

The English Connection

A Korea TESOL Publication

SPRING 2022, Volume 26, Issue 1

Preview to the KOTESOL International Conference 2022

Invited Speakers' Articles and Interviews

A KOTESOL Member Spotlight on Kirsten Razzaq

And our regular columnists...

**Thwaites with The Classroom Connection
Kelly with The Brain Connection**



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The English Connection

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

Editorial

A Field Guide to Online Presenters and Attendees: “You Know Who You Are” Revisited

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

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of *The English Connection*. This edition can be considered a special feature of sorts, as it previews KOTESOL’s International Conference, running online April 30 and May 1. Articles and interviews with the invited speakers to the conference are gathered here, which will shed light on the topics you can expect them to speak upon virtually through their Zoom presentations.

Virtually interacting in an online universe platform can showcase our many unique personal styles and habits. We have all inescapably been self-taught the last few years on how to best portray ourselves to colleagues in our little 1-by-2-inch screen boxes, forced to bring to light perhaps exaggerated video characters of our “normal” F2F reality selves.

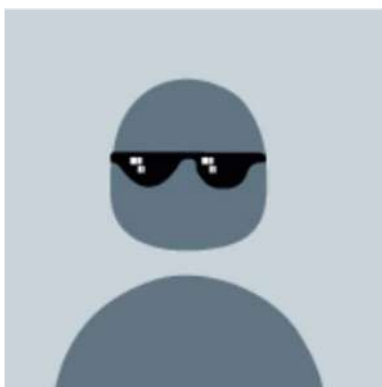
Considering the online format of this year’s conference, it is useful to identify the characteristics of our fellow Zoom presenters and attendees, as I revisit and update the field guide first given in the Autumn 2019 edition.



The Phone It In: Their laptop sadly broken or lost in a recent move, this poor presenter is forced to orchestrate their entire Zoom presentation by cell phone. Shares characteristics with *The DailyROUTINER*.

The Galaxy Far Far Away: Layered screens of rainbow-fonted charts and graphs whizz back and forth, clicked to the fore as viewers are propelled through the deep black void. Glowing cursor trail movements slash back and forth like Darth Vader’s light saber.

The Session Shopper: Oh, hi Wendy. Thanks for joining this presen..oops, we lost her. Oh, there she is. Hello, there. Would you like to introduce...oh, Wendy? Maybe she’ll come back. Oops, she’s gone.



The Beach Goer: Not content with a tropical beach Zoom background, this attendee goes the extra step by laying down shirtless drinking a margarita. Other participants are slightly jealous and contemplate their own existence, until the Beach Goer starts rubbing it in, at which point it becomes annoying.

The Black Screen: It’s hard to contribute as an equal when you’re just “Bill J.,” “julies iPad” or “username3” written on a blank black screen. Either your computer hardware is from 1998 or you need to find and click the “Start Video” button. Other participants consider you a suspicious Zoom-bomber.

The DailyROUTINER: We are all blessed that this attendee could fit us in their busy schedule, as they constantly check their phone, eat their sandwich, and drive. Rather than walk away and leave their screen, they bring the camera with them to make another drink and play with the cat.

The Unstaged Video: This participant seems unaware that camera angle and backlit lighting has cast them into a talking ghoul from the undead, who also has what looks like a load of laundry needing done over their left shoulder. A family member casually keeps entering and exiting stage right.

The Animated Space Taker: Seemingly unaware of the rules of online engagement, this speaker can hardly be contained in their 2-by-1-inch screen, as they aggressively bob and weave like a professional boxer. Gesturing wildly, their nostrils loom large as they lean into the camera to make their exaggerated point.

The Filter: You may need to be empowered to feel your best, but unless you are teaching preschool or comedic acting, refrain from the unicorn horns, pirate eye patches, and Groucho Marx mustaches. There’s a professional difference between liven up and dumbing down. Please disable.

“Our online identity no longer reflects our true selves but rather the person that we think friends, family, and other people should see,” writes social media commentator Erika Farrugia. Zoom time, in its real-time F2F interaction, puts us all visually and aurally front and center (Lights! Camera! Mic! And Action!), and tends to blur the lines (for better or worse) between our online persona and the “real” us. May this field guide to online participants help recognize some of these traits.

President's Message

Why I'm Brimming With Anticipation for IC 2022

By Bryan Hale KOTESOL President

I'm brimming with anticipation for this year's International Conference! One major reason why is the dazzling lineup of featured speakers. Thanks to the International Conference Committee for all their work organizing such a diverse and dynamic selection of luminaries on timely and invigorating topics such as social justice, teacher wellbeing, and game-related pedagogy. If you explore the pages of this issue of *The English Connection*, I'm sure you'll get excited too! But if you'll permit me, I'd like to take this chance to highlight a few other reasons I'm stirred up about this year's IC.



First, I'm glad that this year we'll get to experience a spring IC. There's some history behind this. The idea of moving our IC from autumn to spring has been under discussion for some time. The debate was already raging, periodically, when I first got involved behind the scenes in the mid-2010s. Like many KOTESOL members, I have abundant fond memories of the crisp and colorful Sookmyung campus during past conferences. But I think most of us based here in Korea can agree that the autumn semester, and October in particular, gets overwhelmingly busy. This creates pressure on several fronts, in terms of venue, speakers, our organizational relationships within Korea, and as well, just our own needs as KOTESOL members when it comes to preparing for the conference (and attending it, of course!).

In decades past, when the globe was a little bigger, it made sense for our biggest event to be as close as possible in the calendar to major conferences in neighboring countries. Now, though, that can tend to cause clashes. These are some of the issues that have been debated for so long, and now the timing of this year's IC gives us the opportunity to see how a spring IC fits into both domestic and international dynamics (as changed as those are right now), and to think ahead for the likelihood of similarly timed ICs in the future. And as beautiful as the Sookmyung campus is in October, it's also very beautiful in the spring! It's not clear when we'll be back to in-person events, of course, but a KOTESOL IC that's either in-person or hybrid, where we can come together among the blossoms – that's something I'm really looking forward to in future years.

This year's IC will be online. Although that may not be what we hoped for a year ago, it is still part of why I'm excited. I've already taken up space in these TEC messages talking about how impressive and gratifying it has been to see various KOTESOL planning committees do so much to innovate in the online conference space. I know how driven this year's IC committee is, and I trust that they're going to deliver an online experience worthy of our anticipation, offering us wonderful ways to come together with our professional communities, within KOTESOL, Korea, and internationally, in safety and mutual support.

On the following page, the chair of this year's International Conference Committee, Lindsay Herron, offers a preview of the event. Lindsay is another reason I'm excited. I think it's clear to all involved what a powerhouse within our organization Lindsay is! Of course, it takes many people to power the IC, but the chair's role is key. Lindsay has been serving in crucial roles throughout KOTESOL for some time, including as president. I had been hoping for a while that we would see her take on the role of ICC chair someday, and I'm thrilled we're about to enjoy her chairing of the conference.

Just let me note again how vital every volunteer's contribution is! Not only to each IC, but to all our events, and to everything we do. When you see calls for volunteers for various parts of KOTESOL – perhaps specific events, or at the chapter level, or in other parts of the organization – I hope you'll consider stepping up. I can promise you that contributing to KOTESOL is a greatly rewarding experience.

I can also promise you that your contribution will be valued and appreciated! Just keep an eye out in our social media groups, on our website, and in places like TEC, and I'm sure you'll see an opportunity to step up that fits. And I hope you'll take it.

I hope you're having a wonderful start to the new academic year. See you at IC 2022!



Teaching for a Better World

By International Conference Chair Lindsay Herron

The theme of the 29th Korea TESOL International Conference, “More Than Words: Teaching for a Better World,” has been running through my head (along with a certain song by Extreme) for nearly a decade now. It started with a reading by Karl Hostetler (2005) in the first inquiry methodology course I ever took; in that piece, Hostetler asked the philosophical question of what defines



“good” research – and then answered himself with the argument that “good research requires our careful, ongoing attention to questions of human well-being” (p. 16). This idea was revelatory to my inexperienced researcher-self; connecting the minutiae of research to the wider world and an underlying ethical purpose was inspiring, motivating, and eye-opening.

It is this spirit that infuses the conference this year as we seek to explore questions of purpose and the ways our work improves the world. We’re taking a broad and multifaceted approach, expanding beyond ELT-proper to invite consideration of the tenets that underpin education as a whole, encouraging participants to delve into the manifold ramifications and rewards of our work as teachers, as researchers, as members of a community of practice, and as humans.

Attendees at this conference can expect a focus on research and practice related to improving teachers’, researchers’, and students’ well-being, or with broader implications for improving our communities and society. Also on offer will be a variety of transformative, critical, and equity-oriented frameworks and approaches; humanizing and participatory methodologies and pedagogical practices; and sessions that seek to expand conceptualizations of what “learning” and “literacy” look like, which ultimately helps to challenge deficit discourses, promote asset-oriented perspectives, and encourage more receptive and hospitable views of the many different ways of *being* in the world.

Our featured speakers are respected scholars and practitioners who represent a wide range of experience,

perspectives, and backgrounds. In our quest for an inclusive and incisive conference, we’ve intentionally sought out diverse – and in particular, traditionally underrepresented – voices; our current line-up features presenters from a variety of ethnicities and nationalities, including from the global South, and more women than men. Their areas of expertise are likewise excitingly disparate. We have speakers from the field of cognitive science, who will help reshape conceptualizations of what it means to be “educated” as they discuss how video games and play involve learning; speakers who will challenge our notions of what it means to “teach English” as they expand on ecolinguistics, peace linguistics, and translanguaging; speakers taking a more holistic approach as they center students’ needs in presentations on social-emotional learning and the importance of cultivating relationships in the classroom; and speakers who will bridge the personal and professional in sessions on compassion and teacher well-being. We’re also excited to feature a special 90-minute Friday-night pre-conference session on breaking bias by Anu Gupta, a former Fulbright ETA in Korea and the founder of Be More with Anu,

“We hope to create a conference that is challenging and inspiring – a true agora of ideas.”

an education technology company that offers training to organizations in how to “break bias” and cultivate diversity, equity, and inclusion. Anu’s interactive talk will explore distinctions between conscious and unconscious bias; illuminate some of the concrete benefits of breaking bias; and proffer a “toolkit” teachers can use to define, identify, and break bias in their own lives and classrooms.

Like KOTESOL itself, the conference also seeks to take an active role in encouraging, supporting, and nurturing less-experienced researchers. With this in mind, we’re building on the success of last year’s Graduate Student Showcase (GSS) to offer a similar opportunity this year. We invited graduate students to submit research proposals to the GSS; prior to the conference, they’ll receive additional mentoring and feedback from an experienced researcher on their proposal and presentation. Conference participants can catch the final, polished products at designated GSS sessions.

Between our featured speakers, the manifold presenters accepted for concurrent sessions, and a selection of

promising panels, we hope to create a conference that is challenging and inspiring – a true agora of ideas that encompasses and elicits diverse and divergent perspectives; fosters a sense of pluralism and fallibilism (Appiah, 2006); cultivates cosmopolitanism, criticality, questions, and compassion; and represents responsive, asset-oriented, empathetic perspectives supporting more positive relationships with our students, our work, our world, and ourselves.

The conference will be entirely online this year – and although our initial hopes of hosting a hybrid conference have been delayed by the ongoing pandemic, we're enthusiastic about the advantages of a 100%-virtual conference! Our online-only venue and asynchronous sessions help ensure more equitable access for participants around the globe, including those from countries with lower vaccination rates or less-powerful visas as well as those with less time/money for travel. Aligned with our dedication to improving access, ticket prices will be reduced for participants from low- and middle-income countries (countries with a gross national income of \$15,000 or less, following TESOL International's Global Professionals standard), as well. In-person conferences also generate a lot of waste; although we have tried to minimize waste at past conferences, it seems an especially pressing concern this year, in light of our conference's focus. In essence, an online conference will help us

“walk the talk” as we craft an eco-friendly conference that supports diversity, equity, and inclusion to the fullest extent possible. If you're not well-versed in technology, never fear. Our online platform, Edzila, is generally simple and intuitive, and we'll be drawing primarily on familiar tools to support both the asynchronous (on YouTube) and synchronous (on Zoom) sessions. Multimodal poster presentations will be just a click away (on Padlet), while audio, video, and text conversations will be possible on Discord, a flexible online discussion platform.

Why do you teach, research, and participate in professional development? How do you help make the world a better place? We hope you'll join us at the conference this spring to reflect on these issues and think outside the box; explore the most fundamental tenets and purposes of education; and share how your work helps others “respond creatively, constructively, and humanely” to life – in short, how you are “participat[ing] in rendering [the] world a bit more beautiful as well as hospitable to everyone” (Hansen, 2013, p. 208).

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**The 29th
Korea TESOL
International
Conference**

April 30 – May 1

**Invited Speakers
Concurrent Sessions
Workshops
Poster Sessions
Graduate Student
Showcase**

**Registration Begins
March 1**

**Korea
TESOL**
KOTESOL · 대한영어교육학회

koreatesol.org/IC2022

Speaking for a Better World: IC Speakers' List

To address the theme of the 29th Korea TESOL International Conference – “More Than Words: Teaching for a Better World” – the following stellar speakers have been invited to participate in the April 30 – May 1 event. Their sessions will be dealing with a wide array of approaches and techniques that any teacher can add to their skillset and mindset to augment their teaching for a better world.



Meng Huat Chau
(Universiti Malaya, Malaysia)
Featured Session: Teaching and Researching for an Inclusive World: Ecojustice, Personal Power, and Changemaking



Kurt Squire
(University of California, Irvine, USA)
Featured Session: Learning Language Through Games



Tammy Gregersen
(American University of Sharjah, UAE)
Featured Session: A Research-Based, Practical Exploration of Language Teacher Wellbeing



Constance Steinkuehler
(University of California, Irvine, USA)
Featured Session: Language and Literacy in Online Games and Esports



Ryuko Kubota
(University of British Columbia, Canada)
Featured Session: Enacting Antiracism in Teaching English



Arran Stibbe
(University of Gloucestershire, UK)
Featured Session: TEFL, Culture, and Environment: From Analysis of TEFL Textbooks to Inclusive Pedagogy



Staci B. Martin
(Portland State University, USA)
Featured Session: Applying Critical Hope in Research and the Classroom



Anu Gupta (Be More with Anu)
Special Pre-conference Session: Building a Better World by Breaking Bias



Grazzia Mendoza Chirinos
(USAID Honduras)
Featured Session: The Power of Collaboration: Building Networks, Connecting Educators
Workshop Session: How to Create Engaging Lessons in Virtual Contexts



Kathleen Stephens
(Fmr. U.S. Ambassador to Korea; Korea Economic Institute)
Special Opening Address



Rebecca Oxford
(University of Maryland, USA)
Featured Session: Teaching Language, Teaching Peace: Bridges to a Better World
Workshop Session: Exciting EFL-Peace Activities for a Better World: Strengthening EFL Competence and Fostering Peace

* Our speakers' session abstracts and biosketches can be accessed on the KOTESOL website under "2022 Korea TESOL International Conference" at <https://koreatesol.org/content/featured-speakers>

— Compiled by David Shaffer.

Focusing on Teacher Wellbeing, Positive Psychology, and Peace

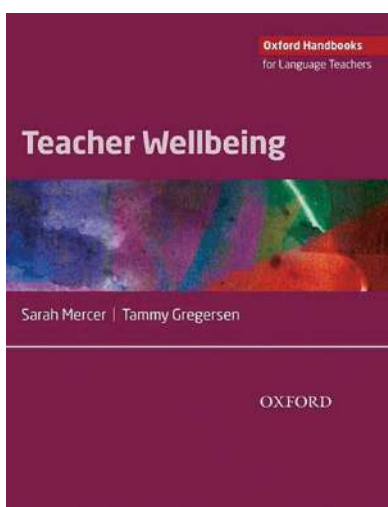
Tammy Gregersen, University of Sharjah

Tammy Gregersen is a professor of TESOL at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates and is a featured speaker at this spring's international conference. Dr. Gregersen is "committed to teachers and learners finding what makes life most worth living." With this in mind, her recent research and writings have dealt with positive psychology, teacher wellbeing, and peacebuilding. Accordingly, her talk for our conference is "A Research-Based, Practical Exploration of Language Teacher Wellbeing." Dr. Gregersen recently gave this interview for The English Connection. — Ed.

KOTESOL: To begin with, Dr. Gregersen, would you let our readers know some background information about yourself?

Dr. Gregersen:

Hmmm, where to begin... How about I start with those things for which I feel the most passion? I love experiencing other cultures. I feel energized by being confronted with new and exciting phenomena that I haven't interacted with before. Rather than saying "I'm from the U.S." or "I lived in Chile for 17 years" or "I'm currently teaching in the U.A.E.," I'd prefer to say that I am proud to be a global citizen – a person who sees the world through an international, universal lens. This means that whenever I meet someone new – no matter what part of the world they are from – we are kindreds. We are united by shared humanity.



▲ **Teacher Wellbeing (Oxford University Press, 2020) – eight chapters, each dedicated to a specific dimension of teachers' lives.**

KOTESOL: You have recently co-authored the book *Teacher Wellbeing*. Would you tell us about this collaboration with your co-author, Sarah Mercer – how materials for the book were collected, and how the book is organized?

Dr. Gregersen: "SarBear" (my personal moniker for Sarah) and I go back several years to the first International Conference on the Psychology of Language Learning and Teaching that she hosted in Graz, Austria. Because of our shared professional interests and the fact that we personally "clicked" immediately, we became close friends and collaborators. Working with Sarah never feels like drudgery or effortful! In fact, most of the time when we meet for collaborative purposes, whether online or in

person, we finally get around to talking "shop" only after we've caught each other up on private life events.

As for our *Wellbeing* book, it is organized into eight chapters, each of which is dedicated to language teachers' motivations, minds, emotions, relationships, work places, physical bodies, or futures. For us, delegating the workload was easy and natural as Sarah's forte is in making complex ideas salient and my skill set is particularly effective for making practical pedagogical applications from theory. That said, the chapters would go back and forth between us until we both felt satisfied that we did the best job we could for our readers and teacher colleagues.

KOTESOL: Also recently published is a book on peacebuilding (*Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice*).

One of your co-contributors and co-editors on that project is Rebecca Oxford, who, by the way, is also an invited speaker at this year's international conference. Please tell us about your work on this book as well as your various collaborations with Dr. Oxford.



Dr. Gregersen: Rebecca and I go back even further than my friendship with Sarah! I

actually met Rebecca through Elaine Horwitz, an eminence with whom many of your readers will be familiar because of her incredible work on foreign language anxiety. I was in Texas at TexTESOL when Elaine introduced Rebecca and me. Besides her seminal work in coalescing peace and linguistics, Rebecca is also known for her work in language learning strategies, and it was on that topic that we first shared ideas and began a lifelong collaboration. From strategies, we together jumped feet-first into positive psychology in language learning and teaching. Rebecca was one of our star contributors with her piece on "EMPATHICS" (an acronym that she developed to discuss wellbeing) to a Multilingual Matters anthology, *Positive*



▲ Tammy Gregersen (left), with *Teacher Wellbeing* co-author Sarah Mercer.

Psychology in SLA, which I co-edited along with Peter MacIntyre and Sarah. The “peace” collection was initiated by Rebecca, and I was honored to be part of her team. Peter and I wrote two manuscripts for it: one on peace and positive psychology and the other on the ways in which nonverbal behavior impacts how we communicate peace. Rebecca and I are now working on another book together, (along with another colleague, Yecid Ortega), for Cambridge University Press about which I am super excited. It examines the intersections of positive psychology, peace, and intercultural communication and provides scenarios and activities for language classrooms.

“Beckers” (as I call her) and I have vacationed together with our husbands and dogs on various occasions. We often share a hotel room at conferences, too. I think we both have stories to tell, but I had better leave it at that in case she is writing for this edition of *The English Connection*, too!

KOTESOL: You have also done work on “dealing with emotions of teaching abroad.” Many of our readers are teaching abroad. Could you give any tips on dealing and what “silver linings” we might find?

Dr. Gregersen: That paper was soooooo much fun! I had a personal stake in it because I am a huuuuge user of sublimation as an emotional strategy. Together with Peter MacIntyre, we designed a case study that focused on an international, in-service teacher who volunteered for a week-long intervention study. Our purpose was to discover whether the positive psychology cognitive reappraisal strategy of finding a “silver lining” (seeing something positive) in adverse events that occurred in one’s daily life was an effective strategy for augmenting teacher wellbeing. To gather structured background information, our teacher-participant completed measures of dispositional optimism, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and emotional experience. Although her answers on the pre-tests suggested that she was generally optimistic, they also revealed high stress and a tendency toward experiencing more negative than positive emotions, and only moderate job satisfaction at best. For the study, she

documented her stressors and the ways in which she was able to find silver linings in them for one week. Qualitative data from her journals, open-ended interview questions, and follow-up interviews provided information on ten specific occasions of teacher stress. For all stressors, our teacher was able to reframe the stressors and find silver linings, but the effects were short-lived. In the end, we discovered that our teacher naturally used another strategy, defensive pessimism (preparing for the worst case), when facing uncontrollable events and that this was her usual “go to” response. So although finding silver linings might work for some teachers to develop dispositional optimism and teacher resiliency, it will not always be the most effective strategy for all people – a conclusion that aligns well with what we know about

“‘Self-care’ is not synonymous with ‘selfish,’ but rather it is integral to our being able to give our best to our learners.”

strategy use: that the best strategies are personally effective and highly idiosyncratic.

KOTESOL: What are you planning for your KOTESOL conference presentation to be about, and how will it relate to our conference theme “More Than Words: Teaching for a Better World”?

Dr. Gregersen: I mentioned in an earlier question that the *Teacher Wellbeing* book was comprised of eight chapters – each dedicated to a specific dimension of teachers’ lives. My plan for the conference is to choose my favorite activity from each dimension, provide a bit of

background information on the “whys” of each, and then talk about the “hows.” That is to say, I’d like to transform my presentation into a “wellbeing workshop” and walk participants through a variety of exercises in pursuit of self-care.

In terms of “Teaching for a Better World,” we know that the teaching profession is one that naturally attracts people who want to serve others, and in doing so, teachers often sacrifice a lot of themselves and become swept away by emotional labor. We spend so much time putting our learners at the center of our daily pursuits that we often fail to make our own personal worlds a better place. I am hoping that my presentation will help my language teacher colleagues discover an effective work-life balance so that our inner worlds are enhanced. In my presentation, “world” refers to teachers’ personal domains.

KOTESOL: What would you like for the audience’s take-aways to be from your conference session?

Dr. Gregersen: The most important take-away for language teachers from my session is that they not only deserve to consider themselves as worthy of self-care but that it is also good for their learners. “Self-care” is not synonymous with “selfish,” but rather it is integral to our being able to give our best to our learners. We know through research that teachers who are in a good emotional and psychological “head space” also have learners who thrive. Emotions are contagious – from teachers to learners and vice versa – so when we go into our language classrooms feeling that we are thriving and flourishing, we transmit this to our learners as well, and the contentment cycle continues. *How* we can do this will be the centerpiece of my talk.

KOTESOL: You have done a lot of work on teacher wellbeing and peacebuilding education recently. Where do you see yourself working as the future unfolds – in these same areas and/or moving into new and different areas?

Dr. Gregersen: Teacher wellbeing and peacebuilding have really resonated with me on a personal level. I’m a true believer! We’ve spent time and energy over the past few years looking at emotional and psychological components and because I am committed to teachers and learners finding what makes life most worth living, I’d like to continue down this same path. However, what we don’t know a lot about are the linguistic outcomes that may or may not arise from greater self-satisfaction. Even though emotional and psychological contentment are in and of themselves worthy of study, wouldn’t it be interesting to find out the implications of wellbeing on a person’s ability to acquire or learn another language? So maybe in the next few years I’ll don my “applied linguist” hat (while not removing my teacher hat!!!) to investigate further benefits.

KOTESOL: What other areas are you interested in – professionally or personally?

Dr. Gregersen: My first professional love has always been teacher education. I’ve been incredibly lucky in my journey in that I’ve been able to wed my passion for equipping prospective educators with the content, attitudes, behaviors, and skills they need to be accomplished

teachers with my curiosity about language as a means of communication among diverse others. That said, I’m interested in discovering ways to make our classroom teaching more effective. At the moment, I’ve been working with Sarah Mercer on a type of teacher feedback called “appreciate inquiry,” which takes a strengths-based approach that empowers learners by focusing on what they do right – rather than a traditional deficit approach that sees the elements that need correction. I’d like to continue down the path of researching how precepts of positive psychology – like signature strengths – can be implemented through intervention studies in teacher education and language classrooms to enhance teachers’ and learners’ development.

“I’d like to transform my presentation into a ‘wellbeing workshop’ and walk participants through a variety of exercises in pursuit of self-care.”

KOTESOL: With the “jump into the deep end” in the use of technology for remote emergency teaching due to the onslaught of Covid, what changes do you foresee in education delivery, or in policies and practices related to teacher and student wellbeing?

Dr. Gregersen: One of the new developments we’ve been working on in terms of methodological research design is complex dynamic systems – looking at any given phenomenon as a system of constantly fluctuating, interacting variables that change over time. We decided to look at teacher wellbeing over time during the Covid pandemic and measured it at the beginning of the surge, a year later, and now we are just reviewing our third wave of data. We investigated ideas like coping, hope, growth, stressors, uplifts, etc. It’s been a fascinating project! Readers can find our results in the journal *System*. An important takeaway, however, is that we need to be attentive to teacher wellbeing with or without a pandemic raging. Of course, life has gotten even more dicey with the rise of Covid, but teacher burnout was an issue even before this current global crisis.

Our foray into “the deep end,” I think, has made teachers incredibly resilient. Our research has shown that some teachers have taken great pride in the fact that they were able to survive the transition into online learning, and they feel that what they’ve picked up technologically will be a great help to their future language instruction. Of course, the stressors are part of the equation, but one thing we discovered is the hardiness that characterizes teachers! I’ve never been prouder to call myself a language teacher!!

KOTESOL: And KOTESOL is proud to have you as a featured speaker at our conference! We look forward to your presentation there, and thank you for the preview of your session that you have provided in this interview.

Centering Users of English: Antiracist Approaches to ELT

By Dr. Ryuko Kubota, University of British Columbia

Ryuko Kubota is a professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada, where she teaches applied linguistics and teacher education. As a featured speaker at our International Conference, she will be presenting "Enacting Antiracism in Teaching English." Dr. Kubota's most recent book, co-authored with Youngeun Jee, deals with ten myths about English education, available in both Korean and Japanese (2021). Dr. Kubota kindly contributed this article to The English Connection, for which we are most grateful. — Ed.

Since the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, many of us have witnessed the ugly realities of racism in multiple forms in the media – from anti-Asian



racism in Western nations to anti-Black police violence in the United States and racial disparities in the access to healthcare or online learning. English language teachers who regularly use current topics for classroom discussion may have invited students to raise their awareness of racial inequities. However, racism

has existed long before the present pandemic, reproducing racial prejudices and racial hierarchies of power.

In the United States, for instance, anti-Black racism stems from a long-lasting legacy of slavery, whereas anti-Asian racism dates back to the late 19th century when Asian immigrants were vilified as a threat to the dominant White settlers. In English-dominant settler colonial societies, racial tensions and disparities clearly exist, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) groups are positioned as subordinate to White people. In contrast, South Korea and other non-English-dominant countries do not appear to suffer from such racial problems. But is that the case?

In reality, English language teaching (ELT) creates a space in which White superiority and discrimination against people of color continue to be reproduced. In recent years, many scholars in applied linguistics and language education have pointed out that native speakerism in ELT – a belief that native speakers of English are ideal English language teachers – is closely linked to Whiteness, positioning White L1 English speakers at the top of the raciolinguistic hierarchy. This belief influences the mindset of local people, including policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, and students, and perpetuates the superiority of Whiteness. Conversely, L1 English teachers

from Black or other racialized heritages tend to receive adverse views and treatments.

In today's globalized society, English language education is actively promoted based on the belief that proficiency in English promises economic prosperity for individuals and nation states. Students are encouraged to manipulate English grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation just like L1 English speakers do. Educators have been making efforts to advance pedagogical and technological innovations to boost learners' proficiency as measured by standardized tests. However, what often gets lost in this endeavor is the fundamental question: "For what purpose do we use English?"

Most students of English pursue learning in order to communicate with English users in many parts of the world. If this is indeed their communicative goal, is developing linguistic knowledge and skills sufficient? Will learners be able to communicate effectively with all types of English speakers once they acquire an advanced level of English skills? I would answer these questions in the negative.

"It is important to raise learners' critical awareness of raciolinguistic power hierarchies that actually affect them during global communication in English."

Learning English, or any language, typically motivates learners to acquire skills to use a set of standardized linguistic codes. However, using these codes constitutes only one part of communication. The ultimate goal of learning a language is to communicate with diverse others. As a global lingua franca, English is used by people from diverse backgrounds with regard to race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and so on. Our

“The ultimate goal of learning a language is to communicate with diverse others.”

students will communicate with not only White native speakers but also these diverse users of English. They must cultivate not only linguistic skills but also dispositions for communicating with diverse people in a respectful manner.

Some teachers may argue that such dispositions are part of general interpersonal skills and should be developed outside of English classrooms. However, as I mentioned earlier, ELT reproduces ideology that positions White native speakers as superior and racialized people as inferior via teaching materials, classroom instruction, and teacher hiring practices.

Nonetheless, there is hope. The ideological nature of ELT implies that constructing a counter discourse to challenge the dominant ideology is possible. Teachers can take initiative to contest the harmful ideologies that undermine the legitimacy of racialized users of English and nonnative English speakers. It is important to raise learners’ critical awareness of raciolinguistic power hierarchies that actually affect them during global communication in English.

Specifically, Korean learners’ attempt to emulate White native speakers of English leads to contradictory outcomes. That is, no matter how they try to become closer to White native speakers of English, they can never acquire Whiteness. Being Asian speakers of English is a disadvantaged social

positioning even with native-like proficiency. This is clearly demonstrated by raciolinguistic discrimination against Asian Americans or Asian Canadians in North America or in other English-dominant countries, as coronavirus anti-Asian racism has painfully demonstrated.

Antiracist and anti-oppressive pedagogies liberate learners and other stakeholders from harmful ideologies that marginalize them and contradict the ultimate aim of learning English for global communication. It is necessary



for all of us to stay critical and explore an alternative vision for human equity through English language education.

2022 Korea TESOL
International Conference
April 30 – May 1
Online

Invited Speakers
Luis Javier Pentón Herrera
& Gilda Martínez-Alba
Presenting

Social-Emotional Learning in
English Language Teaching:
Considerations for Language
Teachers & Teacher Educators



Critical Hope and Despair: Loosening the Knots of Education

By Dr. Staci B. Martin, Portland State University

Staci Martin is an assistant professor of practice at Portland State University. She studies critical hope and despair, co-researching, and peacebuilding. Dr. Martin is a community-based action researcher committed to co-creating practical solutions that are culturally responsive and led by, for, and in partnership with the community, especially refugee communities. At the International Conference, she will be speaking on "Applying Critical Hope in Research and the Classroom." The English Connection much appreciates Dr. Martin's contribution to our pre-conference issue. — Ed.

I entered a home in the Kakuma Refugee Camp, where a woman showed me her beadwork. She handed me a clear, tangled fishing line. She mimed to me that she wanted me to untangle the fishing line for her. As she handed me the plastic line, I found the end and started to work on it. A few minutes later, the group was leaving and I had to go with them. I handed it back to her. As she pulled from the end that I loosened, the knots became tighter and tighter. In a brief moment, staring at her weathered hands, I found myself lost. Lost in my thoughts.



I share this story because students often come with visible threads of their lives that they want to share, and they also come with invisible threads that we can be aware of if we take the time to listen, really listen, to know where to begin. The concept of critical hope is like this. What is often visible to teachers and learners is that there are systems that favor a dominant society at the expense of others (Boler, 2014), whereas what is invisible is our complicity in maintaining the status quo. When we address these unjust systems through meaningful and reflective dialogue, oftentimes decentering and disruption happens, and this is where critical hope can manifest and ultimately foster change and transformation in students, teachers, and communities (Martin, 2018; Martin et al., 2019).

In this short essay, I outline two threads that support critical hope in the classroom. One is visible, that is, a push for more inclusive and culturally responsive global policies, whereas the other is often only visible to a teacher and learners that are fortunate to co-create space for critical hope to happen in their classroom.

In our global education policies, we need critical hope. Policies (e.g., Education for All, Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]) are moving in this direction and becoming

more inclusive, culturally responsive, and just. They are being shifted in a direction that some leaders and policymakers (e.g. The World Bank, creators of the SDGs, to mention a few) from the economically powerful are attempting to learn from the communities that are most affected (Mohamedbhai, 2015). These counternarratives need to be heard due to communities and countries often having realistic goals, practical solutions, and concrete understanding of the context that is far better than the leaders who are dictating from the top. The purpose of inviting counternarratives is "not to 'integrate' them in a structure of oppression but to transform that structure so that they can become 'beings for themselves'" (Freire, 1994, p. 74). These policies can dramatically change students' lives due to their support, build capacity, bring accountability to governments and education sectors, and support reform. Thus, when we welcome our students into the classroom, we also need to reflect on why the implementation of these policies are not moving faster?

As teachers, we need to not give hope, which I don't believe one can do, but rather we need to co-create spaces that support students to embody their own hopes, thus collectively educating our own hope. We can do this by meeting students where they are at. This is self-explanatory and yet often people forget what it actually means. It does not mean to lower your expectations of the student but rather understand that not everyone learns the same way, as much as our textbooks want us to think. More often than not, school is designed for the affluent, Global North, to succeed. Although we say

"We need to co-create spaces that support students to embody their own hopes, thus collectively educating our own hope."



words like “culturally responsive practices,” “universal design learning,” and “equity,” we must actually apply them. Students will respond better when they understand that you want to learn and work alongside them. When teachers can also see themselves as learners, we are in a partnership, untangling invisible thread, which is knowledge.

We can also be a witness to a student’s despair. Despair is not necessarily bad. It is a social construction that we see as a negative connotation, but it can also be a source of awakening, motivating, and hopefulness. As teachers and learners, we just need to be very careful in setting students up for critical despair (Martin, 2018), that is, a space in which a person “confronts the status quo while having the perception or the reality that one cannot do anything about the situation” (Martin, 2018, p. 125). An example of this would be students learning about their human rights while living in a country that enforces unjust policies that counter what they are learning, thus, leading the student or teacher to critical despair and perhaps nihilism.

In this short essay, I outlined two threads that support critical hope in the classroom. One is to advocate for

more inclusive global policies and the other is to cultivate critical hope and be a witness to despair in the classroom. In order to nurture hopeful views, we, as teachers and learners, can recognize our own inherent value, wealth of resources, and solutions that we can bring to the classroom and understand that when we embody our own hope, we might be the catalyst for others to embody their own hope.

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Teachers as Leaders: Understanding What We Bring to the Classroom

By Grazzia Mendoza Chirinos, USAID Honduras

Grazzia María Mendoza Chirinos is a member of the TESOL International Association's Board of Directors, currently serving as Chair of the Finance Committee, as well as Education Specialist at USAID Honduras. As a featured speaker at the International Conference, Ms. Mendoza Chirinos will be speaking on the power of collaboration among educators. In addition, she will be doing a workshop on creating engaging virtual lessons. Here she offers an insight on what teachers as leaders bring into their classrooms. — Ed.

As educators we bring to the classroom a set of skills, knowledge, expertise and experiences, convictions, talents and/or gifts. We usually also bring preconceived notions, traditions, learning culture, and intelligences, as well as misperceptions that shape how we teach and how we shape our lessons. Normally, all this baggage we bring will influence our learners, and it can be either positive or negative. In addition, it will generate a daily impact and contribute to the classroom dynamics. We make daily decisions on how to approach our teaching, and regardless of what we decide, we can be certain that we are an influence and have an impact, which means that we have a huge responsibility as educators.

As language educators, we have an even greater responsibility, as we are not only responsible for teaching the language; we also bring into the classroom the culture, the pragmatics of language use in an academic or social context, and an awareness of our own identity and that of others, which will allow engagement and effective communication. It is of utmost importance for language educators to understand their role to prepare learners to navigate the context of using the foreign language with

those who speak it as their mother tongue and those who don't. Language educators need to bring to the classroom an understanding of the intercultural dimension, gauging expertly the complexities and avoiding prejudice or misperceptions when interacting in the language being learnt. Thus, the language educator has a double responsibility. As stated by Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002), beyond linguistic competence, the development of language competence implies making our learners aware of differences in culture as well as in individuality and perspective, values, and behaviors that



will allow them to have an enriching communicative experience.

Next, it is relevant as we embark on these reflections to understand that the positive influence and leadership of an educator, and moreover of a language educator, encompasses personal skills and values leading to professionalism and commitment to the profession (Marcia, 2002). As such, these identities evolve as time goes by and are shaped by all the experiences and challenges that a teacher faces in childhood, with peers, and finally in the classroom. In addition, the support network within an institution will also contribute to a teacher-leader having a high-level contribution to the lives of their learners. Hence, it is important for teachers to continuously engage in reflective practices that allow them to change and adapt and incorporate flexibility into their teaching. Allowing



▲ *Sophomore students leading plagiarism workshop for freshmen students.*

early reflection among pre-service teachers as well as novice teachers will contribute to a successful classroom environment where learners succeed and thrive. By building on these reflective processes, educators can move beyond the complexities of educating and establish high, achievable expectations for learners. Yoo and Carter (2017) state that success in a language classroom will be built on the relationships learners and educators establish that go beyond the methods or resources used.

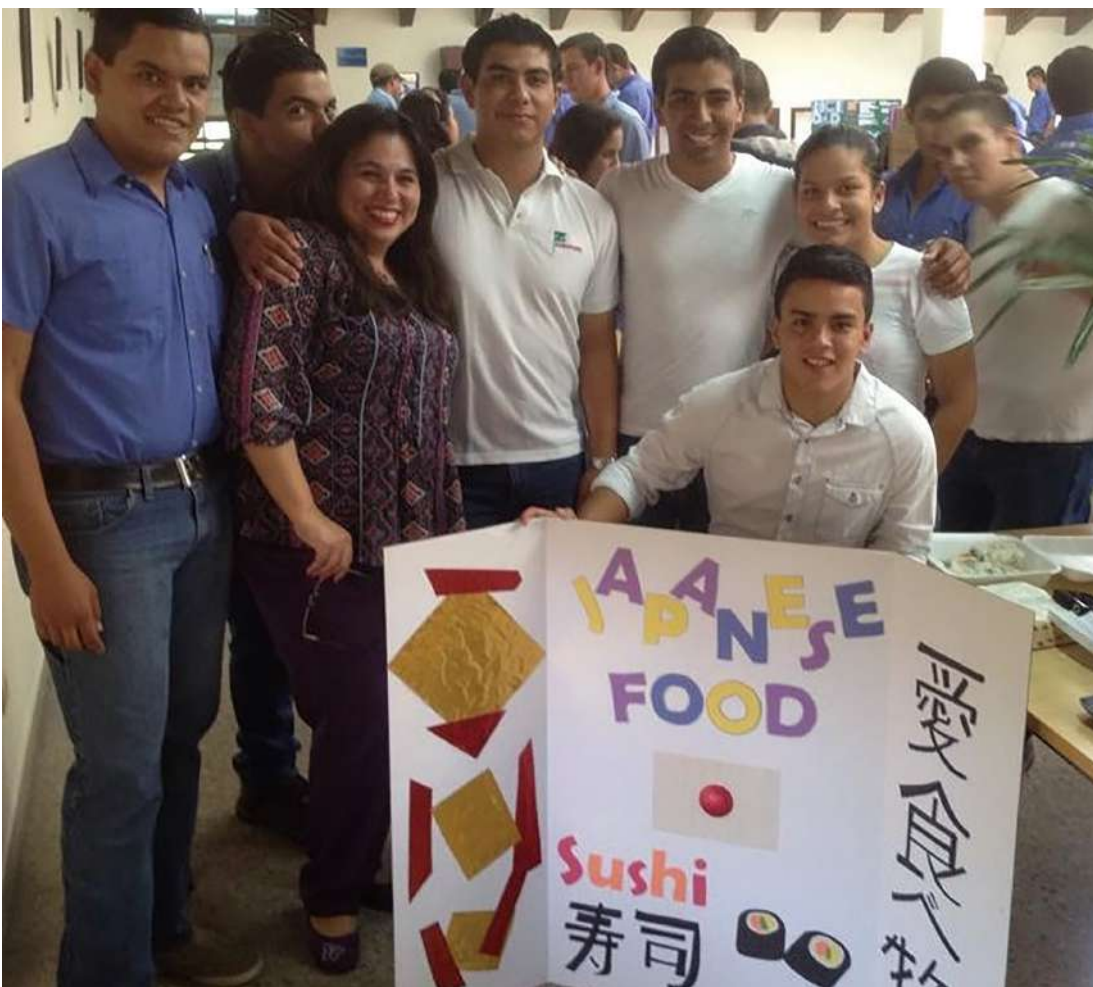
Finally, professional development that is ongoing, up to date, innovative, and creative will also influence the level of evolution and have a positive impact on a teacher-leader. Being connected, up to date, learning from others' experiences, building on others' successes, and learning from failures will shape a teacher-leader to become an inspiration for hundreds of lives that they will touch during their teaching terms. Maintaining teachers engaged in the realm of professional development opportunities will highly motivate them and create incentives to seek opportunities to grow on their own, help peers grow, and above all, support their learners' growth. From my very own experience, being able to attend events and conferences, deliver sessions, and share with like-minded colleagues worldwide since 2007 has allowed me to broaden my perspectives and have insights beyond my own culture and country in such a way that I continuously encourage my colleagues and my students to embark on these professional ventures as well. My overall feeling is that everybody should have a chance to experience the world and learn like this!

"An effective teacher will be one who creates an ambience of trust and has a positive impact in the classroom."

By understanding these premises, a teacher's leadership in the classroom acquires relevance and translates into effective language teaching. By understanding the interconnections between teachers as leaders and the contributions they bring to the classroom, we can see that an effective teacher will be one who creates an ambience of trust and has a positive impact in the classroom. Thus, a teacher who is a positive classroom leader – a teacher as a leader and a professional in the classroom – will be able to inspire, empower, motivate, and generate commitment and enthusiasm, leading to effective learning and high-level accomplishments by the learners. It is then our duty to create networks of support, work, and contributions that will result in more effective learning and more motivated learners!

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▲ Junior engineering students' Food Fair project.

“My Interest in Peace, Languages, and Cultures Grew”

Dr. Rebecca Oxford, University of Maryland

“Rebecca Oxford” is one of the most recognizable names in ELT and has been for years – in journal articles, book chapters, teacher handbooks, as a book author, and as a conference speaker. In recent years, Dr. Oxford has been devoting much of her time to peacebuilding and ELT, which she will speak on at KOTESOL 2022. The following interview with Dr. Oxford was conducted by Jocelyn Wright, creator of the global Peace Linguistics group active on Facebook and a longtime KOTESOL member. — Ed.

Jocelyn: I would like to start by thanking you, Rebecca, for taking time to chat with us! It’s quite exciting to be able to open this interview, and there are so many questions I’d love to ask you. Perhaps we could start with how you got started in peacebuilding?

Dr. Oxford: Sure! It’s amazing what you can learn as a child about peace. Jeannie, my mother’s distant cousin, worked in Africa most of her life as a missionary, teaching literacy and spreading peace and love, so I thought a lot about peace as a child. (Interestingly, my husband, Clifford Stocking worked for seven years in Africa, sharing peace, helping build dams and schools in deeply rural areas of Kenya, and teaching in an international school in Zambia. He, too, is a person of peace.)

In my elementary school in the hot state of Florida, we kids read stories about people in other countries. I especially remember reading a textbook story about the way of life of children in freezing Lapland, a huge Arctic region where you can see the midnight sun, polar night, and the northern lights and where there are as many reindeer as there are people. I was entranced.

My family had little money but many books, and I loved the international ones with photos of real places, like Germany, Russia, and Jamaica. Because of my love of books, as a child I traveled miles by bus to the library, where I eventually checked out all the children’s biographies of famous people. I remember being especially drawn to the biography of Jane Addams, an American

social worker who helped people in the downtrodden, industrial part of Chicago. She wrote peace books and received the Nobel Peace Prize. I loved everything she did for peace.

I also related to Miss Addams because of all the good

works she accomplished, despite her many health problems. I had my own health problems, too (polio at age five, resulting in complete paralysis). Even when the virus was no longer inside me, I could not attend school in first and second grades because I was weak and could not walk well or climb stairs. Despite p h y s i c a l

therapy for a couple of years after polio, I have since then continued to have some difficulties in walking, though for decades I pretended not to have such difficulties. I tried to “fit in” and be glamorous with color, chic clothes, and as an adult, high-heeled shoes. I still love color and clothes, but I ditched the high heels and realized how foolish it was to hide my physical disability, however subtle it might be. I still don’t talk about it much, but I do go to post-polio meetings when I can. I have also become very interested in and respectful of people with disabilities. I learned that peacebuilding includes ensuring that people with disabilities have all the opportunities other people do.

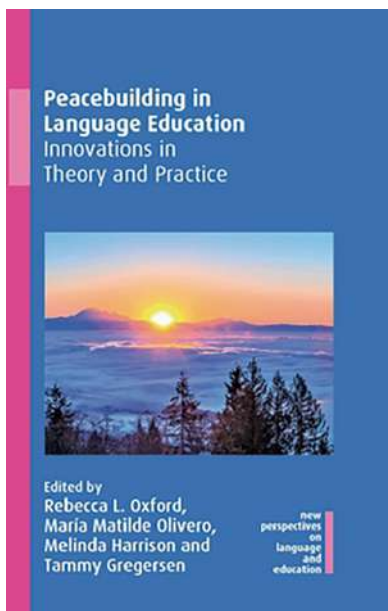
Moving back to childhood, when I rode the bus to the library, I noticed that people with dark skin had to sit at the back of the bus. Later, I realized the awfulness of racial hatred and discrimination and worked against it. I was powerfully affected by the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis when I was a senior



“I learned that peacebuilding includes ensuring that people with disabilities have all the opportunities other people do.”

at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. A few days after Dr. King's death, I joined a peace march in his honor, despite my issues with walking long distances. I was always struck by this civil rights leader's acceptance and love of those who reviled him during his lifetime. Such people were glad he was murdered. There are still racists in my country, and they are becoming louder and more numerous, it seems. I view Dr. King as a symbol of peace and social justice, and he remains a great role model.

My interest in peace, languages, and cultures grew throughout my education. I majored in Russian at Vanderbilt. After graduating, I taught Russian, German, and English in high school, after which I wanted to earn a master's in Russian language education. I wrote about that goal in my application to Boston University. I guess the admissions office did not read carefully, because they let me in and gave me a general master's degree fellowship.



▲ **Peacebuilding in Language Education (Multilingual Matters, 2020), co-edited by Rebecca Oxford.**

I went to see my advisor and found out that the program I wanted, Russian language education, did not exist at Boston University. Having only a few minutes to decide which other master's program to select, I quickly chose educational psychology. It was almost an accident, but what a glorious choice it became. That decision added a tremendously rich psychological strand to my language background. While I was at Boston University, I was even able to do some psychology reading and writing at the great library at Harvard University, which was close by. Some years later, I earned a doctorate in educational psychology at the University of North Carolina.

Without planning it, I had combined psychology with internationalism, language education, and peace. This combination became the bedrock of my career. I loved teaching university courses, especially graduate courses, in foreign language and ESL/EFL education, preparing future teachers for those areas, and a small voice inside me said that I was teaching peace through language education. I didn't tell anybody, because they might have thought I was crazy; nobody was talking about teaching peace through language education at that time. Things are changing now.

In any university where I taught, the students closest to my heart were international students, though I loved the others, too. I had many South Korean doctoral students, one of whom was Young Ye Park, who gave her daughter not only a Korean name but also my name (Becky). It

was the sweetest honor I ever received – the honor of a lifetime, because it signified love and understanding. Young Ye Park is now a professor at Daegu National University of Education. At the University of Maryland, where I arrived in 2000, I understood that peacebuilding, linked with language education, would be my direction for the rest of my life.

Jocelyn: Wow! I really loved hearing about your various experiences, except for the one about polio, of course! It is amazing how revelations of peace – Can I call them that? – appeared in each case. Now, you have already mentioned a few people who have influenced you in the area of peace. Who would you say influenced you the most?

Dr. Oxford: Definitely, Martin Luther King Jr. and my dear friend Jing Lin, a University of Maryland colleague who specializes in international education and peace, have been my greatest influences. Jing gathered students and faculty to form a Peace Study Group at the university around 2008. I was an avid member. Jing became my guide and inspiration. Together we edited a book, *Transformative Eco-Education for Human and Planetary Survival* (2011), which taught me that ecological peace is a huge aspect of peace.

At some point Jing asked me, "Why don't you write a book about peace?" So I did. The manuscript was so long that Jing's friend Ian Harris, a prolific peace author and editor who mentored me on the book, suggested that I split it into two volumes. The resulting volumes were entitled *The Language of Peace: Communicating to Create Harmony* (2013) and *Understanding Peace Cultures* (2014). These are in the Peace Education series for Information Age Publishing. *Understanding Peace Cultures* has a chapter

"A small voice inside me said that I was teaching peace through language education."

by a New Zealander, Carol Griffiths, a language education colleague of mine, who wrote about her eye-opening years teaching English in North Korea. Carol knew she was working for peace and representing other parts of the world, as well as teaching English.

Jing and I decided to create a book series, *Transforming Education for the Future*, for Information Age Publishing. Jing, Ed Brantmeier, Sachi Edwards, and I initiated another book series, *Spirituality, Religion, and Education*, for Palgrave Macmillan. Both series are full of peace ideas woven into books on different topics.

Jing and I proposed a special interest group (SIG), "Contemplative Inquiry and Holistic Education," for

the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES), a strongly peace-oriented organization. The SIG has blossomed. Starting with just a handful, it now has around 30 members globally, and many more come to our conference sessions. We now present workshops, talks, videos, and meditation sessions online instead of in person due to Covid, but the pandemic has not slowed down the SIG's work. I am not a leader of the SIG; I am a presenter and participant, watching peace spread through holistic and contemplative education. One of the SIG leaders, Tom Culham of British Columbia, Canada, has written books with Jing on Daoism, a religion that, along with Buddhism, has been highly significant in my life, along with Christianity, in which I was raised.

Jocelyn: Your relationship with Jing seems to have been very peace productive! What else have you been doing recently for peace?

Dr. Oxford: I co-edited the book *Peacebuilding in Language Education: Innovations in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, Olivero, Harrison, & Gregersen, 2020) for Multilingual Matters. The book is a song of my heart, mind, and spirit. Reviewers described it much better than I could. Researcher Nathan Thomas wrote, "At a time of great sociopolitical tension globally, this volume is a beacon of light for understanding and reconciliation." Religion professor Nicole Johnson remarked that peace should be "the presumed norm for human community and thriving," as the book shows. Finally, language educator Martha Nyikos described it as "a jewel of a book and a labor of love realized." I was grateful for such comments.

Currently Matilde Olivero (from Argentina) and I are co-editing a special issue of *Peace Research: Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict*. Work will soon be in full swing as well on a Cambridge University Press book, *Language Learning and Teaching for Peace, Positivity, and Intercultural Competence* (Oxford, Gregersen, & Ortega). Yecid Ortega is a critical language educator whose recent dissertation studied a program teaching peace through EFL in a poor, dangerous area of Bogota, Colombia, where he grew up. His research inspires me greatly.

Jocelyn: Although you retired from teaching three years ago, you're certainly not slowing down! I'm sure TEC readers will look forward to reading your works. They might also be interested in your talks at the upcoming 2022 Korea TESOL International Conference. The title of your main session is "Teaching Language, Teaching Peace: Bridges to a Better World." Not everyone makes the connection between language teaching and peace. Why is this awareness so urgently needed?

Dr. Oxford: *Communication* is one primary connection between language teaching and peace. Teaching people to communicate peacefully with each other around the world (and next door!) is part of this link. Everything we do in language education, from teaching verb tenses to setting up English language discussion groups to providing extracurricular opportunities for cultural learning, is a step toward greater *interpersonal, intergroup, international, and intercultural peace*. Teaching people to communicate gently with their own inner selves through positive self-talk and mindfulness leads to *inner peace*. Communicating about ways to save the environment (e.g., reducing carbon emissions that exacerbate climate change, decreasing the

clear-cutting of forests, planning in advance for floods and wildfires, and nurturing and enjoying nature) are related to *ecological peace*. We urgently need this awareness to increase peace within our own beings, among people here and everywhere else, and with the environment. Language educators are probably already peacebuilders because they are involved in teaching students to communicate.

Jocelyn: Right, this point is so important. We all have this potential to be peacebuilders through our teaching and interactions, especially if we intentionally set this as a goal! So, what can we all start doing right now to transform this goal into action?

Dr. Oxford: What you can do is to start talking with each other about how language teaching and peacebuilding

"Communication is one primary connection between language teaching and peace."

go together and why this is important. You could have students ask themselves, "What does peace mean to me?" There are many ways to follow up with additional activities if you'd like. (See Chapters 1 and 15 in *Peacebuilding in Language Education*.) Peace activities can be integrated into teaching EFL or other languages without any major changes in the curriculum, as I will show at the KOTESOL conference. Touching the topic of peace will raise your students' awareness of and interest in peacebuilding in their lives. You could also read books, chapters, or articles about peace and language education. Finally, you could partner with someone else in South Korea or another country or even join an international research team on peacebuilding and TESOL. Some readers may even want to talk to you about your work in Peace Linguistics, Jocelyn! Our work is complementary.

Jocelyn: Thanks, Rebecca! That would be fantastic! I sincerely hope that we can cultivate more discussions around the important topics of peace, language, and language education and, especially, do more transformative work in these areas. Again, we appreciate your being with us today.

Dr. Oxford: Thanks, Jocelyn, for the great questions. Readers of this interview, I hope to see you online at KOTESOL 2022! It will be a great and inspiring adventure. I hope to share my ideas at the conference and learn from you about TESOL in South Korea.

What the Pandemic Can Teach Us About Games in Second Language Classrooms

By Dr. Kurt Squire, University of California, Irvine

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The pandemic has been tough on all of us. Educators have reconceptualized our classrooms, learned new technologies, and shouldered emotional burdens for our students – all on top of the personal challenges we face.

Zoom fatigue is real, and online learning technologies alienate many of us. With Canvas, we are not really “in class,” and we’re not really at “home,” either. It feels like the worst of both worlds.

A consensus is emerging that face-to-face instruction works better than online learning, and it’s probably true. Still, I noticed that throughout the pandemic, my kids, who loathed



online school, loved gaming with friends online. What about game experiences makes them so different from “traditional” e-learning? How might we improve online or blended learning environments based on these differences?

One part of the answer is obvious: They are video games! They are fun. But what about the design of games *makes* them so compelling? Researchers have studied this for decades and find broad agreement around the following themes: (a) *Action*, or making things go “boom”; (b) *Social*, or playing together; (c) *Mastery*, or practicing and strategizing to realize command over a system; (d) *Achievement*, or completing all of one’s goals and tasks; (e) *Immersion*, or pretending to be someone else, somewhere else, and (f) *Creativity*, or making things (Quantic Foundry, 2019). We might examine our curriculum through these lenses to identify ways to improve our online classes.

1. *Agency and Choice*. First, video games are play, which we do *voluntarily*. No one forces us to play games. Research studies show that the moment we are compensated to do something, our desire to do it goes down. Similarly, psychologists are finding that practices like mindfulness meditation are most effective when people do engage them voluntarily. We might re-examine our curriculum and insert opportunities for choice when possible.

2. *Progress Through Clear Goals, Constant Feedback*. Existing gamified learning tools can and do allow students to “level up” at their own pace. Tools such as *Duolingo* saw dramatic increases in usage over the pandemic as people sought new ways to “level up” skills while in quarantine. *Clearing goals* is naturally motivating, and the source of “dopamine bumps” (related to *mastery* and *achievement* motivations). Gamifying an entire curriculum so that it is personalized is possible, but a simpler approach might be to give credit to students who use language learning tools such as *Duolingo* for basic skills practice.

3. *Embracing Media Outside the Class*. Practicing second language skills through *immersion* in media – watching television, listening to music, or now, playing games – is common. Research shows that time spent with second language media predicts success on tests of vocabulary. Many gamers embrace familiar, “cozy” games (like *Animal Crossing*) that are designed to produce warm, reassuring feelings for the purpose of language learning. One might assign a media immersion experience in which students complete a game in a second language as a course assignment.

4. *Creating Co-presence*. Tools such as Canvas support the thinnest of *social* co-presence. Students cannot see who is logged on, cannot correspond in real time, and cannot establish private channels of communication. Many students joined Discord servers during the pandemic to get around these limitations. Teachers might create sanctioned Discord servers or embrace technologies like *Minecraft*. Second language teachers such as Glen Irvin in Wabasha-Kellogg High School have reported success making language learning servers where everyone plays *Minecraft* in a second language.

5. *Augmented Reality Games*. As schools closed during the pandemic, opportunities existed to rethink what the classroom was. What if students learned science by studying the birds outside their windows? What if students practiced second language skills by seeking speakers of those languages and visiting shops or stores? Using location-based mobile games like *Pokémon Go* as a model, second language educators like Julie Sykes have designed games where students complete quests by using language skills in the real world.

Conclusion. The pandemic has revealed real limitations with our digital tools for learning. Tools exist for posting documents, completing quizzes, or video presentations. It is harder, however, for students to *do* things together. Second language *Minecraft* servers are not perfect, but they exemplify everything missing from today’s learning tools. They are a *place* where students can *go, together, to create things* and solve problems in an immersive world. We do not necessarily need technologies to address these challenges. However, signs point toward a future of more blended learning, and employing these techniques might improve the learning experience for everyone.

Language and Literacy in Games

By Dr. Constance Steinkuehler, University of California, Irvine

Constance Steinkuehler is a professor in the Department of Informatics at UC, Irvine, where she teaches courses on games and society, visual design, and research methods. Dr. Steinkuehler formerly served as senior policy analyst under the Obama administration in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, advising on videogames and digital media. As a featured speaker at KOTESOL 2022, she will be speaking on language and literacy in relation to online games and esports. This article is a preview of the amazing connections being found between language and literacy and gaming. — Ed.

As parents and teachers, we often feel ambivalence toward videogames as a medium for young people. Despite the fact that many of us were raised playing Nintendo and other early console and computer games, concerns over addiction and violence continue to trouble the minds of those of us who work with children and young adults. Yet, despite our concerns, videogames continue to dominate the entertainment market, with a global market currently valued at 173.70 billion USD (206.3

Arts (NEA) *Reading at Risk* report (Bradshaw & Nichols, 2004), which documented a 10% national decline in literary reading, which the authors blamed on videogames and similar technology-based pastimes, despite mixed evidence on both sides (Cummings & Vandewater, 2007; Gentile et al., 2004; cf. Van Schie & Wiegman, 1997; Weis & Cerankosky, 2010). And when a later NEA publication *Reading on the Rise* (National Endowment for the Arts, 2009) reported the opposite trend, games continued to be framed as reading's competition even though gameplay only continued to rise year after year.

But what if videogames were instead a hook rather than a hindrance? What if games were a means to get kids reading in situated, interest-driven ways rather than reading's main competition? For more than a decade, our team has examined the intersections between youth videogame play and academics, detailing the ways that games, even commercial games – in the right context and for the right students – can serve as “trojan horses” for learning, vehicles for promoting and motivating reading, writing, and other foundational school-valued activities rather than replacing them. Since 2005, we have researched the ways that games promote scientific thinking and reasoning (Steinkuehler & Duncan, 2009), mathematical reasoning (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2009), computational literacy (Steinkuehler & Johnson, 2009), ethical reasoning (Simkins & Steinkuehler, 2008), social skills (King et al., 2011; Steinkuehler et al., 2009), information literacy (Martin & Steinkuehler, 2010), and of course digital and print literacy (Black & Steinkuehler, 2009; Steinkuehler, 2007; Steinkuehler, 2006; Steinkuehler et al., 2005). We have even created game-based (Steinkuehler, 2010; Steinkuehler et al., 2012; Steinkuehler & King, 2009) and esports-based (Lee et al., 2020; Lee & Steinkuehler, 2019; Steinkuehler, 2018) after-school programs on the basis of our findings.

In the context of English language learning, games can provide the kind of immersive, situated, and goal-driven learning environment highly conducive to learning (Black, 2008; Gee, 2007; Leander & Lovvorn, 2006). Game worlds embed students in rich, digital environments where language can be used in specific, contextual ways that are goal driven and tied to action. Thus, they are powerful engines for language learning. In fact, research shows

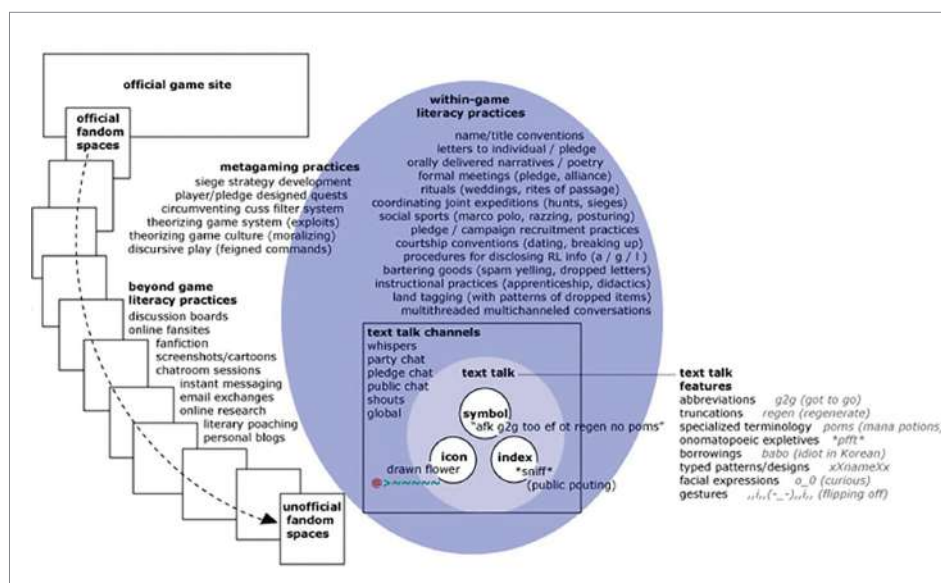
trillion KRW) and expected to reach 314.40 billion USD (373.4 trillion KRW) by 2026, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 9.64% over the next four years (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). Asia-Pacific (including, most notably, South Korea) holds the largest market share and shows the greatest potential for continued growth.

For educators, it is often the distraction from academic work that videogames represent that concerns us most. Our uneasiness typically stems from an underlying and unexamined “displacement” model of literacy and learning that assumes that engagement in digital and print media is a zero-sum game such that, if young people were playing videogames *less*, they would be reading print text *more*. In the United States, this assumption was made popular by the influential National Endowment for the



that even in videogames not intended to teach language, students get language learning “for free” (Young et al., 2012).

Figure 1. The Constellation of Literacy Practices Associated with the Massively Multiplayer Online Game *Lineage I*.



In a 2012 study conducted in one of our game-based after-school programs, for example, we examined the quality and quantity of print text resources used as a regular part of playing massively multiplayer online games (Figure 1) and found that such texts were primarily expository in nature, with an 11.8-grade reading level and 4% academic vocabulary (Steinkuehler, 2012). We witnessed teens in our program who measured far below grade level in reading in school read game-related texts well above their grade level. When we set about measuring these discrepancies and attempting to understand their cause, we found something at once novel and routine. Participants’ reading performance was the same on game-related and school-related texts when the topic was assigned; however, when students were allowed to choose the topics, so-called struggling readers performed up to eight grade levels above their diagnosed competency. Examination of the reading transcripts showed us how and why. When students read about something they cared about, their self-correction rates doubled, thereby dramatically improving fluency and comprehension. Students handed difficult (college-level) texts related to games were able to read successfully not because the texts were more familiar or easier but because they were able and willing to work through challenging words, grammar, and rhetorical constructions at twice the rate. Students cared about what they were reading, so they bootstrapped their own comprehension of the text on the fly.

Games are both the magical and mundane. They are terrific architectures for engagement, but so are many other pastimes in which young people engage. In the case of games, designers work to carefully structure the player experience so that learning and pleasure become one in the same. Learning is pleasurable: It is overcoming the challenging, the as-yet unknown. Game designers attend carefully to the level of difficulty at any given moment

and how that difficulty level scales over time. They think carefully about perception and attention, on the one hand, and aesthetics, on the other. They must make the goals clear for the player and the means for obtaining them findable and fair.

Once we set aside our false dichotomies between print literacy and interactive media, other pressing concerns soon rise to the fore, concerns related to the “cultural models” (Holland, 1987) or tacit worldviews that contemporary entertainment games sometimes espouse. Literacy never happens in a vacuum. Reading, for example, is always about reading “something,” and as such, it is indelibly tied to a particular discourse that guides interpretation and sense-making through (often tacit) assumptions about how the world “works,” assumptions that hang together to form explanatory theories or “story lines” of what is and is not typical,

expected, normal, and valued (Gee, 1999). Discourses are recognizable, “different ways in which we humans integrate language with non-language ‘stuff,’ so as to ... give the material world certain meanings ... make certain sorts of meaningful connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbols, systems, and ways of knowing over others” (Gee, 1999, p. 13). What, then, is the discourse that underlies videogames – or more accurately, what are the discourses (plural) that underlie specific videogames? And are these the discourses that resonate well with academics, or more broadly, shared and accepted social, cultural, and (inter)national values?

Many are not. Recently, our team conducted a broad literature review on the rise of alt-right (conservative) extremism in online games in the United States, a project that grew out of concerns over the rise of toxicity and extremist rhetoric in games and the fear in America that domestic terrorist groups recruit kids into extremist world views using online gaming platforms. According to the most recent Anti-Defamation League report (2021), hate speech and hate-based harassment in online games increasingly undermine their positive effects. Roughly *one in ten players* (10% for teens, 8% for adults) in the United States are exposed to white supremacist ideology in online games, including claims that “white people are superior to people of other races” and that the Holocaust is not real (Anti-Defamation League, 2019). Three out of five (60%) teen online players (ages 13–17) and five out of six (83%) adult online players experienced harassment, an increase of 9% in just two years.

Much of the literature overwhelmingly converged on the same conclusion. The cultural models underlying many mainstream games reflect inherent equity and inclusion problems in the games industry itself whose leadership includes few to no women or minorities. As a result, the games that mainstream industry produces

“So-called struggling readers performed up to eight grade levels above their diagnosed competency.”

all too frequently reflect cultural models that position non-male, non-white persons as resources and objects, not as acting subjects. This has, over time, fomented toxicity and harassment toward players perceived as non-mainstream and allowed game culture to become one where intolerance and extremist views are increasingly normalized.

This is the essential challenge of our next decade of games and learning research. If games are powerful engines for literacy and language learning, then how do we ensure that the games students play promote the discourses and cultural models that society, nationally and internationally, value? How do we nudge the games industry and its consumer base toward more humane, more sustainable, more equitable imaginings of worlds, goals, and each other?

For too long, the global profit-driven industry has decided what interactive media are made readily available for youth. Perhaps it is time for us as parents and educators to embrace games as a medium and help shape the values and assumptions underlying them rather than continue to disavow them as irrelevant to literacy and learning. Such media already serve as rich contexts for learning. Should we continue to wring our hands and insist that games play no important role in the intellectual life of kids, or might we instead try to help bend the arc of where they are currently headed? When I reflect on this year’s conference theme “More Than Words: Teaching for a Better World,” I think perhaps it is time we stop waiting for games to disappear and instead get to the worthwhile business of mentoring and shaping the on- and offline media experiences of the youth whose minds are entrusted to us.

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Ecolinguistics: Caring for Ecology Through TEFL

Dr. Arran Stibbe, University of Gloucestershire

Arran Stibbe is a professor of ecological linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire, England. He is a featured speaker at the upcoming Korea TESOL International Conference, where he will be speaking on "TEFL, Culture, and Environment: From Analysis of TEFL Textbooks to Inclusive Pedagogy." Dr. Stibbe has very graciously made himself available for this interview for The English Connection. — Ed.

KOTESOL: To start off this interview, would you please tell us a little about yourself?

Dr. Stibbe: Certainly. I'm a professor of ecological linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire, but I had quite an unusual journey to arrive at this point. Some points along this journey include studying computer systems engineering, then artificial intelligence, then natural language processing, then linguistics, then applying linguistics to health communication, and finally to ecological issues. During this time, I taught in the UK, South Africa, and, importantly for my international conference presentation, Japan for eight years.

KOTESOL: "Ecological linguistics." Could you explain just exactly what the field of ecological linguistics entails and how you became interested in this area?



Dr. Stibbe: Certainly. For a long time, linguists have applied linguistics to crucial social issues like racism and sexism. This is based on the power of language

to promote prejudice or to encourage respect and care for others. Ecolinguistics simply extends this to consideration of future generations, animals, plants, and the physical environment. We are searching for inspirational forms of language that encourage people to respect and care for the ecosystems that life depends on. I became interested when living in Japan and speaking with elders who lived in the mountains – they were so respectful of all life and expressed this respect in inspiring ways.

KOTESOL: You are also the founder of the International Ecolinguistics Association. Please tell us a little about this association and its activities.

Dr. Stibbe: The International Ecolinguistics Association, at the time of writing this, has 997 members from around the world. By the time this article is published, we will have celebrated our 1000th member. The members are academics and research students who are committed to using linguistics to address some of the key issues that we face in the world, from climate change and the emergence of pandemics through the destruction of nature, to the positive impact

on wellbeing of spending time in nature. It's a wonderful community, and I'd like to invite readers to join (it's free, and you can find more at <http://www.ecolinguistics-association.org>). We also run a free online course, which has 2300 participants at the moment (www.storiesweliveby.org.uk).



KOTESOL: What are you planning for your conference presentation to be about, and how will it relate to our conference theme of "More Than Words: Teaching for a Better World"?

Dr. Stibbe: I am going to discuss my time in Japan, where I was gaining ecological wisdom from the elders in the mountains while also witnessing ecological destruction around me. I felt at the time that I wanted to include the environment in my TEFL classes but did not really know where to start. The environmental textbooks available were written by authors in the US and UK, and represented environmental issues in a trivial way rather than encouraging a deep respect for life. In fact, I analyzed the language of the textbooks to reveal hidden ideologies, which included ideologies of consumerism. In the end, I re-orientated my teaching towards getting the students to express the ecological wisdom in traditional Japan in English so that it could spread across the world.

KOTESOL: Using traditional wisdom to inform a newly emerging field – sounds a bit ironic but at the same time so logical. What would you like for the audience's take-aways to be from your conference session?

Dr. Stibbe: That for genuine ecological education it's important for students in Asia to treat the hidden messages in their TEFL textbooks critically, since they often contain consumerist ideology (even environmental textbooks can promote consumerism). And that a key aim of TEFL is to enable students to express ecological insights from their own traditional culture in English for the benefit of the world.

KOTESOL: Thank you, Dr. Stibbe. We look forward to listening to your presentation at the conference.

Member Spotlight: Kirsten Razzaq

For this issue of The English Connection, TEC turns its spotlight towards Korea's south-southeast to shine its beam of light on a KOTESOL member residing in Busan: Kirsten Razzaq. If you are from the Busan area, you probably know Kirsten as an officer of the Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter and an important organizer of our most recent National Conference. Others likely know her as KOTESOL's second vice-president. To find out more about her, Kirsten provided TEC with this interview. — Ed.

TEC: To start things off, would you let our readers know a little about yourself before you came to Korea?

Kirsten: I am originally from the U.K., and I grew up in southwest London. I was the first person in my family to go to university, and I decided to study astrophysics. I was very passionate about science, especially physics, but my career choice wasn't supported. I struggled a lot with my family and within 18 months I had dropped out. I blamed myself for a long time for giving up on my dreams, but looking back, I can't regret a single thing. I have finally recognized how much bravery and strength it took at the time to persevere for as long as I did. When I was 22, I went back to university to study graphic design. After that, I worked in advertising for six years and eventually became a project manager before deciding it was time to change my career and move to Korea. Whilst living here, I have gained a deeper understanding of my values and motivations.

TEC: Why did you decide to come to teach in Korea, and what kind of teaching context are you working in here?

Kirsten: Growing up near a large Korean community in London, I have always had an interest and a connection to Korea. I decided to move here in 2016 and applied to teach through EPIK. I touched down in Busan seven months later and started my life here in early 2017. While living in Busan, I have been teaching at public elementary schools, but I was able to get experience teaching adults as well, and I found that I really enjoyed the dynamics of teaching mature learners. In 2018, I started my graduate studies with the

December, I organized an online social for the SIG leaders to discuss ideas and goals for 2022. It was the first event of its kind, and there were both seasoned and new leaders present. We discussed what special interest groups do and how they serve our KOTESOL community. The aim for this year is to encourage SIGs to be active and support them with hosting meetings, events, and collaborations. We are also looking at ways to attract new members and maintain SIG records efficiently.



▲ **Kirsten Razzaq**

TEC: In addition to your position as second vice-president, you are also a co-program director for this spring's KOTESOL International Conference. How are things on the program front progressing?

Kirsten: There is a really exciting lineup for IC 2022. The conference will be online once again, using the Edzila platform. There was hope that we could have some in-person components as late as October last year, but as the pandemic has continued, it became clear that an online conference was the best way forward. I am looking forward to assisting in promoting the speakers, presentations, and workshops over the next few months for this year's conference with the theme "More Than Words: Teaching for a Better World."

TEC: You are a relatively recent member of KOTESOL, I believe, and you received the KOTESOL "Stepping Up" service award at our last annual business meeting. How did that come about?

Kirsten: Last year, as a member of the Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter, I was involved with the program team for the Reel to Real Film Festival and National Conference. It was a team effort, and we were able to take advantage of various platforms and gamification to engage a global audience. I appreciate the recognition for my hard work, but the best reward was collaborating with so many KOTESOL members nationally and internationally. We all put in a lot of hours but learned so much in the process about conferencing and also about each other. It was an unforgettable experience.

"The best reward was collaborating with so many KOTESOL members nationally and internationally."

University of Sunderland and completed my MA TESOL in 2021. I will be moving into higher education in March 2022, teaching freshmen at a university in Seoul. Whilst excited for a new beginning, I also feel like I am starting my second life in Korea. Busan will always be my hometown here, and I hope I can visit regularly.

TEC: You became KOTESOL's second vice-president last autumn. What have you been doing so far, and what planning are you doing in regards to that office?

Kirsten: My main role is to support the special interest groups (SIGs) and Korea Teacher Training (KTT). In



▲ **Kirsten at Woljeong Bridge in Gyeongju.**

TEC: What would you like to see KOTESOL doing in the coming year? What about in the long term?

Kirsten: In the long term, it would be great to get back to in-person meetings, of course. The majority of my KOTESOL experiences have been online, and while this affords many conveniences, I am looking forward to meeting in-person again. This year and in the future, I hope to see all levels of the organization embracing change and nurturing growth in a few areas. English language education, the brick-and-mortar classroom, our very roles as learning facilitators, these have been challenged extensively over the last two years. Developments in technology, digital disruption, and globalization also continue to impact our lives as English educators. I would like to see the KOTESOL website and affiliated online media developing into dynamic spaces for learning and connection. KOTESOL has built a legacy within Korea and beyond, and I am excited about the potential for development in the next five to ten years.

TEC: Is ELT professional development or research something that you are devoting much time to?

Kirsten: Continuing on from the previous question, I have found myself seeking out more courses and workshops with online communities. I really enjoy the discussions and accountability. During the past two years, I have learnt about personal finance, teaching English, Korean language, nutrition, and effective language learning from global professionals through well-designed online courses. I would like to find more courses and workshops specific to ELT that are accessible online and where I can learn at my own pace with fellow educators. I am also interested in understanding my learners and their needs so that I am able to curate more effective learning environments whether online or

in-person. This is the area I will probably be dedicating more time and thought to in 2022.

TEC: What do you like to do when you have, or maybe I should say if you have, any free time?

Kirsten: My favorite hobbies in Busan are definitely cycling, hiking, and surfing! These are three things I really didn't get to do much of living in London. These days, I am more focused on enjoying time at home, which includes reading, writing, and watching movies. I am hoping there will still be plenty of cycling and hiking options when I move to Seoul in March. I will definitely be taking my road bike with me.

TEC: Where do you see yourself being and what do you see yourself doing in, let's say, five years from now?

Kirsten: I am actually really excited to be moving into higher education this year. Whilst co-teaching in elementary schools has allowed me to directly observe different styles of teaching, the lack of autonomy has been challenging. I think I will always be a teacher, but these days my focus is on creating and investing in a life that brings me joy and economic security. While I figure out what that looks like for me personally, I will keep living, learning, and teaching here in Korea. I hope that in five years' time, I will have a healthy pension and investment portfolio and a sustainable work-life balance with lots of time spent in nature.

TEC: Well, I hope that you enjoy your new journey in teaching at the university level and that you find that healthy work-life balance you are looking for. Thank you, Kirsten, for making time for this interview with *The English Connection*.

Interviewed by David Shaffer.



▲ **Kirsten camping at Cheonseong Mountain, near Yangsan City in Gyeongsangnam-do.**

The Classroom Connection

A Culture of Questioning

By Peter Thwaites



In the Winter 2021 issue of TEC, I argued that language teachers should prioritize the needs and voices of their students over prescribed coursebook content. Only by doing this, I suggested, can we truly describe our classrooms as “learner-centred.” A reader got in touch to ask about this. His question was “How can teachers be more spontaneous and responsive on a daily basis?”

This gets to the heart of what I hope to achieve in this column. I want to persuade my readers that the foundation of a productive classroom is the connection that emerges when teachers allow their practice to be guided, at least in part, by their students’ needs, preferences, and personalities; and moreover that there are solid techniques and methods that can help teachers to cultivate that connection. In my experience, one of the most reliable ways to connect with students is by asking and answering questions. This article is going to look at how to do that.

“One of the most reliable ways to connect with students is by asking and answering questions.”

Before getting into the details, though, we need to raise the issue of culture. In many classrooms around the world, questions receive only the most minimal of responses from students (sometimes that is all the teacher expects, sometimes not). Much of this is culturally bound. Classrooms reflect the wider cultures to which they belong: school culture, national culture, any sub-cultures to which certain students might subscribe. In some contexts, these cultural factors work out in favor of teaching styles that favor responsiveness over prescription. I found this to be true of teaching in Oman, for example. One day, at the beginning of a class with Omani adults, a student asked me what I had eaten for dinner the previous evening. After answering the question, I asked the students to work in groups of four to talk about the same question. An hour

later they were still talking – asking and answering each other’s questions about recipes, differences in dishes across national borders, and how they fit family meals around busy work schedules. I was able to relax into some of my favorite teacher roles – facilitator of effective communication, linguistic resource, classroom notepad, and participant in conversation. The prevailing culture of openness to asking and answering questions opened the door for this responsive teaching style to emerge.

In other contexts, though, the predominant culture makes it much harder to teach this way. There might be many factors here; expectations about student-teacher relations, stress about giving wrong answers, and fear of standing out all seem to be aspects of the often-anxious nature of Korean classroom cultures. Whatever the reasons, though, it is in such cultures that teachers need to work hardest to cultivate a classroom atmosphere of responsiveness. We must push back against the flow of the prevailing culture, making our classrooms places where normal rules do not apply.

So how can we recognize a productive “culture of questioning” in our classes? In a 1984 study, Joanna White and Patsy Lightbown investigated question usage in seven ESL classes in a secondary school near Montreal. They found that teachers asked an average of 200 questions per 50-minute class (around four questions per minute). This seems like quite a lot of questions. Could these classrooms therefore be said to have a “culture of questioning”? Further details from the White and Lightbown study suggests not, but they do help us to define what kind of classroom *would* meet this standard.

The first hint of a problem in the Montreal classes is that the students in these classes asked only eight questions per class, compared with the 200 asked by their teachers. Moreover, there was wide variance between classes: One group produced only one question, while another produced 47. Another hint came from discrepancies in the rate at which students answered teacher questions: One class answered 89% of teacher questions, while another responded to only 40%. Looking at possible explanations for these differences, White and Lightbown found that a key determinant of both was the amount of time that the teacher waited for students to answer their questions. The same two classes asked the most questions and gave the most responses, and in these classes the teacher wait time was 3.5 and 3.3 seconds per question. This compared with an average of just 2.1 seconds across all seven classes. In classes with the lowest wait time (1.2 seconds), only one student question was asked, and just 52% of teacher questions were answered.

But is wait time a correlate of greater student interaction, or its cause? Seminal research conducted by Mary Budd Rowe suggests the latter. Rowe found that when teachers were *instructed* to wait for between 3 and 5 seconds (as compared with other teachers who were told to wait only one

second), both question response rates and student questions increased – the same pattern observed by White and Lightbown. In addition, students in the longer wait-time classes gave longer, more confident answers to questions, and demonstrated greater student–student interaction. In the Korean context, Lee Kilyoung, in his 2004 article “Extended Wait-Time and Its Effect in ESL Class” seems to confirm at least some of these benefits.

These studies help us to identify some characteristics of question-friendly classes. They are places in which

- Teachers are willing to wait for students to respond to their questions;
- Students answer most of the questions that teachers ask;
- Where possible, these questions are answered at some length;
- Answers are delivered with some confidence; Students frequently ask questions of the teacher, and of each other;
- There is visible student-to-student interaction.

So, increasing the amount of time that you wait for students to respond seems like a reliable way to increase student participation. But there are other ways for teachers to cultivate a culture of questioning. I'd like to share some techniques that I've found to be helpful in my classes here in Korea. If you have quiet students, these methods will not suddenly turn them into extroverts (nor would we wish to do so); but they might help to relieve that part of their language anxiety that results from any prevailing culture of avoiding questions in the classroom.

The first is a practice that I've mentioned before: Use students' names. Being asked a question by name can make some students anxious at first, so start with simple yes/no questions, and move on to more open questions as learners become more comfortable. Another very gentle introduction to being asked questions is the “padded questions” technique, described in Jonathon Newton and Paul Nation's book *Teaching EFL/ESL Speaking and Listening*. In this activity, the teacher talks to the students about a simple topic such as their pets or their family. At various points in this talk, the teacher stops and asks a few questions of named students: “I have three brothers, one older than me and two younger. What about you, Minjung?”

In cultures where students are not expected to ask questions in the classroom, it is likely to be necessary to find methods that can gently train students to alter this expectation. One icebreaker that serves this purpose involves writing on the board some numbers that have a personal significance for you – birthdays, number of pets, your office number, etc. – and have the students ask questions to guess what each number refers to. A similar method involves telling students a story about your life, with the twist that you give students only a few hints about the topic,

and then require them to ask questions to uncover the rest of the story. After some preparation time, the students themselves can later be invited to the front of the class to “tell” their own stories.

Reading and listening activities can be handled similarly. Rather than simply playing a recording, students can be told the general topic of the text and can then ask questions regarding predictions of text content. The teacher can answer these questions with “yes,” “no,” and “maybe.” The students' subsequent reading/listening tasks are then to check which predictions were correct and to figure out how the answers were linguistically realized.

Another activity good for modifying student–teacher expectations is “Control the Teacher,” also described by Newton and Nation. The teacher can read out or dictate a text, but with the explicit instructions that students are to shout out requests to slow down, speak more loudly, repeat a sentence, etc. as required. With younger learners, the teacher can demo this by slowly whispering the text, forcing students to ask for more volume. The teacher can continue exaggerating their reading until the students get used to the idea of asking for changes.

One final suggestion is more of a principle than an activity. It is simply to consider using questions to elicit things *from*, rather than telling them *to*, your students. Perhaps the most common context for elicitation is in vocabulary teaching. Rather than telling students a word and then describing what it means, teachers can describe the word and have the students guess the meaning – “Does anyone know the English word for this?” But there is no end to the things that can be elicited from students. Try asking them, “What are we going to do in class today?” or “Which page of the textbook do we need today?” While the main purpose of these questions is to encourage students to think back to previous classes and notice continuities with today's class, you might also find that simply by asking questions like these, the students' sense of involvement increases.

Finally, it's worth saying something about how we should handle students' answers to our questions. Ultimately, the goal of activities like those above is to help students to feel comfortable around the idea of speaking up in class. This sense of comfort depends upon an atmosphere of acceptance, so it's important to ask questions that don't have right or wrong answers (though we can also use more constrained questions), and to respond with warmth to any genuine attempt at a response (though we can still focus on the form or correct errors in what the students say). This welcoming attitude towards questions is one of the keys to accessing the more “spontaneous and responsive” style of teaching that this column focuses on. I hope that the suggestions above will help you to access something of that style.

The Columnist

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The Brain Connection

How One Particular Theory in Neuroscience Changed the Way I Teach

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

There is one theory in neuroscience that has had a large effect on how I teach. It is not the most important theory I've learned. More important are the role of emotion in learning, how memory works, and that we are ultimately social beings who thrive on being connected. But these things I already knew intuitively from 40 years of teaching. The neuroscience just reinforced those intuitions. Still, there is one thing I do regularly now, because of neuroscience, that I rarely did before. I doubt many of you are doing it, so let me tell you about this vital little trick.



The change in my thinking started about ten years ago when I heard an amazing interview. It was on Ginger Campbell's *Brain Science Podcast*. She interviewed Harvard's John Ratey about his recent book, *Spark*. In fact, Ginger liked it so much that she put the interview up twice. Her older interviews like these are now behind a paywall, but if you write me, I have permission to get you a copy. (I'll just mention here, her 190 interviews with neuroscientists have been my "grad course" about the brain. Ratey's was Brain Science Podcast 33. Write me at (ctskelly at gmail) for a copy. Or, go see Ratey on YouTube.)

What I Learned from Ratey's Interview

So, enough suspense? Do you want to hear what the podcast was about? The full title of Ratey's book will give you the answer: *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*. That is it, *exercise*. Naturally, I don't have my students doing physical exercise in class. The key takeaway for me was the importance of occasional movement for good cognition. Just having students stand up a couple times makes a world of difference, and that is what has changed in my way of teaching.

Ratey's talk had many interesting points, including these:

- He noticed sportspeople laid up with injuries experienced mental maladies they did not know they had before, such as depression, anxiety, or attention deficit.
- Exercise leads to an increase of BDNF in the brain, a kind of brain "fertilizer."
- When exercise sessions were added to school curricula, there were some amazing effects on achievement. One high school became the top performer in the state. In elementary schools, grades went up for everyone, but especially for girls in *math*.

Ratey spoke to many of my deepest concerns about the classroom, and probably yours: What can I do when my students are so faded after a long day of classes (or after lunch)? Is their brain power at a low too? What can I do about that? Ratey provides a simple solution; their hearts need to pump harder to wash away toxins. In other words, make them move.

Glutamate is the most important neurotransmitter in the brain – it lets neurons send signals – but at certain levels, it is also toxic. If you use your brain a lot, with no neural recovery time and a low blood flow rate, glutamate builds up. At high levels, it is toxic and causes cell damage and cell death, which

we experience as mental fatigue. To paraphrase an NIH study:

Mental fatigue appears as a decreased ability to intake and process information over time. Mental exhaustion becomes pronounced when cognitive tasks have to be performed for longer time periods with no breaks (cognitive loading). It results in a lack of motivation, sensitivity to loudness and light, irritability, affect lability (strong emotions), stress intolerance, and headaches. (Rönnbäck & Hansson, 2004, para 4)

And isn't that how you feel after a day at a conference? Of course it is, and it is the same condition we are creating in our classes. Students sit 45–90 minutes in one class, mainly just listening (which in itself is heavy cognition) and then take a few steps to the next class where they listen again. Mental fatigue. For comparison, think about your own mental condition after a two-hour teachers' meeting. Don't you also end up in a heavy mental fog? With difficulty in thinking or talking? With an inability to decide anything (which is why that one-hour teachers' meeting became two), it feels like a hangover.

And what usually happens because of the fatigue is that all we want to do when we get a break is to sit there and vegetate. But now I know this is completely the wrong thing to do. We should be up and moving. Since our brains evolved on creatures who walked or ran over 10 kilos a day, our brains are built to work best when there is continuous blood flow.

So, after hearing Ratey, I conducted an experiment at the biggest kind of brain killer, a JALT conference. Between presentations, a friend and I climbed five flights of stairs, enough to get our hearts beating. Amazingly, we discovered at the end of the day that we were still as fresh as at the start. (As a footnote, the friend, Steve Jugovic, later became an expert in the movement and the brain. We made him an officer in our BRAIN SIG, *Body Police*, so that he could make sure our conferences had enough energy breaks.)

The Columnist

Popular speaker and writer **Curtis Kelly** (EdD) is a professor of English at Kansai University in Japan. His life mission is to “relieve the suffering of the classroom.” He has given over 500 presentations and written 35 books, including *Significant Scribbles* (Longman), *Active Skills for Communication* (Cengage), and *Writing from Within* (Cambridge). He invites you to subscribe to a free magazine, the *MindBrainEd Think Tanks*, that connects brain science to language teaching. Email: ctskelly@gmail.com



Adding Movement to Our Classes

So, what can we do for our learners to counteract their five-teacher-meetings-a-day-equivalent build-up of brain toxins? It's not that hard. Even just standing helps. As old-timer Marc Helgesen informs us, after a student has been sitting for 20 minutes, with blood collecting in their legs and buttocks, having them stand up for just a minute leads to a 15% increase of oxygen rich blood in the brain (Sousa, 2011). So, it is that simple. Just get them to stand up and maybe move once in a while.

Here are some easy ways to do it:

- Stop passing out and collecting quizzes. Make students come to the front to pick them up and turn them in. Same for homework assignments and handouts.
- Use stand-up, sit-down questioning: “Everyone stand up. If you got less than 6 right, you can sit down.” And since the brain is predictive and engaged in allostasis, just *thinking* they might have to stand up increases blood flow.
- Have them do pair work standing up. Do poster sessions.
- Use dyadic circles or lines, a powerful, but underused, teaching technique. Students form lines down the aisles with pairs facing each other. They engage in some short interaction and when you give a signal, everyone in one of the lines shifts a person to the right and they do the interaction again.

So, as you can see, just a few simple changes can increase the learning potential of your classes. Managing student brain states is an important factor in being a good teacher. Ratey changed the way I manage my classes, and I believe he can change the way you teach yours. Add movement. Make your classes brain-friendly and relieve a bit of the “suffering of the classroom.” His interview changed my life, and I hope, even if indirectly, it will change yours as well.

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