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Erratum: In the last issue, Naheen Madarbakus-Ring's email was incorrectly given as nring@hotmail.ac.uk when it should be nring@hotmail.co.uk.

Suggestions and contributions to **tec@koreatesol.org**
The deadline for the Fall 2017 issue is 9 a.m., July 20, 2017.

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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.

Editorial

By Gil Coombe Editor-in-Chief

As summer vacation nears for many of us, it may be time to reflect back on the first half of the year. I don't mean the maelstrom of current events that get us talking over a beer or ranting on Facebook – impeachment, US-North Korean tensions, fine-dust pollution – but rather how things have gone in our classrooms and how things are going in our chosen profession. Around me, I see a number of my colleagues who are restless in their pursuit of knowledge and a greater command of teaching practice, leading them to join KOTESOL workshops, look for a new job to challenge them, or even head home to further their education. And while it is always sad to see them go, you can't help but admire that dedication and motivation.

So what about you? What are *you* seeking?

We can turn the question around and direct it at our students, of course. What are they looking for? Sometimes we may be too quick to define them by their short-term goals – a drunken MT weekend, that blind date tonight, heading back home for the holidays – and forget that, like anyone else, they have hopes and dreams for themselves. So what can our classes offer in that respect? What have we done to influence their long-term plans?

The latest issue of TEC may help to clarify some of those questions for you, as we have a number of interesting articles from motivated educators that may spur you to reconsider your professional aspirations or to implement improvements in the classroom to further your students' aspirations. We start with a trio of articles in the former category. First, Alasdair Couch takes a critical look at the usefulness of English immersion programs in Korea and comes to some sobering conclusions. This is followed by Geoffrey Butler's look at breaking into publishing, something that I'm sure many of our readers have considered as the next step in their careers. Finally, for those of us interested in curriculum design, Jocelyn Wright outlines her experience with a new course based around teaching computer skills in English. In addition to these articles, our regular column KOTESOL People interviews Gordon West, who provides his own perspective of teaching in Korea and the opportunities it offers educators.

In terms of classroom techniques, Colin Walker provides a step-by-step guide to teaching debate in English at a Korean university, while Christopher Redmond introduces the Facebook group Teacher Voices, a meeting place for instructors looking to swap ideas and activities. And returning to these pages is Christopher Miller with his book reviews, this time looking at a more practical offering, the British Council's *Creativity in the English Language Classroom.*

The issue is rounded out by two regular columns by experts in their field. Curtis Kelly returns with his second entry on brain-assisted language learning in ELT, this time looking at the relationship between learning, memory, and attention, while Thomas S.C. Farrell takes aim at the danger of using Twitter as a means of professional communication for teachers.

As always, my thanks go out to the contributors and especially to TEC's team of editors and proofreaders for their expertise and guidance. And I've needed it. It wasn't that long ago that I was wondering what I could do to further myself after 15 years teaching. It led me to editing, to KOTESOL, and to here, and now I have a new interest to pursue to keep the fires burning. So if you are feeling in the same boat, looking for something new, why not contact KOTESOL and see what you can jump into next?

President’s Message

By Lindsay Herron KOTESOL President

Happy summer! I hope you’ve enjoyed some great personal and professional growth throughout the term and that your spring semester is winding down well. I’m happy to remind you, though, that KOTESOL isn’t winding down; we have events scheduled throughout the summer. Just check our events calendar online to find a workshop near you!

This past spring has been a busy and enjoyable semester for our organization. At the TESOL International Conference in Seattle, Washington, USA, this past March, KOTESOL was honored with a special plaque celebrating our 25th anniversary, and I was pleased to accept it on the organization’s behalf. At the local level, nearly every chapter hosted an inspiring array of workshops and social events, and intrepid volunteers successfully coordinated new local discounts for our members. Last but not least, I’d like to applaud the hard-working committee and volunteers behind the FAB11 and KOTESOL National Conference 2017, which proved to be a truly phenomenal event. This two-day extravaganza at Sookmyung Women’s University in May attracted a wide variety of attendees and presenters from around the globe, including the renowned organizers of FAB, which is based in Japan. I hope the success of this event augurs well for future close collaborations with all of our partners, both domestic and international.

Keep an eye out this summer for information about myriad upcoming events! In August, pre-registration will open for the 2017 International Conference; in early September, nominations will open for national officers; and at the end of September, our Reflective Practice Special Interest Group (RP-SIG) is hosting a full day of RP workshops featuring one of the world’s foremost authorities on reflective practice [and TEC columnist! – Ed.], Dr. Tom Farrell.

I hope you can find some time this summer to relax and reflect. It’s also a great time to reconnect with your KOTESOL family – something that is sure to help refresh and rejuvenate you! We look forward to seeing you at another wonderful event soon.

English Immersion Programs in South Korea: Good Idea or Not?

By Alasdair Couch

This article aims to address questions arising from the South Korean Ministry of Education's (MOE) decision to ban English immersion (EI) classes for first- and second-graders. In South Korea, English is often seen to be integral to the country's future prosperity, so much so that former president Lee Myung-Bak made an attempt to implement a widespread English immersion policy requiring all classes in high school to be taught in English. Although the policy was not implemented, many private schools continued to teach subjects such as mathematics and sciences in English. Laws established in 2013 require that English language instruction in elementary schools can only commence in third and fourth grade with a restriction of two hours per week. The court's decision was supposedly based on "experts' opinions" that learning English at an early age would hinder the children's Korean uptake. This article will focus on what the literature says about early bilingualism and immersion programs before discussing whether the Korean government made the right decision to restrict immersion programs.

There has been a wealth of research done on immersion language programs going as far back as Lambert and Tucker's studies of French immersion (FI) programs in Quebec in the 1970s. In Korea, the type of program that has become subject to scrutiny is a partial immersion program with majority-language students who speak a dominant societal language. In this context the aim of the immersion program is to gain L2 (English) proficiency while maintaining the L1 (Korean), a process known as "additive bilingualism."

L1 Development

The primary reason for the Korean government's decision is the belief that learning an L2 will inhibit the development of the L1. Some bilinguals have smaller vocabularies than monolinguals and their lexical access may not be as rapid, but these are the only negative consequences of bilingualism that have been documented (Bialystok & Craik, 2010). Could these factors be what the anonymous "experts" were referring to, as quoted by the Korean MOE? If so, it should be noted that these are not developmental factors. In fact, there is a large amount of evidence contradicting the myth that learning an L2 hinders L1 development. For example, Cheng, Li, Kirby, Qiang, and Wade-Woolley (2010) conducted research on students from grades 2, 4, and 6 enrolled in partial EI programs in China. Three schools whose EI programs taught 30–40% of the curriculum in English and 60–70% in Chinese were included in the study. Learners were tested for English (listening, writing, and reading), Chinese, and Mathematics. The results showed that when compared with non-EI students, EI students achieved higher scores in English in all three grades. Both groups scored similarly in Chinese and mathematics in grades 2 and 4, but the EI group did better in grade 6. A similar 2.5-year-long study of German EI kindergarten programs (Bergstöm, Klatte, Steinbrink, & Lachmann, 2016) supported these findings. The children in EI programs developed better English receptive skills than those receiving conventional English instruction at no cost to their L1 development.

Critical Period Hypothesis

Penfield and Roberts (1959) hypothesized that there is a critical period (*critical period hypothesis,* CHP) during which children are able to acquire an L2 to native levels. Generally this period is considered to stop around puberty, and acquisition becomes much more difficult thereafter. Johnson and Newport (1989) studied native Chinese and Korean speakers, 50% of whom had moved to the USA aged 15 or under, while the remaining 50% arrived after 17 years old. Based on a grammaticality judgment test taken by the participants, they found that the learners who arrived later scored lower. Despite this evidence, Birdsong (1992) found that highly proficient English learners of French who had begun learning as adults were capable of achieving just as highly in grammaticality judgment tests as native French speakers. Research into CPH has also focused on other areas, such as the accents of first-generation immigrants in the USA (Oyama, 1976) and Japanese learners' speech perception (Larson-Hall, 2008). Both of the above studies showed that younger learners have an advantage over older learners. Despite the evidence showing an advantage for early starters, or that there is an age-related decline in second language acquisition, the existence of a fixed critical period has not been unequivocally proven (Hakuta, Bialystok, & Wiley, 2003).

Rate of Attainment

Despite the various advantages young language learners have, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence showing that late learners acquire language at a much faster rate than early learners. Muñoz (2006) conducted a long-term study on Catalonian students learning English in a non-immersion classroom setting with starting ages of 8, 11, and 14 years old. Data were collected after 200, 416, and 726 hours of instruction. The findings showed that students who had started learning later initially had a much faster rate of progress; towards the end of the study, the early starters progressed faster but did not catch up. Muñoz concludes that this is due to the explicit nature of learning in a classroom setting, which favors older learners who are more cognitively developed; in a naturalistic setting with much more exposure to the language, the results may have been different. Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle (1978) investigated the acquisition of Dutch by English speakers using three tests over a 10-month period, focusing on four age groups: 3-5 years, 8-10 years, 12-15 years, and adults. They found that the youngest age group achieved the lowest results in all the tests employed. In the first set of tests, the 12-15 year olds and the adults had the fastest rate of attainment, but by the end of the study the 8-10 year olds and the 12-15 years olds had acquired the most Dutch. While there is various research on French immersion programs in Canada showing that early immersion students outperform late immersion students, it should be noted that the gap between early and late immersion students lessens towards the end of secondary school (Genesee, 2004).

Muñoz (2006) argues that age effects on language acquisition vary depending on the particular aspect being studied. Older students have a faster rate of learning due to their advanced state of cognitive development, explaining why they do better when it comes to explicit learning. Learning a language at an early age, on the other hand, is of particular benefit for acquiring aspects of language that are best learned implicitly, but ultimately the benefits will normally only be evident with massive amounts of language input over a long period of time.

Cognitive Benefits: Executive Functioning

Bilinguals face a situation that monolinguals do not in that they have two languages available and are able to switch between them with relatively little trouble. Research into early bilingualism has shown that bilingual children develop enhanced executive control (Bialystok, 1988). When children were set a task to focus on grammatical mistakes in meaningful sentences, both the bilingual and monolingual children would spot the errors, but when the sentence was grammatically correct but contained a semantic anomaly (e.g., *Apples grow on noses*), the monolinguals would get distracted by the lexical error, whereas the bilinguals would remain focused on the grammar task, acknowledging that it was grammatically correct. The situation for immersion students is different because early bilingualism implies high L2 proficiency and a relatively balanced use of the two languages. Would this cognitive advantage also apply for students in an immersion program whose language use is unbalanced and not so proficient? In a study on 106 eight-year-old French students, half of whom had been enrolled in an EI program for three years, tests were carried out to assess both attentional and executive skills (Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013). The results showed that immersion students possessed cognitive advantages over monolinguals on tasks for alerting, auditory attention, divided attention, and mental flexibility, but not for response inhibition, interference inhibition, and the Simon effect.

Effects of Immersion Programs on Mathematical Achievement

At YoungHoon elementary school in South Korea, core subjects such as mathematics are taught in English. Would teaching mathematics in an L2 have a negative impact on students' results? Bournot-Trites and Reeder (2001) conducted a study in Vancouver on English speakers being taught mathematics in French, but evaluated in English. The participants were from two different French immersion (FI) groups being observed from grades four to seven. A treatment group of 45 students was taught 80% of the curriculum in French, including mathematics, and the remaining 20% in English. This resulted in the group receiving up to 250 hours of additional instruction in French per year throughout the study. A control group of 36 students received 50% instruction in French and 50% in English, including mathematics. The two groups were tested for mathematics achievement at the end of grade six. The treatment group, who received mathematics instruction in French, outperformed the control group. This evidence suggests that learning mathematics in an L2 can actually improve students' performance and that the knowledge acquired in an L2 can be applied in L1. This study makes a good case for immersion programs.

Discussion

The majority of evidence that we have seen so far would suggest that the Korean MOE might have made a mistake in imposing restrictions on EI programs; however, there are other factors that need to be considered before coming to any conclusions. While there is plenty of research showing the success of FI programs in Canada, a country with two national languages, there is no guarantee that this could be replicated in South Korea, a homogeneous, monocultural nation in which English is generally not used in everyday life.

Many of the benefits of starting to learn languages at an early age relate to acquiring native models of L2. Does it make sense to aim for native proficiency in English when three-quarters of the world's English speakers are non-native? Once we move away from native speaker models of English, the argument for early language learning loses its strength.

Multiple sociocultural factors also need to be considered. Private education is a massive industry in South Korea; according to the *ICEF Monitor,* over US$17.9 billion is spent on private education, accounting for 12% of consumer spending and nearly half of that is spent on English education. There is an incredible amount of pressure on students to perform well in academic studies resulting in many children studying from as early as 7 a.m. at school and until 10 p.m. at private *hagwons;* this can lead to self-induced sleep deprivation, which has been associated with depression and suicidal ideation (Kang et al., 2014). Most research into immersion programs has focused on results and measures of language acquisition. There needs to be research into how attending an immersion school in Korea would impact a child's wellbeing. How does studying in an L2 affect a child's motivation? Would the nature of the instruction be playful and implicitly focused? If immersion classes result in improved academic performance as suggested (Bournot-Trites & Reeder, 2001), would it result in parents reducing a child's extracurricular study obligations? These questions need to be answered before making decisions on the appropriateness of early immersion programs in Korea.

Taking into consideration the evidence that has been presented, I am very much in favor of children learning an L2 at an early age, but this depends entirely on the situation. There are a whole host of benefits that come with learning a language, but I believe it is important for children to have a choice in what language they study. If a six-year-old Korean child is enrolled in an EI program, the decision has most likely been made by the parents with societal expectations in mind. Self-determination theory in psychology proposes that we are more motivated to do something that we choose to do rather than something that has been imposed upon us. Research has also indicated that intrinsic factors such as autonomy have the most impact on language learners' motivation (Pae, 2008).

In conclusion, while I am not opposed to early immersion programs, in the case of South Korea, I am inclined to agree with Genessee (2004) that the introduction of bilingual education in higher grades would be adequate in monolingual countries. If long-term Korean–English bilingualism is supposed to be the outcome of these programs, then it needs to be determined whether this goal can actually be achieved before the programs can be deemed a worthwhile investment.

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The Author

Alasdair Couch commenced his TESOL career in South Korea back in 2008, teaching in Bucheon, Seoul, and finally at Chonnam National University in Gwangju before leaving the peninsula in 2014. He has since taught in Saudi Arabia and the UK. Most recently he obtained a master's degree in applied linguistics at the University of Nottingham, specializing in group dynamics in the language classroom. When he is not teaching English, Alasdair spends his time riding his bicycle in far flung places around the world. Email: alasdaircouch@gmail.com

Starting the Journey: Publishing for Beginners

By Geoffrey Butler

Publication can often seem like the distant destination of an arduous journey. As teachers, we often hear of "publish or perish" or see job postings that require candidates to submit proof of professional development. For example, the norm for non-tenure track university teaching positions in Japan is to require three publications from their candidates (McCrostie, 2010). Faced with these requirements, it is often easier to give up before beginning. Having had some success getting articles published, I thought that it would be worthwhile to share my thoughts and experiences on the matter. This article will address the reasons for publishing, define research in a way that makes it accessible, and provide some suggestions on how to begin the process.

Why Publish?

It might be useful to look at why we write for publication in the first place. We can easily look forward to the fruits of publication and miss out on the benefits of the writing process itself. In other words, we should focus on both the destination and the journey.

The first reason to publish is to share effective teaching practices with other teachers. As Palmer (1998) writes, our tendency is to shut the door on our classrooms, which contrasts with professions such as law or medicine where observation, sharing, and input are considered necessary for professional development. Palmer urges us to invite our colleagues into our classrooms and to have discussions about pedagogy. It seems to me that these discussions can occur in several different spaces: in the teacher's lounge between classes, by conducting workshops at conferences, and by sharing our practices through publication. If we find something to be useful in our practice, there is a good chance that others will as well.

Another reason to write is to reflect upon our practice. Reflection is the process by which teachers can make informed decisions that do not rely upon intuition, emotion, or otherwise hastily made conclusions (Farrell, 2012). While we often think of reflection as a process done alone or in private conversation with our colleagues, in my experience, I have found that publication has helped my colleagues and I to reflect upon our teaching practices. For example, when writing an article about our curriculum, we had to explain our decision-making to an audience that did not know our language center or learners. In having to describe our work to different audiences, we were engaging in deeper reflection on our practices than we might have done on our own.

Defining "Research"

Dörnyei (2007) introduced his book on research methodologies by describing a common image of research being limited to white-coated scientists running around with clipboards. The introduction goes on to refute this concept by providing teachers with resources to conduct their own classroom research. Brown (2001) also observes that, as an active teacher who is growing as a professional, "you are researching ideas all of the time, whether you realize it or not" (p. 437). If teachers study what goes on in their classrooms, it also follows that they should share their observations with other practitioners.

> **"In much the same way that a journey begins with a single step, publishing can begin with a single book review or activity share."**

Choosing a Topic

When moving into a position of teacher-as-researcher, it can be daunting to know where to begin. During graduate school, I attended a workshop on getting published and the presenter described the following possibilities for engaging in research during the workshop:

- What are you interested in?
- What questions come up in your teaching?
- What have you done in your classes that you think works really well?
- What do you present on?
- What "aha" moments have you had in class? (Cornwell, 2008, p. 8)

Considering these questions can make it easier to think of a topic to write on. They are basically the questions we discuss over coffee, during staff meetings, or at teaching conferences. When framing our thoughts in this way, it makes the journey seem much more possible.

In the same way that we learn to walk before we run, we can also begin to write in preparation for publication. There are lower-stakes forms of writing that can help you begin. Examples of such pieces can be book reviews, sharing classroom activities, or if you are already presenting, conference proceedings. Pursuing one of these genres of writing can provide good practice and may actually allow for greater freedom than a feature article would.

Choosing a Publication

Once you have an idea outlined, it might be good to begin researching journals. *How to Get Published in TESOL and Applied Linguistics Serials* (TESOL International Association, 2015) alone lists over 50 journals. I would suggest going through the list and seeing which ones are a match for your topic. Once you have selected a few journals, it is a good idea to consult some back issues to get a feel for their style; for example, prior to writing this piece, I dug out some back issues of *The English Connection.*

Be certain to carefully read their submission guidelines before writing. For example, most journals will have clearly stated word limits. My coauthors and I learned the hard way that it can be easier to work within a prescribed word limit rather than cutting a 10,000 word manuscript down to a 3,500 to 4,000 word submission.

Collaborating with Colleagues

At this juncture, it is also worth considering collaboration with colleagues. I have found that working with peers helps me to write better papers since one colleague's strengths often complement another's weaknesses. For example, I am a big-picture thinker and can produce writing fairly quickly. My weaknesses are a lack of attention to detail and making logical leaps that can be difficult to follow. Partnering with colleagues who are more detail-orientated can produce better articles.

Even if you do not write together, I would suggest asking friends, colleagues, or even former professors to read over early drafts before submission. I have found it helpful to ask at least three different people, both in and outside of my teaching context to read my work. A safe audience can provide constructive feedback and point out errors prior to submission.

If you feel less than confident about your academic writing skills, there are additional steps that you can take. Many journals require readers to help them screen and review papers prior to publication and will sometimes advertise this need within the pages of their publication; it can be as simple as sending an email to become a reader. Acting as a reader can help to build your own inner criteria for academic writing and introduces you to both the good and the bad of journal submissions. While a different form of publication, blogging can also be another low-stakes entry into writing for your peers. Teaching organizations and their special interest groups often feature blogs to stimulate discussion among their members.

Submitting

When you have completed a draft that you feel comfortable with, it is time to submit. When I began writing for publication, I thought that I would need to contact the journal prior to submission. This is actually an unnecessary step unless your manuscript topic is much different than those the journal usually publishes. However, if you are planning on reviewing a book for a journal, there are two reasons to contact them: (a) to check if a review of the book is already underway and (b) to see if the journal has a sample copy of the book available for review.

> **"I have found it helpful to ask at least three different people, both in and outside of my teaching context, to read my work. A safe audience can provide constructive feedback and point out errors prior to submission."**

Another important rule is to only submit a manuscript to one journal at a time. This makes sense, as reviewing manuscripts is a time-consuming process for editors and readers. In fact, many journals will require you to check a box or to state in your email that your manuscript is not under review elsewhere before considering it for publication.

The hardest part of the process, the waiting, begins after you have submitted your draft. It can take several weeks to hear back from editors and readers. Even a simple piece such as an activity share or a book review can take several months from when you begin writing to final publication. Other than suggesting patience, I have found that it can be useful to have multiple topics and ideas lined up. When you are waiting to hear back from one journal about one submission, it might be a good time to begin thinking about your next project.
When you have heard back from the editors, you will know whether or not they are interested in your idea;

if they are not interested, it can be easy to lose heart in the process and your work. While rejection is never easy, editors will often provide feedback on what works and does not work. For example, when my colleagues and I submitted a paper on our language center's curriculum, the editors suggested that our topic was too connected to our university. They suggested that we consider how we could make it more applicable to the field as a whole; we followed their suggestion and it made for a stronger paper.

If you feel that the journal is not interested in your writing, it does not mean that you need to scrap your idea completely. It can be your cue to reconsider, revise, and submit your paper to another journal. One of the articles I am most proud of was rejected in a matter of hours by a high profile journal. While dismayed, we returned to our manuscript and decided to separate it into two different papers and submit to different journals. We ended up with two much stronger published papers as a result.

If the editors are interested, the review process will begin. While the process can differ from journal to journal, here is a short summary based on my own experiences. (a) You submit to a journal and receive a confirmation email with a submission number and estimated time for initial screening. (b) Should your paper pass the initial screening, you will be contacted by an editor to let you know the progress of your submission. (c) Your submission will pass to a peer double-blind review, where it will be carefully read. They will recommend whether or not the paper should be published and give critical feedback for improvement. (d) The editor will contact you with the readers' feedback and let you know if the journal wishes to proceed with your article. Should they wish to do so, you will be asked to make revisions based on the readers' and editor's feedback. (e) You make revisions based on the feedback and submit your revised manuscript back to the editor. (f) They will contact you to let you know if the submission has been accepted for publication or not.

Depending on the journal, they might do the final proofreading and corrections for you or ask you to make those final corrections yourself. You might also need to sign an agreement that you are submitting your own work and are freely conferring the copyright to the journal.

"Our tendency is to shut the door on our classrooms, which contrasts with professions such as law or medicine where observation, sharing, and input are considered necessary for professional development."

Conclusion

Although I have only a few experiences and some minor successes in terms of publication, I have found the process to be a rewarding one. The difficulty with any sort of writing is that it requires practice to improve. The popular writer Lamott (1995) compared writing to the scales that aspiring musicians perform daily to improve their skills. I believe that the same is true of academic writing. It is only by practicing that we can improve and only by submitting that we can succeed. In much the same way that a journey begins with a single step, publishing can begin with a single book review or activity share.

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The Author

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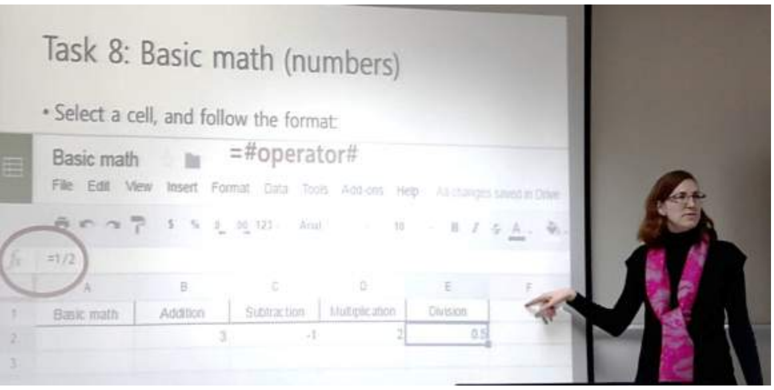
Designing Courses for Combined Literacy Development:
Teaching Computer Skills Through English

By Jocelyn Wright

Due to demographic changes and cutbacks to education, many universities are restructuring. This sometimes leads to curriculum revision within and/or across programs, and courses being merged, dropped, or newly developed as a consequence. Sometimes, our voices are heard, and if we can propose courses that appear practical and pertinent, we get the green light! This happened for me last year, and I opened Computer Essentials for Academic Purposes, an elective taught through English, in the fall semester.

Context

I chose this theme because I had observed that my English major students needed new ways to practice English and particularly lacked computer skills necessary for completing well-presented assignments. In informal needs assessment exchanges before course



▲ ***Explaining basic calculations***

approval, students also showed a keen interest, and registration soon validated this as places (26) filled up immediately. Although my intention was for this course to be offered to first-year students so they could learn skills that would help them excel in their future academic studies, in fact, many higher-level students also signed up, as they saw the potential value of this course for their career paths. Clearly, students in this department felt the need to develop their language and computer literacies as well as a desire for a new learning opportunity, despite the obvious dual challenge.

Course Design

Curriculum is a complex concept. With regard to a course, it basically refers to a plan for teaching and learning content, skills, values, and/or attitudes. There are many ways to approach curriculum design. Richards (2013) discusses three (forward, central, and backward) and their differing assumptions, practices, and implications for language teaching. He also comments on the essential design components, input (syllabus), process (methodology), and output (learning outcomes), and discusses their place in each approach. In the spirit of backward design, I followed Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) three-step process that emphasizes identifying results, determining evidence, and then planning learning experiences and teaching.

Results

I began by reflecting on what I hoped my students would be able to do at the end of the semester. Of course, given their major, I wanted them to be exposed to English and understand and use all four language skills more confidently. I also intended for them to gain experience in and practice doing academic activities, such as composing appropriate emails and online posts, doing research and interviews, making short videos, writing reviews and extended reports, and giving presentations. Last, I expected them to use computer applications to do these efficiently and effectively.

Evidence

Given that the course aimed for knowledge and skills acquisition, which require both theory and application, a mixed assessment model seemed most appropriate. Prompt language and technical feedback on in-class performance tasks and out-of-class reinforcement assignments served as individual formative assessment. As for summative assessment, traditional quizzes after each of the five major modules tested knowledge, although only the best four were graded. A culminating project done in groups assessed overall skills. It consisted of first choosing a topic (this time regarding the quality of life on campus or in town), then doing some preliminary secondary research, drafting a project plan, creating a survey, doing interviews to gather primary information, composing a full report based on the results, preparing a slideshow, and finally, sharing these findings in class.

Learning Experiences and Teaching

To facilitate instruction and learning, I opted for a blended teaching method, consisting of direct instruction (using both pedagogical and authentic materials) as well as inductive learning, and proceeding from preliminary individual study to cooperative reinforcement, which seemed appropriate given the course was mixed-level in ability.

I decided that Google, with its English-language option, free applications, and user-friendly interface would be suitable and democratic. In addition, it would be good preparation for students wishing to pursue computer licenses (e.g., MS Office) later on. Thus, over a span of 16 weeks, we studied and experimented with several key applications: Gmail, YouTube, Forms, Docs, Slides, and Sheets. I also introduced Google Translate (with a firm note of caution), Google Books, and Google Scholar, and a few non-Google applications (e.g., to learn how to make PDFs and QR codes, or find usable Creative Commons images). Because my students were most comfortable using Naver, many of these applications were truly new to them.

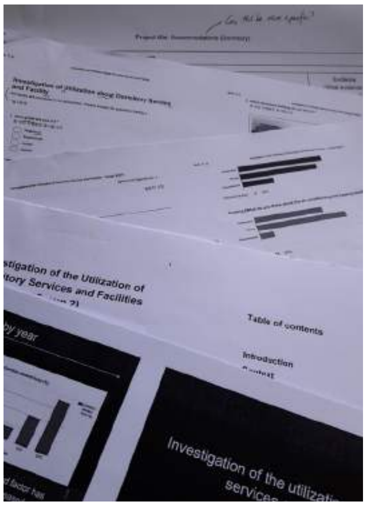
This practical course taught entirely in English was ambitious. However, the knowledge and skills were well scaffolded. Most classes involved a quick review before new content was introduced and tasks performed. Additionally, many elements taught at the beginning of the course were transferrable, which helped subsequent learning. Project work also involved peer-assisted recycling of computer applications and language review, made easy thanks to Google's sharing, synchronous collaboration, and editing options. All project tasks were also staged.

Finally, with regard to materials, Google has a learning center (https://gsuite.google.com/learning-center/) that provides tips and how-to guides (I especially liked their cheat sheets), and many tutorial videos are available on YouTube (and elsewhere) that can help students to learn. I took advantage of these resources and many others to reinforce theoretical aspects of my lessons as they provided for real opportunities for students to develop their English comprehension in addition to computer skills. However, I mostly designed my lectures around what I wanted students to be able to produce.

Conclusions

I enjoyed teaching this course as it pushed me to review and learn more about the selected applications. In the process, I made a few interesting discoveries. For example, I learned that YouTube has a Creator Studio feature, for managing dashboards, editing videos, reviewing analytics, etc. Although still limited, it is getting better. I came to know that Docs can be shared with up to 50 users at a time, which may be useful with large classes! With regard to Forms, I tried out some new settings that allow for quiz creation, which, in my opinion, made it both simpler and more sophisticated to use than Socrative (https://www.socrative.com/). I especially liked that there were more question types and easy teacher-controlled shuffling and feedback options. Additionally, I came to know about the laser pointer and the audience Q&A in Slides. With regard to the latter, though, I consider TodaysMeet (https://todaysmeet.com/), which I also used, to be more convenient.

Enthusiasm for the course was very high from the start and, I pleasantly discovered, increased as the semester progressed. On an anonymous survey at the end of the semester, all 25 respondents reported that the course had helped them to develop useful computer skills. At the same time, 96% stated that their English had improved. These high results are consistent with those at the midterm. In terms of particular skills, those most highly rated include listening skills, presentation skills, teamwork, and research skills. These match students' initial expectations although in somewhat lower proportions.



▲ ***Sample cumulative project elements***

Some hurdles anticipated and dealt with included the need to reserve a computer lab, as not all students had their own devices, occasional technical problems with hardware and software, class size, and students switching to Korean Google or using Naver when not under direct observation. One thing I will add to the beginning of the course the next time I open it is a specific lesson highlighting computer security and ethical issues, as, surprisingly, some students did not instinctively log out of accounts or recognize spam mail while others occasionally abused the privilege of anonymous settings when giving peer feedback although these points were touched upon over the semester. With this change, this already worthwhile course will be even more valuable, and I do look forward to teaching it again in 2017.

The Author

Jocelyn Wright has worked at Mokpo National University for more than eight years. She has an honor's degree in linguistics, a master's degree in education, and is also CELTA certified. Her many interests include curriculum, teaching methods, and materials development. Email: jocelynmnu@yahoo.com

Teaching Debate: A Task-Based Approach

By Colin Walker

In September, 2015, I was assigned to teach a Presentation and Debate course (영어발표와 토론) to third-year students in the Department of English Language and Literature at a mid-sized Christian university in Korea. In this article, I will outline my experience teaching debate and discuss some considerations.

I was given full autonomy over teaching methods and course content, which provoked feelings of apprehension for several reasons. First, I lacked experience teaching this type of course. Second, the attendance list revealed many familiar names from the Advanced Conversation course I had taught the previous semester – a course in which I had failed to meet students' expectations and received poor student evaluations. And finally, the students (17 Korean and 7 foreign advanced students) did not align well with the bulk of my professional experience, which was constrained to teaching Korean learners with low to intermediate levels of proficiency.

To begin, I solicited sample copies of EFL textbooks from various publishers but was surprised to see that most contained fill-in-the-blank exercises, listening activities, and short reading passages, some of which included meaningless clichés such as "speak clearly" and "make eye contact." Having taught in Korea for nearly a decade, I was aware that the methods that often accompany such content include grammar translation, audiolingual, and the ever-common initiation-response-feedback (IRF) approaches (e.g., Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Though familiar and perhaps comforting for students and teachers, the evaluations from the previous semester had indicated that students were looking for something creative, something that went beyond the tepid and banal. Ideally, I was looking for a textbook that would incorporate facets of task-based language learning (see Ellis, 2003).

> "Typically, three classes were reserved for each debate: two days for preparation and one day for the formal debate."

Searching "debate syllabus" on Google turned up a number of promising leads. Some went into elaborate detail casting students in various roles (e.g., judges, audience, moderator, debate captains, researchers), but the syllabus I found most appealing kept each class structure fairly routine: two debate teams with respective captain(s) and the instructor in the role of judge/moderator. Typically, three classes were reserved for each debate: two days for preparation and one day for the formal debate. On the first day, students would interact in pairs within their teams. On the second day, the teams would come together to finalize their three arguments. Finally, the third day would be reserved for the formal debate.

Knowing the number of students in the class, I was able to arrange the schedule so that each student would have an opportunity to co-captain a debate team. In this role, the student would collaborate with fellow classmates in the management of the team, with tasks including delegating responsibilities, soliciting group participation, and preparing a script and PowerPoint/Presi slideshow to be used in the formal debate. This was a nice starting point, but other key questions remained: what topics should be included, how would teams be decided, and should students be afforded the option of choosing their position in the debate?

Syllabus Design and Topic Selection

As noted above, the standard EFL coursebook seemed unfit to meet students' expectations. Browsing through Kyobo Bookstore, I came across *Pros & Cons: A Debater's Handbook* (Newman & Woolgar, 2014). It includes over 100 debate topics neatly arranged in categories that include Moral and Religious, Education, Culture and Sport, Philosophy/Political Theory, Constitutional/Governance, Politics and Economics, and Law and Crime. This well-written resource lays out each debate by listing the arguments and counter-arguments in two separate columns. The book does, unsurprisingly, contain topics most would deem contentious (e.g., euthanasia and abortion), so it might be best to either avoid these, or at a minimum, consult with your institution. In the first week, I chose a topic that examines individual liberty versus public well-being: *Smoking, the banning of.* To appeal directly to the Korean context, I altered the topic slightly: *Should smoking be banned in public streets such as Gangnam-ro?*

Step 1: Assigning Captains and Teams

Step 1 involves assigning students into teams and designating captains. During the first debate, it is not uncommon for students to make a number of requests:

▲ ***Day 1 – The Black team speaks in small groups or pairs to brainstorm ideas.***

Can I choose which side I want to be on in the debate? Is it possible to trade debate team members? I don't like the topic I have been assigned to captain; can I switch? In teaching Advanced Conversation, I did my best to accommodate students, often granting most requests. The problem, as I later learned, is that it took away from the structure and routine of the class and, in some cases, was construed as showing favoritism. As an alternative, I would urge instructors to arbitrarily determine the teams and captains.

In this class, for instance, I had all students draw from a deck of playing cards. There are 54 cards in a standard playing deck. I removed the two Jokers, 13 red-suited cards (Hearts), 13 black-suited cards (Clubs) plus the 2-of-Diamonds and the 2-of-Spades. The remaining cards included 12 red-suited cards and 12 black-suited cards: an equal number, one card for each of the 24 students in the class. Next, the students drew a card – those drawing red-suited cards on one team, those drawing black-suited cards on the other. Students who drew a King or a Queen were cast in the role of captains – two captains per team.

Step 2: Sharing Ideas and Collaboration

Once the teams are divided, students can begin to research arguments that will support their team's position in the debate. On Day 1, have the students brainstorm ideas that would defend their team's position in the debate. At this stage, begin by having students discuss ideas in small groups (2–3 people), then have the students change partners after 5–7 minutes. Doing so will give exposure to a variety of perspectives. From this, the students should be able to categorize their arguments into common themes. For homework, students should print out articles from respected sources that support their teams' position in the debate.

On Day 2, have the co-captains solicit opinions from their group members. Their goal at this juncture is to prepare a script that contains an introduction,

▲ ***Day 2 – The Red team begins to finalize their team's position in the debate.***

their team's three arguments, and a conclusion. For homework, the co-captains of each team prepare a short script and PowerPoint/Presi presentation that will be used for the formal debate in the following class. It is imperative that the captains rehearse their script in accordance with the time limits in the debate format shown in Table 1 below.

Step 3: The Formal Debate

On Day 3, begin by arranging the desks: two rows of desks on one side and two rows of desks on the other side of the room. The debate format presented below evenly distributes the workload of the captains. As such, the teacher can fairly evaluate each student.

Table 1: Debate Format

Team	Time	Who
1 Team Red Introduction	2 minutes 2 minutes	Captain 1 Red Captain 2 Red
2 Team Black Introduction	2 minutes 2 minutes	Captain 1 Black Captain 2 Black
3 Break – 6 minutes		
4 Team Red Rebuttal	2 minutes 2 minutes	Captain 1 Red Captain 2 Red
5 Team Black Rebuttal	2 minutes 2 minutes	Captain 1 Black Captain 2 Black
6 Break – 6 minutes		
7 Team Red Rebuttal – open remarks	4 minutes	Non-captain members
8 Team Black Rebuttal – open remarks	4 minutes	Non-captain members

In Part 1, the two captains from the Red team (i.e., the students who drew the King-of-Diamonds and the Queen-of-Diamonds) come to the podium to present their introduction. Begin by having one of the captains read while the other coordinates the PowerPoint/Presi. After two minutes, have the captains change roles. Repeat the same process for the Black team in Part 2. During this time, encourage non-captain members on both teams to take notes. In Part 3, have the captains convene with their respective teams to prepare a rebuttal. Parts 4 and 5 include the rebuttal from the respective captains. In Parts 7 and 8, give all non-

▲ ***Day 3 – The part of the formal debate where non-captain members are afforded opportunities to speak in the debate.***

captain members an opportunity to speak. This is a good opportunity to evaluate student participation – to see which students are willing to volunteer to speak; which students acknowledged the opinions of the opposition and were able to offer a counterargument? At the same time, the instructor should remain cognizant of over-participation and may intervene to solicit opinions from some of the quieter students in the class.

Results and Considerations

At the end of the semester, I eagerly looked over the course evaluation. Among the courses I had that semester, this course was rated the highest and served as a sort of vindication of the scathing reviews I had received from teaching Advanced Conversation the previous semester. The qualitative feedback was sincere, somewhat flattering. Still, there are points of caution to be shared. First, the methods involved call on students to take an active role in their learning, that is, finding newspaper articles, collaborating with team members, and soliciting/acknowledging the opinions of others. The instructor must have a clear means for evaluating this type of participation. I used the attendance sheet to jot down observations. At the end of the semester, I found it to be somewhat cluttered and disorganized. An alternative would be more efficient, for example, using a simple checklist to evaluate whether students have performed specific tasks. Second, the students had a tendency to inundate the opposition with detailed facts during the formal debate. Instruction is required on how to present facts in a more cohesive manner: beginning with broad statements and then transitioning to more specific examples could be beneficial, and a more effective, means of communication.

Conclusion

This article presented a three-step, task-based approach to teaching debate for advanced students using topics chosen from Newman and Woolgar's

"...the methods involved call on students to take an active role in their learning..."

(2014), *Pros & Cons: A Debater's Handbook.* I hope you find the ideas presented here useful in your debate classroom!

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Teacher Voices: The Online Hub of Professional Development

By Christopher Redmond

Professional development is arguably the most important activity that teachers engage in. Training courses stress the need for it, and we often peruse university websites to see what course could make us better teachers. On this very subject, there is a Facebook group by the name of Teacher Voices that "aims to provide a platform for English language professionals from around the world to share and exchange teaching and research information and ideas." We will review Teacher Voices according to whether or not it achieves these aims.

Teacher Voices (known by its members as "TV") was set up in April 2012 by Handoyo Widodo of State Polytechnic of Jember, Indonesia; Willy A. Renandya of NIE, Singapore; and Flora Debora of Petra Christian University, Indonesia. Its membership currently stands at over 8,000, and they have recently expressed a desire to reach the 10,000 mark. I myself have been a member of TV for about six months.

TV has met its ambitions in a highly impressive fashion. In fact, I have yet to encounter any other online professional development group with such a

lively and enthusiastic following. Updated several times a day, discussions on TV are rich and varied, as its multicultural members offer consistently valuable insights pertaining to their own teaching contexts. Members share activities that have been successful for them, research projects are posted with great regularity, topical issues such as the continuing debate surrounding native vs. non-native teachers are discussed at length, and information regarding upcoming conferences and calls for papers can easily be found in the carefully moderated timeline.

On a personal level, TV has been a tremendous outlet for my own thoughts about teaching and learning. Anytime I read something interesting related to either, TV is invariably the first place I post it. I have been involved in all kinds of discussions and debates, which in turn has enabled me to both validate and reformulate my own thoughts. I have learned a lot about numerous ELT contexts across Asia, and I have also been able to read the thoughts of the many internationally renowned scholars who frequent the page. Names like William Littlewood, Ahmar Mahboob, and Masaki Oda will be familiar to many people involved in TESOL research, not to mention the most active moderator, Willy A. Renandya.

As previously mentioned, TV is carefully monitored, which ensures that postings unrelated to professional development are swiftly deleted. It is not a page designed to teach people English, nor is it a page where informal abbreviations are acceptable. Don't expect to get away with writing "b4" or "gr8" on this forum, for you will be gently reprimanded if you do! This may seem somewhat draconian, but it ensures that an air of professional integrity is maintained, just as it ensures that its (mostly non-native) members are not misled by unfamiliar colloquialisms. While TV is not a resource for language learning, it contains such a rich variety of linguistic input that subconscious language learning is something of an inevitability.

With so many commendable traits, it would be foolish to sign off without urging you to join this rapidly growing hub of professional development. It is little wonder that one of its members recently described it as "the best forum for discussions and information about ELT and applied linguistics." As online teaching groups go, there is arguably nowhere better to be than Teacher Voices.

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KOTESOL People: Gordon West

Gordon West has taught in Korea at the private academy and university level, and has been an active presenter at KOTESOL events. He recently gave a very well-received plenary address at the Seoul Chapter Conference. The English Connection then caught up with him for this interview. — Interview by Julian Warmington

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

I majored in global studies in university with an emphasis on urban planning and geography, and after graduating in 2008, I found myself working as a cook because there were no jobs to be had anywhere. I was also active in working with activist groups like the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. Just before coming to Korea, I was spending time in Arizona with border activists.

TEC: What was your impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane?

My first impression was that it was colder than I had expected! I arrived late at night, and when I was dropped at my apartment, no one showed me how to turn on the heat. I spent the night huddled in bed in all my clothes and winter gear thinking that Korean apartments were really cold. Seoul itself was fantastic. I had studied Seoul in my urban planning classes and was anxious to see in person what it was like. From an American perspective, it was a dream. The public transit system is superb, and it was a much more vibrant city than I ever could have expected.

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

I might be in the minority of loving the business of Seoul. I always need to be moving, and I appreciate how fast things move here. I also really love teaching kids here. I've talked and written before about the tensions of teaching at a *hagwon* and how conflicted I felt in my position in furthering the English divide, but the one thing *hagwons* did afford me was the chance to work for multiple years with the same group of students, and during that time, I got to know their families and feel like I had a bigger impact on their lives. Of course, my wish is for every teacher and student to be able to have that same connection, rather than opportunities being limited to a few students who can afford expensive academies and more opportunities for teachers who don't fit the blonde hair, blue-eyed, North American "native speaker" mold.

Currently I am making the transition back to the US. I'll be pursuing a PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in their Second Language Acquisition program. For the past few years, I was working for the Sookmyung YL-TESOL program. I really enjoyed teaching there and couldn't ask for a better group of colleagues. I plan to remain active in Korea even after my move, continuing to do research, teach, and attend conferences every chance I get.

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

I was always looking for something more than punching the clock, and I got a bit tired of the standard, rather negative, teacher-room talk. I found a much more professional and positive atmosphere at KOTESOL. I started attending the International Conferences in 2010 and finally presented my own work in 2011 at the Daejeon-Chungcheong Thanksgiving Symposium. There, I met Michael Griffin, who introduced me to the Reflective Practice SIG. Finding the RP-SIG was a turning point for me, and the group of people I met there in 2012 really helped me to find my passion in this field and focus on the potential future that teaching offered.

TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL? Why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?

I think the biggest benefit for me has been finding a positive sense of community that encourages growth and development. Korea can be an isolating place to work, depending on your workplace environment. It helps to have a place to go when you feel overwhelmed or frustrated, or even when you are just looking for a good group of colleagues to bounce ideas off of.

I would really recommend people who are looking at KOTESOL to also look at getting involved in a SIG. As I mentioned before, I really felt like I found a home in the RP-SIG, which I know is still active and has excellent people managing it. I have also more recently found the Social Justice SIG to be a great place to exchange ideas for those of us who care about and want to find ways to practice social justice in our professional lives. I'd encourage everyone interested to seek out their Facebook group, and I'd like to give a big thank-you to Jocelyn Wright for setting up the group and helping to make sure it remains a welcoming and active community.

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

I am not sure how much of a contribution I've made to the organization overall, but the main way I've tried to contribute to the community has been as a voice for social justice. I have been keenly aware of my own privilege while working in Korea. I tick almost every box of privilege for working in TESOL in Korea: white, male, North American, even blonde haired and blue-eyed to boot! It's important to understand our own positioning in this environment and to work to improve our field. I hope that I've helped people to reflect on this in some of my conference workshops, and also helped them to think about how they can practice in socially just ways, given their position here in Korea as teachers of EFL.

TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?

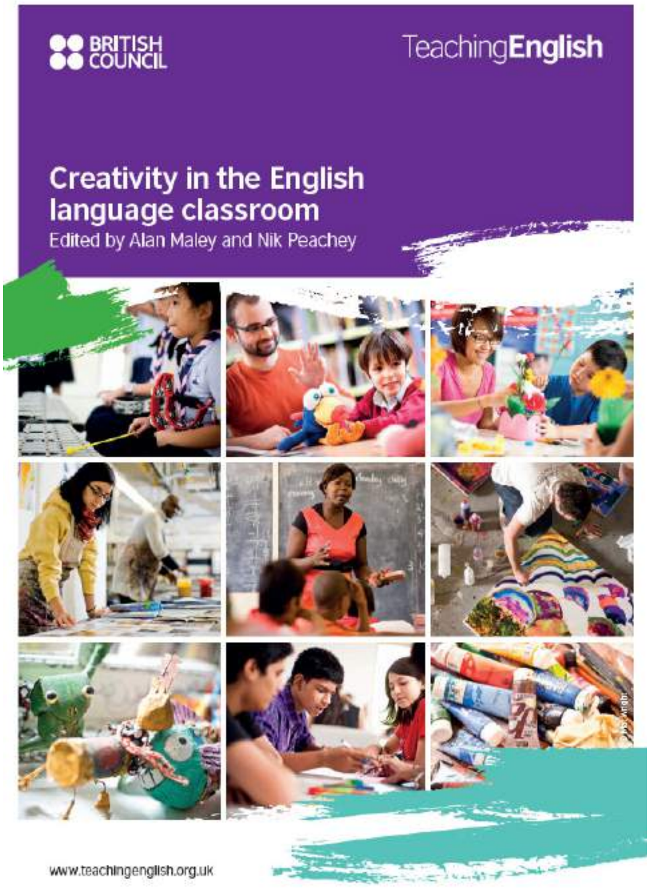
Building a bit on my last answer, I'd say that it would be great to have more focus on advocacy on social justice issues in Korea related to TESOL. I think we've seen this a bit more at the international TESOL level, but I think that, as professionals, we have a duty to speak out to improve the educational environment for teachers and students in Korea. This would mean trying to do more to fight native-speakerism, racism in hiring, and unequal access to English language education that currently contributes to ever-deepening divisions in Korean society. It is great to focus on developing as professionals and improving our teaching, but as a group of professionals, it is also necessary to reflect on our position in society. In what ways are we helping to improve the lives of our students and our own positions, and in what ways could we do more to improve our field?

> **"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."**

Book Review
Creativity in the English Language Classroom (2015)

Edited by Alan Maley & Nic Peachey
Reviewed by Christopher Miller

The British Council has offered another resource free to teachers. *Creativity in the English Language Classroom* offers teachers a broad array of activities and curriculum design considerations to help student and teacher alike become more creative. This edition features 18 chapters from both classroom teachers and well-known ELT authors such as Kathleen Bailey and Brian Tomlinson. The book is full of resources that can potentially be used with learners from beginner to advanced. The editors take a broad view of creativity and its potential applications in the classroom, as Maley and Peachey state: "creativity is not something… reserved for a specific part of a course…it is something which can and should be integrated into every aspect of our classroom practice" (p. 4). This review will address the organization, strengths, and a few deficiencies of the book with recommendations for possible future editions dealing with a similar theme.



Organization is not explicitly stated in this publication. There are 18 separate chapters, but it is unclear to the reader initially how these contributions relate to each other beside the basic theme of creativity. To the editor's credit, selections appearing early in the volume, such as Maley's "Overview: The What, the Why and the How," provide a good grounding of foundational constructs pertaining to creativity as well as a discussion of the role of creativity in academic discourse in the second half of the 20th century. Chapter 3, by Carol Read, provides seven pillars of creativity, which include promoting self-esteem, teacher modeling, and strategically employing questioning strategies. Overall, this volume could have been strengthened by providing some initial organization for the sequence of the chapters. For example, Brian Thomlinson's selection "Challenging Teachers to Use Their Coursebook Creatively" could have been placed near Marisa Constantinides' Chapter 12 selection, "Creating Creative Teachers."

> "In this age of discrete testing and results-oriented teaching approaches, creativity, due to its ambiguous nature, is easy to neglect."

Nevertheless, this volume has multiple strengths. It is perhaps strongest when providing one-off activities, such as those provided in Marjorie Rosenberg's chapter, "The Learner as a Creativity Resource." Rosenberg provides activities heavy on collaboration and peer teaching. Similar activities abound in other chapters, perhaps most prominently in the chapters by Judit Feher, Kathleen Bailey and Anita Krishnan, and Zarina Markova. There are literally dozens of such activities interspersed throughout this publication.

To some degree, when a chapter addresses broader issues, such as designing curriculum that provides students with greater opportunities to utilize creativity, this volume is less impressive. Peter Lutzker attempts to describe his 10-lesson unit on writing and Victoria Hlenschi-Stroie describes her use of drama for a unit focused on writing. While Lutzker's selection does provide prompts to help the reader understand how he implements certain techniques and strategies in his class, the reader is often confused as to how his lessons are sequenced and organized; additionally, the reader is left with an incomplete understanding of how Lutzker intends to assess his students. Hlenschi-Stroie's contribution, while alluding to a unit plan, primarily consists of a series of activities that do not necessarily have a clear connection to each other in the context of the unit plan.

Phuong thi Ahn Le provides a strong contribution dealing with a broader, unit-long perspective. Her selection, entitled "Fostering Learners' Voices in Literature Classes in an Asian Context" (Chapter 15), addresses primarily her questioning strategies to elicit responses from students. Le explicitly describes the materials she uses (i.e., a wide range of Western poetry), specific questions she asks learners during the pre-, during-, and post-lesson stages; how the students can display their comprehension of the material; and examples of student output. The author provides a personalized poem by one of her students modeled after Robert Frost's famous poem "Acquainted with the Night," with the title modified to "Acquainted with the Difficulties."

There are a series of limitations with this book. The scope is quite broad. At times, the activities are possibly too basic, such as an activity suggestion appearing in Bailey and Krishnan's chapter: Have students design a name placard at the beginning of the semester (p. 86–87). This occurs a few times in other chapters as well. For example, Feher provides a pronunciation awareness-raising activity based on tongue twisters (p. 67), which at a very minimum is pedagogically suspect. This book would have benefited from greater organization on two fronts to save time for busy teachers: first, greater organization among the chapters and, secondly, an index organizing and categorizing the large number of activities provided. Nation and Newton (2009) used a similar approach in their book, *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*.

Despite these limitations, *Creativity in the English Language Classroom* has much to offer the reader. In this age of discrete testing and results-oriented teaching approaches, creativity is easy to neglect due to its ambiguous nature. However, this can do substantial harm to learners, for example, by decreasing learner motivation. Bichsel, contrasting his experiences learning French, which was rather unpleasant for him, to learning English, shows the possibilities the ELT instructor has for enlivening and stimulating our learners: "Learning English was for me the realization of a boy's dreams…a language that not only opened a new world, but far more than that, gave me the possibility to take on a new role, a form of acting, a faint breath of change, a faint remembering of the human dream of becoming someone else. I don't have to be someone in this language; instead, I am allowed to play" (as cited by Lutzker, p. 136). Given the unique circumstances of many ELT instructors in South Korea, we as teachers should be keen for the opportunity to let our students creatively play with the language. This book can help facilitate that pursuit. Available as a free pdf download from: www.britishcouncil.org

"Given the unique circumstances of many ELT instructors in South Korea, we as teachers should be keen for the opportunity to let our students creatively play with the language."

https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/ec/files/F004_ELT_Creativity_FINAL_v2%20WEB.pdf

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On the BALL: Brain-Assisted Language Learning for the ELT Classroom

Part 2: Learning, Memory, and Attention

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

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

As teachers, we are in the learning business. Learning, in simple terms, means memory formation. Memory formation means neurons connecting to each other through synapses, or the strengthening or pruning of those connections that already exist. Strengthening involves increasing the number of synapses between two neurons, shedding others, adding more receptors to synapses, or myelinating long axons, which can increase the firing speed up to a hundred times (Hartline & Colman, 2007). It is misleading to think of the brain as being like a computer, and it is misleading to think of neurons as being simple electric circuits. Each of the thousands of synapses on a neuron has its own complex mix of hundreds of types of receptors, which are also heavily influenced by the cocktail of neurotransmitters they are bathed in. It is more appropriate to think of each single neuron as a computer.

Likewise, it is wrong to think of the brain as being hardwired. We are born with almost all our neurons already formed, but with only 20% of the connections between them in place. Unlike connections in computers, those between neurons are not permanent. Infants, for example, start with everything connected, and up until the age of five, they shed more connections than they make in a kind of fine tuning. In fact, babies are born as "citizens of the world," with the ability – meaning neural connections – to hear any phoneme in any language (Kuhl, 2004). The neural connections for sounds that are not reinforced by L1 input, such as "L-R" differences for Japanese, are lost.

In fact, the highly plastic nature of the brain is why we can learn so much. Another aspect of learning and plasticity is the fascinating way the brain takes parts that evolved for one purpose and reuses them in others. Whereas we once believed that specific brain areas had specific functions, that notion has been overturned by the massive redeployment (or neural reuse) hypothesis (Anderson, 2010). The brain is adept at cobbling together networks originally developed for one purpose into a variety of coalitions that are used for new purposes. For example, one small part of the brain, the left inferior parietal sulcus, seems to have evolved to manage your fingers. It identifies which finger is touched, but it is also recruited for use in higher-level functions involving organization, like figuring out the relative size of numbers.

Language also uses many parts of the brain that originally evolved for other functions, including the sensory cortices. The fact that we can take the same sensory systems we use to interpret incoming information and repurpose them to store episodic memory and process language is an amazing

achievement. Not so amazing is our inability to talk on the phone and drive safely at the same time; the same areas in the visual cortex required for visual vigilance are decoupled to simulate verbal meaning (Bergen, 2012). In other words, do not read this while driving.

Getting back to memory formation, as a reader, you just made thousands of new connections (I hope) reading the paragraph above, but you will not be able to keep them very long. Almost all of what you read might have gone into short-term memory, but only a small part of it, or maybe none at all, will go into long-term memory. (Disclaimer: Short-term and long-term memory do not really exist in the brain. These are just notions we have developed to frame long-term potentiation.) You are bound to forget most of this article even before you finish it, and you'll forget more each hour afterwards. Some of it might be retained longer, and over the next two weeks, some of it might even be integrated into the rest of what you know, meaning you will probably keep the gist of it for the rest of your life. Something happens to some short-term memories that make them long-term, and if we can find out what that is, then we have discovered the holy grail of teaching.

The first step in forming any kind of memory is paying attention. With hundreds of bits of data entering our sensory system at any given moment, we have to filter out the little bit that is important and send it on for further processing. This is handled by the reticular activating system located in the brain stem, but which is also connected to everywhere else. This filter passes on sensory information related to personal relevance, recent executive thinking, and novelty, among other things (Willis, 2007).

The brain's sensitivity to personal relevance is extremely important for teachers, and should be taken advantage of more in materials development. Emotion and cognition are the same thing (Pessoa, 2013), and all memories have an emotional valence. Therefore, all input automatically gets tagged as relevant to us or not. That determines whether we send it up for further processing and memory or not.

Novelty, which is something else the brain is particularly sensitive to, is another factor teachers should take advantage of. We evolved a sensitivity to novelty as a way to survive. A mouse coming out of its hole and noticing a subtle change in its surroundings is less likely to be eaten and more likely to find something tasty to eat. Novelty causes dopamine release (Goldberg, 2002), which is a neurotransmitter associated with deeper learning. By putting learning targets in novel packages, such as having students repeat fruit vocabulary and then sticking the word "gorilla" into the middle of the word list, leads to a greater retention of not just the new item, but the fruit words as well.

Episodic memory, the way we remember past events, is highly faulty, but for a good reason (Schacter, 2012). Our brains are prediction machines, constantly determining what will happen in the next moments of our personal futures. ("If I do this, this will happen." "If I do my Audrey smile, he will be putty in my hands.") And the ability to predict is the sole reason we have memory. Being able to record every memory perfectly and separately does not aid prediction much; it is far too detailed. Combined and generalized gist memory is faster, and we can use it to predict the outcomes of novel situations, even those we have never experienced before. This is why we are good at remembering what things mean and how they might be related to other things, but weak at remembering the details. Interestingly, computers have the opposite capabilities.

So, what is the offshoot of faulty memory for teachers? It helps to make sure you have your students' full attention when you tell them the things you want them to remember. Our age-old secret weapon, "This will be on the test," works wonders for this purpose. Another thing we do is provide high quality cueing, as through multisensory input. Then, since emotional valence drives retention, we should give what Krashen (2011) now refers to as "compelling input" rather than just "comprehensible input." Nor should we forget that novelty causes dopamine release and better retention of even the less novel things associated with it. Finally, spaced repetition increases retention as well. Rather than giving all the content in one session, spreading it out over two or more makes the related networks reactivate and consolidates the connections:

> It sounds unassuming, but spaced repetition produces impressive results. Eighth-grade history students who relied on a spaced approach to learning had nearly double the retention rate of students who studied the same material in a consolidated unit, reported researchers from the University of California–San Diego in 2007. (Pashler et al., 2007, cited in Paul, 2013)

The above factors of learning – novelty, spaced repetition, personal relevance, motivation – have long been an important part of our teaching toolbox. We have never really been able to say why, though. Now we know why. Our brains are built to remember certain things and forget the rest, and we need to remember this as teachers.

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"[The problem] with reflective practice is that it often ends up in the teacher's head, not shared": Reflecting on TESOL Twitter Bytes

by Thomas S.C. Farrell

Introduction

Recently a friend was alerted to a Twitter comment that one of the main speakers at a major conference made (which is also the title of this article, although I added full words); the comment that was widely shared is: "[The problem] with reflective practice is that it often ends up in the teacher's head, not shared." The friend asked me what my reaction to this comment was. Of course, I realize that this is but one sentence and decontextualized, and so I wondered what the context was that the sentence was plucked from. When thus prompted, my friend then gave me further background that the speaker provided in the talk but not in the Twitter comment, that a "problem" with reflective practice is the problems of teacher isolation and that the discoveries in reflective practice seldom go beyond the individual teacher; according to my friend, the speaker's main presentation centered on teacher learning communities. I have several reactions, including recognizing the danger of the Twitter bytes of information that emanate from conferences, but this is subordinate to my main reaction, which is more detailed as it concerns some of the ignorance that surrounds what reflective practice is and what it can do for language teachers.

"Yes, we can share our reflections with other teachers, but what we share now as a result of self-reflection is the strong sense of personal identity that infuses our work."

Twitter

First, let me confess that I do not use Twitter and only occasionally read the bytes of information that appear there (usually in one or two sentences with a maximum of 140 characters in a tweet). It seems to be a powerful social media networking mechanism and, for that reason alone, is very useful in instantly connecting language teachers from around the globe. It also seems to be an excellent form of self-promotion and many businesses are successfully using it in such a manner to promote their products. There are many more advantages of using Twitter for language teachers, I am sure, but from my (limited) observations the limitation of 140 characters leads to my main worry about this new form of "communication" for language teachers, which is that the comments, by their nature, are decontextualized. Thus, there often seems to be a need to come up with sensational one-liners about teaching and learning such as the tweet I am addressing in this article. However, those who have been involved with teaching and learning a second or foreign language know how complex this is in terms of teaching and learning, and I believe they do not do justice to all the research that is ongoing that proves there are no simple cause-effect solutions nor answers to complicated issues such as teachers reflecting on their practice.

The Tweet: "...it often ends up in the teacher's head"

Looking at this tweet bite (and not the context that was provided as it was not provided in the original tweet I was shown), one reads immediately that reflective practice has a big problem: *"it often ends up in the teacher's head"* and is not shared. I am not sure if the speaker really understands why engaging in reflective

> **"We in the TESOL profession must be careful of always looking for sensational one-liners (encouraged by the limit of 140 characters) that are decontextualized and may be misleading to others reading them."**

practice is important for individual teachers, but it (i.e., self-reflection) *should* end up in the teacher's head. Teachers engage in self-reflection with the idea of gaining self-understanding and self-knowledge, which is in *itself* a valid means of knowledge generation because the resulting self-awareness will provide such knowledge (Farrell, 2015). Some may say that such self-reflection is self-indulgent (as the tweet perhaps may be alluding to?), but as Palmer (1998, p. 3) correctly notes, "The work required to 'know thyself' is neither selfish nor narcissistic. Whatever self-knowledge we attain as teachers will serve our students and our scholarship well. Good teaching requires self-knowledge; it is a secret hidden in plain sight." Which brings me to my final point about the importance of such self-reflection: it never really just stays in a teacher's head because it goes beyond the teacher to his/her *students,* and who better to benefit than our students? I think in all the discussions related to encouraging TESOL teachers to engage in reflecting on their practice, we have somehow forgotten that the main reason for this is that our students will benefit as we become more aware of our practice so we can provide more learning opportunities for our students. Yes, we can share our reflections with other teachers, but what we share now as a result of self-reflection is the strong sense of personal identity that infuses our work.

Conclusion

In this article, I have cautioned that although Twitter may be a wonderful means of networking and promotion among teachers worldwide, we in the TESOL profession must be careful of always looking for sensational one-liners (because of the limit of 140 characters – of course, there is a lot more I could have said in this article, but I too am restricted by space) that are decontextualized and may be misleading to others reading them. I used one particular recent tweet that was brought to my attention because it was related to a perceived "problem" with reflective practice in that it ends up in a teacher's head and thus may not be useful. However, I have attempted to point out that the result of such self-reflection will not just stay in a teacher's head because his or her students will be the ultimate beneficiaries of such engagement in reflective practice. As Palmer (1998, p. 2) relays, "Knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject."

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