

The English Connection

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*Garth on preparing conversation activities with Google
Ptak, Redmond, and MacKinnon address socio-cultural issues in Korea
Rebuck and Phillips provide multiple written feedback techniques*

Regular Columns:

Farrell discusses English-medium instruction issues

Kelly explains the importance of working memory



KOTESOL
대한영어교육학회



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Editorial – <i>by Dr. Andrew White</i>	4
President’s Message – <i>by Dr. David E. Shaffer</i>	5
Features	
Introducing: The 27th Annual Korea TESOL International Conference <i>by Grace H. Wang</i>	6
Google Forms and Form Publisher: Reducing Speaking Activities’ Setup Time <i>by Andrew Garth</i>	8
Spotlight on an At-Risk Student in an English Classroom <i>by Stephanie Ptak</i>	10
Challenging Two Common Beliefs About Korean Education <i>by Chris Redmond</i>	12
Teaching North Korean Refugees: Knowing Your Students <i>by Patty MacKinnon</i>	14
Futile Feedback? Writing Feedback to Encourage Student Engagement <i>by Mark Rebeck</i>	17
Six Ways to Give Feedback on Writing for Improvement and Engagement <i>by Jeremy Phillips</i>	20
Being Mindful of Air Pollution: A Lesson Plan for Summer Camps <i>by Crystal S. Cho Jones</i>	22
Regular Columns	
“I Don’t Teach Language; I Teach Physics”: Reflecting on English-Medium Instruction <i>by Dr. Thomas S.C. Farrell</i>	24
The Brain Connection: Bad Attitude or Weak Working Memory? <i>by Dr. Curtis Kelly</i>	26



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

By **Dr. Andrew White** Editor-in-Chief

Early summer – the season that shows what drastic changes in weather Korea can throw us, as the long paddings in the closet have just recently been moved back into storage and replaced with T-shirts. Yet, we embrace this ubiquitous, oft-clichéd changing in our host-land’s distinct four seasons as we prepare for the sweltering days of summer, even with our memories of piled snow banks and frigid mornings so recent.

This summer–winter contrast is analogous with the multiple views on English language teaching, I believe, and as informed teachers, we should be aware of, even stake our position in, the spectrum on the teaching cline, based on our opinions, our experiences, and the supporting research in ELT. As illustration of this “baggage” that we bring, even such a seemingly unassuming statement as “teaching English in Korea” can break down to disparity. What does teaching mean? Teaching it how? What kind of English and who owns it? In Korea, to whom? All of these questions are connected to a diverse range of subjects including psychology, socio-linguistics, gender and minority studies, geo-politics, computer-assisted language learning, and many more, all running through our own filter in our unique social environment.



Principle practices in the ELT field (such as deductive/inductive learning and implicit/explicit grammar instruction, teacher-led/student-led classrooms, explicit/implicit grammar teaching) are often (detrimentally) presented in the ELT field as binary choices; extreme ends of the English teaching cline that somehow have to underpin our teaching/learning philosophy (labels like *blended* and *mixed methods* are becoming more vogue). Critical positions we exhibit, either consciously or subconsciously, on degrees and usage in teacher talk, slang, World Englishes, current events, politics, and so on... work to categorize us as we go about our jobs, often with weighted and sometimes misunderstood descriptive labels (think of *neutral*, *aware*, *progressive*, *active*, *reactionary*, *alternative*). Yet, in our field of ELT, hypotheses and theories are many and laws few, thus helping to fuel the research that is the cornerstone of KOTESOL’s goals: to assist members in their self-development and to improve ELT in Korea. The articles within this magazine are prime examples of various perspectives in our field. Additionally, Grace Wang speaks more on this teacher-fueled research while promoting the International Conference 2019 in a couple of pages: “Teachers at the grassroots level, rather than researchers in ivory towers, are being recognized as the best authorities on what constitutes ‘best’ in ELT for their local contexts.”

It is within this dynamic of sharing informed ideas and thought that we must, while having a sense of our personal place on the spectrum, also have a mindful awareness and understanding of others’ positions on such matters related to improving our students’ English, even if such views are distant or even contradictory to our own. “Different roads sometimes lead to the same castle,” said George R. R. Martin (I cannot promise this is not a *Game of Thrones* spoiler) with a sort of Devil’s advocacy understanding and respect being the different roads, and our students’ improved English the castle. Despite any perceived contrasts, our goal as teachers is the same; it is in our methods we may differ.

There are several diverse roads taken to the castle in this summer edition of TEC, and I hope they provide you with thoughtful perspectives on “teaching English in Korea.” Some might support your own ELT views, others might challenge them. Some might even sway you left or right on the cline. I believe these are all good things. But the major takeaway is respect for the varied approaches by others that fall on the cline; all, it is assumed, with informed “baggage” packed for heading towards the castle.

On his preparations for his role as Chewbacca in the Star Wars franchise, the late British-American actor Peter Mayhew said, “You have to do some research, but the questions are easy enough if you think about them.” Our field is not rocket science, but in the “questions” and “thinking about them” lies the quandary. While I’m not disparaging research, as compassionate teachers there is gut involved, and our classroom methods and practices can stem from variables more personal and subjective than facts and studies (the support from scientific research can always be found later). As a result comes the diversity of approaches on the spectrum we should all be mindful of and embrace. Mayhew’s iconic Wookiee perhaps said it best: “AAARARRRGWWWH.” And I think we can all agree upon that!

President's Message

By Dr. David E. Shaffer KOTESOL President

This spring has been wonderful for Korea and for KOTESOL. The weather has been beautiful for hosting a season full of chapter workshops across the peninsula, chapter conferences in three corners of the nation, and just recently our spring National Conference in Jeonju. KOTESOL works hard to bring to its members informative, top-quality conferencing events that lead to strengthening learning in the EFL classroom, and to do it at as little cost to our members as possible. I hope you had the opportunity at the National Conference to hear, or even talk with, plenary speaker Jack C. Richards – selected by TESOL as one of the most influential individuals in the TESOL profession in the past 50 years. We were quite fortunate to have had him.



I wish to thank Aaron Snowberger, Allison Bill, and their team for a memorable National Conference. As well, I thank Gwangju-Jeonnam, Seoul, and Busan-Gyeongnam Chapters for the superb conferences they have organized, and all of the chapters for the fine array of events they have hosted throughout the spring. So many members have been volunteering so much time to provide such beneficial events. It is this volunteerism that makes KOTESOL strong. This admirably exemplifies the meaning of “Teachers Helping Teachers.”

Summer

Haji (하지, the summer solstice) will soon be upon us, bringing with it the distinctive sound of the cicadas (according to ancient records). It also signals a change in teaching schedules for many: summer courses, summer English “camps,” and summer vacations. I hope that you are planning on allocating some of your summer downtime for reflective practice and professional development as the cicadas chirp outside the window. I also hope that you take advantage of the KOTESOL chapter events scheduled for the summer: monthly workshops and summer social-cum-networking events.

International Conference

As the Bok-nal (복날, dog days) of summer set in, the International Conference Committee folks will be toiling away, making preparations for this October 12–13 event. The conference will feature as plenary speakers two teachers, authors, and researchers who are known around the world for their contributions to ELT: Rod Ellis and Andrew D. Cohen. This year’s premier event will also feature two timely panel discussions: one four-member panel on “Women in Leadership in Korea” and the other spotlighting an international panel discussing “Women in Leadership in ELT.” You won’t want to miss these and a cornucopia of copious presentations for you to “harvest.” Thank-yous go out to Grace Wang, Michael Free, and their team for the ongoing efforts towards a fabulous KOTESOL IC 2019. Don’t forget to register this summer at the lower pre-registration fees.

What’s New

In the ever-evolving dynamic that is KOTESOL, we have numerous updates to announce. To begin with, (a) we have two newly formed special interest groups: the Classroom Management SIG (James Kimball, facilitator) and the People of Color Teachers’ SIG (Arturo Collado, facilitator). Check them out on our webpages. (b) In an effort for KOTESOL to better address inclusiveness and diversity for our organization, the National Council has created a Diversity Committee (Luis Caballero, chair). (c) The Research Committee has selected its research grant awardees for 2019: Congratulations Kevin Kester and Daniel Bailey! (d) We have also entered into a partnership with ELTAI, the English Language Teachers’ Association of India for cross-promotion of events and conference presenter exchange. If you are interested in giving an unvetted presentation with ELTAI or one of our similar partners, contact our International Outreach Committee chair. Projecting forward to 2020, KOTESOL is partnering with AsiaTEFL in organizing their conference slated for June next year just north of Seoul. This partnering will provide the rare opportunity for our members to experience a very large and very international conference right on our doorstep. You won’t want to miss it.

And probably the most immediately apparent change is the changing of the chief at *The English Connection*. After two tours of duty, Editor-in-Chief Julian Warmington has handed over the layout spreadsheet to Dr. Andrew White, who joined the staff early this year (see facing page). I thank Julian for his more than two years of service and thank Andrew for volunteering for this all-important and time-intensive task. We have much to look forward to – both at TEC and at KOTESOL!

Introducing...

The 27th Annual Korea TESOL International Conference

By **Grace H. Wang**, International Conference Committee Chair

Advancing ELT: Blending Disciplines, Approaches, and Technologies

I am very excited about the theme of the conference this year – *Advancing ELT: Blending Disciplines, Approaches, and Technologies*. We are entering into a post-post-methods era in English language teaching, when, not only is there a move away from any single “method” of ELT that is considered best for any given situation, there is also an increasing move away from top-down, Western-centered approaches and theories to what are considered the best ways to teach the English language. We are, therefore, entering an era where teachers at the grassroots level, rather than researchers in ivory towers, are being recognized as the best authorities on what constitutes “best” in ELT for their local contexts.



We’re also increasingly recognizing the very multifaceted characteristic of ELT. Applied linguistics is a diverse field in its own right, but no longer can some of the challenges faced by teachers in local contexts be met by scholarship limited to the applied linguistics field. More and more, we’re learning that the best ways to engage students in English language learning are informed also by fields outside the traditional domains of applied linguistics (for example, culture, identity, and communication).

Like every cloud that has a silver lining, with every blessing, there is a burden. In order for ELT to advance in this post-post-methods era, more of the burden for that advancement must shift from researchers to teachers. We need more teachers to realize the crucial role they play in advancing the profession. We need more teachers to become increasingly invested in their own professional development and venture out to explore unknown territories within their own practice domains through reflective practice and action research activities. We need teachers to become less comfortable with being directed on how to teach (for instance, via an over-reliance on textbooks produced in the West), and more comfortable with engaging a path to the discovery of how best to teach within their own local contexts. And then share what they are learning.

This is an exciting time for the field of ELT. And it is with great pleasure that we offer this year’s Korea TESOL International

Conference, with a focus on inspiring local teachers to think outside the box and challenge traditional boundaries, so that they may be empowered to create teaching strategies that may uniquely suit the particular teaching contexts and students that they serve.

Invited Speakers

I am very excited to announce that Rod Ellis, author of numerous books and one who needs no introduction, will be a plenary speaker at our international conference this autumn. We have also confirmed as a plenary speaker, Andrew D. Cohen, who has published extensively on learner styles and strategies, second language acquisition, and language assessment. In addition, we will have a diverse set of invited speakers and panelists, many of whom will be familiar names and others whom you will be glad to have come to know. In particular, we will have two featured panels: “Women in Leadership in ELT” and “Women in Leadership in Korea.”

And of course, there will be hundreds of other sessions by teachers and researchers from Korea, across Asia, and beyond. The truly international flavor of the conference will not be missed!

Information About the Conference

The conference will be held on October 12 and 13 (Saturday & Sunday) at Sookmyung Women’s University in Seoul.

Pre-registration will be open online from August 1 through September 30. I strongly suggest pre-registering. It will save you time and money, and it will also help us accommodate you.

We will be using the Whova conference app again this year; more information will be available later on how you can benefit most from it.

If you are interested in learning more about the International Conference, and we hope you are, please visit our website at koreatesol.org/ic2019.

The Author

Grace Wang recently retired from teaching at Yonsei University and is serving as Associate of the Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics, University of Birmingham, UK, for the MA TESOL/Applied Linguistics Program. She’s currently completing her Doctor of Pharmacy Program, University of Toronto, in preparation for her return to pharmacy practice in Canada next year. Email: ghwang97@gmail.com



THE 27TH ANNUAL KOREA TESOL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Advancing ELT: Blending Disciplines, Approaches, and Technologies

October 12-13, 2019
Sookmyung Women's University
Seoul, Korea

Plenary Speakers

Rod Ellis
Andrew D. Cohen

Invited Panels

Women in Leadership
in ELT
Women in Leadership
in Korea

PRE-REGISTRATION

August 1 ~ September 30

<https://koreatesol.org/IC2019>

#KOTESOL2019 #AdvancingELT

Interested in Volunteering?

Go to the conference website to learn more!
Or contact: iccochair2019@koreatesol.org



Google Forms and Form Publisher: Reducing Speaking Activities' Setup Time

By Andrew Garth

Many ESL speaking activities require setup time before beginning the activity. For example, before a job interview roleplay, the interviewee may need time to brainstorm their strengths and weaknesses. Depending on the activity, this setup time ranges from a few minutes with the fastest students to around ten

more fluid class. Google Forms and Form Publisher may be that way.

Google Forms is a service provided to all users of Google that looks and acts like an online survey. The creator of the form creates questions. These questions can be of a variety of types, such as short-response, long-response, multiple-choice, and scale. After finishing the form, its creator can publish the form and send a link to participants; in this case, to the students. After arriving at the form page, the students can complete it by inputting their answers and clicking "submit."

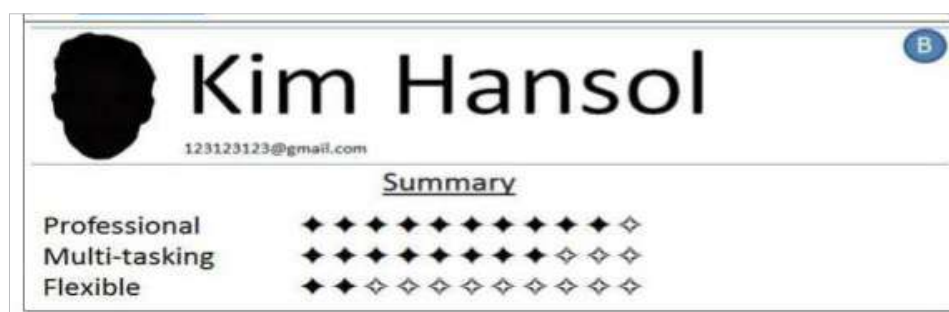
Google Forms is a basic platform, ostensibly designed for straightforward surveys with few bells and whistles. However, when setting up the form, the creator can choose to include some add-on functions. One of these add-on functions is called Form Publisher. This add-on takes each answer provided by the student and puts it in a predetermined spot on a predetermined Google text document or Google powerpoint-like document. Most importantly, Form Publisher enables a PDF of that text document, or a powerpoint-like document, including the student's answers, to be created and

sent via email. When configured correctly, the PDF is sent to the student's email address.

In practice, the teacher would set up the Google Form and Form Publisher, and then inform the students



▲ A screenshot of the Google Forms.



▲ The PDF sent to Kim Hansol at 123123123@gmail.com, demonstrating his answers and where they were placed via Form Publisher.

minutes with the slowest students. This is an inefficient use of valuable class time that should be providing speaking opportunities. If only there were a way to reduce this in-class setup time, there would be more time to devote to speaking practice, producing a much

“Google Forms is a basic platform ostensibly designed for straightforward surveys with few bells and whistles. However, when setting up the form, the creator can choose to include some add-on functions.”

of the URL. The students would complete the form sometime before class, replacing this in-class setup time with out-of-class setup time. After completing the survey, the student would be sent an email that includes a PDF attachment of the text or powerpoint-like document including the student’s answers. The students would download this document from their email account, print it, and bring it to class. Then, when it is time for the speaking activity, the students can simply pull out this printed PDF and begin the activity with no further setup time.

There are a few limitations and drawbacks that should be addressed. First of all, the teacher must have a Google account; students do not need to have a Google account. Secondly, this method would require the students to successfully prepare at home and bring in the printed PDF; forgetting to do either would render this method much less useful. In case a student does not have the printed PDF, the teacher is urged to bring in a few analog versions without the student input, and the student can then complete the setup in class and continue on with the activity.

The Author

Andrew Garth is an assistant professor in the English Department at Dankook University, Cheonan Campus. His research interests focus on best teaching practices for native-speaking teachers and L1 use in EFL classes. He holds an MEd with a concentration in TESL. Email: andy.garth@gmail.com



Most importantly, the setup time in class has been replaced with teacher setup time. The teacher must spend time to set up the form and to set up the final PDF product of the Form Publisher. Depending on the complexity of the speaking activity and PDF, this amount of time is predicted to range from 20 minutes (if the teacher simply wants to superimpose student answers onto a picture of the book’s speaking activity) to a few hours (if the teacher wants to create their own speaking activity).

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS
koreatesol.org/sigs

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Spotlight on an At-Risk Student in an English Classroom

By Stephanie Ptak

Even as an experienced teacher, it is a challenge to get to know each student, and modify lessons and activities in an attempt to benefit various learning styles. I currently teach a required English course for freshmen at a university in Seoul. The student competition to be accepted at this school can be quite high. Academic pressure is also intense, as one's university is believed to truly shape one's future career and marriage potential. Additionally, the exam required to apply to universities is only offered once a year, with some students taking additional years after high school graduation to study with the sole purpose of getting a better score the following year. The freshmen students I teach have experienced quite a bit of pressure to get into this university. However, I worry about the well-being of the students, as there is a lack of discussion around mental health in South Korea. With this in mind, this article will profile one of my students considered to have emotional at-risk concerns, while attempting to explain why these students should be a concern for us as teachers.

Student Factors

I would categorize one of my students, Joon, as being "at-risk", which is a term that is used to describe students whose behavior raises concerns. Moreover, it is often used for students who have a higher probability of failing academically and who may have disciplinary problems (Great Schools Partnership, 2013). Joon is about four years older than his peers, which is a factor for at-risk students (Ormrod, 2010). The reason for this is that he spent a few years after high school graduation studying and retaking the university entrance exam multiple times. Joon did not fail the exam, but he was not satisfied with his score. When he describes this time in his life, it is clear that Joon has low self-esteem and sees himself as a failure, which are both additional factors to being at risk (Ormrod, 2010).

Joon stood out to me as being at risk due to his lack of core skills in writing and his reaction to teacher feedback on his writing assignments (Ormrod, 2010). His anger and frustration towards me over the feedback was quite shocking, and it was clear he did not know how to handle himself, as he lacked academic self-control (McKibben, 2018). This behavior carried over through multiple classes.

The U.S. Department of State (2018) states that resilience is "the ability to successfully adapt to

stressors ... the ability to 'bounce back' from difficult experiences" (para. 1). When Joon earned a mediocre score on a writing assignment, he was unable to bounce back. His attitude in class from that day changed. When doing group work, he was anti-social and not cooperative, which is the opposite of resilient students (Sagor, 1996). Instead, he would physically separate himself from his group and work alone.

As self-directed learners mature, they are developing their ability to take increasing responsibility (Knowles, 1975). Joon began to blame his group for holding him back in class, even when we changed groups, which we did every class. He also began to insist that I should check all of his writing in detail before he officially submitted any assignment for grading. Although this does show motivation and a desire for a high score, this does not show responsibility on his part. Instead, it shifts the responsibility of his learning onto his peers and teacher.

I was reminded of Joon while reading *Teaching the ABCs of Resilience* (Jain, 2013). The article attempts to explain why students may react differently to adversity, an unexpected or undesired event or outcome. There are many factors that contribute to how people react in these types of situations, but the biggest influence is the way one thinks (Jain, 2013). When students experience Adversity, their Beliefs shape how they will react, which becomes the Consequence (Jain, 2013). I taught meditation and mindfulness, which are related to Beliefs, as a part of our course in Joon's class. He explicitly stated that it was a waste of time. In contrast, self-directed learners monitor and evaluate themselves through reflection (Knowles, 1975). Joon refused to participate during our reflections. I believe he was so overwhelmed by what he perceived as his shortcomings that he had a high level of stress. Due to the stress, he was unable to focus on anything else. Students who demonstrate resilience and grit are open to feedback; conversely, Joon very much overreacted to feedback and peer discussions in our class (McKibben, 2018).

Action Plan

In order to support building resilience in Joon, I used portfolios with the class to build competence (Sagor, 1996). Throughout the semester, our class had multiple writing assignments, and each assignment had multiple steps, such as brainstorm, outline, and first draft. I wanted the students to create a physical portfolio to

keep all of their work together and organized. This would help the students, including Joon, to see in front of their eyes the progress they have made. It is not easy to see one's progress when receiving feedback for one assignment. But by being able to open a physical portfolio and look through the work they have done in a chronological order, students felt confident in their writing skills and ability to progress over time. Additionally, seeing how each of the steps in the writing process contributes to the final product helped Joon set small goals on the path to a larger goal (McKibben, 2018). Through this experience and the knowledge gained through researching this topic, I have been able to make changes in the semesters following Joon's class. For example, early each semester, I guide students to start tracking their class vocabulary and expression usage throughout different activities and assessments. Additionally, students track how much time it takes to complete certain assessments. Lastly, students reflect after the midterm and final on the progress made

“However, I worry about the well-being of the students, as there is a lack of discussion around mental health in South Korea.”

throughout the semester. Through these reflections, I have seen students feel empowered and confident when they can see their progress. Lastly, without prompting, students have commented that they are happy to see themselves progressing and thus feel more enthusiastic in the English classroom and more confident speaking English outside the classroom.

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The Author

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 - receive a membership card and our monthly e-news;
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Challenging Two Common Beliefs About Korean Education

By Chris Redmond

Introduction

In 2013, I moved to South Korea to teach English and ended up staying for four years. The first two were spent at a high school in Daegu, an environment that I was told led as much to misery as it did to achievement. Despite stellar scores on international tests, I would hear that Korean students were under “great pressure” to do well in school and get accepted into a top university. Fear of failure, according to a PBS news report (PBS NewsHour, 2011), was even causing them to commit suicide. My general perceptions, however, seemed to be at odds with what I was hearing, and a closer look at the data tells an unexpected story.

In this article, I will challenge two of the most widely held beliefs about the Korean education system; namely, that *school pressure* is one of the major factors behind the country’s high suicide rate, and that an over-emphasis on *rote learning* is chiefly responsible for Korean students’ low English proficiency and difficulties in finding work.

Is School Pressure Driving Korea’s High Suicide Rate?

Having taught roughly 2000 high school and university students in Korea, I can’t claim to have ever noticed a trend towards despondency. The students in my school, and indeed in the other high schools I often visited, were typically quite bright and bubbly, and the general atmosphere around the school grounds was always positive. Was I wrong in my perceptions? I was told that Korean students were under an extraordinary amount of pressure, the evidence for which was Korea’s high suicide rate – the highest, in fact, of all countries in the OECD (OECD, 2011). The PBS report mentioned above seemed to confirm the magnitude of this problem by pointing out that suicide is the number one killer of adolescents in Korea. However, when looking at the suicide rate among people aged 15–19, Korea is barely above the OECD average (OECD Family Database, 2017). Therefore, does Korea really deserve to be singled out as having the most unhappy teenagers? Not if we dig a little deeper into the facts.

The World Health Organization lists suicide as the third most common cause of death among adolescents worldwide, with road injury and HIV taking the top two positions. Road safety has improved significantly in Korea, particularly around schools (Hung, 2015), while HIV is not even among the top 50 causes of death in the country (World Life Expectancy, 2017). That suicide is the most common cause of death among adolescents in Korea should not be a huge surprise to us, then.

Without wishing to trivialize what is still an important issue, the rates of depression experienced by Korean teens are, in fact, below average for all age groups in the country (Ekin, 2014). Moreover, the main cause of suicide among Koreans is thought to be economic rather than academic (Breen, 2017, loc. 1365). These findings correlate with the OECD data showing that Korean students experience a higher-than-average sense of belonging at school as well as a statistically insignificant level of schoolwork anxiety relative to other countries (OECD, 2017, 2018).

But What About Rote Learning?

Another persistent belief is that the emphasis on rote learning is the reason so many young Koreans (specifically, those aged 15–24) find it difficult to get a job. The most sought-after positions are those with major corporations such as Samsung and Hyundai, but they don’t hire many young workers. Rote learning supposedly kills the creativity required for these jobs and keeps the youth out of work, but are things actually that bad?

When compared with other countries, the youth unemployment rate in Korea is not unusually high – just 10.9% as of this writing, according to data available from Trading Economics (2019b). To put this in perspective,

“...the rates of depression experienced by Korean teens are, in fact, below average for all age groups in the country.”

the equivalent rate for the euro area is 16.1%. From 1982 to 2019, the youth unemployment rate in Korea has averaged 7.16% meaning the current rate is only slightly higher than average (Trading Economics, 2019a).

It is hardly a surprise that younger workers find it difficult to get a well-paying job with a large company. Young workers, after all, have less experience and fewer skills than older workers, which explains why the youth unemployment rates in virtually all countries are higher than the overall unemployment rates, and why the average age of Samsung employees has been reported as 34 (Hardy, 2013).

Rote memorization is also often regarded as the major reason for Korean students’ low levels of spoken fluency

in English. However, memorization of language does contribute to higher levels of spoken fluency and is seen as a natural part of the learning process (Pawley & Syder, 1983). What's more, in her recent book, *The Birth of Korean Cool*, author Euny Hong (2014) identified rote learning as one of the most valuable aspects of her own experience in Korean education. It depends, of course, on what is being memorized. If students are only memorizing long lists of grammatical rules, they are unlikely to make much progress in spoken English.

A study surveying 302 Korean learners of English in the Philippines found that the number of formal hours spent learning English was the strongest predictor of proficiency (Magno, 2010). When English is a foreign language, as in Korea, time spent learning English will be limited by the time spent studying other academic subjects. Compared to students in the Philippines, for example, Koreans lack the same opportunities to use English in daily life and are therefore at a disadvantage when it comes to reaching higher levels of proficiency. This also helps to explain the low levels of English proficiency in other East Asian countries like Japan and China.

Conclusion

The Korean education system is far from perfect, though we ought to recognize that some of the negative beliefs attached to its current model are not supported by the data. It is a tragedy that many Korean teenagers are committing suicide, but the rate is not unusually high when compared to other OECD countries. The youth unemployment rate, for that matter, is not high by international standards either. Furthermore, despite being blamed on rote learning, the relatively low levels of English proficiency among Korean students can be better explained by a lack of meaningful input than by too much memorization.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to single out one nation as having the best education system, but Korea has managed well with often-limited resources. It is unfortunate, then, that when searching for Korea's educational deficiencies, people have looked in the wrong direction for the problem.

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Teaching North Korean Refugees: Knowing Your Students

By Patty MacKinnon

What is life like for North Korean students here in South Korea? Have you had the opportunity to teach or even speak with a North Korean? Perhaps not. I have – in fact, every day – in my work as an English language fellow for the U.S. State Department at an alternative high school for North Korean Defector (NKD) students in Seoul.

Knowing your students, knowing them as learners and as individuals, is the foundation of good teaching that sometimes we, as teachers, let “covering the content” overshadow. Getting to know students is a day-to-day process. Daily, my students and I eat lunch together. On a nice day, we stroll along the Yangjaecheon Stream. In class, we often start off with a sharing of “good news.” A student calls out, “I shot two baskets yesterday!” These are opportunities for teachers to learn about students as people and to let them know we care about them individually, enabling us to motivate and inspire them to learn.

Students from the “Third Country”

So, who are these students? My students, like other NKD students, exhibit incredible determination, having arrived in South Korea, after often harrowing journeys, from North Korea or China to face new and unanticipated difficulties. Because China repatriates fleeing North Koreans, the journey is especially risky and can take years and cost tens of thousands of dollars (Heifetz, 2018).

NKD students generally fall into two groups: those born in North Korea and those born in China who have at least one parent who fled from North Korea. The latter

group often refers to themselves as being from the “third country” because they lack a sense of belonging in both China, where they are not recognized as citizens and denied rights, as well as in South Korea, where they struggle with the Korean language and culture. The North Korean-born students, on the other hand, seem to assimilate more easily due to the similar language and the additional higher education and financial benefits the Korean government provides them. This group receives preferential admission to Korean universities and tuition waivers (Park & Kim, 2014). I have found this to be a tremendous academic motivating factor for North Korean-born students. Both groups struggle with identity issues and traumatic experiences before and during their journey as well as with the acculturation stress experienced in South Korean society, which can seriously affect learning.

Students choose to attend NKD schools because they are older, have educational gaps, and are in need of holistic education as they learn to adjust to their new lives. Many students come from the countryside and begin school in South Korea lacking the content and skill knowledge of their peers. Students are sometimes in their twenties, seeking a Korean high school diploma. Considering the cultural hierarchy of age in Korea, attending a public school for these older students is contrary to custom, and to the student may seem a violation of the Confucian code of *li*, or “reason,” for specific kinds of social relationships.

Women make up approximately 72% of the approximately 32,000 NKDs who reside in South Korea (Ministry of Unification, n.d.). In recent years, the majority of escapees have also been women, often sold into forced marriages or trafficked in China (Little, 2017). Upon entering South Korea, both groups officially become South Korean citizens as established by the constitution.

Students’ Voices

Preparing my students for the English speech competitions hosted by TNKR (Teach North Korean Refugees) was a profound opportunity to hear my



students share their views on reunification, identity, and resettlement.

"Go back to China!", "I don't need you!", "I wish you weren't born!" As my student Ha-yoon* stood in front of a panel of judges at the TNKR speech competition, she emotionally explained that these were words she often heard from her mother whom she had joined in South Korea after years of being separated. Her mom is now remarried with a new family. It is typical for North Korean mothers to arrive to South Korea and later, sometimes years later, send for their children. The reunification of families can be incredibly stressful with children feeling abandoned and resenting the new family structure. Last semester, Ha-yoon frequently missed school and rarely completed her homework. When I learned she had left home and was sleeping in a *jjimjil-bang*, a public sauna, I could better support her academically and personally.

A North Korean-born student, Woo-jin, regrets not having learned English in North Korea. He complains, "The revolutionary history and stories of the Kim Il-sung family I learned is useless. I wish we had studied English."

One of the major challenges for students born in North Korea when they first arrive in the South is understanding the South Korean dialect. Over the seventy-year division period, the language of the North and South has diverged with the South acquiring many English words due to the influence of globalization and the North intentionally excluding foreign words from its language. This linguistic difference, along with accent differences between the North and the South, can cause frustration and impede interaction between students from the North and the South.

For the speech competition, another student, Jin-young, referenced a common challenge NKD students face when she said, "Just like me, many people from North Korea are afraid of telling others where they are from because of prejudice.

In North Korea, I always felt happy ... but when I started to live in South Korea, I felt ashamed of who I was."

As another refugee once put it, adjusting to life in South Korea is, at times, more challenging than fleeing North Korea was.

Jin-young attributes her feelings of inferiority to the media for their exaggerated and distorted images of North Koreans as being "all poor, uneducated, and

unhappy." She wants her homeland to be known for more than just the brutal dictatorship of Kim Jong-un. She recalls good memories of family life, like chasing fireflies, swimming in the river as her mom washed clothing nearby, and eating *injo-gogi* (literally "man-made meat"; made by wrapping rice with a thin sheet made from leftover soy bean paste and oil) with family on special holidays. She reminisces about the clean air of Mount Geumgang and the strong community relationships based on face-to-face conversations rather than on an exchange of cell phone texts. By speaking out publicly, Jin-young wishes to change the biased and incomplete perception of daily life in North Korea.



Students' Cheer

The resilience and adaptability of my students became loud and clear when I learned of how they struggled to redefine themselves in their new society. Students reported that at first, in South Korea, they were confused about their identity because they spoke differently, lacked the continuum of a long family lineage in the South (and

the accompanying veneration to parents and ancestors as practiced in the South), or because they felt like a "shameful" mix of Korean and Chinese.

Over time, some students explained that they began to see their multiculturalism as a strength, which they wanted to impart to their peers. One student put it this way, "... they [my classmates] are valuable people. All of them are bilingual in Korean and Chinese and share three different countries' cultures. I think that's something money can't buy."

Another student emulated Martin Luther King Jr. with "I have a dream that one day when other people say that

"...some students explained that they began to see their multiculturalism as a strength, which they wanted to impart to their peers."

we were born in a third country, we will be proud to hear that because that's who we are! We are not Chinese, and we are not some kind of fake Koreans."

A third student reflected, "When South and North Korea played soccer in the East Asian Cup in 2017, I hesitated for a moment in wondering which team I should cheer for. Now I realize that I don't have to be on only one side. North and South Korea are both my home."

“Both groups struggle with identity issues and traumatic experiences before and during their journey, as well as the acculturation stress experienced in South Korean society, which can seriously affect learning.”

A Promising Generation

These students are a unique generation with knowledge of both South and North Korea, and China. They are a promising generation poised to play a crucial role in achieving future reunification on the Korean peninsula, as well as experienced guides to a more informed and enriching journey toward globalization.

Our North Korean Defector students, born in North Korea and born in China, are well worth knowing, professionally and personally. Getting to know a student, their experiences in life, their deficiency needs, and their unique ways and customs can be the difference between being a good teacher and a great teacher. And as one Asian proverb says, “Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher.”

Note. Fictitious names have been assigned to students to maintain student privacy.

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The KOTESOL Pass-It-On Challenge



Have you benefitted from KOTESOL? I know I have. KOTESOL has made me a better teacher, a better researcher, a better presenter and a better speaker, a better writer and editor, as well as a better leader, organizer, and administrator. Because I have benefitted so much from KOTESOL, I feel obliged to give back through volunteering my time for a variety of KOTESOL tasks (and through these tasks, I benefit even further). I am so happy that I became a KOTESOL member when I did.

I hope you are happy to be a KOTESOL member, too. If that is the case, I encourage you to pass it on – to pass on the word about the benefits to be gained from KOTESOL, to introduce to your ELT colleagues the advantages of membership in the KOTESOL community. Our challenge to each KOTESOL member is to bring one new member into our organization this year. Are you up to the challenge?

— David Shaffer, KOTESOL President

Futile Feedback? Writing Feedback to Encourage Student Engagement

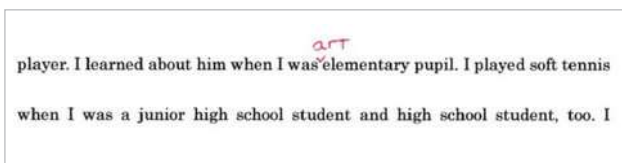
By Mark Rebuck

Those with an interest in medicine may be aware of the term *compliance*, which refers to the degree a patient correctly follows medical advice. A doctor can diagnose a malady and prescribe medication for it, but if a patient does not heed the advice, their condition will most likely not improve.

And what has this got to do with writing feedback, you might ask? Well, a teacher may correctly *diagnose* what is “wrong” with a piece of writing and provide helpful comments, but if a student does not *engage* with this feedback, the prognosis for improvement in their writing remains poor. This article suggests several ways to promote student engagement from teacher feedback techniques that I discovered through teaching my university pharmacy students.

Direct and Indirect Feedback

An important distinction to be aware of is between *direct* and *indirect* error feedback. Direct feedback involves giving the writer the correct form; indirect feedback does not provide the writer with the correct form. Underlining, or circling of an error is an example of indirect feedback. This kind of implicit feedback encourages students to reflect on why something has been marked as “wrong.” In some cases, this may be all that is needed to nudge students to make the appropriate revisions themselves. Often, however, pointing out errors is not enough, and in such cases, codes can serve to identify the type of error. In the following sample (Example 1) of a student’s writing, “art” indicates that an article is missing. (Note: All examples used in this article are from a first-year writing class in a Japanese university).



player. I learned about him when I was^{art} elementary pupil. I played soft tennis
when I was a junior high school student and high school student, too. I

Example 1.

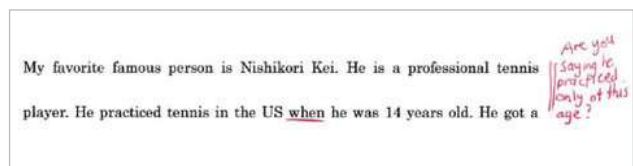
The code provides the category of error, but students must determine the exact mistake themselves. This often requires some deep thinking, or engagement, on the part of the writing student. An excellent correction code list can be found in Hogue (2003) in the appendix. By using this appendix, students can refer to the list if they forget the meaning of a specific given code. Another positive side-effect of using coded feedback in

conjunction with Hogue’s list is that students become familiar with key grammar terms.

Although indirect feedback may often be sufficient in later drafts once the main errors have been corrected, students often require more detailed feedback in the first draft. However, one problem with comprehensive feedback, feedback that includes complete error reformulation, is that students often respond by just fixing the correction without considering the error itself in too much depth. Without deep processing of the error, the benefits may be lost. I like to use the expression “no thinking, no sticking” to remind students of the necessity to think and engage in the error correction/feedback process. As Ferris (2012) writes, the primary purpose in responding to student writing is to help with “long-term development, not to ‘fix’ a particular text, or to simply tell writers what they did wrong” (p. 229).

Making Direct Feedback More Interactive

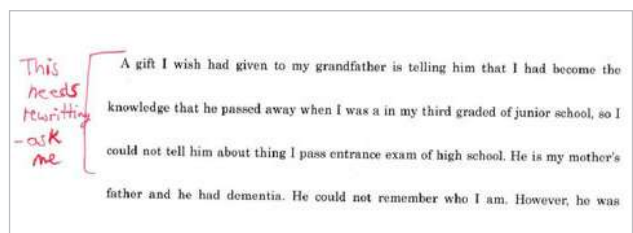
Comprehensive feedback can be more interactive by including corrections that question the writer’s intention. Two ways that encourage such engagement are the inquisitive structures “Do you mean...?”, or “Are you saying...?” (such as in Example 2 below).



My favorite famous person is Nishikori Kei. He is a professional tennis
player. He practiced tennis in the US when he was 14 years old. He got a

Example 2.

The sentence below (Example 3) constitutes a “global error,” meaning the error interferes with overall comprehension.



A gift I wish had given to my grandfather is telling him that I had become the
knowledge that he passed away when I was a in my third graded of junior school, so I
could not tell him about thing I pass entrance exam of high school. He is my mother's
father and he had dementia. He could not remember who I am. However, he was

Example 3.

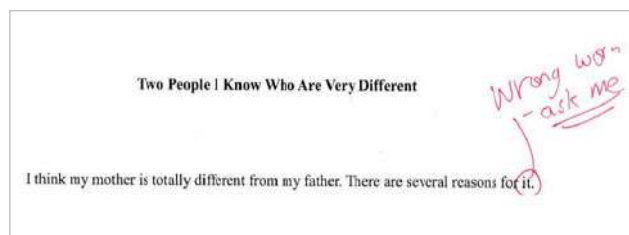
I call Example 3 an “engine-problem error” because in the same way a car’s engine cannot usually be fixed single-handedly, this kind of writing problem

often requires teacher intervention. When the writing is unclear, talking to the student directly is often the only way to ascertain intended meaning. On class days when papers are returned to students, I reserve around twenty minutes for questions. It was during one of these question times that I asked the writer of Example 3, "What do you want to say?" Once I heard the student express her intended meaning in Japanese, and paraphrase it into simple English, we worked together to produce the following clearer and sophisticated sentence based on the above: "I wish I had been able to tell my grandfather that I had passed the university entrance exam and become a university student. This would have been my gift to him."

"...a teacher may correctly diagnose what is wrong in a piece of writing and provide helpful comments, but if a student does not engage with this feedback, the prognosis for writing improvement may be poor."

Sharing with the Class

I often put on the board feedback points I consider useful for the class as a whole. Example 4 is such an example. Japanese learners often write *it* when *this* is correct. I explain to the class the nature of the mistake as such: *This* refers back to the whole idea in the previous sentence, while *it* refers to a specific noun.

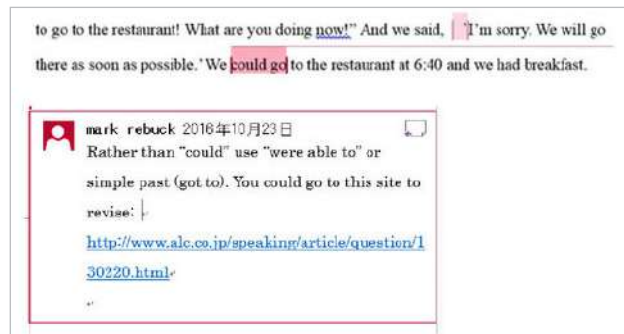


Example 4.

Electronic Feedback

If an assignment is received as an email attachment, the editing and track changes function of Word (or other word-processing software) can be used. One feature of this tracking program is the comment boxes. The comment boxes can be used to direct students to relevant internet sites that will help them understand their errors. The comment box for Example 5 directed the writer to a page that explained why "we could" should be changed to "we were able/managed to" or "we went to." Such instances of feedback help to

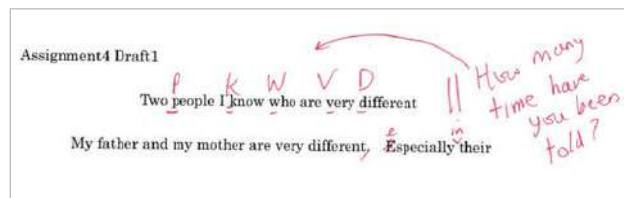
save the teacher's time of repetitive feedback as well as actively engage the student in their own learning process.



Example 5.

Brain Games

At the beginning of the semester students are taught about the mechanics of writing. Yet, there are always students who repeat mistakes weeks into the course. The error in capitalization, in Example 6, was made in the second semester of a writing course.



Example 6.

In responding to errors such as Example 6 above, I ask students to teach me a simple task. For example, how to write a basic *kanji* (Chinese character), or how to eat with chopsticks. Then, after being taught what to do, I intentionally make a gross error (for example, I use a completely wrong stroke order, or I put one chopstick in each hand). After such an erroneous action, I brainstorm with the students the possible reasons why I might have done so, even though I had been taught correctly. This generates a list, such as the one below, which I put on the screen.

- I had not heard the instructions or feedback.
- I had not understood them.
- I had ignored them.
- I don't care (lack of motivation).
- I don't have the cognitive ability to learn this task (perhaps I have a learning disability).
- I need more time to learn.
- I was not taught properly.

This kind of awareness-raising really seems to reduce errors that stem from carelessness or laziness on the part of the student.

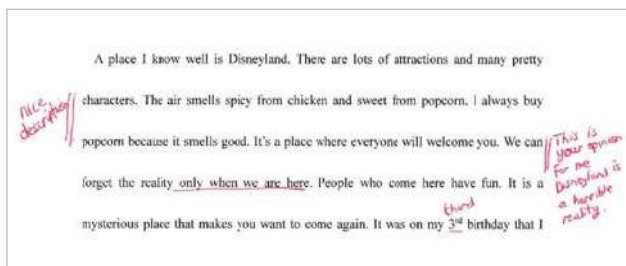
Another awareness-raising endeavor relates to students often feeling that writing is a burden. At such times, I explain that it is more of a burden for *me* to check their

writing, but that I do it because I want them to improve their writing. I inform them that once they leave university, it will be difficult to get such error correction, and I also show them price lists of proofreading services with the hope that they will appreciate the feedback they are getting.

Feedback on the Feedback and Engagement Being Two-Way

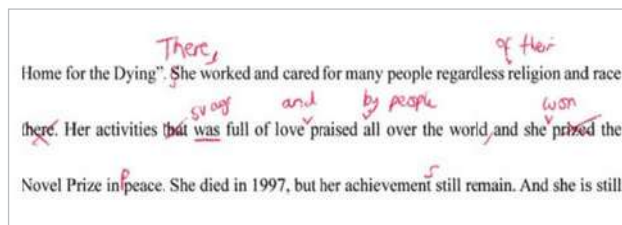
I encourage students to engage with my feedback by asking them to review and report on it in some way. For example, students can give short PowerPoint presentations in which they introduce their most useful feedback to the class.

For students to engage with feedback, the teacher must also engage with the student's writing. Teachers can show such engagement by responding to content, not just by writing superficial comments, such as "Your dog sounds cute!" or "Interesting story." In one class, for example, I put Examples 7 and 8 on the screen (with the writers' permission) to show that I was really engaging with the ideas in the student's writing, and to illustrate the importance of qualifying a comment.



Example 7.

In this example, Disneyland may be "heaven on earth" for this student, but it is definitely not to everyone's taste, a fact I felt was important to mention. I suggested to the class that the writer could write something like this: "For me, it is only when I'm at Disneyland that I can forget reality, although there are some people who do not like the crowds and the commercialism." In suggesting this correction the writer could be made aware that they needed to present alternative points of view within their context. Regarding Example 8, perhaps we should not expect a first-year university student to have more than a straightforward and simplistic view of Mother Teresa, but as a writing instructor, I felt obliged to point out that the writer could acknowledge that Mother Teresa had her critics. In the final version, the writer included the following qualification: "Although Mother Teresa was criticized by some people, I think that her activities were full of love and they were praised all over the world."



Example 8.

Conclusion

Some teachers are full advocates of peer review, and do not feel it is necessary to correct students' writing themselves. However, this is not my position. Teachers who invest valuable time correcting student writing want their feedback to count and contribute to their students' long-term writing development. I hope that

“Without deep processing, any benefits may be fleeting, ‘no thinking, no sticking.’”

some of the ideas presented in this article may help to point TEC teachers in the direction to develop their own repertoire of strategies for encouraging their writing students in the learning process and engage them more with feedback.

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Six Ways to Give Feedback on Writing for Improvement and Engagement

By Jeremy Phillips

At the 2018 Korea TESOL International Conference, Daniel Corks gave an interesting presentation on feedback for grammar errors in L2 writing, which he referred to as a “burden” for teachers. No argument there. However, the claim that close, corrective feedback does not in fact help students improve is more contentious. Fighting under the banner of Truscott (1996), Mr. Corks and others claim that feedback on errors doesn’t work. It’s not just discouraging for students or a major time-gobbler, but the actual results in terms of improved writing and grammar are minimal, and there is hard data to prove it. Unfortunately, for anti-correction writing teachers, there is also conflicting data supporting the effectiveness of grammar feedback. I will leave that dispute to future researchers, and I leave the defense of detailed corrective feedback to Dana Ferris, who has written extensively and persuasively on

ownership of those errors as a way to create the need for feedback, input, and (hopefully) self- or peer correction.

Explanation Stations

That said, you can’t correct what you don’t know. Sometimes feedback involves language input after the writing has been returned (e.g., the difference between “moreover” and “in addition”). If your classroom space permits, set up stands or posters with four or five written pieces of input and practice tasks. Students can move from station to station working on each task at a teacher-controlled pace. You can go from group to group clarifying and answering questions. Tech-positive teachers in contexts with ubiquitous smartphones can set up an online task like Quizlet and put the link as a QR code at the explanation station to add variety.



Asynchronous Online Peer Feedback

Speaking of tech tools, these days many writing teachers use the power of online document-sharing such as Google Docs or Dropbox. Why not do peer feedback this way? Anonymize the texts and set up a rotation so that everybody is giving feedback to somebody. For the peer feedback to be more positive, the teacher might want to set some etiquette guidelines. For it to be more productive,

the uploaded texts need to have problems and errors already identified, located, and maybe even categorized. Underlining, highlighting, and correction codes are useful here if potentially time-consuming.

the subject (I recommend *Response to Student Writing*, 2003). Close corrective feedback is a given in current English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, particularly if students submit draft versions of assessed texts. Students and institutions expect error correction, so the question is: *How* to use error correction to help learners improve their writing? I have six suggestions.

Error Pooling

Mistakes are opportunities for learning and for teaching. Teaching and learning grammar and lexis for its own sake is fine, but when a structure is used in writing, it answers a real need. So while you are plowing through that pile of papers you need to correct and return, keep a scratch pad handy and make notes of common errors you notice or even errors that occur once, but offer “teachable points” (e.g., “According to Cho *said*” + quote). Pool these errors and add some capsule explanations and correct examples for quick teaching after returning the papers. I’m big on PowerPoint for this, but handouts can work, too, especially if you’re going to use a Grammar Auction-type of activity. Don’t tell or hint who made which mistake, just use group-

ownership of those errors as a way to create the need for feedback, input, and (hopefully) self- or peer correction.

Gallery Tour of Draft Texts

If you’re not into tech, there are other ways of making peer feedback engaging. Select a few texts you want to use (usually because they have some quality you want the peer reviews to pick up on), anonymize them, and blow them up to A3 size, if possible. Post them on the classroom walls and put your guidelines for peer review (e.g., “Does the writer link paragraphs together well?”) on the board. Students walk around and add their comments to the essay copies or on large Post-it notes. Nobody has to know who wrote the example essays unless the writers want to reveal themselves.

Color-Coded by Criteria

A more teacher-controlled feedback method is color-coding. If the students are working from a set group of assessment criteria (e.g., the IELTS writing task marking

bands), select one color per criterion and highlight the relevant text sections in that color. You'll have to switch highlighters a lot, but this links your feedback with the assessment criteria clearly in the student's mind. This forces them to self-correct or rewrite with some awareness of what kind of problems they face.

Feedback by the Numbers

But sometimes that's not enough. Grammar input and giving examples of correct forms or alternative phrasing are part of close corrective feedback *some* of the time. Correction codes and prompting questions like "Can you think of another word to use here?" are awesome ways of forcing the student to think harder about the nuts and bolts of their text. However, sometimes teacher input is

with the student after you return the text, in case anything is unclear.

Most of us are never going to see the long-term product of our work as academic writing teachers, but the steps we make towards that goal every day are helpful in the long run. Just remember to take off your proofreader's hat once in a while and give the writers credit for what they *can* do and what they have got right. A little encouragement goes a long way. Happy correcting!

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“Just remember to take off your proofreader’s hat once in a while and give the writers credit for what they can do and what they have got right.”

necessary and can aid learning through awareness-raising, if used selectively. Rather than covering the paper with teacher scribble, add numbers next to the words or text sections you want to give feedback on. Then write your notes on another piece of paper, staple the two together, and be sure to make some time to meet (or “conference”)

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Being Mindful of Air Pollution: A Lesson Plan for Summer Camps

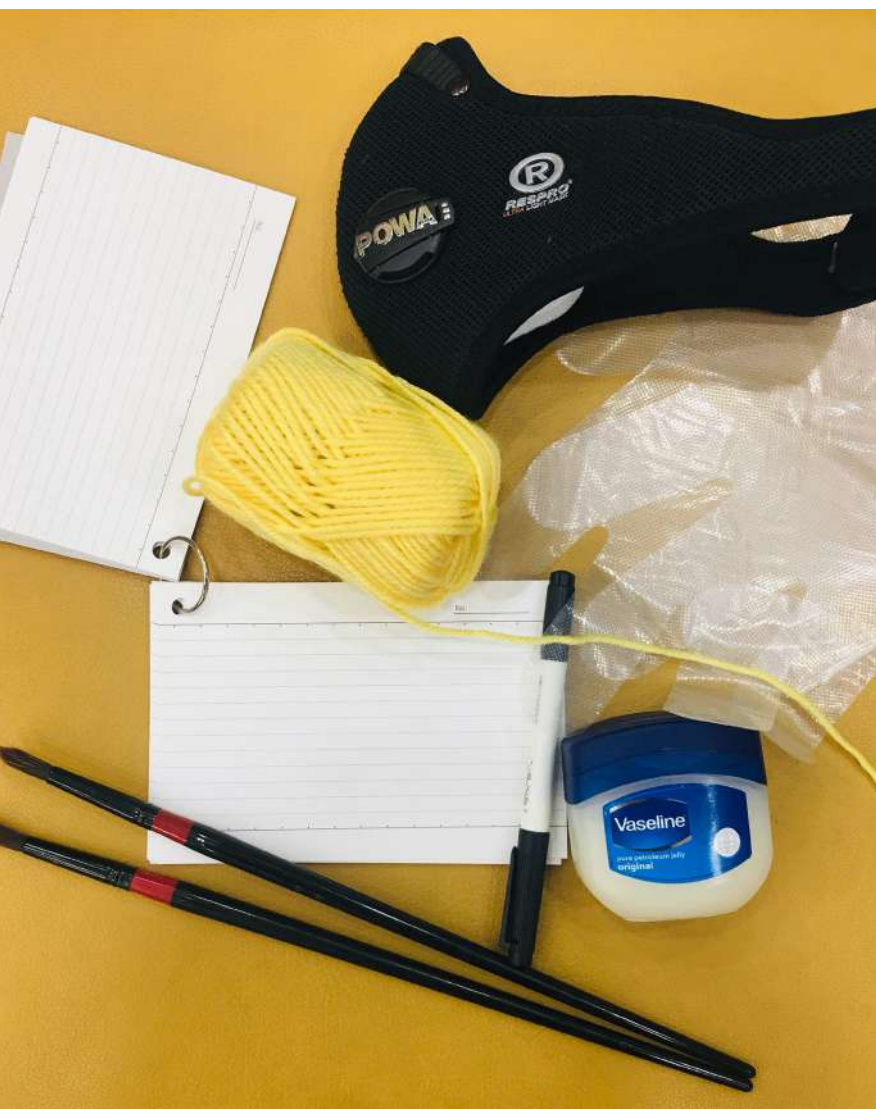
By Crystal S. Cho Jones

Air pollution is a serious issue in South Korea that has affected my health and that of countless others. I teach elementary, middle, and high school students at the English Village at Andong National University. The

learn about the causes of air pollution and its effects on the body. I created a PowerPoint presentation showing images of Korea and various air qualities to show comparisons of days with good and bad air. I also presented on PM2.5 (particulate matter) readings, explaining with images how acutely small it is in comparison to other particles in the air, where it comes from, and emphasizing that it is mostly caused by humans.

The images and information can be found by searching online. The videos used came from YouTube and the air pollution detection cards I found through a website, TeacherVision (Scott Foresman, 2018). Students were engaged through questions about the images, videos, and some of the target vocabulary presented in class to increase their understanding and promote communication. Many were shocked to see the damage air pollution can do to the body; some looked tearful and upset. The news report I showed allowed them to understand the serious issue of air pollution affecting South Korea today and the prediction that air quality in their future adulthood will only become worse.

Many students seemed concerned, and hopefully, I energetically sparked a mindfulness in their actions. At the end of class, students told me to turn the light off, and they chose to wear their face masks when going outside. I also shared information on ways for them to protect themselves from air pollution by wearing quality masks, showing them the Respro mask I use. I also mentioned using an air purifier in their home because closing the windows isn't always sufficient.



summer camp theme for 2018 was “Environmentally Mindful,” and I wanted to take this opportunity to teach students about air pollution, particularly its causes and the effects it has on our health. This camp was for elementary students in grades 3 through 6. I taught a science class where the lesson was for students to create air pollution detection cards (APDC) to investigate the air quality in our area and to

“I try to encourage project-based and collaborative learning with my students to help them build social skills...”

All students were divided into groups of four and worked together to create their APDCs. Students were

directed to write the date, the location, and a capital letter with the numbers 1, 2, 3, or 4 (depending on their group number) at the top of their index card (for example: 8/13/18; Outside fence; A1). Using an app such as AirVisual, we checked the air quality outside to determine if we needed to wear our face masks to protect ourselves from the pollution before going outside. The students investigated, experimented, and hung their cards at four different designated locations for a week. The materials used were simple: index cards, string, black markers, petroleum jelly, paint brushes, gloves, magnifying glasses, and masks. Goggles were optionally used to protect eyes from petroleum jelly. I strongly warned students to not touch their faces when using the petroleum jelly and to use a paper towel to wash their hands after they finished. This was done as I monitored them doing the experiment.

The following week, I had the students collect the detection cards to investigate the Andong air quality of the previous week and, from their observations using their magnifying glass, record their cards' data results in the chart I provided. I gave students two different cards to make their observations of air quality from different locations and to write the results on their chart. Some students were shocked to see that some cards were somewhat blackened by the previous week's air. Students would tell me the air quality from both cards, whether it was "good," "moderate," or "bad," and share their thoughts about the lesson on air pollution. Follow-up lessons were designed on finding solutions to air pollution and how we could lessen the effects of air pollution.

The students provided positive feedback, and they expressed that they enjoyed the science activity the most. I try to encourage project-based and collaborative learning with my students to help them build social skills and join their intellectual efforts by encouraging them to work together in search of understanding, meaning, and/or solutions to create products. I find that this is most meaningful and encourages a form of mindfulness in their learning (especially when it comes to their futures) by facing and tackling the problems of air pollution.

Hopefully, sharing this lesson plan with other teachers will encourage them to inform their students of the severity of air pollution in this country and also create a mindfulness of the air and how it will affect our futures.

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“I had the students collect the detection cards to investigate the Andong air quality of the previous week.”



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“I Don’t Teach Language; I Teach Physics”: Reflecting on English-Medium Instruction

By Dr. Thomas S. C. Farrell

Introduction

Two of the most common forms of bilingual education delivery modes in vogue today are content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and English-medium instruction (EMI). Although some teachers may perceive that these two approaches are the same and only have different names, or that CLIL is mainly for the primary and secondary education sectors, while EMI is mainly preferred at the tertiary level, this is not a correct perception. In fact, they are very different; whereas CLIL has the dual objectives of language and content learning, EMI is mainly content driven, although some language learning is probably expected (but as a by-product) because we cannot equate EMI courses alone to automatic improvement in English proficiency. As one teacher of physics who was asked to teach the content of his course using English in an EMI-type program in Sweden remarked, “I don’t teach language, I teach physics” because “there is nothing about language skills in the syllabus” (Airey, 2012, p. 74). Indeed, many EMI instructors have complained about the lack of clear guidelines available to effectively implement what has become a popular approach in many countries at the tertiary level, including South Korea.

One of the problems with the implementation of both CLIL and EMI programs is that they are newish approaches within the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) community. We are most familiar with their predecessors, Teaching of English for Special Purposes (ESP), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), rather than CLIL and EMI, and in fact, ESP and EAP are still in vogue within TESOL, and both, to a certain extent, provide a tradition of effective practices for CLIL and EMI. Thus, this article focuses on EMI and will briefly outline some of the unresolved issues related to implementing EMI courses. It proposes that it is important for EMI instructors to engage in reflective practice to help overcome some of their insecurities associated with its implementation.

EMI: The Issues

The first issue related to EMI is the problem of defining what exactly it is. Although EMI is said to be a growing global phenomenon, in fact, there is still no universally accepted definition of what the term actually means to everyone, mainly because EMI has no specific contextual origin. CLIL is contextually situated with origins in the European ideal of plurilingual competence for EU citizens. Indeed, Dearden’s (2015) explanation of EMI reflects this

conceptual difference between EMI and CLIL, where she defines EMI as “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English” (p. 4). As Dearden points out, for EMI programs, the language of education is English, but for CLIL programs, there is no mention of which second language academic subjects will use. In addition, EMI programs do not have as clear an objective of furthering both content and language as CLIL programs do. Simply put, the best available definition of EMI seems to be a more general one that Dearden (2015) suggests, as “the practice of teaching an academic subject through English, which is not the first language of the majority population” (p. 8).

Another major unresolved issue regarding EMI programs is a lack of clear guidelines for instructors as to how they should teach such courses. In a British Council study by Dearden (2015), teachers from 55 countries noted that there were no clear teaching guidelines and reported major concerns regarding what language they should use while teaching, with particular confusion over whether English exclusively or a mixture of English and their L1 might be permitted or advised. In addition, some EMI teachers insisted that teaching English was not their job (see the title of this paper), and others wondered if they or others had sufficient proficiency levels in English

“Reflection is a key competency for teachers, as it allows them to analyze and adapt their teaching to EMI students in specific social, cultural, and political contexts.”

to be able to deliver such courses. This of course begs the question of what, if any, standard(s) level of English should be required for EMI teachers? Should EMI teachers be, for example, asked or required to improve their students’ knowledge of the academic subject and English, or just the academic subject? Indeed, Dearden (2015) posed an interesting question related to this uneasy relationship: “If subject teachers do not consider it their job to improve the students’ English, whose job is it?” (p. 29). In fact, some studies have noted that many EMI teachers have not considered EMI instruction beyond the idea that EMI was simply a matter of translating course material from L1 into English. As EMI programs expand worldwide, policymakers and EMI teachers will need to critically reflect on the role of these EMI programs as well as the role(s) of EMI teachers in these programs.

Yes, EMI programs have exploded in popularity worldwide, mostly pushed by policymakers in a top-down manner (some would say in order to attract more foreign students and improve university rankings), but without seriously considering how EMI teachers can effectively implement these programs. Major concerns still exist among EMI teachers, or its bottom-up implementation, about what effective EMI teaching approaches should be incorporated as well as the lack of specific pedagogical EMI guidelines to follow. As a result, many EMI teachers have become insecure about their teaching and disempowered about what their exact role is when delivering such courses (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018). In addition, there is still no real EMI content in pre-service language teacher education or in-service professional development programs. Thus, a serious gap exists between the top-down pressure to incorporate EMI programs in many countries and the reality of the bottom-up EMI teacher implementation of these programs where teachers find themselves often experimenting informally as they look for best practices in their individual contexts. So what can EMI teachers do to overcome the constraints and demands of the top-down imposition of EMI programs? Farrell (in press) suggests that they should engage in reflective practice so that they can make more formal adjustments based on their own reflections when implementing EMI courses.

EMI: Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is now considered a mark of professional competence in many professions, including in the field of TESOL (Farrell, 2015, 2019). However, it has not been utilized much within the EMI community (Farrell, in press). Reflective practice generally means that EMI teachers subject their philosophy, principles, theories, and practices to critical analysis so that they can take more responsibility for their actions (Farrell, 2015). Reflection is a key competency for teachers, as it allows them to analyze and adapt their teaching to EMI students in specific social, cultural, and political contexts. Engaging in reflective practice can help EMI teachers to unravel these tacitly held, hidden dimensions of practice (philosophy, principles, and theory) and compare them to their classroom practices (Farrell, 2015, 2019).

EMI teachers have various tools available to help facilitate their reflection, including dialogue, writing, classroom observations, action research, and team-teaching (Farrell, in press). EMI teachers can come together either physically or virtually to engage in reflective discussions about their practice. They can also write about their reflections and share them with other EMI teachers. For EMI teachers, such reflective writing can include written accounts of their philosophy, principles, theory, and their teaching, as well as any critical reflections they may have (Farrell, 2013). EMI teachers can also systematically reflect on their practice through classroom observations of what they do while they teach or after they teach. When EMI teachers engage in classroom observations to reflect on their teaching, they can compare what they say they do with what they actually do, and examine if these tend to convergence or diverge (Farrell, 2018a). Action research is another reflective tool that EMI teachers can

use to reflect on their practice (Farrell, 2015). Engaging in action research generally involves teachers entering a cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting on a problem in order to improve practice (Farrell, 2018b). For EMI programs, team-teaching is also an effective reflective tool where a content lecturer and a language lecturer can collaborate and complement each other's strengths to provide learning opportunities for their students.

Conclusion

EMI programs seem to be preferred by many policymakers as the way forward in bilingual education, yet they have not provided sufficient guidelines about how EMI teachers can effectively implement such programs. Thus, it is important that EMI teachers themselves engage in reflective practice so that they can discover their own effective teaching approaches. In addition, I have discussed various reflective tools EMI teachers can use to facilitate their reflections so that they closely examine their classroom practices. Given the rapid expansion of EMI globally and the ever-changing roles of EMI teachers, it becomes even more crucial for EMI teachers to engage in reflective practice so that they can continue to develop the resourcefulness and resilience needed to face inevitable future challenges and changes in English-medium instruction.

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The Brain Connection

Bad Attitude or Weak Working Memory?

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

Working memory is one of the three key executive functions that almost every other thinking skill is built from (Diamond, 2013). To help me discuss it, I'm going to bring in some other members of the JALT BRAIN SIG.

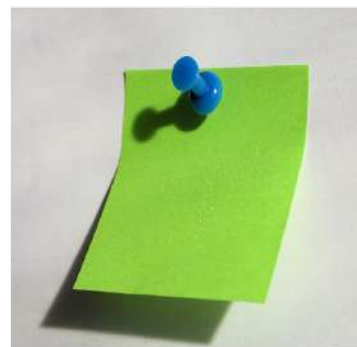
Working memory is a prefrontal cortex function that allows your brain to temporarily hold information for processing and manipulation. When you reach into your purse to take out money to pay for a purchase, you hold the amount you owe in working memory. When you read a novel, you hold the events in the preceding paragraph in working memory. When you tell

“We do not want to pour that much into working memory, because ... it is an information bottleneck.”

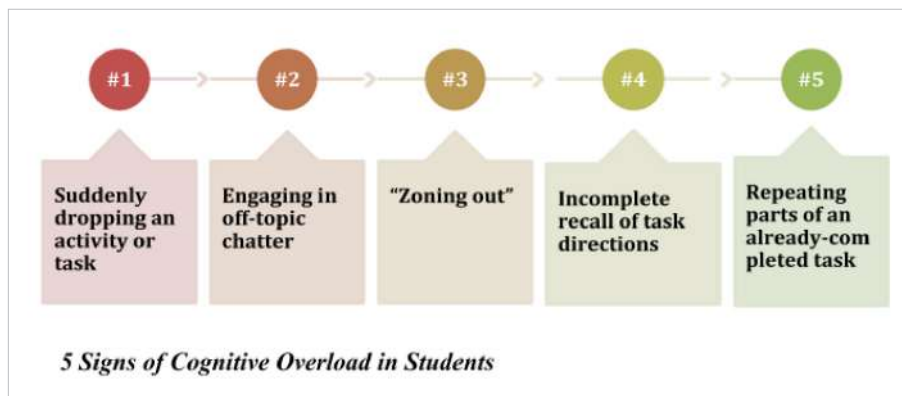
your students how to do something, they hold those instructions in working memory while they do it, as well as other information such as the grammar form they are working on, the need to turn the exercise in, and how many minutes remain before the bell rings. The amount of information that the brain can hold in working memory is limited (Cowan, 2010); not quite seven items as we once thought, but close enough.

If you think about it, working memory is a critical component for everything we do in class, so it behooves us to pay attention to it, especially in regards to its limits. If you give your learners too much information at once – say, for example, explaining 14 rules for using commas – you risk creating a cognitive overload, which basically means asking them to remember too many things at once, which then often results in them remembering nothing. We do not want to pour that much into working memory because, as Mike Kelland (2018) puts it, it is an information bottleneck. The width of that aperture is limited to start with, but it can become even smaller as a result of stress, distraction, lack of sleep, weariness, and other more interesting things to think about. And of course, we've all seen (been?) that kind of teacher who has students start a task and then every fifteen seconds interrupts them with something else we want to say.

So here is the best formula for avoiding cognitive overload: When you give students access to new information, limit the amount. In a speaking activity, if you want to teach your learners how to politely interrupt, just give them the minimum one, or maybe two, language forms they need; not all six ways it can be done. Then, when you give them a writing task, create the most working memory-friendly conditions you can: a distraction-free, stress-free, as-relaxed-as-possible class environment.



Julia Daley (2019) is particularly skilled at watching for cognitive overload. She provided a number of suggestions in her article in our January issue of the *MindBrainEd Think Tank*, from using easy-to-read fonts to multiple ways of delivering instructions, which she considers the most likely place for overload to occur. She also gave us a good tool for identifying overload:



Going back to the information bottleneck metaphor, some learners are naturally better at keeping the aperture open. As Caroline Handley puts it, it's like the signal-to-noise ratio: "People with high working memory capacity are good at focusing on the signal while ignoring the noise, whereas people with low working memory capacity don't filter out so much noise and so process and store less of the signal" (2018, p. 4). And that brings us to something important to think about. Working memory and attention capacities depend on neurological structure, the particular array

of connections in your prefrontal cortex, hippocampus, and other areas. These basic capacities are not really a choice; they're influenced by early childhood experiences and genes. In fact, about half of the variability of working memory across individuals is genetic. While it's believed we can improve working

m e m o r y
c a p a c i t y
t h r o u g h
t r a i n i n g
(Owens,
Koster, &
Derakshan,
2013), other
local factors
that we have
little control
over – such as
anxiety, sleep,
sitting too long
– can reduce
it, mainly by
interfering with
the attention
system. The
question is,

then, with so
many factors influencing attention and working memory not under the learner's control, is it really fair to reward some students because their working memory is stronger? And punish those whose isn't?

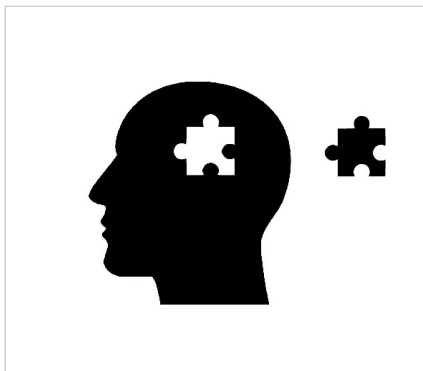
Obviously, the answer is "no," but isn't that what we are doing all the time? Think about how you define "good student" versus "bad student," even if not consciously. If a student has trouble paying attention or reciting back what we just said, we almost always jump to the conclusion that the learner wasn't listening and has a bad attitude. So, we dock their scores and treat them a little less nicely. Imagine if we did the same thing on the basis of other physical differences influencing performance, such as docking a student with poor eyesight because she can't read the board.

I can't help feeling that there is something wrong with the way we implicitly evaluate learners as good or bad, smart or challenged, serious or slack. Consider other types of brains that have difficulty performing: dyslexics or learners with ADHD. Should we assume their weaker performance is caused by laziness and poor character? Of course not, unless you were a teacher in the previous century (Lange, Reichl, Lange, Tucha, & Tucha, 2010).

So let's embrace neurodiversity and cut our learners some slack. That doesn't mean you have to give everyone the same grade. After all, what really matters has little to do with grades. It's about respect, trust, and absolute positive regard (Rogers, 1961). Performing at something you're not that good at, like

English, is like walking across a rickety bridge. One slip and you fall into an abyss of teacher censure, peer ridicule, and loss of self-esteem. We often think that a little push will help that student make the crossing, and sometimes we're right, but maybe a better way to use our power is just to get under the bridge and keep it

"... working memory is the critical component for everything we do in class, so it behooves us to pay attention to it, especially in regards to its limits."



from shaking during the traverse. Giving unconditional positive regard is easier once you understand working memory.

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