the first time in a supportive environment. This is a cause close to my heart. When I first started attending

> "I think KOTESOL should continue working on embracing social media and the opportunities that the latest technologies allow for creating and developing a more cohesive community."

KOTESOL events, I was in such awe of the presenters and never considered the possibility that one day I could be one of them. I am so proud to have been able to help others begin the same journey and to help in knocking down the mysticism surrounding presenters. The sessions were incredibly successful last year and are set to return again for this year's Seoul Chapter Conference.

> "I am so proud of myself each time I present because I am doing something I never thought I would."

During the last year and a half as Vice President for the Seoul Chapter, I am also really pleased to see how our group has become more sociable and cohesive. We have introduced a post-workshop coffee networking session each month, which has really offered a great opportunity for our chapter to bond further as a group. It has been a great space for networking, reflecting on the workshop, and brainstorming ideas as a group.

TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?
LM: I think KOTESOL should continue working on embracing social media and the opportunities that the latest technologies allow for creating and developing a more cohesive community. I would like to see more of our members become more involved with, and invested in, the organization; it would be wonderful to see KOTESOL becoming more diverse and reflective of our members and of TESOL teachers across Korea. I would love to see KOTESOL reaching a wider number of teachers. One thing I hope to be able to work on with the Seoul Chapter is to increase membership and engagement. I am looking forward to an exciting future with KOTESOL.

Dates for Your Diary: Upcoming Events in Korea

March 11	Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL Annual Regional Conference 2017
March 25	The 13th Annual Seoul KOTESOL Conference
April 1	The 35th Korean Society of Bilingualism National Conference
April 7-9	ICLT 2017: The 3rd International Conference on Learning and Teaching
May 13-14	FAB11 & KOTESOL National Conference 2017
June 30 - July 1	The 2017 KATE International Conference
July 14	The 2017 MEESO International Conference
August 8	2017 KEES-ETAK Joint Conference
September 9	2017 ALAK International Conference
September 15-17	MMSEE 2017: KAMALL-STEM-KASEE Joint International Conference
September 23	2017 PKETA Conference
October 21-22	The 25th Annual KOTESOL International Conference & PAC 2017

For more details, including calls for proposals, locations, and individual websites, please visit http://www.koreatesol.org/calendar

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

The topics in this new series include the neuroscience of learning, movement, language processing, sleep, and similar concepts. This TEC entry is based on a chapter Curtis Kelly wrote for the recent book:

Gregersen, T., & MacIntyre, P. D. (Eds.). (2017). *Innovative practices in language teacher education: Spanning the spectrum from intra- to inter-personal teacher development.* New York, NY: Springer Nature.

Sleep is an important factor in long-term memory formation. It is an area I became interested in because of something bizarre that happened in one of my English classes. It was a first-year English class in a Japanese university, one with a rather low ranking. There is a stereotype about Japanese students being serious and dedicated, but this is generally a fiction, especially at the university level. In fact, one study found that Japanese high school students spend far less time on homework than Chinese students and even a bit less than Americans. So even though the students in this class were English majors, they were not motivated to study outside of class. Getting them to truly learn things was difficult, so one day I decided to spend the entire class teaching one particular structure, present perfect tense for relating experiences, and make sure it was fully internalized. The one single question form, "Have you ever," and how to answer it was explained, modeled, practiced, used in communicative interactions, and tested for mastery throughout. It was a perfect lesson, and I was sure everyone got it.

How surprised I was a few hours later when one of the students who had previously demonstrated mastery could not even understand the simple "Have you ever" question I asked her. Worse, she did not even remember that we had studied it, even though part of her practicing was done with me as a partner. I was shocked, and it was not just her. Most of the other students seemed to have forgotten this expression a week later as well. Now, I have the deepest respect for learning loss, but at the time, this seemed bizarre. Then I discovered the probable reason. The students who had forgotten the lesson were doing night jobs and hardly getting any sleep. No sleep, no memory.

Lack of sleep might be the single greatest problem in education. The National Sleep Foundation (2006) found that only 20% of American adolescents get an optimal amount of sleep, nine hours or more, and only 51% get even eight hours. How does this affect performance? Research shows that an all-A student who gets fewer than seven hours sleep on weeknights

and a little more than seven on weekends will drop from the top 10% of her class to the bottom 9% of those who are not sleep deprived (Medina, 2008, p. 162). With a few all-nighters, she will start showing the same symptoms as someone with Alzheimer's. Another study shows that only six hours of sleep for five nights in a row leads to 60% loss in performance – 60%! Dr.

▲ *Dr. Kelly presenting on neuroELT at a conference.*

John Medina, author of *Brain Rules*, puts it simply: "Sleep loss means mind loss" (p. 162). This is true for *all* of us. If you have trouble remembering things these days, it is probably because of sleep deterioration, not brain deterioration. Although it is almost impossible for most adults to sleep eight hours, even if they have the time, we still need eight hours for full memory consolidation.

Of course, we have long known that sleep is important for learning, but neuroscience tells us why. We tend to think of sleep as a time when our brains are at rest, but brain studies have found that in certain stages,

our brains are even more active than when we are awake. This is because our brains reactivate the neural connections of new learning to consolidate that learning in our memory. According to Penny Lewis, in the slow-wave stage, the deepest kind of sleep, our neurons start firing in synchronous bursts, and the level of acetylcholine drops precipitously (Campbell, 2014). Acetylcholine is a neurotransmitter that blocks communication between the hippocampus, where new learning is stored, and the neocortex, where new memories are integrated into older ones. This drop allows these two structures to communicate. We believe that the slow-wave stage is when new memories are passed to the neocortex. Research also suggests that we shed memories of lesser importance during this stage as well.

▲ *Lack of sleep might be the single greatest problem in education.*

Then, we go into the REM stage, and the amount of acetylcholine quadruples (Campbell, 2014). Communication with the hippocampus shuts down (which is why we rarely remember dreams). We believe that during the REM stage, the neocortex scans existing memories for an association with the new memory and links them up. Maybe that is why we have such vivid and disjointed dreams during this stage. The linking involves a lot of sanding and reshaping, too. Rather than storing each memory separately and exactly during this stage, we make associations between whole sets of memories and extract generalities out of them. Related memories meld to create understanding.

The slow-wave to REM cycle repeats throughout the night, from four to six times (Irwin, 2015). Getting less sleep, or poor sleep, reduces the number of cycles and thus impairs memory formation. Considering all the enemies of sleep our youth face – computers, caffeine, blue light, and even the shift of circadian rhythm that happens in teens – we should consider sleep a serious educational issue. Teachers need to be telling students about the importance of sleep, saying that one hour of sleep equals an hour of study. Even naps as short as six minutes help (Campbell, 2014). Administrators need to look into setting later starting times, which have been repeatedly shown to increase achievement. And all of you reading this article need to get a good night's sleep to remember it.

Additional Comments for TEC Readers

This was an amazing finding for me. For most of my life, I have been trying to figure out why we sleep, and as late as 2000, no one could really explain why. Now we know. And there is more. Even newer findings have discovered that the brain does not just engage in learning consolidation during sleep; it also engages in freshening up.

Studies on mice (National Institute of Health, 2013) indicate that sleep helps restore the brain by flushing out toxins accumulated during waking hours. Glial cells, which manage this process, shrink during sleep, and cerebrospinal fluids, the clear liquid the brain lies in, flow through channels in the brain, taking away toxins and residues. One of the toxins, beta-amyloid, is associated with Alzheimer's disease, and this discovery may eventually lead to future treatments.

When I was a boy, and I was already trying to find out why we sleep, I asked my father. He responded by saying that we sleep in order for our body to refresh itself and get rid of dirty chemicals. He was passing on a common wisdom about muscles, which was later refuted by science. Sleep is not necessary for muscle replenishment, just sitting quietly will do. How coincidental that he was right after all, maybe not in terms of muscles, but in regard to what we now know about the brain!

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Language Teacher Research: Enlightenment or Academic Terrorism?

By Dr. Thomas S.C. Farrell

Introduction

In previous issues of TEC, I have written a lot about the importance of self-reflection where language teachers reflect not only on what they do but also *who* they are as human beings. In this issue, I want to address the growing popularity of "language teacher research," which has been encouraged by many academics; I really wonder if this is truly for the benefit of teachers or if they are being manipulated to concentrate on what the academics want to research.

Language Teacher Research

For a long time, teachers – regardless of what subject they are teaching – have often felt a lack of ownership of what and how they teach. Teachers have been told what to do by so-called experts, and this has been the tradition in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). In the field of TESOL, we have had to endure many years of publishers dominating conferences, selling (supposedly teacher-proof) textbooks that all teachers should follow without question. Some teachers have followed these books and the methods within without question, but others have begun to question some of these approaches because they feel a lack of self-worth in the whole process.

So now, language teachers are being encouraged (mostly by academics, but also supported by some administrators) to engage in "teacher research" in order to gain more ownership of what they do. However, there are so many different terms used to identify teacher research (e.g., teacher research, practitioner-research, action research, collaborative action research, exploratory practice) that we do not really know what (or who) we are referring

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to. Indeed, the presence of all these terms and how they are often used interchangeably is probably an indication that the "research" is being directed by academics who are interested in developing their own academic empires.

Academic Terrorism

When the word "research" is used in a publication, readers have particular expectations about what they will read in terms of the language that is used and how the research is presented. In most cases, research publications in education are written with a particular audience in mind: academics. Academics usually author these publications for many reasons, including their own academic advancement and the dissemination of their research results. Many of these academic publications related to teaching contain papers that explain why language teachers teach in the way they do. This is research *on* teachers *by* academics *for* academic audiences. Such papers may be fine in themselves because they may advance both the knowledge base of the profession and (of course) the career of the author. However, there is an uneasiness in the relationship between academics and teachers; Elliott (1991, p. 52) has gone so far as to say that "academics tend to behave like terrorists" when they play the "role of theoretical handmaiden of practitioners" because academics have hijacked the research process by reinterpreting it for their needs and to fit the theories they are formulating. In other words, the focus of the research is placed on what academics regard as important rather than the teacher. So what is really missing from the literature is the teacher's perspective

on what they consider important about what *they* do, or research *with* teachers, *by* teachers, and *for* teachers so that they can become enlightened about *their* practice.

Enlightenment

One of the main problems I have with the new push to encourage language teachers to engage in teacher research is that very issue of teacher perspective; the person at the center of *all* of the research seems to have been omitted in favor of what academics perceive as important, such as "fixing" some perceived problem in practice. I believe that it matters *who* the teacher is and that reflection is grounded in the beliefs that teachers are whole persons and teaching is not simply one-dimensional problem-solving, but is multi-dimensional and includes the *moral, ethical, spiritual,* and *aesthetic* aspects of our practice (Farrell, 2015).

When we teachers are encouraged to research our practice by academics, we are asked to examine our lessons and teaching techniques with the idea of improving our teaching mainly to achieve educational objectives that have been designed by others. Teacher researchers busily go about gathering data from classroom observations and the like so that they can examine their teaching from a technical perspective. However, the moral, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic aspects of what we do must also be taken into account if we are to transform our practice. I believe we cannot separate the teacher (person) from teaching (practice) because the teacher teaches in light of his or her life values or what he or she thinks is morally right. The only way that a teacher can "research" his or her practice from such a perspective is to engage in self-reflection (in the manner I have outlined in previous articles). We must be cautious of this recent call by academics for teachers to act as researchers because what may be efficient (and even effective) from a technical or methodological perspective may not be morally right for an individual teacher in a way that the teacher can maintain personal integrity (yes, we may

also wonder about an academic's personal integrity). I believe the process of self-reflection can facilitate language teachers in becoming who they want to be as a second language teacher more so than language teacher research can.

Conclusion

When teachers engage in teacher research (with or without academics) on what they consider important, classrooms become places where teacher learning flourishes because they have become enlightened (rather than manipulated) by the results of their research and reflection. From a TESOL perspective, I should point out that I am firmly planted on the side of the "T" (teaching and teacher) and as such have spent my whole career (both as an ESL teacher and teacher educator) reflecting *with* teachers, *for* teachers – not for academics.

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