Perspectives

Views on
**Lessons,
Language**
and **Institutions**

Interviews
Sora Kim-Russell:
Literary Translator
Mikyoung Lee:
Member Spotlight

Regular Columns
The Brain Connection:
Teaching with Zoom
The Reflection Connection:
The Look

And more...

KOREATESOL

KOTESOL
대한영어교육학회

Contact us:
KoreaTESOL.org
TEC@KoreaTESOL.org

The English Connection

Photo & Image Credits

Cover image: *unsplash.com*
This page artwork: Lisa MacIntyre-Park

Page 6 photo: Natalie St.Martin
Page 9,10 photo: Rory O'Reilly Hayes
Page 16 photo: Sora Kim-Russell
Page 20,21 photo: Jack Glowacki
Page 23: pxhere.com
Page 25 artwork: Lisa MacIntyre-Park
Page 26,27 photo: Mikyoung Lee
Page 28: gratisography.com
Page 29: pixabay.com
Page 30,31: unsplash.com

Suggestions and contributions:
tec@koreatesol.org

Deadline for Winter 2020 Issue Submissions: Monday, October 12

Contents

06

09

16

22

26

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

Editorial
Perspectives

By Dr. Andrew White Editor-in-Chief, *The English Connection*

The theme of this edition of *The English Connection* is "Perspectives." I had given a lot of thought to additional adjectives to further explain "perspectives," such as *diverse*, *varied*, and *different*, but ultimately added modifiers just seemed like excess. *Diverse* seemed too cliche, *varied* too redundant, and *different* came across as too judgmental and exclusive. A person's perspective is as singular and unique as the person holding it, and with a definition of "a mental view of the relative importance of things," it's implicit in the word that our viewpoint, both mental and visual, can never be shared or even fully explained to others. We all think in different ways and do things for different reasons. Processed through our filters on experience, beliefs, culture, values, assumptions, and so on, what we finally end up with that's called "perspective" is as personal and one-of-a-kind as we'd all like to think we are in life. Thus, *perspective* is enough.

Of course, perspectives can be unifying, and reason for rallying around an idea or cause, but they can also validate one's self and prevent trying to understand other points of view. Perhaps worst is when we confuse perspective with reality. Integral coach Steffan Surdek (*Forbes*, 2016) speaks on "perspective-seeking," a leadership skill on reaching out and being authentically curious about others' perspective, with the potential of discovering one's own blind spots and considering new things. This is, of course, nothing new or groundbreaking. We take pride in "seeing eye to eye," being "Devil's advocate," and "walking a mile in their shoes," but oh how hard it is to do so authentically!

Some of my favorite perspectives on *perspective* are here:
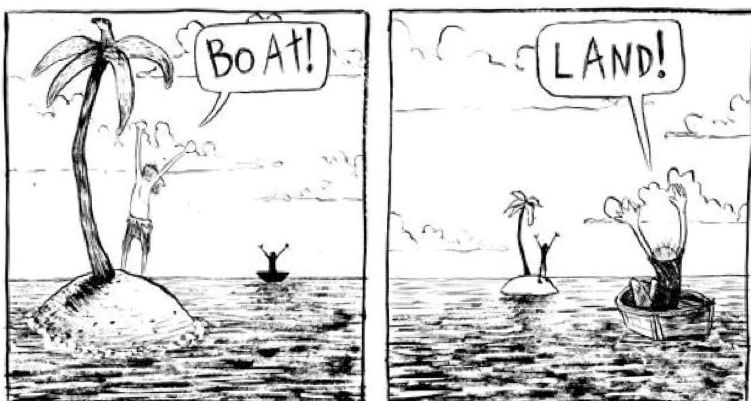
•We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are. (Anais Nin)

•Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact. Everything we see is perspective, not the truth. (Marcus Aurelis)

•If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change. (Dr. Wayne Dyer)

•It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see. (Henry David Thoreau)

•Perspective is worth 80 IQ points. (Alan Kay)

My rationale in creating this Perspective theme is three-fold. First, articles are categorized into three sections, offering EFL-related perspectives on institutions, language, and classroom lessons. This was borne out somewhat naturally, and somewhat by design, based on the direction my soliciting and gathering took me these last few months. For institutions, there are viewpoints from a *hagwon* owner and a foreign-school administrator. On language, there's a description and analysis of classroom discourse using Sinclair and Couthard's IRF model, an interview with award-winning literary translator Sora Kim-Russell, and an in-depth defense for using Korean in the language classroom. For an interesting new lesson to try out, an interactive communicative activity using art images is explained.

Second, the viewpoints shared here are, I dare say, unique in that they come from people whose perspectives in EFL matters are perhaps not commonly written upon in *The English Connection*, which hopefully will add another layer of interest to readers.

And third, though applicable in the field of EFL, "perspectives" is to highlight the larger opportunity we have as educators, but also as global citizens, to learn to practice perspective-seeking for others' points of view, to be more open-minded and curious, if not to see, at least to understand, that things can appear differently to other people. A perspective that acknowledges this fact is one that truly can see things more fully and clearly.

Please enjoy this edition, which hopes to broaden your EFL-minded perspective.

President's Message
On the Crystalline Grace of Diverse Perspectives in Our Organization

By Lindsay Herron KOTESOL President

I really appreciate this issue's theme of "Perspectives." While this magazine – and arguably all of KOTESOL's publications – already showcases a wide range of viewpoints as a matter of routine, it's important to reflexively revisit this idea periodically – to specifically, *intentionally* focus on it. As of this writing, KOTESOL members represent nearly thirty nationalities and live in more than twenty countries around the globe. Our members have a plethora of educational backgrounds, range in age from undergraduates to retirees, and work in a variety of contexts and circumstances. We have members who teach, publish, study, do research, or simply enjoy the camaraderie and benefits the organization provides, all united by a common dedication to English language teaching and a shared interest of personal and professional growth. For KOTESOL as an organization, this diversity means we have to conscientiously work to ensure that we truly represent and serve all of our members, a goal toward which we continuously strive. It also means our community of practice proffers a remarkable pool of resources – an impressive range of disparate experiences, views, and ideas to spark the imagination, promising new realms of possibility and tantalizing roads less traveled. With all this in mind, I am absolutely delighted to welcome readers to this issue of *The English Connection*, a veritable cornucopia of less-traveled paths and diverse experiences guaranteed to give glimmering glimpses into new and inspiring spheres.

Our organization is rooted in a strong belief in the benefits of diverse perspectives; indeed, our Constitution notes we were founded "to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding." As such, we not only embrace diverse perspectives but also explicitly seek to incorporate them, including, for example, our wonderful assortment of SIGs as well as our Code of Conduct, which aims to ensure the provision of safe, inclusive, welcoming spaces promoting positive, productive discussions and lively, collegial exchanges.

In a similar spirit, I'd suggest that 2020, fraught as it has been, has been a good year for varied voices in KOTESOL overall! January saw the launch of our monthly online column *KOTESOL Voices*, which highlights the multifaceted experiences, insights, and stories of our members, focusing on the human side of being a teacher. Hundreds of people around the globe participated in the online 2020 KOTESOL National Conference in April, not only enjoying an amazing assortment of presentations but also exchanging ideas with other participants sharing the digital space. Our chapters' virtual events this year have also attracted a multinational audience as they explored an array of in-demand topics benefiting from varied perspectives, from online teaching to social justice. The new KOTESOL Membership Lounge, meanwhile, provides a virtual venue for online meet-ups, games, and discussions while also opening up opportunities for members to converse with experts in a variety of fields via scheduled "AMA" ("Ask Me Anything") events. Indeed, the Membership Lounge was deliberately designed to facilitate the sharing of diverse ideas, from its inclusion of both pre-set and member-created chat-rooms to its basis in one of the most popular online chatting tools in the world, Discord – a decision that aimed to make KOTESOL conversations accessible to non-Facebook users while also seamlessly integrating into a digital tool many members might already use.

Stepping outside of our KOTESOL community for a moment, I might note that this theme of varied perspectives seems particularly appropriate now, at this tumultuous moment in history, as disparate ideas and diverse voices are elicited and amplified in a globally connected world. The limitations created by COVID-19, for instance, though daunting and frustrating, have coerced creative adaptation, collaboration, and divergent thinking to overcome challenges, particularly for educators. The global Black Lives Matter movement, meanwhile, has begun to spur long-overdue conversations on endemic and structural racial injustice, amplifying Black voices and spotlighting the lived experiences of Black people. In the face of today's divisive rhetoric and seemingly insurmountable intolerance, encounters with diverse perspectives can be key to cultivating more open-minded, responsive, reflective dispositions and, ultimately, a more compassionate world. As educational scholar James Gee has noted, it is only through encounters with difference – with other ways of *being* – that we can gain the distance needed to critically examine our own enculturated beliefs and understanding, and thus to grow, evolve, and change for the better.

As you read this magazine and engage with other KOTESOL members in a variety of contexts this fall, I hope you will take note of what inspires your imagination and opens up novel avenues for exploration. I wonder, what new perspectives will you encounter? How will these new perspectives spark your curiosity and foster critical reflection? What indelible imprint will they leave on your own understandings and beliefs? And finally, how will you share your own savoir-faire and insights with others – thus making an impact on someone else's life? Our actions undeniably influence the world even as we are influenced by it; may the changes you make – in your life and others' – be positive ones.

Using Art Images in the English Classroom

By Natalie St.Martin

Arts-Integrated Language Learning

Among authentic materials that can be used in the language classroom, fine art images seem underappreciated. Perhaps this is due to teachers feeling unequipped to discuss art themselves or the difficulty in finding appropriate images for classroom use. Images of visual art (i.e., painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, installation art) are texts that can be "read" by students of various levels in many different kinds of ESL activities, including conversation, writing, and presentation. I have found that looking at art has a way of capturing attention, prompting strong opinions and questions, and distracting nervous students from their anxieties. The image content can be appealing to students, and with careful selection, art images can be used with any age group.

Arts integration is an approach to childhood education that combines core subjects with various artistic methods and materials to improve student understanding and expression. A study done with children in ESL classrooms in the US showed measurable benefits to arts integration through improved language test scores (Spina, 2006). In Korea, there is great interest in arts integration in elementary school, with the government putting emphasis on creativity and integration in national curriculum policies since 2015 (MOE, n.d.). The Korean Society for Education Through Arts (KoSEA) publishes regularly in their journal about arts integration in primary education. "In the fields of art education and therapy, interest in integrative application is increasing" notes Mo (2016, p. 5) about trends in Korea. There is a popular healing movement here in Korea that recognizes benefits to engaging with art both casually (through creative "healing cafes" and such) and formally through clinical art therapy (S. Kim, 2012). I have studied art therapy in recent years and abundant research confirms that engaging with art can be therapeutic and used to promote wellness in individuals and communities. Many art therapy practices focus on *making* art, whereas I here focus on *looking at* art. A helpful text that describes this approach is *Art Healing: Visual Art for Emotional Insight and Well-Being* (Spiegel, 2011). The author explains how looking at art and engaging with it deeply can have benefits akin to spending time in a therapeutic relationship.

I have used art images in my English teaching practice with students from kindergarten through graduate school. For those who are new to using art images in their language teaching, the following are some recommendations and example activities.

Finding Art Images

Nowadays, we can access art online for free with unprecedented ease. Simple Google image searches bring up interesting results, but because of image sharing sites like Pinterest and Instagram, it can be difficult to know if the images are authentic, correctly identified, or available for use. Thus, instead of general searches and sites where people can share images irresponsibly, I recommend

teachers and students use image curated websites. PBS Arts' Art 21 videos are a great way to start learning about contemporary artists around the world. Google Arts and Culture is also an excellent resource for learning about a lot of different art, but direct image downloads are unavailable (instead, Google provides links to the museum sites where images may be downloaded). Wikiart, The Metropolitan Museum, The Getty, and The British Museum all allow downloads and fair use through the Creative Commons license of images in the public domain.

In addition, teachers and students might visit museums and take their own photos (if permitted). Images can be used in presentation slides or printed as handouts. Personally, I like to use art postcards for classroom use. Over the years I have curated a set of over 150 art postcards, representing art from all over the world and many different eras.

▲ *Students looking at art postcards in small groups.*

Analysis and Choosing Art Images

The Art Box is a set of 100 different postcards published by Phaidon in 2012, and the diversity of subjects and styles makes them exciting to work with. I had been using this set for almost four years in classroom activities before I thought to do an analysis of the set in terms of representation. Analyzed for race, it was found that of the 100 different artists represented, 97 are white people, with a mere three Black indigenous people of color: Basquiat,

Botero, and Khalo. A feminist review finds an equally disappointing number. The set actually represents white male art from the U.S. and Europe, which is not identified anywhere in the title or explanation of the set. This is a common problem in fine art collections and publications not only in the U.S. and Europe but all over the world. To get a more appropriate representation of diverse artists, I included selections of Precolumbian, African American, and Korean artwork from the National Museum to mix in with selected cards from *The Art Box* to make a set that is much more balanced and interesting.

Example ESL Activity with Art Cards
Teachers can use the art images they have curated and collected in a myriad of ways. One simple but effective activity involves having students get in small groups, preferably no more than five per group, and each chooses an image from a stack of postcards or art images (15–25 recommended). This can be an image they like, dislike, or are confused by, but I generally start with an image they like, and if time allows, they may choose more than one. Then they are given four simple questions to think about. This should not be rushed: The time it takes to look at the art is as important as the following language tasks. For Korean students, who are often more comfortable writing than speaking (J. Kim, 2018), taking time to write some notes in answer to the questions before talking seems to really help their ability to share their thoughts. Students organically help one another understand the questions and answer them, mixing Korean and English in ways I encourage because code-switching is an important development in biliteracy (Spina, 2006). Questions to stimulate thought, writing, and discussion are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Questions on Art to Stimulate Thought, Writing, and Discussion

Question	Rationale
What do you see?	Looking at visual art is the priority. New vocabulary can be emphasized, especially adjectives.
What do you feel?	This makes the discussion personal. Grammar and phrasing specific to art expression can be introduced.
What do you know?	Giving information about the artist and artwork's history. Past referential grammar can be introduced.
What do you think?	Prompting analysis about meaning and importance. Basic positive/negative statements to express various critiques based on student level.

Questions can be reduced to fit different timeframes or levels, but I have found them to be engaging and interesting for my university students of various majors, ages, and English proficiency. In addition, I use these as writing prompts for short essays.

Looking at Fernando Botero's Mona Lisa (1978), one of my third-year university students made the following essay response:

This is like a fat, cute Mona Lisa. If the existing Mona Lisa had a woman's maturity, this picture seems to be the girl who pretends to be an adult. Her face is big and her arms are short by comparison. It seems to have a child's physical proportion. The face is big, but the eyes, nose, and mouth are small, and the focus on the eyes is unclear. I found it is interesting to parody the world-famous paintings we know and present them in this picture. It doesn't feel sarcastic about being fat, but it feels soft and pure. Mona Lisa painting showed a gentle smile that made me smile the

> "…an arts-based curriculum can help bridge differences between people by giving more ways to express and understand one another."

entire time. He used a variety of colors to suit his nickname "Picasso of South America." Famous paintings parody, as well as a painting, imbued with Latin culture has been drawn. Unlike a picture that looks warm and cute, many paintings imply political, social, and religious issues, which make us think about what they mean. I felt that I had to be different from others so that I could get attention. Breaking the social framework, I have to be confident to do what I like.

▲ Mona Lisa, *by Fernando Botero (1978), oil painting, 187 x 166 cm, Botero Museum, Colombia.*

Other activities with artworks can be more student initiated with them finding images online and sharing their own interests and cultural backgrounds. In flipped

classrooms or project-based learning, students can be invited into various analysis activities to grow in media awareness along with their teachers.

Conclusions

Art images can be curated by any teacher for classroom use. It does not require an art degree or even great familiarity with visual arts to use images to prompt exciting discussions and cultural explorations in English classrooms. Spina (2006) points out how artistic imagery activates many perceptive and cognitive processes that aid in learning, and an arts-based curriculum can help bridge differences between people by giving more ways to express and understand one another. Students get the opportunity to express themselves in real conversations about real art and make discoveries about the world, themselves, and English along the way.

References

Art 21. (n.d.). *Artists in their own words* [Video series]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6Z_Gbfo7xwSMs6Ahkv-m3Q

Kim, J. (2018). Ongoing speaking anxiety of Korean EFL learners: Case study of a TOEIC intensive program. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, *15*(1), 17–31.

Kim, S. (2012). Towards an integrated medicine: Clinical art therapy in Korea. In D. Kalmanowitz, J. Potash, & S. Chan (Eds.), *Art therapy in Asia: To the bone or wrapped in silk* (pp.78–87). Jessica Kingsley.

Mo, M. (2016). The creative and expressive arts in Korea today: Education, therapy, and research. *Creative Arts in Education and Therapy (CAET)*, *2*(2), 5–6. http://caet.inspirees.com/caetojsjournals/index.php/caet/article/view/21

MOE. (n.d.). *Key policies: Character education and fine arts/physical education*. http://english.moe.go.kr/sub/info.do?m=040101&s=english

Spiegel, J. (2011). *Art healing: Visual art for emotional insight and well-being*. Seishin Books.

Spina, S. U. (2006). Worlds together… words apart: An empirical assessment of the effectiveness of arts-based curriculum for second language learners. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *5*(2), 99–122.

The Art Box. (2012). [Postcard set]. Phaidon Press.

The Author

Natalie St.Martin is an artist and educator from the U.S. making a home in Korea. She has an MFA in interdisciplinary art and a BA in English, with over 12 years of experience teaching at the college level. She believes in the power of art to heal and always finds ways to incorporate arts into her English language classrooms. Email: nataliestmartin@gmail.com

Mother Tongue Use in the Language Classroom

By Rory O'Reilly Hayes

Any attempt to learn a second language can be beset by concerns about the benefits or disadvantages of using a student's mother tongue (MT) in the classroom. In this article, I will begin with research that seeks to illustrate the differing perspectives regarding allowing students to use their first language, while they are studying a second. I will then offer my own take on MT use in the classroom, chiefly as it relates to personal circumstances of eight years of English teaching in South Korea. Korean government policy around the amount of English teaching for elementary/primary age students has been "tweaked" in recent years, and this article will reflect on how that affects overall attitude toward MT use. Lastly, I will offer my thoughts on how MT use can aid future language development and the steps that can be taken to protect students' personal and national identities while they work towards second language proficiency.

The theory underlying the banishment of the MT was never clearly defined, nor was it substantiated with empirical study. The Direct Method subscribed to the belief expressed by Kroeh in 1887 that in learning another language one had to overcome the "habit" of the MT (Howatt, 2004, p. 221). In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Grammar Translation Method was attacked as a cold and lifeless approach to language teaching, and it was blamed for the failure of foreign language teaching: "The majority of language teaching reforms in the late nineteenth century and throughout the first half of the twentieth developed in opposition to grammar-translation" (Stern, 1983, p. 454).

Green (1970) described the translation of sentences as a way to exemplify specific grammar points and vocabulary. This technique, which is characteristic of the Grammar-Translation Method, was often criticized for ignoring context and meaning and encouraging word-for-word translations. The Audio-Lingual Approach to language teaching has a lot of similarities with the Direct Method: Both were considered as a reaction against the shortcomings of the Grammar-Translation Method, both reject the use of the mother tongue, and both stress that speaking and listening competences precede reading and writing competences.

The Communicative Approach, considered to have been a "revolution" in foreign language teaching, became dominant in the 1980s and continues to be so. Yet concentration on the spoken language and the exclusion of the MT were still maintained, the "revolutionary" aspect being a "shift of focus away from arguments over methods of teaching and towards a new emphasis on arranging the appropriate conditions for learning" (Howatt, 2004, p. 326).

Research on Mother Tongue Use

At the end of the 19th century, opposition to MT use in the classroom was voiced by the Reform Movement and the Direct Method, both advocating a focus on spoken language and characterized by the following:

> (a) a growing distrust in the notion that words in different languages could be equivalent in meaning, (b) dissatisfaction with translation-based teaching strategies, and (c) the influence of contemporary theories of psychology which stressed the importance of direct associations between words in the new language and their referents. (Howatt, 2004, p. 313)

In a detailed qualitative analysis, Anton and DiCamilla (1999) showed that the relationship between the MT and the L2 in the classroom cannot be viewed in simple terms of how much target language versus how much MT is used. Underscoring the inextricable nature of language and thought, and rejecting the notion of a simple prohibition of the MT, they argued that a principled framework is needed in which the MT serves as one of many communicative tools (1999). Holliday (1994) suggests that students working in groups or pairs do not have to speak English all the time; they can speak in their MT about the text, and if through this process they are producing hypotheses about the language, then what they

are doing is communicative. Crucially, the MT is not simply a metalinguistic tool. Rather it is a "means to create a social and cognitive space in which learners are able to provide each other and themselves with help throughout the task" (Anton & DiCamilla, 1999, p. 245).

Cummins (2001) contends that any credible educator should build on the experience and knowledge children bring to the classroom and instruction should also promote children's abilities and talents. Whether we do it intentionally or inadvertently, when we destroy the children's language and rupture their relationship with parents and grandparents, we are contradicting the very essence of education. It could be argued that the elevation of English to a prestigious and sought-after skill may eventually cause some undervaluing of students' native tongue or culture. Cummins considers that "while students may not be physically punished for speaking their mother tongue in the school (as they previously were in many countries), a strong message is communicated to them that if they want to be accepted by the teacher and

Recent Developments in Korean Education Policy
Many modern countries are not nation states, where the majority of the population have a sense of shared ethnicity, language, and culture. South Korea, where I live and work, is relatively unique, given that its population is almost completely homogenous, and there is little argument against giving primacy to the MT. Still, Koreans have demonstrated a huge desire for English study, and there are a large number of native-speaking English teachers working in the country. However, there has been a demonstrable drop in the number of foreign teachers over the past few years, with a 42% drop of English teachers in Korean public schools between 2011 and 2016 (Ock, 2016, para. 1). Additionally, a recently enacted government policy that forbids the use of English for first- and second-graders could perhaps be indicative of a wider societal trend of the de-prioritizing of L2 study. The ostensible reason behind this new policy was that

even question my worth as an educator. As well as being embarrassing, this could endanger my employment status."

the society, they have to renounce any allegiance to their home language and culture" (Cummins, 2001, p. 16).

Reflections on Mother Tongue Usage
When reflecting on my own circumstances, my experience thus far has been one of acute awareness of the supposed negative impacts of students using too much MT. I previously taught grades 1 through 6 in an elementary school. My classes were 40 minutes long and usually involved a mixture of speaking, reading, listening, and writing activities. Teachers, myself included, often felt uncomfortable or somewhat guilty when students used their MT in class. Skehan (1998) argues this discomfort is natural: The teacher's mandate is to improve the students' English language, and how does this occur if students are conversing in the MT? This tension may be one of the factors contributing to concerns about tasks that lead to a lot of MT use, and thus make teachers question the viability of their language teaching methods (Carless, 2002). Personally, my feelings were often along the lines of "My students' parents are working hard to pay taxes to fund these lessons. If they were to see their children using Korean in the classroom, they may grow angry or

students should fully develop their own MT, in this case Korean, before they begin studying English. The current administration believes there is an excessive degree of focus on the English language, one that threatens the educational and linguistic development of Korean children.

The new policy came from government strategy and not a shift in parental mindsets with regards to the importance of English study. "According to many English education experts and neuroscientists, the right age for learning English as a second language is the third grade," Ji-young Kwon, director of the Early Childhood Education and Care Policy Division of the Ministry of Education, told Al Jazeera (Ghani, 2018, para. 3). "Starting second-language education at preschool is too early. Before that, social skills and cognitive development should take place." Together with the ban, the ministry issued a warning and reminder to Korean parents, urging them to treat English as a second language. "It's important that parents perceive English as a second language," said Kwon (para. 3).

The above statement in particular stands in stark contrast to the aforementioned Cummins' quote. It is important to

the current government that English is seen as a second language. They want students and parents to reaffirm their allegiance to the Korean tongue, rather than renounce it, as Cummins states. The Korean case (as an EFL issue) and Cummins' hypothetical case (more of an ESL discussion) might not on the surface be easily comparable circumstances. However, it could be contended that the new affirmation from government policymakers around their native tongue could permeate the wider educational sector, leading to a situation whereby Korean students who grow up in the Korean educational system before studying abroad (116,942 studying abroad in 2014 alone; Ock, 2016, para. 2) would not feel the need to abandon their home language or culture. This factor would make me inclined to disagree with Cummins' statement.

One aspect to the debate that speaks specifically to the question of MT use is the overall effectiveness of using, or not using, native-speaking English speakers. Even before the recent government changes, the educational authorities, teachers, and parents had mused for years on the best way for students to learn. In 2012, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education said there was no substantial difference between native and Korean instructors, but that students participated more and used more English in Korean teacher-led classes than in native English teacher led classes (Ramirez, 2015). "Parents and students answered that their most ideal English teacher is "a Korean teacher with outstanding command over English." Similarly, participants showed three times more preference for Korean teachers over native English teachers.

Thoughts on Korean in the Classroom
Regardless of current developments within the wider Korean education system, the issue of allowing MT use in the classroom is a constant one for all English teachers, myself included. Previously, I had been of a similar persuasion to Krashen, whose theory of language acquisition is based on the importance of target language input, with the reduction of the target language being seen as a wasted opportunity for valuable input. The significance of target language input becomes even more apparent in an EFL setting where there is limited time available for students to study English, sometimes only one or two hours a week, as is often the case with many of my students in Korea. Limited exposure outside the EFL classroom also adds to the importance of high-quality, high-quantity target language input and output in the classroom. I felt that if my students were only with me for a relatively short amount of time each week, they should be speaking as much English as possible. To me, allowing them to use Korean in the class was counterintuitive.

Many researchers and practitioners are hesitant or even adamantly opposed to the use of the native language in the foreign-language class (Schwarzer & Luke, 2001). This stance maintains that students learn the target language better when completely immersed and surrounded by it. This correlates with my initial opinion on the subject and was a belief shared amongst my co-workers (Korean and native English speakers alike). As mentioned, I see 90% of my students three times a week, 40 minutes at a time, in classes of 14–16 students. I feel obligated to produce what Chaudron (1988) calls a rich target language environment, one that does not deprive learners of valuable input in the L2. I am constantly and consistently

found to be encouraging students: "Use English! Speak in English! Class, use your English."

In pursuit of these beliefs, I employ several strategies to try to reduce or entirely eliminate MT use in my lessons. Nunan (1999) describes a situation where an EFL teacher in China would post fines on his students when they spoke Cantonese in the classroom. The effect, unsurprisingly, was that the students just fell silent. The teacher got his wish of no Cantonese, but ironically, he did not get any English from his students either. I also use a similar, if less financially minded, system. I set up a loosely defined game, whereby I lose points for speaking Korean, as do my students. As someone with only a very basic grasp of Korean, this is easy for me to abide by, but much more challenging for my students. As in the case Nunan mentions though, rather than encouraging English, this punitive system instead handicaps my students with a lesser grasp of English for expressing themselves. In other words, banishing the learners' first language from the classroom deprives learners of their normal means of communication as well as of the ability to behave fully as normal people (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

My Thoughts Going Forward
Reading for this piece has illustrated different viewpoints and may alter my future professional development. Research dealing with sociocultural approaches to second language acquisition, for example, shows a number of vital roles for MT in L2 learning situations. These include working as a scaffolding tool, as a vehicle for establishing inter-subjectivity, and as a psychological tool for regulation and task orientation (Schwarzer & Luke, 2001). One technique that I have considered for immediate use is checking for comprehension using "How do you say _____ in Korean?" which Atkinson (1987) states is often more foolproof and quicker than inductive checking techniques. If students wanted something translated, especially beginner or intermediate students, they would usually do it themselves, so why not give it to them directly?

I am conscious, with regards to Cummins' statement, of avoiding any damages to the sense of Korean identity. There is an intense clamor amongst many Koreans to become proficient in English, and I am careful to ensure they understand that becoming well versed in a foreign language does not have to be at the expense of their own culture. While they should endeavor to have correct pronunciation, for example, they shouldn't feel ashamed of a Korean accent. It is useful to be well versed in the customs and culture of English speakers, and it is fine to enjoy the benefits of understanding the international language that English has become, but they should still be proud of their own language. Becoming adept at using their mother tongue is as important as developing a second language.

While students in Korea are told they should be proud of their Korean heritage and identity, they will simultaneously be afforded a level of prestige and respect if they become a proficient foreign language speaker. Within South Korea, English is viewed as a means to gain social prestige and economic success (Collins, 2005). Conversely, students who do not command a reasonable grasp of English may therefore feel a degree of insecurity or, in many cases, shame when comparing themselves to higher-proficiency

peers. It could be said that a message is communicated to students that they will be less accepted by their teachers, parents, and society if they do not become adept at using a second language, in this case, English. I have noted the difference between my current state (EFL) and Cummins' hypothetical scenario (ESL), but I believe that two cases have parallels here.

On the messages communicated from the educational authorities, myself, and my co-teachers to students, I should add one point. Under no circumstances are students, even those heading abroad, told they must renounce allegiance to their home language and culture. They may head overseas with the intention of improving their English, but it is unlikely I, or any other teacher, would tell them to forego their own language in pursuit of a second.

Perhaps future research could analyze the points discussed earlier, whereby students are asked not to renounce allegiance to their mother tongue but certainly to look upon the second language as one of success and prestige. What effect does this have on student achievement, and is it to the detriment of the students' mother tongue?

References

Allwright, D., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

Anton, M., & DiCamilla, F. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, *54*(3), 314–342.

Atkinson, A. (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom: A neglected resource? *ELT Journal*, *41*(4), 241–247.

Carless, D. A. (2007). Student use of the mother tongue in the task-based classroom. *ELT Journal*, *62*(4), 331–338.

Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second language research: Research on training and learning*. Cambridge University Press.

Collins, S. G. (2005). Who's this Tong-il? English, culture, and ambivalence in South Korea. *Changing English*, *12*, 417–429.

Cummins, J. (2001). Bilingual children's mother tongue: Why is it important for education? *Sprogforum*, *19*, 15–20.

Ghani, F. (2018). *South Korea bans English education for first- and second-graders*. Al Jazeera. Retrieved March 2, 2018, from https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/south-korea-bans-english-education-graders-180302100352881.html.

Green, J. F. (1970). The use of the mother tongue and the teaching of translation. *ELT Journal*, *24*, 217–223.

Holliday, A. (1994). The house of TESEP and the communicative approach: The special needs of state language education. *ELT Journal*, *48*(1), 3–10.

Howatt, A. P. R. (2004). *A history of English language teaching* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Pergamon Press.

Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. Heinle & Heinle.

Ock, H. J. (2016). *Korea sends fourth most students abroad*. The Korea Herald. Retrieved September 18, 2016, from http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160918000267.

Ock, H. J (2016). *Number of native-speaking English teachers drops*. The Korea Herald. Retrieved October 6, 2016, from http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20161006000812.

Ramirez, E. (2015). *Is Korea's EFL education failing?* Groove Magazine. Retrieved March 18, 2015, from http://groovekorea.com/article/koreas-efl-education-failing/

Schwarzer, D., & Luke, C. (2001). Inquiry cycles in a whole language foreign language class: Some theoretical and practical insights. http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/ flesa/tpfle/contents5.doc

Skehan, P. (1998). Task-based instruction. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *18*, 268–286.

The Author

Rory O'Reilly Hayes is an assistant professor in the ESL department of Sungkyul University, Anyang, South Korea. He obtained an MA in TESOL from the University of Birmingham and a BA in history and politics from John Moores University, Liverpool. He lives with his wife in Seoul, South Korea. Email: reghayes@hotmail.com

Understanding Classroom Interaction Through IRF Model Analysis

By Andrew Smith

I have been teaching English as a native English-speaking teacher in an elementary school in Korea for over 14 years. My school is well known nationally for its innovative curriculum that aims to facilitate student autonomy and self-directed learning. From the beginning, with no great knowledge of the Korean language and with my personal beliefs of teachers being facilitators, I have approached all lessons with an emphasis on language fluency and maximum student participation. Over the years, however, I started to notice that my classroom interaction with students was comparable to the prevalent teacher-led lockstep approach typically found in Korea. Then, four years ago, while doing my master's in TESOL, the differences between the two approaches I had observed started to take more concrete form with substantial validity. During my graduate studies, I had a chance to analyze my own classroom discourse, based on Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) model. It was an opportunity to get an accurate picture of the communicativeness of my class and forms the basis for this current article.

Types of Classroom Interactions
At the heart of the communicative classroom lies this question: To what extent do students of a class contribute to overall classroom interactions? It is at this point where classroom discourse analysis comes into play. If one is teaching or intends to teach English in a more student-initiated communicative environment, analyzing the classroom discourse can be useful, as it can chart the level of teacher–student talk objectively as well as support or debunk the teacher's intuition of communicativeness in their classroom.

Take students and teachers as participants. The following patterns of interactions are possible: teacher–students, students–teacher, and students–students. Arguably, the more initiatives learners take in the classroom, the more learning will take place. Learners will be freer to question what they learn, initiate conversation, make decisions about the learning process, and therefore contribute more to their own learning process. This is in stark contrast to a teacher-led approach, which orients learners towards conformity in gaining knowledge with accuracy, with teachers being the sole decision-makers.

The IRF Model
The IRF model is a relatively simple and powerful descriptive system for classroom communication. Despite the model's teacher-centeredness and lack of explorations on the functional level of the utterances, it is widely employed for discourse analysis. It can illustrate how classroom interactions take place by categorizing and analyzing teacher–student utterances. Under this model, classroom conversation comprises five ranks (Willis, 1992). The ranks are inter-related as each one is realized by the rank below it; they consist of "lesson," "transaction," "exchange," "move," and "act."

The ranks "lesson" (a classroom discourse as a whole) and "transaction" are coterminous with topic boundaries in a lesson (Coulthard, 1981). At the level of exchange, there are two types: boundary and teaching. Boundary exchanges mark off stages in a lesson by means of framing moves and/

or focusing moves. Teaching exchanges concern the actual progression of a lesson. Table 1 provides greater details.

Table 1. Subdivisions of Teaching Exchanges

6 Free Teaching Exchanges	
Subdivision	Structure and Function
Teacher Inform	I(R) – offering new information to pupils
Pupil Inform	IF – offering relevant information to the teacher
Teacher Direct	IR(F) – eliciting a non-verbal response from pupils
Teacher Elicit	IRF – eliciting verbal contributions from pupils
Pupil Elicit	IR – eliciting a response from the teacher
Check	IR(F) – discovering how well pupils are getting on
5 Bound Teaching Exchanges	
Subdivision	Structure and Function
Re-initiation (i)	IRIbRF – inducing a response to an unanswered question
Re-initiation (ii)	IRF(Ib)RF – inducing a correct response to an incorrectly answered question
Listing	IRF(Ib)RF – withholding evaluation until two or more answers are received
Reinforce	IRIbR – inducing a (correct) response to a previously issued directive
Repeat	IRIbRF – inducing a repetition of a response

Note. From Sinclair and Coulthard (1992).

A teaching exchange commonly consists of "initiation" (I), "response" (R), and "Feedback" (F) moves. An example of the IRF structure, taken from personally transcribed data, is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Teacher Elicit (26)

INITIATION
T: "I looked in the kitchen. I said, "by cracky!" Five more things are very wacky". (el) [Reading] What rhyming words can you see? (el)

RESPONSE
P1: Cracky and wacky. (rep)

FEEDBACK
T: Cracky and wacky. (acc) Right. (acc)

This three-part, teacher-elicit exchange consists of an opening move, which invites students to engage in the exchange, an appropriate response by the student with an answering move, and a follow-up move from the teacher in the form of feedback. It should be noted that not every teaching exchange follows this three-move structure. For instance, pupil-elicit exchanges are devoid of student feedback, as doing so might be considered disrespectful to a teacher, hence the structure is IR (as shown in Table 1). Also, teacher-inform exchanges, where responses are not always made (I(R)) and pupil-inform exchanges, where feedback is given by teachers (IF), exemplify different types of the IRF structure.

Contained within these moves are the lowest rank of discourse, acts. The excerpt above, for instance, contains a request for a linguistic response (an elicit) in the opening move, an appropriate linguistic response to the teacher's elicitation (a reply) in the answering move, and the teacher's satisfaction with the student's reply (an accept) in the follow-

up move. Accepts are a distinguishing feature of classroom discourse in the model (Coulthard, 1985), where the teacher asks questions to which he/she already knows the answer (display question) rather than not already know (referential question).

Gauging Communicativeness

The transcribed portion (25 minutes) was taken from a 40-minute after-school reading class attended by three sixth-graders (labeled P1, P2, P3) at my elementary school. The lesson is based on Dr. Seuss's picture-book titled *Wacky Wednesday*. I felt this book was appropriate for young learners as the short sentences provided sufficient opportunities to notice sentence structure and form in context and to learn new vocabulary. Also, the book's colorful pictures and comical scenarios offered a stimulus for the students to produce language learned from regular classes.

Based on the theory behind the IRF model, often found were two moves (IF) from the teacher and one student move (R) in return, which typically indicates teacher-led classroom discourse (i.e., a lesson deprived of opportunities to generate genuine communication).The result of my classroom discourse analysis shows an even contribution of teacher versus student utterances. In some analysis slots, more student exchanges (witnessed in Exchanges 47–51) occurred in comparison to teacher utterances. This has led me to believe that my classroom is conducive to student-led lessons.

The high frequency of student answering moves alerted me to their limited use of English as responses, similar to "pseudo-interaction" described by Willis (1992, p. 171). Such responses were indicative of a teacher-led lesson designed for beginner-level students, who are limited in their capability to express themselves communicatively outside of answering moves, as shown in the exchange in Table 3.

Table 3. Teacher Elicit (21)

OPENING	
T: What's the matter? (el)	
ANSWERING	
P1: Upside down.(rep)	
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P3: Shoe's under the bed. (rep)	T: The shoe is under the bed. (acc)
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P1: This clock is upside down. (rep)	T: Yes (e)
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P1: This number is …(rep)	T: Okay. (acc)The number is upside down. (com)
ANSWERING	
P1: The number is no upside down (rep)	

As a result, the analysis illustrated the need to provide more opportunities for students in this class to increase their contribution to opening and follow-up moves. Therefore, I started supplementing this class with book conferences (i.e., small groups in which students review and give their opinions on what they read in order to create more genuine communication opportunities as well as make learning more meaningful).

The analysis also highlighted possible impediments in the teachers role. I found the high frequency of follow-up moves in teacher-elicit exchanges is not conducive to student participation, as it can leave them starved of a wait time of three to four seconds, recommended by Nunan (1991) as necessary to increase the length of their responses. Also, the type of teacher feedback in teacher-elicit exchanges can be either beneficial or detrimental to developing the

communicativeness of a lesson. For instance, "evaluates" (coded as "(e)" in the follow-up move) seems to limit my students' creativity and entrap their contribution to the confines of the answering move, as shown in the exchange in Table 4.

Table 4. Teacher Elicit (57)

OPENING	
T: And the Sutherland sisters. They look wacky, too. They said "Nothing is wacky around here but you!" (el) [Reading] What's wacky here? (el)	
ANSWERING	
P1: That girl. No… No… (rep)	
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P2: No leg. (rep)	T: No leg (acc)
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P2: No neck. (rep)	T: Right. (e) Yes. (e)
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P2: No bag. (rep)	T: No bag. (acc) Right. (e)

It seems to me that teacher comments or acknowledges in follow-up moves could be more beneficial to the development of more authentic discourse, allowing expanded student contributions outside the constraints of the answering move. In other words, the analysis made me realize the value of feedback on content rather than on form as a means of developing more natural discourse. Therefore, I was convinced that, as a teacher keen to develop student communicative competence, claims such as "the teacher almost always has the last word" and "two turns to speak for every pupil turn" (Coulthard, 1985, p. 124) should be taken with caution.

Recognizing Ss' Learning Processes

In my analysis, several recurrences of checks (coded as "(ch)") for clarification have been observed as shown in Table 5. This shows not only the reversal of classroom roles, but their use of social strategies (i.e., to cooperate with the teacher to verify or clarify a confusing language point in order to enhance their learning experience).

Table 5. Teacher Elicit (95)

OPENING	
T: What's that? (el)	
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P1: Car on the …. Ah alligator! Shoes on the … Shoes on the … (rep) Shoe's in the sky? (ch)	T: Yeah. (acc)The shoe's in the sky. (acc)
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P1: That chimney. Is on the tree. (rep)	T: Yes. (acc) The chimney is on the tree. (acc) Right. (e) Very strange. (com) Eleven. (com)
ANSWERING	FOLLOW-UP
P1: Four sale. (rep)	T: FOUR sale. (acc) Yes. (acc)

Also, the presence of asides, where pupils uttered or repeated phrases from the book or the teacher to themselves, helped me notice their "transformation of the target language" (Oxford, 1990, p. 43). For instance, P3's utterance "Don't be a fool!" in Exchange 59 (see Table 6) is a case in point, where the student practices out loud a sentence structure.

Table 6. Teacher Elicit (59)

OPENING	
T: "But look!" I yelled. "Eight things are wrong here at school." "Nothing is wrong," they said. "Don't be a fool." (el) [Reading] What are the rhyming words? Can you find them? (el)	
ANSWERING	
P3: Don't be a fool! (z)	

Interestingly, the analysis showed that my students overcame their lexical deficiency by code-switching to Korean. P2's and P1's utterances in Korean (see Table 7, Exchanges 29 and 52) are examples of code-switching. This compensation strategy helped them to "hold the floor" and maintain the flow of the discourse. Thus, the analysis confirmed my expectation regarding the importance of using L1 in a classroom of beginners as a way to develop strategic competence.

Table 7. Student Code-Switching

Teacher Elicit (29)	
OPENING T: Four more. (cl)	
ANSWERING P1: That umbrella. (rep)	**FOLLOW-UP** T: Yes. (acc)
ANSWERING P2: Umbrella in *nembi* [Korean for "saucepan"]. (rep)	**FOLLOW-UP** T: In the saucepan. (e) Saucepan. (e)
Re-initiation (i) (52)	
OPENING T: Anything else? (el)	
ANSWERING P1: Stop and go color change. (rep)	**FOLLOW-UP** T: Right. (acc) You're right. (e)
ANSWERING P1: The car wheels is man's *dari*. [Korean for "leg"] (rep)	

Student-Led Interactions

My classroom discourse data often tended to resemble real-life communications, regularly accompanying switching or going off topic, and longer individual student contributions. In this regard, some complications arose in the use of the IRF model, but adaptations were possible. The most salient examples are seen in Exchanges 47–51 (see Table 8).

Table 8. Pupil-Led Interactions

Pupil Elicit (47)	
OPENING P3: What's that? (el)	
	FOLLOW-UP T: Good question. (e) What's that? (acc)
Pupil Elicit (48)	
OPENING P3: P2, what's the matter with you? (z)	
Pupil Inform (49)	
OPENING P2: Head change. P3. (i)	
Teacher Elicit (50)	
OPENING T: Changed into P3?	
ANSWERING P2: Yes. (rep)	
Pupil Inform (51)	
OPENING P3: Okay. I understand. (z)	

In Exchange 48, P3's utterance, "P2, what's the matter with you?" functions as a technique not only to practice but display his sense of humor (teasing P2) as well, and ends up drawing a response from P2. Although these exchanges of information by the pupils, without the provision of the teacher's response, are outside the realm of the IRF model, I decided these qualify as pupil-elicit and pupil-inform moves, respectively.

Likewise, in Exchange 22 (see Table 9), in response to the student's question, there is a noticeable absence of a teacher's answering move. Instead, P2's question is met with P1's reply. Effectively, P2's opening move allows for his peer to self-correct, taking on the role of the teacher. Therefore, I felt it was appropriate to label this exchange a pupil-elicit move.

Table 9. Teacher Elicit and Pupil Direct

Teacher Elicit (21)	
OPENING T: What's the matter? (el)	
ANSWERING P1: Upside down.(rep)	
ANSWERING P3: Shoe's under the bed. (rep)	**FOLLOW-UP** T: The shoe is under the bed. (acc)
ANSWERING P1: This clock is upside down. (rep)	**FOLLOW-UP** T: Yes
ANSWERING P1: This number is …(rep)	**FOLLOW-UP** T: Okay. (acc)The number is upside down. (com)
ANSWERING P1: The number is no upside down (rep)	
Pupil Elicit (22)	
OPENING P2: Why? (el)	
ANSWERING P1: Oh! (ack)The number is upside down. (rep)	

Conclusion

Contemporary language education strives to allow for divergence and independence for learners. Albeit time consuming, classroom discourse analysis such as the IRF model provides teachers with objective insight into the mechanism of teacher-student verbal exchanges, overall communicativeness of the classroom, and learning strategies employed by the students. Therefore, by adjusting their teaching methodology accordingly, teachers with the goal of improving communicativeness can work on creating more opportunities for their students to contribute to the three slots of the IRF exchange. Furthermore, once experience in teacher–student interaction analysis has been gained, teachers may become more capable of automatically analyzing real-time classroom discourse and amending their interaction styles to better fit desired teaching methods.

References

Coulthard, M. (1981). Developing a description of spoken discourse: Developing the description. In M. Coulthard & M. Montgomery (Eds.), *Studies in discourse analysis* (pp. 13–30).

Coulthard, M. (1985). *An introduction to discourse analysis*. Longman.

Lesieg, T. (1974). *Wacky Wednesday*. Random House.

Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology*. Prentice Hall.

Oxford, R. L. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Heinle & Heinle.

Sinclair, J., & Coulthard, M. (1975). *Towards an analysis of discourse: The English used by teachers and pupils*. Oxford University Press.

Sinclair, J., & Coulthard, M. (1992). Towards an analysis of discourse. In M. Coulthard (Ed.), *Advances in spoken discourse analysis* 1–34). Routledge.

Willis, J. (1992). Inner and outer: Spoken discourse in the language classroom. In M. Coulthard (Ed.), *Advances in spoken discourse analysis* (pp. 162–182). Routledge.

The Author

Andrew Smith is a native English teacher at a rural elementary school in Korea. He has been teaching young language learners and adults in Korea since 2004. He completed his MA TESOL at the University of Birmingham in 2018. Email: elt.in.korea@ gmail.com

"A Matter of Skill, Temperament, and Passion"
Interview with Literary Translator Sora Kim-Russell

Sora Kim-Russell is an award-winning literary translator who has translated Korean novels by Hwang Sok-yong (*At Dusk, Familiar Things, Princess Bari*), Bae Suah (*Nowhere to Be Found*), Hye-young Pyun (*The Law of Lines, The Hole, City of Ash and Red*), Un-su Kim (*The Plotters*), and Kyung-sook Shin (*I'll Be Right There*). She is also an essayist on Korea and translation, and has previously taught at Ewha Womans University and the LTI Korea Translation Academy. Currently she lives in Seoul with her family. We are thankful that Sora has accepted our request for an interview. — Ed.

The English Connection (TEC): Thank you for giving us some of your time today, Sora. Could you first briefly introduce yourself to our readers?

Sora: Thank you for inviting me to do this interview! I'm a mixed-race Korean-American from California, and I've been living in Seoul since about 2004 – longer, if you include a year of language study before that. I've been working as a translator for roughly ten years now.

TEC: Would you consider yourself bilingual? Could you briefly describe your own personal experience on learning a second (or more) language?

Sora: As strange as it might sound coming from a translator, I don't consider myself bilingual. I only translate from Korean to English, so my passive understanding of Korean is much stronger than my active use of the language. And having seen how well truly bilingual people can toggle back and forth between the two, I can't put myself in the same camp as them, despite how long I've lived here. I'm a "heritage speaker": I had exposure to the language growing up but wasn't able to speak, read, and write in Korean until I was an adult and had access to formal instruction.

Acquiring Korean was a struggle. I'd taken classes in Spanish and Latin earlier and was told by my teachers that I had a knack for learning languages. But with Korean there was an emotional barrier that came with studying a heritage language. I felt pressure to be naturally good at it, and I felt a kind of resentment, as well, that I hadn't learned it from a young age. Classroom experiences were a mixed bag. I had some wonderful teachers who made the effort worthwhile, but there were a few who were insensitive towards Korean-Americans in general or towards mixed Koreans specifically.

TEC: As a follow-up question, the benefits of bilingualism to being a translator seem obvious, but are there any drawbacks as well?

Sora: There are, in fact, drawbacks. For me, a very simple and easily fixable drawback I ran into was that I couldn't use the same words we used growing up at home. We had our own translations of things (e.g., food names) that didn't work in a formal way.

As a teacher, I found that my bilingual students had a tendency to overly summarize as they translate. Through discussion, we discovered that their habit is to read very quickly and retain content while ignoring style (or overlaying their own). This resulted in texts that were very "clean" grammatically but didn't have the same effect or impact as the Korean text. This was especially the case when the author was doing something deliberately stylistic or experimental; student translators who were "less bilingual" were more prone to reproducing the sentence

as is (though not always to great effect), while those who were "more bilingual" tended to unconsciously go, "hey, something's weird about this," and then "fix" it in their translation. My approach as a teacher, then, was to work with them on reading more slowly and deliberately, and observing the author's sentence style in order to think about a literary text as a series of rhetorical choices rather than as a mere description or reporting of events.

TEC: What part does translation play in learning a new language (either naturally, or as explicit teaching to students in the classroom)?

Sora: It depends on the type of translation. I tend to think that literary translation is not hugely helpful to language study because what we do is a form of creative writing as much, if not more so, as it is a language exercise. To that end, I think translation would be of more use in a writing program. That said, I think that looking at examples of translations – particularly looking at different translations of the same text – can help to convey the

idea that there is never a perfect one-to-one equivalency between different languages, and that it comes down to what and how you're trying to communicate.

In terms of my own language study and translation practice, learning how to translate was a very different experience from learning Korean. There's no rote memorization, for example, or scripts to follow. If anything, what you end up strengthening is the language that you're translating into. Translation has made me a better writer of English and a worse speaker of Korean.

TEC: For those (including myself) who constantly struggle with improving comprehension and speaking in learning Korean, what advice can you offer?

Sora: Don't become a translator! Haha! I'm only half kidding. If your goal is language acquisition, then interpretation is probably the way to go. Most translation work is too highly specialized for the average language learner.

That said, if your specific desire is to read more, then I would suggest starting with translations of books you've already read in your dominant language. If you're not tasked with trying to figure out who is who and what's what, then you can spend more time getting comfortable with the grammar and building your vocabulary. There are also a lot of great chapter books and graphic novels, if facing a dense wall of words is too much. Just bear in mind that each genre has its own form, so getting really good at reading fiction unfortunately will not make going to the bank or seeing the doctor any easier.

▲ *Kim-Russell's most recent translation is Hye-young Pyun's thriller* **The Law of Lines.**

TEC: As an instructor at Ewha Womans University, how do you teach translation (with or without mentioning any adaptations due to COVID-19-induced online course requirements)?

Sora: At both Ewha and LTI Korea, classes are taught in a workshop format. For the non-literary translation classes at Ewha, we went over different forms of writing – expository, descriptive, persuasive, etc. – and translated sample texts. For the literary translation classes, the students worked in small groups to translate short stories, while also reading short stories in English that had something in common with the Korean text they were working with. By doing so, it helped to expand their lexicons while also seeing how so much of literature is universal. I like to think that it also showed them that literary translation is *possible*, that very few texts are

actually "untranslatable" or inaccessible for foreign readers (which is not to say that all Korean books will *sell* well outside of Korea, but sellability is a different issue than translatability.)

I haven't taught since the COVID-19 outbreak, but before that, there were times when I had to resort to distance learning. In those cases, students would critique each other's work and post their responses to each other via email, group chat, or bulletin board, etc. Live workshops are preferable, as the energy generated from live discussion and collaboration helps to spark ideas and breakthroughs, e.g., when someone is stuck on a difficult passage. Also, translators have a tendency to feel isolated, so coming together socially is really helpful, both artistically and emotionally.

TEC: You've written on being biracial in the anthology *Mixed Korean: Our Stories* (2018). As the father of two biracial daughters myself, I'm interested in how your unique experiences and perspective help you see the two cultures (Korean and Western), and ultimately shape your work as a translator?

Sora: This is a tricky question to respond to, as I could probably write a book on the subject…. But I'll try to keep my response brief.

First off, I want to dispel the notion that biraciality in and of itself makes a person a better translator. It's a tempting notion, but there are specific, honable skills that go into the work, namely, writing skills that require active study and practice.

That said, I suppose there is something to experiencing both cultures in your daily life and within your own body and self that lends itself to understanding translation as a concept. We know that translation is possible, because we live it every day. I get impatient with people who question whether foreign readers can understand or appreciate Korean literature – they have and they do. The idea of untranslatability has an inherently monoracial bias. The people who believe that racial or ethnic boundaries are so impermeable that literature cannot pass through are probably the same people who are insensitive or prejudiced towards mixed people. Our existence is confusing to them, just as the idea of enjoying and understanding a foreign novel seems to confound them.

I personally encountered some of this prejudice when I started out. On the whole, most people were supportive. But I ran into my share of Koreans who questioned whether I was "Korean enough" to understand "Korean
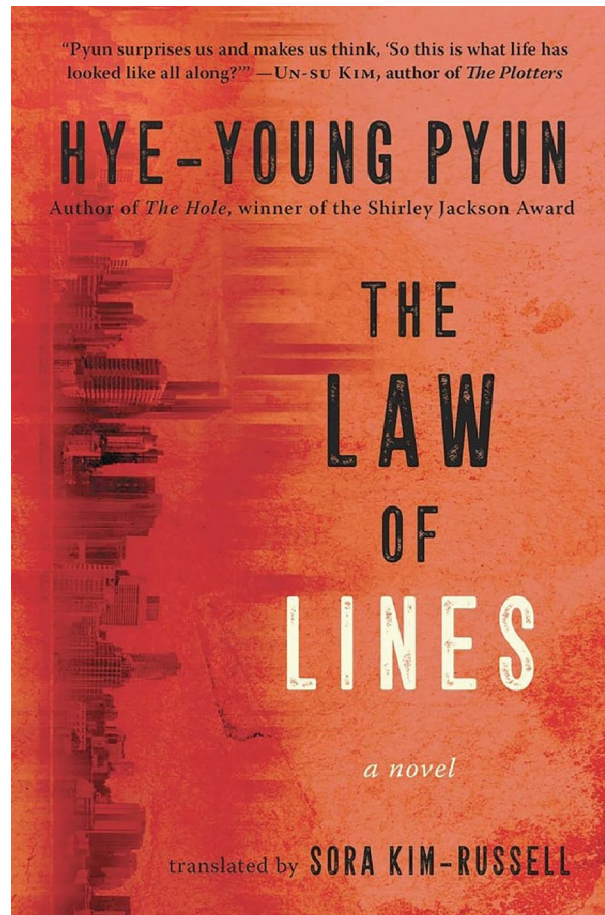
emotions" well enough to translate them, along with Western readers or book reviewers who I assume took one look at my hyphenated last name and evaluated me in terms of my English "fluency." You can't win either way!

It's important to resist the assumption that the language arts are defined or bounded by ethnicity. Being Korean does not make you an expert on Korean literature – I've seen just as many Korean students as non-Korean misread sentences. And being a "native" (read: white) English speaker does not make you an expert on English prose – there are far more terrible writers than there are good ones. But all too often, I see reviews of literary translations that seem to be more informed by the translator's surname than by the work itself. Being a good translator is a matter of skill, temperament, and passion. What you look like – or more precisely, what others think you look like – or what your name is has no bearing on that.

TEC: You've spoken in prior interviews that so much is "taken for granted" in Korean literature, in terms of cultural-specific aspects, and that it's often difficult to find English equivalents, as "the tricky part is revealing the overlap enough to make it easier for the reader to picture, while still keeping that item culturally distinct." I'm thinking of relatively basic things like the *jjapaguri* ramen-udon combo found in Bong Joon Ho's *The Parasite*, but conversely also historical events and complex Korean concepts such as *han* (한) and *nunchi* (눈치). Can you explain the approach (if any) you use in translation of culturally weighted aspects?

Sora: The basic rubric that I use, and that I've taught to my students, is to consider the cultural reference in relation to the story or book as a whole. For example, with *nunchi*, is it mentioned once in a scene and never brought up again, or is it integral to the theme or plot? Does it behoove the reader to learn this word or concept? Culturally specific terms like *han* and *nunchi* are heavy, layered concepts, but they also function as everyday figures of speech and are more often than not solvable through roughly equivalent terms, like "resentment" and "reading the room." We have a tendency to trip over these words and to search for something equally layered, but if you step back and look at what is happening in the scene as an integrated whole, you'll often find that those layers of meaning are already there. This is because we don't translate words in isolation, we translate stories.

What tends to be more challenging to translate are things that might be difficult for the reader to picture, such as physical objects and spaces (e.g., *hanok*) or things with certain values attached to them (e.g., double eyelids, round foreheads). Beauty standards differ between cultures, so the significance of a character with double eyelids and a high nose bridge might be lost on some (though never all) readers. (And in some cases, a translator might simply translate *ssang-ggeopul* as "big eyes" or "pretty eyes" instead, to convey what is really being said.)

As for historical events, I have in some cases added content to the translation to help the reader understand. For example, in *The Plotters*, the author referred to "the dictatorship era," which would only make sense to readers who know something about South Korean history. In collaboration with the editor and author, I expanded that term into a one-or-two sentence-long summary of South Korea's history of dictatorships. Sadly, even with that addition, at least one reader/reviewer still missed the point: They mistook the entire book as speculative fiction about a future, unified Korea.

TEC: In talking about sentence structure, flow, timing, and even the tone of humor and sorrow so often found in Korean literature, you've said it's important to "follow the author's lead" to let their distinct styles shine through in translation. Do you have an accustomed process of focusing just on the text, or do you work in tandem with the author and/or editors (or does it vary from author to author, project to project)?

Sora: It does vary. Some authors are more hands-on with translations, and some editors ask for more revisions than others. Most of the time, I'm able to make these revisions directly to the translation, but very occasionally the author has to step back in and revise the original. There are also rare cases where works need to be shortened to a publishable length; in that situation, the author should sign off on cuts made to the text.

I used to ask authors a few questions about their work before starting the translation (e.g., who their literary influences were), but I stopped because it didn't help as much as I thought it would. Instead I complete a draft before contacting them with questions. (And even then, the questions are not all that exciting. They're usually along the lines of "In line x on page y, who is this referring to?")

By "follow the author's lead," I mean that it's important to look at what kinds of choices the author made and what effect those choices create. My process is to work on my own for the first draft, so that I can immerse myself in the world of the book and form my own experience and understanding of it. When that draft is done, I invite feedback.

I usually hire a fellow translator to compare my translation against the original for errors and offer an evaluation of how well or poorly they think I've captured the tone and voice. I take their feedback into account as I revise, then the manuscript goes off to the editor at the publishing house. I get their feedback, which is based solely on my English translation, or in some cases is informed by other-language translations of the same book, and then revise again. The only time the draft goes to the author is when they explicitly ask to see the translation before it gets published. Of all the authors I've translated, this has only happened twice.

TEC: You have said "Korean-to-English translation has an innate tendency to veer abstract and indirect." What are the reasons for this, and how can it be overcome?

Sora: I wish now that I hadn't said that, as I've been rethinking it a lot in recent days. But for the sake of argument, I'll expand on that statement very briefly here: Korean is a high-context language; English is low-context. Aside from very formal occasions, when speaking Korean, you can drop words that are implicit from the context. For example, you don't need to say "I am going to the store" when it's obvious that you're the one leaving. If you do add the subject, it can imply a contrast or emphasis, e.g., "I'll (be the one to) go to the store." In English, we

add the subject without that sort of thought or nuance – it simply completes the grammatical unit. If you do say, "Going to the store," in English, it can sound curt. The listener might wonder if you're in a hurry, or in a bad mood, or angry at them, etc. Which brings me to why I've been rethinking my initial statement. If "going to the store" is only incomplete from the viewpoint of English, then is it really fair to label it as indirect in Korean?

At any rate, when you translate, you have to keep an ear out for what isn't made explicit, for those moments of high/low context, and decide whether the author is being elliptical for artistic reasons or if it's just a fluke of the language. If the former, keep it elliptical; if the latter, spell it out.

There are also ways in which Korean is less ambiguous than English. For example, with dialogue, register shifts between *banmal* and *chondaetmal* can reveal a lot of information about characters, their relationships, and what's going on in a scene. Do these two characters know each other from somewhere or have something in common? Is the mood friendly or tense? Is someone about to get punched in the face? A translator might have to work a little harder to carry that over into English.

Overall, I think it's more the case that Korean is vague where English is concrete, and Korean is concrete where English is vague.

TEC: There's a sense of growing popularity of Korean literature on the international literary stage (*The Vegetarian, Please Look After Mom, The Translator, Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*, to mention a few), along with all the attention given to *The Parasite* winning Best Picture at the 2020 Academy Awards, director Bong Joon Ho's comments on overcoming the one-inch-tall barrier of subtitles, and even the success and charm of his translator Sharon Choi. This must be a significant time for Korean translators, in both literature and cinema.

Sora: It's a pretty good time to be a Korean translator. There is a lot of interest from overseas publishers and support from the Korean government. It has also coincided with a broader, non-language-specific push to make translators more visible (e.g., #namethetranslator on Twitter) and a surge of interest in translated literature in general. Korean literature in translation has been around for a long time (much longer than most people realize), but the visibility of translation and translators is perhaps a more recent thing.

TEC: How have you recently been spending your time?

Sora: I've actually been taking a hiatus from active translation while finishing up some projects and focusing on family life. My most recent publication (in May) was *The Law of Lines* by Hye-young Pyun. That will be followed next year by *The Prisoner*, a co-translation of Hwang Sok-yong's autobiography, and *On the Origin of the Species*, a co-translation of a science-fiction short-story collection by Bo-young Kim. Beyond that, my next step will be to read some new books and decide on future projects.

TEC: Thank you so much for your time in this interview. I will certainly be following your continued success in the future.

Sora: Thank you!

Owning and Operating a *Hagwon* in Korea

By Jack Glowacki

Never before have I been asked to write an article about the *hagwon* (private academy) industry here in South Korea, although my experience with it extends as far back as 2005 and encapsulates most, if not all, aspects of operating a hagwon as a business.

My arrival in 2005 marked my first year working as an ESL teacher here in South Korea, and with a prior year of ESL teaching in Japan, I would like to think that I can now officially refer to myself as "a seasoned veteran of the ESL industry."

I would like to open this brief article by saying that a hagwon is as much a business as any other, and one should really take the time to consider the pros and cons of opening one prior to taking the initial steps. I might even venture out to say that operating a hagwon business places more demands on the owner than many other businesses might. I would also like to dispel the myths regarding the idea of being your own boss and deciding on the times during which you may choose to operate your school. Neither one of these could be farther from the truth.

> **"Our main objective is to help English learners to acquire the language in the most natural way possible."**

The Idea

In 2016, I was toying with the idea of repatriating back to Canada, with my Korean spouse and our two young children, when an opportunity presented itself that I thought passing up would be a mistake. We decided to take a chance and became the master franchisees of Shane English Korea, a franchise with a 40-year-long history, over 300 schools worldwide located in ten different countries, and in that fateful year, South Korea became the eleventh.

There is a myth that starting your own business means that one becomes their own boss, and while in essence this assumption is correct, instead of having now to answer to your employer, you will be required to answer to your customers. Unlike in retail, where an unsatisfactory product can be returned by the customer, placed on the shelf, and resold to the next person, the product hagwon owners sell is for the most part non-refundable. In addition to the actual product itself, the curriculum, the customers in South Korea place a lot of importance on the types of teachers actually implementing the curriculum and, more importantly, to the school director and their way of operating the school.

There is also the perception that, as a business owner, one is able to decide on the hours worked, which although

essentially true, also poses the question of what level of business operations is seen as most effective. Operating a hagwon business is kind of like being a taxi driver in a Jimmy Carr joke, you are your own boss and no one tells you what to do or how to run your business, until your passenger tells you where to turn and when to stop. As a hagwon owner, you realize very quickly that the number of customers you are able to retain is largely dependent on how flexible you can be with your schedule, and that your business will be a lot more successful if you adhere to your customers' calendar.

Reason for Success

They may not come even if you build it. There is a reason why so many people decide to open a franchise when starting a business. Franchises have a proven record of success and an established product that is familiar and time tested. Just like the multitude of coffee shops across the nation, we all know what to expect from Starbucks, Angelina's or Hollys coffee. Likewise, when looking for English education for their children, parents have certain expectations when it comes to GnB, Lucete, or Cheongdam.

Statistically, more than 60% of all businesses are said to stand the chance of going bust within the first year. On the other hand, franchises boast a 90% rate of success, within that same challenging period.

The hagwon industry is quite competitive, and although I would not go as far as labeling it "cut-throat," I will say that it occasionally feels like an acidic environment that can corrode relationships and individuals from the inside. This has become particularly true more recently, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. In Ulsan, where our business is located, hagwons were politely asked to close their doors for two solid months, causing a fair number of them to remain closed indefinitely. The large franchise hagwons were the first ones to begin operations once the green light for reopening was given, and they are also the ones who saw the most rapid bounce back in their student numbers. Both of our Shane English schools have managed to get through the crisis, and I can say that we are nearly at our pre-COVID-19 student numbers.

Types of English Hagwons

A hagwon is what we refer to as an academy, a private school that teaches any given subject. Hagwons specializing in English can range in size in terms of their student as well as their staff base. Personally, I like to subdivide schools into three categories: small, medium, and large. The amount of responsibilities and management required is proportional to the number of staff and clients on board. In my experience, having gone through two of the stages now, the middle one is the most demanding. In a small hagwon, the owners have the luxury of arranging their time schedule to fit their needs to some extent, provided that the income from their work is enough to cover the expenses. As a small hagwon, one owner is able to comfortably take on a number of roles without any of them encroaching too much onto the other. Managing parents and the day-to-day tasks required for the efficient operation of a small hagwon can be balanced relatively easily alongside teaching the students. Many expats who operate their own schools are able to teach, prepare for classes, consult with parents, and manage the overall existence of their business at this early stage. This being said, having spoken to quite a number of people in this position, I know that most expats who are hagwon owners conduct their business with either their Korean spouses or hire a Korean assistant to take up some of the slack in the linguistic department, bringing us to the middle-sized stage.

Having a partner becomes crucial once the hagwon becomes middle-sized. As the

number of students grows, so must that of the staff, both teaching and support, whether in the form of drivers or out-of-class student managers. This is the space within which my spouse and I find ourselves, and with each passing day, I feel that each of the roles I retain within our business (teacher, school manager, franchising director, HR manager, school principal, head office liaison, stock clerk, maintenance manager, or any other type of work that needs to be done around the school) is getting the short end of the stick, as juggling these responsibilities becomes a lot less efficient. Without my spouse, who carries an equally count-worthy load of positions, if not more, our school would not be able to function as efficiently as it presently does. We employ ten more staff without whom this entire operation would be impossible to manage, and yet, it feels like neither my spouse's nor my work ever seems to end.

A large hagwon, boasting student loads large enough to support a larger staff base, will allow its owners to shed some of the layers of responsibilities, delegating them to

their support staff. Getting to this stage, however, is very challenging and can be impossible without the proper teaching equipment, which comes in the form of curriculum and teaching methodology.

The Curriculum

The variety in the types of English language education offered by hagwons is quite broad. Traditionally, Koreans on the whole prefer the grammatical approach to learning, which is still largely persistent in the public education system. A large number of hagwons still see this type of approach as the primary way of winning their bread and butter, but more and more, such traditionally driven hagwons have been trying to diversify their portfolios by employing more teachers to teach communication. The student base in such cram schools is mainly made up of middle and high school students, whose parents are adamant about pushing their children towards the top tier universities, which require impeccable test scores.

Our Shane English School sports one of the more unique curriculums, as it focuses on the communicative approach. Our main objective is to help English learners to acquire the language in the most natural way possible. Our

> **"... your business will be a lot more successful if you adhere to your customers' calendar."**

education begins at the kindergarten level with a three-year-long program, which allows our students to begin their English studies early on and then smoothly transition into our elementary levels. My wife and I continuously work on developing our brand and curriculum, and are always seeking opportunities for further expansion of our chain of schools.

Our first franchise began operations in 2019, turning a profit within the first six months of operations. Parties interested in finding out more about Shane English Korea can view videos of our school on our YouTube channel at "Living Korea," or contact me directly.

The Author

Jack Glowacki is a Canadian expat and has been living in Korea since 2005. He holds a BA in psychology and an MA in applied linguistics and ELT. He is a father of two and shares his time between his family, business, and a small YouTube channel "Living Korea." Email: jackg@protonmail.ch

Where Common Core Meets SLA:
International School Education for Students Who Are Not International

By James Green

The mention of an international school draws images of a magical place akin to a 70's American film with graceful buildings, a large sports stadium, and big yellow buses bringing students to and fro. Expatriate youth roam the hall trying to retain some of their Western culture whilst living abroad, quotas prevent the schools from being flooded with locals, and the campuses are essentially enclaves of their foreign counterparts with English-only zones meant to help the few accepted Koreans immerse themselves in the world of this new language. That's the idea, at least.

The reality is that international schools in Korea exist on a wide spectrum with only a few reaching anything close to the aforementioned status. Even the term "international school" comes with numerous caveats and exists in a variety of legal and social categories. Regardless of the provisos, the majority of international schools in Korea are (in my personal opinion) essentially ESL academies that use some combination of content-based instruction (CBI), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), and/or project-based learning (PBL) based around Common Core standards (these being academic benchmarks set by each state in the U.S. on what K-12 students should be doing at each grade and in each subject). These schools model themselves as such to kill two birds with one stone: give students an American high school diploma (well, most do at least) and help them learn English. So where do these schools fit in the Korean world of second language acquisition? Are the teachers simply ESL instructors dressed up in teacher uniforms? And how should those teachers

institutions under foreign laws and regulations of a foreign country.

— **Foreign Schools**: These are schools that are established to provide education for the children of foreigners staying in Korea by their own countries. In cases with domestic residents returning to Korea after residing in a foreign country for three years or longer may be admitted within certain ratios of the full capacity of students.

— **Jeju International School**: This is a school established in Jeju English Education City with the approval of the superintendent of education in Jeju. Its purpose is to improve public foreign language fluency and develop globalized professionals' human resources. Jeju International School may be established with kindergarten, elementary, middle, and high schools, and respective school courses may be consolidated or integrated for operation.

— **Special Classes for Returning Students**: This is a special class established in general schools in order to help students returning after residing overseas to amicably adapt to domestic school life (MOE, 2013).

This is a good start, but it leaves plenty of confusion as most schools officially designated as "foreign educational institutions" or "foreign schools" will have the term "international school" integrated into their titles, webpages, or descriptions. Not to mention that the MOE's list leaves out other categories like the international middle schools

> **"I personally prefer to rather lump the 'international schools' in Korea into one of two imperfect categories."**

best approach their classes and with what pedagogical approach(s)? Should those teachers plow through their curriculum as if they were in the U.S. teaching in English to a class of native English speakers or find some hybrid balance between ESL and Common Core Standards styles of teaching?

Now, I should start by better defining "international schools." I should also mention that what follows is my personal interpretation of what I have been able to piece together though my time working in Korea. The terminology and crossover alone is enough to make one's eyes glaze over. Here are some classifications to start off with, direct from Korea's Ministry of Education:

— **Foreign Educational Institutions**: These are educational institutions established in Korea by national or local governments or non-profit organizations with the approval of the Minister of Education, and which operate kindergarten, elementary, middle, and higher educational

(which have had some recent legal issues that will be discussed below) and international high schools that follow a Korean curriculum taught in English. It also leaves out the *hagwons* (or private academies) that are accredited by non-profit agencies like Accreditation International (AI), The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), or AdvancedED (Cognizant) and issue transcripts accepted by universities based on those accrediting agencies. Even the mention of accreditation brings up an often confused distinction between being accredited (a voluntary procedure by a non-profit-organization schools complete for quality assurance) and being licensed (which relates to being legally allowed to operate). And even on that note of cross-definitional attributes, terms like "off-shore programs" can add another layer of haze to the mix.

Civic definitions aside, I have not even accounted for the common misrepresentations or misunderstanding of definitions socially perpetuated in conversation (intentionally or accidentally), myself being no less guilty than others.

Maybe this is an issue in calquing Korean *waegukin* and *gukje* into English "foreign" and "international." Or maybe it's an example of social interpretations of literal versus practical definitions misaligning. With all this confusion and terminology, I personally prefer to rather lump the "international schools" in Korea into one of two imperfect categories: The ones that are registered and licensed as international schools in Korea and the ones that are registered and licensed as private academies (*hagwon*) but operate as international schools.

The first of those categories is the type of school that I feel people generally think of when they hear the term "international school." Schools like Yongsan International School of Seoul (YISS), Seoul International School (SIS), and St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju make this list. They have large student bodies and many facilities like fields, labs, etc. These schools have strict government requirements and can be subject to regulations for their student body, such as sometimes having quotas for how many Korean nationals can enroll (though schools have varying levels of compliance to these rules and varying interpretations). These schools also have government-imposed minimum qualifications for their teaching staff such as QTS/PGCE (qualified teacher status / post-graduate certificate in education) and two years of legitimate teaching experience (not to mention the additional layers of requirements self-imposed by the schools, such as subject certifications or

playing a game of semantics when it comes to their titles and labels, the Ministry of Education has a fixed mindset on these linguistic interpretations. A Canadian School by the name of CBIS (one can guess what the IS stands for) tested these waters and in 2017 found out the hard way what non-compliance leads to. Despite being registered as a "*hagwon*" and hiring E-2 visa teachers, the school continually advertised themselves as an international school that was an offshore program run by British Columbia's Ministry of Education (CBIS, 2015). After multiple warnings and failures to properly convert their licensure (Kim, 2017), the Korean MOE shut down the school and punished the teachers for holding improper visas (Brend, 2017). Further international documents even showed that the schools inadequate licensing was not even valid during the year the Korean MOE took action, the result of poor attention to detail during a lapse in school leadership (B.C. Government, 2017).

Now CBIS's incident doesn't necessarily doom the other *hagwon* international schools or make them less legally secure. The Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (Seoul MOE) announced in June that it would target two international middle schools (Ock, 2020), and then revoked their licenses a month later because the office deemed the schools were "deepening inequality and promoting private education" (Ko, 2020). While this currently only affected the two schools, the logic of the superintendent at the Seoul

graduate-level degrees), which are needed to hire them on E-7 visas.

The second type of "international schools" carry words like "scholars" or "international education" in their names instead of actually using the word "school," which is a lexical distinction more than anything. Any of the St. Paul's schools fall into this category. They issue transcripts accepted by universities abroad and have CEEB codes (College Entrance Examination Board) issued by CollegeBoard. They often hold the same accreditation as the category of schools mentioned above and use many of the same software programs for managing their classrooms or student information. However, these schools are usually smaller in size, student body, and do not have as many resources or elective facilities as the other category. The local offices of education still frequently visit and follow up on these institutions, but the institutions are not as strictly bound by government regulations. The *hagwon* license deters the employees from being called "principal" or "teacher," instead opting for labels like "academic director" or "instructor." Requirements for teachers to have QTS/PGCE is an institutional preference for marketing or quality purposes, and even licensed teachers will still be hired on E-2 visas. While it may seem like the second category of schools is

MOE certainly seems to elude risk for any international schools as the agenda is to "strengthen education opportunities for the socially vulnerable by tackling deep-rooted elitism" (Bahk, 2020). It's frankly hard not to read those words and imagine how any or all the schools defined above could be perfectly immune from that agenda.

But legal standings aside, while these two categories of international schools may seem drastically different on the outside with varying challenges and political risks, at the heart of them both are teachers, classrooms, and curricula based on standards. Sure, the more professional schools often have higher price tags and can pay higher salaries, which broadens their applicant pool and increases their chances of finding teaching talent. However, that's probability and not a guarantee of success. The less-

regulated schools are still capable of providing quality education based on evaluation and achievement of standards. But the most important aspect to consider is that both types of schools tend to teach a majority of native Korean students with varying levels of English proficiency and different types of bilingualism (albeit the registered schools tend to have Korean students with higher levels of English proficiency than the latter). They both must balance their approach of teaching English as a second language to teaching subjects in English to non-native speakers.

So what is that difference then? How does one teach a class about world civilizations in English to a group of primarily non-native speakers without being an English as a second language class about world civilizations? Are these schools and their courses just a version of CBI/CLIL? Rod Ellis' plenary session at the 2019 KOTESOL conference at Sookmyung Women's University discussed the concept of task-based learning, an idea that seems to line up perfectly with the approach of international school education in Korea. Not that classes necessarily teach "tasks," which he defines as "activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use" (Ellis, 2003, p. 3). Rather, it lines up in that these institutions just teach their subjects and let the grammar follow. Much like the Swiss cheese model of risk management, the layers of classes and subjects taught in an international curriculum allow for layered levels of grammatical lessons that, when stacked on top of each other, mitigate the risk of deficiencies in second language acquisition. Students enroll with minimal English abilities, often straddling the lines between being a coordinate and subordinate bilingual (coordinate bilinguals being those who learn their L2 during their compulsory educational period and subordinate bilinguals being those who learn their L2 after developing a dominant understanding of their L1). And through the classes, projects, and tests, these students learn to pick up the pieces of grammar they need.

The beginning for any new student with limited English abilities is tumultuous at best. New students must make up ground quickly to be able to reap the most out of their school experience. Schools have a few tricks up their sleeves to handle this. Utilizing electives for ESL support classes, hosting after-school enrichment programs, separating students into different tracks, or having ESL pull-out classes for certain core courses (like English or social studies) to help provide a stronger linguistic over content focus for those select students. Standardized testing (Measure of Academic Performance, MAP, by Northwest Evaluation Association, NWEA, being the gold-standard choice amongst all international schools) helps ensure students are progressing, and school counselors monitor grades and test scores to help ensure those students' English proficiency levels are improving. Students are encouraged (and sometimes mandated) to get help at home (either through tutors or family members). And as long as the students' efforts match the resources provided, students are often able to catch their English abilities up to the minimum threshold needed to excel.

So where does this put educators at international schools on the spectrum of ESL and Common Core? Basically in the middle with a foot on both sides, slightly leaning towards being a traditional, standards-based teacher. The system of international schools and the approach to student body selection naturally leads to multilevel classes, regardless of the definition that applies to the specific school (albeit various classes and schools may lean more to one side of the spectrum than others). Therefore, SLA techniques are still invaluable tools for making slight adjustments in a teacher's pedagogical approach, regardless of the "type" of international school. However, understanding of academic standards and outcome-based education is still the primary and essential component to international schools. Teachers at these institutions have a plethora of formative or summative assessment strategies to ensure their learners have met their desired outcomes. But for the most part, teachers can use constructive, collaborative, or whatever approach they see fit, focus on the curriculum and content, and let the language and grammar follow, sprinkling ESL tactics in when needed. Of course, each definition of international school might have additional factors to consider (the specific curriculum, school mission, accreditor recommendations, etc.), and the different schools on the spectrum may be able to execute in different ways (especially with the registered school often having more facilities, students, revenue, etc.). But that's a story for another time.

References

B.C. Government. (2017). *Response package EDU-2017-71579*. http://docs.openinfo.gov.bc.ca/Response_Package_EDU-2017-71579.pdf

Bahke, E. (2020, July 30). Seoul education office chief vows to tackle elitism. *The Korea Times*. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/07/181_292059.html

Brend, Y. (2017, April 27) South Korea closes B.C. school: 14 teachers caught in "bureaucratic nightmare." *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/offshore-international-school-south-korean-cbis-1.4087304

Brend, Y. (2017, May 29). Ministry of Education ignored warnings about South Korean school closure. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/offshore-international-school-south-korean-cbis-ignored-warnings-1.4099541

CBIS. (2015, June 1). *Canada B.C.: Global Education Program* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cG2vJOOO2I8

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Kim, B. (2017, May 3). British Columbia-authorized school in Seoul to shut down. *The Korea Times*. http://m.koreatimes.co.kr/phone/news/view.jsp?req_newsidx=228730

Ministry of Education. (2013). *International school information*. https://www.isi.go.kr/en/index.do

Ko, J. (2020, July 20). Licenses for two international schools in Seoul revoked. *The Korea Herald*. http://m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200720000760&fbclid=IwAR0IyAUVIgsRFIGhT7S7gR-eStsPfJR1Tj0BvkpDWHWRnUVKWz4L-L7H1mw

Ock, H. (2020, June 10). International middle schools in Seoul may lose special status. *The Korea Herald*. http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200610000914

The Author

James Green is the academic director for Beyond Dream Scholars in Chungju, an alternative boarding school established in 2019 by the Godowon Foundation. He received his Master of Education in 2018 from Central Washington University and his Bachelor of Science from Gonzaga University. He has more than five years of experience working in Korea's private academy and international school field. Email: Jgreen@bds-korea.org

Connection and Camaraderie at the KOTESOL Membership Lounge

This past spring, with KOTESOL face-to-face events suspended and many members lamenting the loss of these usual opportunities to interact, the KOTESOL Membership Committee started searching for new avenues for connecting and socializing. In June, they decided on a particularly promising possibility: Discord, a chatting tool similar to Slack but with a younger, more casual, less "professional" vibe; and so it was that the "KOTESOL Membership Lounge" Discord server was born.

What is Discord?

Discord[1] is a free chatting platform that includes text, voice, and video options. Launched in 2015 as a tool to facilitate communication and coordination among gamers who were synchronously playing computer games online, the platform has since expanded to encompass a plethora of purposes and more than 250 million users, making it one of the most popular chat options currently available. Discord is accessible via web browser (except on mobile devices), as a downloadable program for computers, or as an app on mobile devices.

Once users create an account on Discord, they can access a variety of groups, known as "servers." To participate in a private server, such as the KOTESOL Membership Lounge, the user must be invited; private servers cannot be discovered through online searches, and Discord is known to be very protective of users' privacy. Discord also offers public servers, typically connecting communities engaged in specific hobbies or bonding over shared interests, that can be discovered by searching Discord, itself. There's no limit to the number of servers a user can participate in simultaneously, and it's simple to create a new private server and invite only the participants one desires, such as coworkers, friends, or family.

To participate in a Discord server, users can just click on the invitation link, quickly create an account, and then proceed to explore the server. Servers typically have multiple "channels," which are essentially chat rooms. Channels come in both voice-chat and text-chat varieties, and participants can be in one text channel and one voice channel at the same time, allowing multiple modes for simultaneous communication. Private messages to other server participants are also possible, and Discord recently introduced a video-chat option, as well.

What is the KOTESOL Membership Lounge?

The KOTESOL Membership Lounge is a private Discord server intended to provide a variety of opportunities for members to connect. It currently offers a selection of pre-set channels to prompt discussion on a variety of topics, from podcast recommendations and self-promotion to teaching advice and classroom-resource sharing.

In addition to the pre-set channels, members can create their own text and voice channels in the "Hang-Out Rooms" area, allowing members to flexibly meet up for small-group text-chat or voice-chat discussions. There's also a channel designed to help coordinate online meet-ups (called, appropriately, #plan-a-meet-up), providing space for members to call for participants for synchronous events. It's possible, for example, to use the #plan-a-meet-up channel to find players for a synchronous game of Codenames, which can be played online using one of the tools mentioned in the #games-and-more channel, and then create in the Hang-Out Rooms area a new text or voice channel specifically designated for gameplay interaction. The channel is easy to delete after the game finishes.

Organized Events at the Membership Lounge

The KOTESOL Membership Lounge is primarily intended to be an open and adaptable space for members to communicate with each other in a variety of ways; however, it also offers a small selection of scheduled events, as well. Twice a month, the space hosts "AMA Mondays," taking a page from Reddit's popular "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) question-and-answer sessions.

AMA Mondays at the Membership Lounge are hour-long synchronous events featuring respected experts invited not only for their knowledge of English language teaching (or teaching-adjacent fields) but also for the diversity of their experiences and interests. Past guests have included materials designers and authors, podcast producers, bloggers, U.S. Embassy English Language Fellows, journal editors, and more; discussions have touched on a wide array of topics, such as what it's like to live and teach in different parts of the world, helpful tips for aspiring podcast-creators, steps and suggestions for self-publishing, what it's like to work in the Vancouver film industry, transitioning back home after teaching in Korea, and more. Since the guests come from all over the world, the timing of the events varies, depending on the schedule of the guest; and the AMAs are conducted via text-chat, voice-chat, or Zoom, depending on the guest's preference. Members can also request specific people or topics for AMAs (in the #request-an-ama channel).

In weeks that do not include an AMA, asynchronous organized discussions are usually offered, with users discussing prompts related to teaching (in the Teacher-Talk Tuesday area) or their personal lives (in the Friday Fun area). Occasionally, the Membership Lounge coordinates synchronous "cocktail chats" or "happy hours" during which attendees can chat with each other live via text or voice.

Joining the Membership Lounge

To participate in the KOTESOL Membership Lounge, members can access an invite code on the KOTESOL Membership Committee's website (https://koreatesol.org/membership), under "KOTESOL Membership Lounge Discord Server." If you are not familiar with Discord, don't worry; it's easy to figure out, and the #how-to-participate channel provides a helpful overview of the basics, along with links to more detailed instructions. We hope you will join us at the Membership Lounge soon!

Footnote

[1] For more information, see Hornshaw, P. (2020, May 8). *What Is Discord?* Digital Trends. https://www.digitaltrends.com/gaming/what-is-discord/

Member Spotlight: Mikyoung Lee

This issue's Member Spotlight beams its light on Mikyoung "Miky" Lee, a member of the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter. You may know Dr. Lee from her presentations at conferences, her research articles in journals, or as the chair of the KOTESOL Research Committee. The English Connection was recently fortunate to arrange this interview with a very busy Dr. Lee. — Ed.

The English Connection (TEC): Will you tell us a little about yourself, Dr. Lee – where you're from, what you do, your life before KOTESOL, et cetera?

Mikyoung: Certainly, my name is Mikyoung, or "Miky." I'm originally from Yeosu and grew up there until high school. I lived in Seoul for over ten years, and I also lived in Canada, the U.S., and Germany for about eight years. Now, I'm back in Jeollado, living in Gwangju.

Regarding my work, I'm a guest researcher in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Munich, where I completed my doctoral studies in educational psychology. My research interests include students' socio-cognitive mindfulness and learning emotions, as well as teachers' emotions and emotion regulation. I'm also an academic trainer and consultant at Editage Insights. I give online and offline research-related workshops to graduate students at universities, researchers at national organizations, and doctors and nurses at hospitals. Workshop topics include how to write a scientific manuscript in English, common errors by Korean authors in preparing a manuscript, how to improve clarity in one's manuscript, how to use voice effectively in scientific writing, how to write an effective abstract and cover letter, how to paraphrase sentences, developing an outline for a master's thesis or PhD dissertation proposal, and publication strategies. I'm enjoying this work very much because I can integrate my education background well: my English teaching and research training. Finally, I have recently accepted a position as a tenure-track assistant professor in the Nursing Department at Kwangju Women's University (and I'm actually completing my second PhD in nursing science!).

TEC: You sure are busy! How did you first get involved in KOTESOL?

Mikyoung: I was an English instructor at Ajou University Foreign Language Center a long time ago. So, I had heard of KOTESOL at that time, but I became involved in 2015. At that time, I was conducting a study on "NNESTs' Anxieties

▲ *Traveling through Barcelona.*

and Insecurities: Self-Perceptions of Their Communicative Limitations" from a psychological perspective and had a chance to present my research results at the KOTESOL International Conference that year. I also had the opportunity to meet someone by the name of "Dr. Shaffer" for the first time at this conference. Since then, I have been actively involved in KOTESOL.

TEC: I believe that KOTESOL is the only English language teachers' association in Korea that you are a member of. What has attracted you to KOTESOL over any of the many Korean ELT associations?

Mikyoung: KOTESOL is connected with Sookmyung Women's University in several ways. That's where I completed my master's degree in TESOL and where I gave special lectures for a while. So through my work there, I was sort of organically introduced to KOTESOL and its activities. KOTESOL seemed to be involved in so many more things than the other English teachers associations – chapter meetings, for example.

TEC: You are presently the Research Committee chair for KOTESOL. What does that National Council position involve?

▲ *Presenting at the KOTESOL International Conference.*

Mikyoung: KOTESOL offers research grants every year. The Research Committee deals with the entire application process. We receive grant applications, evaluate them, select grantees, and supervise their research project until they present their findings at the International Conference and finally publish their research project as a full research paper in the *Korea TESOL Journal*. We also offer research-related workshops at the KOTESOL International Conference.

TEC: Does the Research Committee have any additional plans or programs for the promotion of research within KOTESOL?

Mikyoung: In addition to promoting the application for KOTESOL research grants and research-related conference workshop sessions, the Research Committee is considering the possibility of an online workshop or series of workshop sessions this autumn – if there is enough interest expressed.

TEC: You are seriously involved in educational research. How important do you think it is for English teachers to be involved in doing research, and in giving presentations?

Mikyoung: I think that English teaching and research complement each other quite well for an English teacher. The teacher can apply what they experience in classroom settings to their research and also apply their research findings and implications to their classroom. They will generate a synergy for effective English teaching. In addition, being involved in a research group and presenting research at conferences creates the opportunity to form a great network to develop oneself as a teacher because research helps us better understand our students' as well as ourselves as teachers.

TEC: As a researcher, what kind of advice can you give for people pursuing an academic career, a career involved in academic research?

Mikyoung: Such a career involves doing research projects and getting the research published. To do that, one needs to be disciplined. It involves a commitment to research and writing, say two to three hours, daily. This time includes designing the research project, searching for and reading articles, as well as writing the final paper. Regularity is important! Set your short-term, mid-term, and final goals, and set your personal deadlines for reaching them. Build up a professional network. Attend conferences; listening to other researchers gives you

> **"Regularity is important! Set your short-term, mid-term, and final goals, and set your personal deadlines for reaching them."**

inspiration and motivation to keep going! It informs you of the current research topics and what others are interested in. Conferences are a great place to find potential collaborators for your research. And very importantly, be open-minded and respect the opinions and attitudes of other researchers.

TEC: How has English teaching changed since the days you were learning English in Korea's public school system? And also, have you noticed a marked improvement in English proficiency among high school graduates today compared to when you graduated from high school?

Mikyoung: When I studied English in secondary school, we didn't have a native speaker as an English teacher. Also, English TV channels or English tapes and CDs were not available, so practicing native English pronunciation was basically impossible. We had to solely depend on our Korean English teachers, who also hadn't had chances to practice pronunciation. However, these days, public schools have native English-speaking teachers and focus on communication skills more than in the past.

Oh yes, when I was young, in terms of English study, most students, including myself, focused on the receptive skills to prepare for tests. So our speaking skills were lower, despite all the long years we spent on learning English. Our proficiencies in receptive and productive skills were quite unbalanced; for

example, reading skills were much higher than speaking skills. But today, I feel that high school students can speak better English than when I was in school, although the focus is still on teaching for the test.

TEC: Do you have any suggestions for how KOTESOL might attract more Korean teachers as members?

Mikyoung: I think that to bring more Korean teachers into the KOTESOL fold, the role of Korean teachers who are already members is an important asset; they could effectively introduce the KOTESOL community to their Korean colleagues. Also native English-speaking teachers who work with Korean teachers can invite their colleagues to chapter meetings and other KOTESOL events. I think that working at the individual, word-of-mouth level would be most effective.

TEC: What other interests do you have – other than teaching and research? Do you have any time for hobbies and such things?

Mikyoung: I love to travel, and I'm pretty disappointed these days that the coronavirus is preventing me from doing this. I'm interested in both indoor and outdoor activities, for example, yoga, distance running, and skateboarding (though I'm just a beginner). I also play the piano; I used to be the pianist for my church's services when I was young. And I love dogs. Until recently, I had two dogs; they were brothers – Magie and Dwaegie – but they are in heaven now, after 14 years on earth.
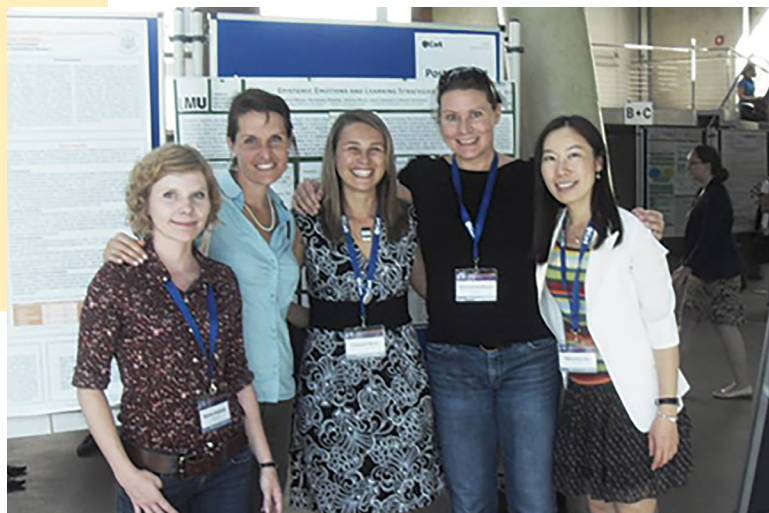

▲ *Mikyoung (right) at a conference in Munich.*

TEC: What do you envision Mikyoung Lee doing in, say, five to ten years from now?

Mikyoung: In five years, I will be giving interdisciplinary lectures in areas such as educational psychology, English, research methodology and statistics, and nursing education. I will probably have become a tenured full-time professor at a university, where I can both interact with students a lot and be active in conducting interdisciplinary research. By that time, I will have helped many researchers write English research papers and successfully publish them in reputable journals.

In ten years, I envision having a house with a big garden, where I can drink coffee with my husband at an outside table, petting our future dog – I'm a dog person, you know.

TEC: Thank you, Mikyoung, for sharing your opinions and so many aspects of your life with our KOTESOL community.

Teaching with Zoom: Advice from the Brain

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

I teach Business English to Japanese college students. Like everyone else this spring, I had to move my classes online. I was already adept at Zoom (the same principles apply to Teams, Skype, or any other group teaching app), and although I knew the power of the screen share, breakout rooms, and chat features, I also learned a few new tricks this semester, such as how to find which of your unmuted students has a dog barking in the background: Look for the mike icon with flashing input levels.

Nonetheless, taking my English classes online was a trial. Some of my usual classroom techniques worked in Zoom and some didn't. Group or pair discussion and use of videos transferred to Zoom well, but weekly quizzes did not. And what about my presentation course? Even student presentations given live are hard to listen to, but they are so much worse online unless the learner has an excellent connection. The first few weeks in Zoom were terrible, but then I found Microsoft's Flipgrid, a super easy-to-use video sharing tool that fits language teaching perfectly. Students can record videos from their phones that automatically get posted to the site and then record comments for other students. Poor connection? Just upload your Mp4 video instead.

So, I managed. And in some ways, my online classes are even better than when they were live.

Then, some new concerns came about, some deeper concerns. Study is a social thing, so how do those students who lose their connections, who cannot be heard, feel? According to a survey I gave them, quite badly, but I have encountered teachers who mark students absent if their cameras are off. Bizarre. Instead, I believe we should telephone/mail, or just text them, and see if they can take part that way. Other questions came up as well: Should I place more importance on security or accessibility? How does online synchronous compare with asynchronous? Should cameras be on or off? Should I really use breakout rooms and open chat when I cannot keep

a vigil on how they are being used? And why am I so much more tired after a Zoom class than a live class?

Opinions vary on each of these issues, but neuroscience provides us with one particular insight that adds color to the picture: The human brain is predominantly social. That we can socialize and interact in far larger groups and in more complex ways than other mammals isn't just a given. We have to have special neural equipment to allow us to do so. The prime requirement for being social is a nonstop ability to assess other people's thoughts, attitudes, and intentions, even those of leaders on the other side of the world. Therefore, a large part of our brain is devoted to mind-reading and mentalizing others (assessing their mental states). Recently, through fMRI studies, neuroscientist Matthew Lieberman identified the *mentalizing network* (2012), an information processing network separate from the one we use for other calculations, the working memory network. These two networks are on a neural seesaw – when one is active the other fades into the background – but the mentalizing network is the heavier partner. Anytime we stop using the working memory system, the mentalizing network takes over as we contemplate other people's thoughts, interests, and interactions (2013b), even those distant. That is why this network is almost the same as the default mode network.

Lieberman calls the social processing part of our brain our superpower, even though we are barely aware of its activities. Yet, though we have this superpower, we also face a kryptonite: traditional schooling. Schools tend to see learning as an individual thing using the working memory network to implant facts, discounting classroom social needs as a distraction. No wonder so many students have trouble. On the contrary, there is a huge amount of evidence that shows the mentalizing network also causes learning, and in fact, is often stronger than the working memory system. In one study, two groups of students were

given a reading. One group was told they would be tested on it, and the other group was told they would have to teach it to someone else. Both groups were given the test anyway, and guess which group got the higher scores! Education is generally missing this huge potential. We are driven by our social needs, so much so that Lieberman says Maslow had it wrong. Social needs should have been the bottom of the pyramid, not physical needs (2013a), especially for young adults, when their need for peer approval takes on a knife-edge sharpness.

So what does this tell us about online classes with Zoom? First, we now know why it is so tiring, what Julia Sklar refers to as "Zoom fatigue" (2020). In a Zoom session, the social brain goes into overdrive. It is already loaded down with paying attention to a gallery of faces, watching, as it always does for hesitations, inflections, changes in eye movement, etc., all necessary for its mind-reading powers. But doing so online, where such signaling is pixelated, time-lapsed, and obscure, is turning up the gravitational force up to double. Decoding becomes far harder and far more exhausting. Too bad we didn't have G5 before classes online came about.

Of course, we could reduce Zoom fatigue by turning our cameras off, but as I am sure you have experienced yourself, that means your attention would fade away as well. And if we agree with Lieberman, why should we nullify the huge learning potential offered us by our superpower? So, I say, cameras on, chats open, and have breakout rooms at least twice a class.

Maximize learning by maximizing the social aspect, especially for our young learners, when the need to socialize is at its peak, but thwarted by isolation (Kelly & Murphey, 2020). So, ride that wave!

Following Lieberman's advice (2012), we could do other things as well to activate the mentalizing network. Give students different homework assignments telling them that they will have to teach each other. In that regard, Lieberman (2013a) points out a possible mistake in peer tutoring. We usually have the stronger learner mentor the weaker, but maybe it should be the other way around. Or if tutoring is not feasible, at least put your learners in breakout rooms where they can discuss the things that were taught that day.

Here are a couple more tricks to engage the mentalizing network:

• When lecturing, ask a few participants to leave their

"*Study is a social thing, so how do those students who lose their connections, who cannot be heard, feel?*"

mikes unmuted to add some natural background noise instead of operating in deep-space silence (suggestion from Gary Ross).

• If the class is just before lunch or at the end of the day, end the class with an activity where students are in breakout rooms, and tell them they can leave or stay where they are as long as they want, maybe even having a meal together (suggestion from Marc Helgesen). I have one group of boys who stay in their room about two hours after class.

• And one of my favorites: Just tell your students to smile, and see what happens. Make some magic.

We tend to think of this pandemic as an anomaly, and teaching online as a one-semester thing, but is that really the case? Isn't it possible that – like its corona brother, the flu – a new strain of SARS-CoV might hit us every winter? Even if not, we have crossed the Rubicon in regard to online teaching, and things will never be the same again. As I have written before (Kelly & Murphey, 2020, p. 17), 2020 will be remembered as the year "we liberated learning from the tyranny of proximity" ... and a hurrah for that.

The Author
Curtis Kelly (EdD) founded the JALT Mind, Brain, and Education SIG and is a professor of English at Kansai University in Japan. His life mission is "to relieve the suffering of the classroom." He has written over 30 books, 100 articles, and given over 400 presentations. This article was based on one he wrote for the *MindBrainEd Think Tanks,* so please subscribe! Email: ctskelly@gmail.com

References

Kelly, C., & Murphey, T. (2020, June). The need to socialize while social isolating: Group surfing on virtual waves. *MindBrainEd Think Tank: Cultural Diversity in the Language Classroom, 6*(6), 9–17.

Lieberman, M. D. (2012). Education and the social brain. *Trends in Neuroscience and Education, 1*(1), 3–9.

Lieberman, M. D. (2013a, November 13). *Making 'social' a superpower in the classroom.* YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6sR1Tku3cs

Lieberman, M. D. (2013b). *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect.* Oxford University Press.

Sklar, J. (2020). "*Zoom fatigue" is taxing the brain. Here's why that happens. National Geographic Society.* https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/04/coronavirus-zoom-fatigue-istaxing-the-brain-here-is-why-that-happens

The Reflection Connection

The Look: Reflecting on Classroom Observation

By Dr. Thomas S.C. Farrell

The Account

She had already arrived and was sitting at the back of the room writing something on a large piece of paper. Oh no! I didn't know she was coming today. Oh my! I should not have gone to that party last night. What is her name anyway? I wonder, should I go down and explain why I had just arrived at nine o'clock and not my usual fifteen minutes before?

Oh no! She has stopped writing and is looking up. I guess she expects me to begin. I hope that little Brian is quiet today. Now let me get my notes.

Oh Lord! She is *staring* at me. Ok! Ok! Cool down, I better review yesterday's lesson. Where the hell are my notes? She is still *Looking* at me. Oh boy!

No Brian, don't ask a question. No! [Brian's hand goes up!]

"Yes, Brian?"

"Oh! Mr. Farrell, why are we doing this lesson today, we already finished this last week?"

"Quite right, Brian, thank you for telling me, anyway today we are going to review…"

And so went my first experience with *The Look* from my observer. This was, of course, my teaching evaluation from my university practicum days.

This was not the last time I was to get that same *Look*. Oh, no!

When I traveled to South Korea a year later to teach at a prestigious institute at a top-rated university, I got *The Look* again! In fact, it started from the moment when I was interviewed for the job. Yes, that very same "What can you do?" *Look*.

Then after one week of teaching, I heard a knock on the classroom door I was teaching in. I opened it, and in walked the director without any warning. She had on her face *The Look* of "Let's see what you can do."

"I want to *Look* at you teaching," she said.

"Fine," I said. But it was not really fine.

Reflection on the Account

I coped, somehow, but I still remember that first day in Ireland when the observer was sitting in my classroom waiting for me and that first week in Korea experiencing the exact same feeling of a supervisor sitting in the back of the room with an "I am the expert, let's see what you can do" type of *Look*. It took me 18 years to write about my first experience of *The Look,* but I have never completely recovered from that initial experience. Many years and many workshops and talks in many different countries made me realize that I was not alone when I heard of *so many* similar experiences from highly accomplished TEFL professionals.

The above account of a teacher being observed is actually me and my first experience as a learner teacher while on practicum in Ireland many, many years ago. At that time, I was required to teach (as part of the practicum) in a high school each morning for two hours and attend lectures (as part of the coursework) in the university in the afternoons and evening as part of my Higher Diploma in Education (post-graduate work) that

qualifies one as a teacher in Ireland. For the practicum portion of the diploma, I was informed I would be supervised and visited four times during the year in the school where I was teaching. I was not informed any time before any visit nor was I debriefed from any of the four visits. The supervisor was in the room each time for the first 9 a.m. class of the day and left after 45 minutes each time. *The Look* that I am talking about lasted all four visits, and each time I was on the receiving end of it, my anxiety in the classroom increased to very high levels. Thank goodness my students were on their best behavior for each visit; it's a pity the supervisor wasn't. Not one time did this supervisor sit down and talk to me about my teaching before or after her observation. Instead, she spent all of these observations writing speedily on paper about what she was "seeing"; at the end she just said "thank you" and left the room.

So what does all this mean? I believe that these sessions, still very much prevalent in our profession, are akin to "drive-by" drop-ins that can turn-off a teacher for life if they are judgmental concerning the abilities of the teacher's teaching skills. But, of course, if the supervisor does not talk to the teacher, this makes things worse. I passed this course in teaching practice, but I never received any report or recommendations, which further traumatized me for future teaching. Yes, I can never forget *The Look.* But I decided not to ignore it and educate colleagues about the possible abuses of observing another in class. There is such a power differential that I think it borders on learner teacher abuse, especially if not addressed at the beginning of a learner teacher's life and career.

I am over this *Look* now, as I have reflected deeply on it and talked to colleagues about their similar early teaching observation experiences,

and I have come up with a basic set of questions I now ask anyone (supervisor or teacher or administrator) who wants to observe me teaching:

1. Why do you want to come to my class? If the answer is to watch me teach, then my answer is no because I am not a model teacher and you are probably going to judge me against some preconceived notion of what constitutes good teaching.
2. What are you going to do in the class? If the answer is just sit at the back, then my answer again is no because I want an observer to help me critique some aspect of my teaching that I am interested in. So the observer has to be active.
3. What are you going to use the observation process for? If the answer is research, then I say no. I want to know the exact research project and how I fit into the scheme of things (i.e., how my class can help in this research). I am not against research, and in fact I am constantly conducting my own. Rather, I think bad research (not set up with clearly defined objectives) can do more harm than good to the teacher being observed and his/her students, who may not like outsiders in the classroom.

I have found that these three questions have helped me to avert *The Look* because when the answers to the questions are to my liking, the observation process can be a wonderful experience. It can be an enlightening exploration of what it is to be a teacher working with other teachers (peer observation), and it can be a learning experience (for focused research). Also, it can be used to evaluate. But evaluators should be able to explain their criteria for evaluation. It would be interesting to see their *Look* at that time!

Always remember that this is *your* class, *your* students, so if anyone says they are coming to observe you, do not be afraid to give them *The Look!*

Reference
Farrell, T. S. C. (Forthcoming). *TESOL teacher education: A reflective approach.* University of Edinburgh Press.

Thomas S.C. Farrell is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University in Canada. His professional interests include reflective practice and language teacher education. Professor Farrell has published widely and has spoken at major conferences worldwide on these topics. A selection of his work can be found on his webpage: www.reflectiveinquiry.ca

LOOKING FOR FLEXIBLE STUDY OPTIONS?

The University of Birmingham's Department of English Language and Applied Linguistics offers flexible personal development opportunities for professionals wishing to develop their skills and expertise. Our distance learning Masters programmes are delivered part-time over 30 months, to fit around your existing commitments.

APPLIED LINGUISTICS MA

This programme is for professionals wishing to further their personal development, and those who are interested in learning more about possible applications of language research. You will study topics including corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, lexis, functional grammar, spoken and written discourse, and multi-modal communication.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (TESOL) MA

This programme is for practising teachers of English as a second or foreign language who wish to develop their knowledge of classroom methodology and materials design. You will study topics such as language teaching methodology, second language acquisition, syllabus and materials, pedagogic grammar, lexis, and teaching young learners.

KEY FACTS

- Start in February, April, July, October or December
- Study entirely online
- All modules assessed by written assignment
- Pay per module

Find out more and apply:
www.birmingham.ac.uk/elal-dl