The English Connection

A Korea TESOL Publication

Spring 2024, Volume 28, Issue 1

Preview to the KOTESOL International Conference 2024

"Players on the World Stage"

Invited Speakers' Articles and Interviews

And our regular columnists...

Snyder with The Development Connection

Kelly with The Brain Connection

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KOREA TESOL

KOTESOL

대한영어교육학회

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
Blinking

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

In the novel *The Hole* by Hye-young Pyun, the lead character wakes up from a coma after a devastating car wreck kills his wife and leaves him badly disfigured. He is paralyzed from the neck down and unable to talk, yet is fully cognitive, left only with the confused thoughts and memories of his prior life. Unable to communicate with hospital staff, counselors, and eventually his vindictive mother-in-law, he is left with blinking to "speak" as his only means to try and convey his troubled thoughts and quadriplegic needs. Stuck with a yes-or-nothing response system, he can't clearly express himself and is constantly misunderstood, his replies being misconstrued with people "putting words in his mouth." Throughout the novel, he is shamed, belittled, and tormented as he slowly becomes more isolated and neglected. His existence becomes one hopelessly trapped in his inner world, lacking vocalized expression.

What insights can ELT teachers take from this and apply to our English language learning students (if we take care to first remove the hospital bed, paralysis, and revenging mother-in-law)? What can a blinking, bedridden patient teach us about our learners and how to better understand them? I've just spelled it out: blinking, learners, understanding. Let's look at each one in turn.

Blinking. Our hapless patient above uses blinking as a language, as a signed system of communication, replacing the more common visual gestures, written words, and of course, verbal speaking. It is most rudimentary, invented out of necessity, as the doctor teaches him to "blink once for yes," and that's it. No "no." No "give me___." Nothing. He plateaus at one blink and can't learn (or isn't taught) anything further. As the novel progresses this emerges to the reader as one of the most aggravating elements: his failure as a language learner, stuck at a beginner's level.

Actually, if anyone had bothered to teach him, an eye sign language has already been created. The Blink to Speak system encompasses a collection of 50 commands designed for communication via eye expressions, utilizing eight eye gestures (shut, blink, left, right, up, down, wink, and roll). Specific messages have been linked to eye movements, creating a set language of essential phrases for daily communication. One blink is "yes," two blinks is "no." One left, one right is "water." One blink, one left is "call my guardian." A sequence of three gestures conveys the most complex messages, such as one blink, one up, one wink is "let's go out in the open." Two blinks, one long close is "I'm proud of you." Imagine the journey a Blink to Speak language learner can take, creating a more complex and richer language with their blinking, winking, and eye-rolling expressions, to advanced levels, to native "speaker."

Our paralyzed protagonist's gradual downfall is a result of his ineffective communication, as he becomes imprisoned within the confines of his own unexpressed thoughts. He couldn't learn to blink better.

Learners. We can think of our English learners as blinkers, as they struggle with this second language. Just like our hapless bedridden character, our students have a lot to express and reveal to us. They bring to the classroom their whole lives' worth of experiences, opinions, and memories. Just imagine the stories they can tell, want to tell, as they strive to find the means in their English L2. Our students, with limited proficiency in English, likely possess an extensive vocabulary in their native language, potentially surpassing our own by tens of thousands of words. Consider this before passing judgment on someone's intelligence solely based on their struggles in the classroom. Can they express it in anything more than mere blinks, barely scratching the surface of their intended meaning? Of course they can. They just need the methods to do so, without feeling trapped.

Starting with the binary "yes/no" blink and scaffolding eye gestures from there, we as teachers can impart on them the tools to structure and cultivate a richer and more complex language, aware of the fact they may face unique obstacles to their blinking acquisition, based on their native language, specific linguistic contexts, and individual learning styles.

Understanding. Empathy. Imagine your own paralysis the last time you struggled to express what you wanted to say in a second language. Here in Korea, it's not very hard. Maybe with a taxi driver who took a wrong turn, or a waitress that forgot your second Sprite. Didn't you want a better cooperative effort to get through that communicative standstill? As a teacher, we should have the understanding and patience, even respect, to stretch those learners' blinking expressions.

Gladwell's *Blink* is about making instantaneous decisions, using our instincts to "thinking without thinking" to make successful snap judgements. The blinking analogy I describe here is prolonged (even lifelong), more deliberate and purposeful, an awareness of a developmental journey our learners take to communicate their thoughts. Stephen Hawking once said, "Quiet people have the loudest minds." (And he found a way.) Give your students the time, the methods, the language, and the empathy to speak the thoughts in their rich inner worlds, to break out of their linguistic paralysis. Wink wink…

President's Message

The Play's the Thing: Spotlight on KOTESOL's Spring Celebrations!

By Lindsay Herron KOTESOL President

The 31st Korea TESOL International Conference is coming up in April – and with our conference theme of "Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives," we invite you to join us with a sense of adventure! Indeed, this theme is deceptively simple, conjuring images of theater, roleplay, and games but underpinned by more trenchant questions of scale, possibility, and our place in the world. As conference chair Bryan Hale writes, the theme "calls into question our preconceptions about time and space, the relative size and importance of aspects of our lives and world, and where to perceive the boundaries around our activities" while simultaneously "[highlighting] a fluidity about the roles that people take on and 'perform.'"

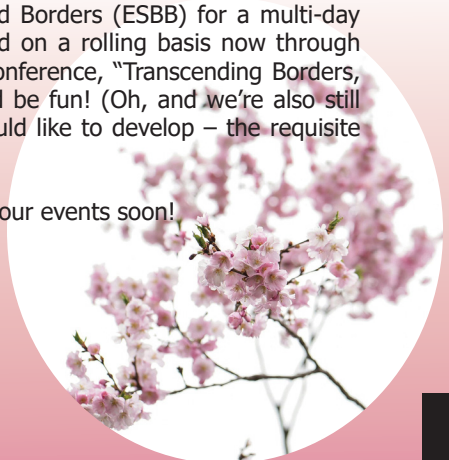
I love this theme and its metaphor of the theater; it speaks directly to our goal as educators to cultivate compassionate, critical, cosmopolitan citizens of the world. Augusto Boal, a drama theorist, director, playwright, and activist, once described theater as "the art of looking at ourselves" (2002, p. 15) and "[recognizing] ourselves in alterity" (2002, p. 2). Indeed, roleplay, imaginative play, and empathetic engagement with stories have great transformative potential. They can disrupt the automaticity of everyday life, make us aware of our own limitations in perspective, highlight the contextual nature of taken-for-granted norms, and shift the borders of belonging as we perceive similarities to and from solidarities with diverse and distant others. Moreover, theater, Boal writes, has the potential to show "reality ... not only as it is, but also, more importantly, as it could be" (p. 6); as drama presents new paths and possibilities, new ways of *being*, it can pique participants' imaginations and evoke visions of a better self, a better world. Whether we interpret the theme as literally evoking the stage or more symbolically representing the promising potential, pathways, and pluralism proffered by language education, this conference inarguably opens a vast world for discussion and exploration. I, for one, can't wait to delve into this nuanced theme and the multifaceted interpretations it invites!

Speaking of pluralism and pathways, one of my favorite things about KOTESOL conferences is the impressive breadth of perspectives and insights they offer – and the attendant opportunity to connect and share with a diverse community of educators. Participants in this year's conference can engage with educators from across the globe, including representatives from our partner organizations in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, and more; presenters residing in about 25 countries and of about 35 nationalities; and a varied line-up of invited speakers, from World Englishes expert Aya Matsuda, coming to us from Arizona State University (USA), to national education idol Boyoung Lee. Perhaps best of all, this year's conference includes several structured opportunities to socialize, including during refreshment breaks and at our annual social on Saturday evening. I hope KOTESOL members will take advantage of this inimitable chance to engage with new perspectives and make new connections – of both the social and reflective variety!

As with previous years, KOTESOL seeks to maximize access, equity, and engagement by offering a blend of online and in-person options. This year, though, all synchronous presentations will be held onsite at Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul, while a selection of pre-recorded video presentations will be available for all – absolutely free – on our website and YouTube channel. In addition, we are offering special registration discounts for in-person attendees from low- and middle-income countries as well as for students in undergraduate or graduate programs.

As I write this message for our spring magazine, though, I would be remiss if I didn't also offer a glimpse of the other amazing opportunities in store for 2024! First, we have a newly rejuvenated special interest group (SIG) to celebrate this spring; the Young Learners and Teens SIG (YLT SIG) has hit the ground running and has hinted at extensive plans for the coming months. Our Research Committee, meanwhile, is currently planning online workshops for interested members and will award up to 1,000,000 KRW in grants to promote quality inquiry; submit a proposal by March 31. The International Outreach Committee is now accepting applications for travel and conference grants to represent KOTESOL at our various partners' conferences, or you can check for reciprocal conference registration discounts offered to KOTESOL members. Finally, KOTESOL is teaming up with English Scholars Beyond Borders (ESBB) for a multi-day national conference to be held in October in Gwangju. Proposals are being accepted on a rolling basis now through July 31 for the 2024 ESBB International TESOL Conference and KOTESOL National Conference, "Transcending Borders, Building Bridges: Compassion, Connection, and Criticality in the 21st Century." Should be fun! (Oh, and we're also still looking for a Publicity Committee chair and a national treasurer. If you have – or would like to develop – the requisite skills, please contact us!)

I hope your new year is off to a great start, and I look forward to seeing you at one of our events soon!



Reference

Boal, A. (2002). *Games for actors and non-actors* (2nd ed.; A. Jackson, trans.). Routledge.

"Players on the World Stage" at KOTESOL 2024

By Bryan Hale, International Conference Chair

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players

This quote from William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (Act 2, Scene 7) is probably the most well-known English-language comparison between the world and a theater stage, and between the people of the world and theater actors or players. This idea doesn't actually come from Shakespare, though, and isn't special to English-speaking cultures. Much meaning has been made from this metaphor across diverse societies, cultures, systems, and contexts.

Why emphasize this idea with "**Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives**," our KOTESOL 2024 conference theme? Perhaps it seems disrespectful or diminishing to suggest that the activities going on in our English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching contexts are somehow unreal or illusory. But I think this metaphor is persistent because it is subversive and thought-provoking: It calls into question our preconceptions about time and space, the relative size and importance of aspects of our lives and world, and where to perceive the boundaries around our activities. It also highlights a fluidity about

the roles that people take on and "perform." For some, it might be discouraging to think of life's important activities as ephemeral, but from another point of view, it could be empowering or exciting to envision the ways in which personal (and interpersonal) creativity, expression, and even playfulness and whimsy connect outwards to touch the affairs of the whole world. With this theme, we are centering and celebrating all that is humanizing and powerful in EFL.

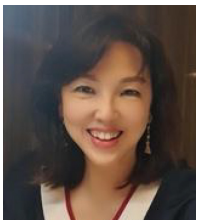
Attendees at KOTESOL 2024 can expect a diverse and stimulating offering of presentations and workshops, with opportunities to explore and reflect on our profession now, at this point, already a quarter of the way into the 21st century. Recently, many EFL teachers and professionals find themselves confronting professional and personal turmoil. Post-pandemic, our physical classrooms might be understood as either vitally important or utterly disposable. We are confronted by surprising new technologies that might entirely transform our professional lives, or might prove to be mere toys (or maybe even toys that transform our lives). Our world seems somehow to usher us towards both hyper-connectedness and isolation. As teachers, learners, and professionals, the pathways ahead of us might be more confusing than ever. A contemporary reading of "players on the world stage," informed by neoliberal and technocratic understandings of globalization, might be perceived as an arrogant or chauvinistic understanding of how to engage with the world. Surely, though, our tumultuous times have brought such paradigms into question. As well as allowing us to celebrate EFL, we aim with this theme to stimulate interrogation of English learning and teaching, of the perceived goals and trajectories of EFL, and of the relationships between EFL and the world, with an eye to humanizing our profession and our classrooms and empowering the teachers and learners who inhabit them.

We have worked hard to organize a compelling lineup of invited speakers. Boyoung Lee will help us explore why "the world stage" is of such great importance to our learners, and Aya Matsuda will address English as an international language and preparing students for a globalized world. In a special virtual plenary, Guy Cook, preeminent scholar of both language play and the place of translation in EFL teaching, will help us put our current teaching situations in the context of developments in EFL over the 21st century so far. Other invited sessions will cover a range of vital topics, from language play to learner and speaker identities, from Korean pop culture and its relationship to the "world stage" to the newly revised Korean national curriculum and its implications for teaching. This year we have invited a special thread of speakers to present in Korean on AI and tech. Our invited speaker lineup balances genders and also language backgrounds, and promises a critically timely range of perspectives and expertise.

As I write, our program team is hard at work vetting our submissions, but I can see already that KOTESOL 2024 will feature around 200 exciting and intriguing presentations in addition to our featured presentations, including the latest in TESOL research, practical and interactive workshops, panel discussions, and more. The online portion of our conference will consist of video presentations, and we are thrilled to be able to make these available to all. But those who attend in-person are in for a really special treat: KOTESOL 2024 is shaping up to be a vivid and vivacious carnival of all things vital to TESOL professionals in our current age.

“Players on the World Stage”: IC Speaker Preview

In exploring the theme of the 31st Korea TESOL International Conference, “Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives,” we are thrilled to present an outstanding lineup of invited speakers who will illuminate our event scheduled for April 27–28. Below, you will find the titles of their main sessions, and a number of them will also be conducting additional sessions, adding depth and richness to this conference experience.



Boyoung Lee
(AnySpeak, CEO)

Plenary Session:
Meeting Halfway with Learners

Guy Cook
(King’s College, London)

Virtual Plenary Session:
Setting the Stage: The EFL Classroom in the First Quarter of the 21st Century

Robert J. Lowe
(Ochanomizu University)

Featured Session:
Native-Speakerism and (Dis)empowerment: An Autoethnography of Success and Failure in Teaching and Learning

Eun Sung Park
(Sogang University)

Featured Session:
Resilient Roots, Global Growth: Transnational Identities as Assets in the English Classroom

David Kellogg
(Sangmyung University)

Featured Session:
Rote, Role, Rule: Halliday, Vygotsky, and Shakespeare on Play Development

Aya Matsuda
(Arizona State University)

Plenary Session:
From EFL Students to EIL Users: Preparing Students for Today’s Globalized World

David Paul
(Language Teaching Professionals)

Featured Session:
Using Classroom Games Effectively with Young Learners

CedarBough T. Saeji
(Pusan National University)

Featured Session:
Dressing Up in the Korean Past: Hanbok Wearing as Play Informed by Popular Culture

Michael Hurt
(Korea National University of Arts)

Featured Session:
How Korea Got Cool: Ethnography and the Korean Style

Eunjee Ko
(Namseoul University)

Featured Session:
Exploring the 2022 Revised National English Curriculum: Deciphering What to Teach and How to Teach It

TEIL and a Need to View the World as "Messy"

Dr. Aya Matsuda, Arizona State University

Aya Matsuda is a professor of applied linguistics in the Department of English at Arizona State University. She is also a plenary speaker at KOTESOL 2024, our international conference happening April 27–28, with the theme "Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives." She is an expert in the fields of World Englishes, English as an International Language, and the pedagogical implications of the global spread of English, of which she has published widely in various books and journals. After kindly agreeing to this interview with The English Connection*, Professor Matsuda explains in more depth below her plenary presentation and compelling research areas. — Ed.*

***The English Connection* (TEC):** Thank you, Professor Matsuda, for agreeing to this interview with *The English Connection*, KOTESOL's ELT magazine.

Prof. Matsuda: Thank you for having me!

TEC: We at KOTESOL are honored to have you as one of the plenary speakers at the 2024 International Conference, coming up on April 27–28. Can you share with KOTESOL members the title and content of your presentation, and perhaps a little bit on how it fits into the conference theme, "Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives"?

Prof. Matsuda: Sure, I would be happy to. My talk is titled "From EFL Students to EIL Users: Preparing Students for Today's Globalized World," and it explores how we can prepare our students not just for success in their classrooms but also for success in their global lives beyond school. While English is not by any means the only important language used in today's multilingual, globalized world, there is no question that it plays an important role as an international lingua franca. One of the most crucial responsibilities we have as English language teachers is to prepare our students for this reality.

One tenet of teaching English as an international language is that our ELT practices must acknowledge and reflect this "messiness."

In my talk, I plan to first give a quick overview of the current state of the English language, specifically focusing on how its global spread resulted in linguistic, user, and cultural diversities. I will then try to demonstrate how traditional approaches to English language teaching, which tend to focus heavily, if not exclusively, on the English varieties, users, and cultures of the US and UK, may be inadequate in preparing our students for the complex reality of English usage today.

Then, using examples of pedagogical ideas, I will explore how we can better align our pedagogical assumptions and practices with the sociolinguistic reality of English as an international language (EIL) and assist our students in becoming competent EIL users who can navigate and achieve their goals in today's globalized world.

TEC: You have described today's world – where English is used as English as an International Language (EIL) – as a "messy world." Can you explain what you mean by this?

Prof. Matsuda: I have used the term "messy" to describe the linguistic, user, cultural, and other diversities we find in English today. The English-speaking world represented in the EFL curriculum tends to be simple and "tidy," where "native English speakers" are presented as English users, and share their cultures, often American or British, speaking in the "standard" variety spoken in their countries. But when we look at how English is used in the real world, it is much more complex. It is used beyond so-called "English-speaking countries" and, especially in the former colonies of the UK and US where English continues to be used regularly for domestic communication, new varieties have emerged. The spread has also resulted in a change in the profile of English users and which cultures these users bring with them when they communicate in English. One tenet of TEIL (teaching English as an international language) is that our ELT practices must acknowledge and reflect this "messiness."

TEC: How should teachers prepare themselves, and their language learners, for this messy world of EIL?

Prof. Matsuda: This is a big question! I think one important piece is the awareness of the messiness – what kinds of English are used by whom, how, and for what purposes these days. It is also important to understand how our students will be using English within that context – are there particular varieties of English or types of English users and cultural references that they are more likely to encounter than others? That they must be more familiar with? Such specific information about learners' needs can help teachers turn the general principles of TEIL into specific pedagogical practices.

TEC: Your invited second session is entitled "TEIL as a Tool for Decolonizing and Anti-Racist Pedagogy." Could you give us a brief insight as to how teaching English as an international language can aid in combating racism as well as decolonization in language learning?

Prof. Matsuda: This is a question that I started exploring only recently, and I don't feel like I have the full answer yet. But my current thinking is TEIL has the potential to minimize – though not necessarily eliminate – racism and colonialism in ELT by challenging various assumptions and widely accepted practices in ELT that resemble implicit racism and colonialism in the field. It also gives us a way to combat racism and work toward decolonization at the level that is doable in our capacity, which varies across contexts.

TEC: Is English your first language? Can you share with us your background, and your own personal experiences with language learning and EIL?

Prof. Matsuda: English is not my first language. I am originally from Japan and grew up there speaking only Japanese until the age of 17, although my school offered an English class from Grade 1, and it was always one of my favorite subjects.

My transnational life started when I traveled to the US as a high school exchange student. After spending two years in a small dairy-farming town called Colby, Wisconsin, I began my undergraduate work at the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point as an accounting major and completed it at International Christian University in Tokyo as an English linguistics major. After graduating from ICU, I returned to the US to pursue graduate degrees at Purdue University in Indiana and have lived in the US since then. The insights on language, multilingualism, and identity that I gained from attending schools in two countries continue to influence the way I approach my work today.

Nowadays, I use both English and Japanese on a daily basis, being connected to both English-speaking and Japanese-speaking communities, in-person and virtual. There are areas I'm stronger in in one language over the other, but these two languages are equally important to who I am today.

TEC: You are the editor of the book *Preparing Teachers to Teach English as an International Language* (Multilingual Matters, 2017) in which you brought together a collection of over 30 EIL teacher educators and researchers from countries around the world, exploring theoretical approaches and models; teacher education programs; and courses and activities in TEIL teacher education. Please share with us the process and challenges of editing and publishing such an important addition to the TEIL literature.

Prof. Matsuda: This was such a rewarding project! I decided to edit this book because I sensed the frustration among teachers who were told that their current practices are inadequate in preparing their students for their future use of EIL but received no guidance on what to do about it. My primary goal was to provide a good balance of theory and practice, with a set of ready-to-use pedagogical ideas that can be adapted to different teacher education contexts. I also wanted to bring together scholars from World Englishes and English as a lingua franca – two scholarly fields that inform TEIL but do not interact with each other as often as they could – so that we can all work together to move the idea of TEIL forward.

As for the process, I first ran my ideas with the acquisition editor of Multilingual Matters, whom I had the pleasure of working with for my first edited book (*Principles and Practices of Teaching English as an International Language*, 2012). Once I had the contract, I recruited the authors. For the first two chapters that provided the theoretical foundations, I invited colleagues who were already doing innovative work in teacher preparation for TEIL. For other chapters that showcased teacher education program models and pedagogical ideas, I solicited them through a call for papers. The chapters were revised several times based on internal and external reviews. I believe the whole process took about 2 and a half years from the time when I received the contract to the publication of the book.

Editing is not for everyone. I've heard some people say they much prefer to write a book on their own, and yes, it can sometimes be a challenge to balance the unique voice of each chapter and the coherent vision of the volume. But I enjoy editing tremendously because I learn so much from reading other people's work, and contributors collectively move the thinking further than I can do alone. And more than anything, an opportunity to work with dedicated contributors, reviewers, and publishing editors is priceless!

TEC: With what you know personally about Korean society, along with being an expanding circle country, how can you apply your views on TEIL to Korean ELT?

Prof. Matsuda: I admit that my knowledge of Korean society is limited (and I am looking forward to learning more in April!), but from what I have heard from my students and colleagues, I understand that the *suneung* and testing in general have strong washback effects on ELT in Korea. In such a context, teachers often do not feel they have the freedom to deviate from the existing curriculum and teaching materials or to incorporate TEIL practices. I believe, however, that there are ways to bring in, or even "sneak in," TEIL principles into even a very strict curriculum. I hope to share some such examples during my talk and to think creatively about the application of TEIL in various instructional contexts in Korea.

TEC: You are a faculty member in the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics/TESOL Department at Arizona State University. The TESOL program is one of the oldest and most respected in the country.

Prof. Matsuda: Yes, our Master of TESOL (MTESOL) program began in 1969 (celebrating its 55th birthday this year!) and is now offered in-person and online. The program offers opportunities for students to develop scholarly and professional knowledge and skills in four main areas that are central to TESOL – language, learning, teaching, and research – with a very strong (and popular) supervised internship component. MTESOL students on campus often take courses with students from our MA and PhD programs in linguistics and applied linguistics as well as a graduate certificate program in computer-assisted language learning. These graduate programs are quite diverse, with students from 37+ countries and 40+ languages altogether, creating a vibrant EIL community. It is such a privilege to teach in this program. Our students come with diverse experiences in TESOL and generously share their knowledge and insights to support each other. I get inspired and learn so much from working with them!

I believe, however, that there are ways to bring in, or even "sneak in," TEIL principles into even a very strict curriculum.

TEC: Will this conference event be your first trip to Korea? Any personal plans, if you're able to get away with some free time?

Prof. Matsuda: Yes, it will be my first time, and I am very excited about it! My daughter, who attends university in Japan, is planning to join me for the conference, and we are hoping to extend our stay after the conference to explore Seoul a little bit. A former student of mine has offered to show me around, and I am grateful for that! Any sightseeing suggestions from the readers would be greatly appreciated, too.

TEC: Thank you, Professor Matsuda, for your time and for sharing with TEC readers your compelling conference presentation topic and your other research interests. I truly hope your visit to Korea is an enjoyable one, and I look forward to meeting you in person at the conference.

Prof. Matsuda: Thank you! I look forward to meeting you all soon and learning from you.

Interviewed by Andrew White, TEC Editor-in-Chief

On Kellogg, Vygotsky, Halliday, and Shakespeare

Dr. David Kellogg, Sangmyung University

David Kellogg has spent a quarter century living, teaching, researching, writing, and translating in Korea. As a researcher at Sangmyung University, he is tirelessly translating the works of Lev Vygotsky. In his featured session at KOTESOL 2024, "Rote, Role, Rule: Halliday, Vygotsky, and Shakespeare on Play Development," Dr. Kellogg will deal with rote play, role play, and rule-based games. In his invited second session, he will be dealing with metaphor as language play and the different views on it by Shakespeare, Halliday, and Vygotsky. Below is a wide-ranging interview with Dr. Kellogg for which The English Connection *is quite grateful — Ed.*

***The English Connection* (TEC)**: Thank you, Dr. Kellogg, for allowing time for us to do this interview. To start off, would you tell us a little about your background, both before and in Korea, what fields your degrees are in, and your areas of specialization as well as special interests?

Dr. Kellogg: The pleasure – nay, the honor – is really my own, Dave. But first let me say something general and anodyne; otherwise I'm afraid that what might follow will make me seem utterly unhinged. I think that a lot of the big decisions we make in life look poorly motivated and inexplicable in hindsight. When we recollect all of the circumstances, we can usually see that they were reasonable enough at the time. It is only that what was essential turned out to be merely important, while what might have seemed trivial turned out to be essential.

So, for trivial reasons, I chose to study Oriental languages at the University of Chicago. It was mostly because I just didn't want to do Greek or Latin, and the common core at UC wanted us to start with classics. Then I dropped out and went to see the world instead of graduating.

In retrospect it seems like a crazy thing to do – I was on the dean's list and had only about a year left. But the choice was really between paying to learn languages badly in a classroom in Chicago and getting paid in order to learn them really well out where they were actually spoken. So I went.

And I never went back. I had studied Chinese, but I didn't think it was really possible to go live in China. Instead, I first spent about two years in the Middle East studying Arabic, writing and doing odd jobs, none of which had to do with teaching (translating, book reviewing, being a cinema extra). Somehow I got on the wrong side of a civil war in Syria in 1980, and it occurred to me while I was in prison and the police were trying to figure out if I was really as dumb as I looked, that I could have a stable job in a quiet place and avoid this sort of thing altogether if I only had some kind of English teaching qualification. Fortunately, the Syrian government did eventually arrive at the inescapable conclusion that sometimes appearances do not deceive. So I got out of prison, was deported from Syria, went back to Chicago, and got enough money working as a welder for the General Motors Company to go to London and do a teaching certificate: It was called the Royal Society of Arts diploma back then. Teaching didn't come naturally to me, and I think I just eked out a pass on the course.

As it happened, I stayed in China for twelve years, teaching, getting married, and writing my first book. The book was pretty forgettable: a runaway non-seller that bankrupted my small publisher. It was mostly letters home, with some translations of Chinese literature to entertain my mother, but it did get me into graduate school in England without ever finishing my first degree. That meant that my first real degree was an MA in applied linguistics from the University of Essex: I got a distinction, but more importantly, I got to study with people like Henry Widdowson and Keith Johnson (who were pioneers in communicative language teaching), and I heard talks by people like Peter Skehan on individual differences in language learning outcomes (he had just finished a big book on the topic). Even when they invited me to do a PhD in applied linguistics, I declined and returned to China to teach instead.

▲ ***Michael Halliday, Linguist***

But back in China, I discovered the work of Vygotsky and that of Halliday almost simultaneously. Peter Skehan had warned me against Vygotsky, and Widdowson had a strong dislike for Halliday, but that only made them all the more interesting to my perverse intellect. Soon I started to realize that I'd gone down the wrong path again.

I also got to know Halliday a little – I wrote a second book on Halliday, Vygotsky, and Shakespeare, and managed to give him a copy before he died. I still have a little note of appreciation that he wrote by hand (he never really learned how to use a computer). The PhD won a vice-chancellor's award or something, but for me the real prize of my work in Australia was that hand-scrawled letter from the greatest linguist of the twentieth century.

TEC: What was it that was the impetus for you coming to Korea so many years ago?

Dr. Kellogg: I had had a number of Malaysian students when I worked at the University of Lincoln and Humberside, and I had had Korean students when I worked at the University of Warwick. So it looked like either Malaysia or Korea.

My Korean students had included members of the then illegal teachers' union, some of whom had been fired in the 1987 movement. They were all excited about the government plan to introduce English as a compulsory subject in elementary schools in 1997. Some were for it, because they thought it would slow the growth of private education (which was also illegal then) and some were strongly against it, because they thought it would tighten the grip of US imperialism on Korea. I thought I'd better come and have a look, before I made up my own mind. So I joined the EPIK program and came to Korea.

I guess I thought that after running ESL programs for grad students in England, I was going to be a big shot in research and development here in Korea. But EPIK thought – quite rightly, too – that I should get some experience teaching children first, so they sent me to a middle school in a suburb of Daegu for my first real experience in teaching kids. I don't think the kids got much out of it, but I sure did.

Firstly, I learned that I wasn't much good at teaching children. This was frustrating and provoking, but it also intrigued me, the way that finding out any glaring weakness that you never noticed before always does. I'd been reading Vygotsky and Halliday, so I knew I had an awful lot to learn, and I knew it wasn't just a matter of not having my own kids to play with. Secondly, I learned that the kind of communicative teaching I'd learned in the UK really wasn't much good for kids or for Korea: It just wasn't a situation where English served any conceivable communicative purpose, and the attempts to make it do so (information gaps, games, and so on) were pathetically artificial and bathetically theatrical. Thirdly, I found out that, thanks to the IMF and the aforementioned grip of US imperialism, the value of my EPIK salary in British pounds would be less than half of what we'd counted on to pay off our debts. So we ended up staying here much longer than I'd planned, and by the time we had enough money to leave, we didn't want to anymore.

TEC: At a KOTESOL regional conference panel discussion last autumn, you mentioned that machine translation and AI chatbots such as ChatGPT may spell the end to English as a global language and that can be a good thing for EFL teachers. Could you expound on that?

Dr. Kellogg: Let me start with the moral of the story once again. If you are a linguist, you understand how different ways of speaking invariably mean different ways of thinking. So if you believe in intellectual diversity – and I do – then you have to conclude that a global language is a terrible idea: It's really like promoting ideological monoculture or depending on a single cultural hydrocarbon as our sole source of energy. Of course, you can argue that a "global language" doesn't have to imply universal monolingualism. But that ignores the real choice that speakers of other languages have.

It seems to me that there are two sides to this job, a sunny side and a rather shady one. The sun-lit side is teaching. As Goethe said, and as Vygotsky never tired of repeating in all nine different languages he knew, you don't really know your own language until you have tried to learn another one. It's only foreign language learning that makes the medium of language perceptible, translucent, and viscous, so we become conscious of it and appreciate the role of language in thinking for the first time. It can't be a coincidence that the most advanced science concepts and literary ideas always seem to come into a language from some foreign language. Teaching is just enlightenment, on a scale that we can all handle.

But the shady side is testing. Of course, it's good to know where you stand and how far you have to go, just as it was good for me to find out I wasn't good at teaching children. But the purpose of testing isn't that: It's gate-keeping. So a researcher who does testing for a living eventually loses the will to teach and sometimes even the will to live. A linguist has to be appalled by how arbitrary and yet life-changing testing is, how atomistic and alienating the "discrete items" we produce in item response theory really are. A teacher who has to mark a big stack of compositions at the end of the term knows how this can drag you down into the most demoralizing and dehumanizing pedantry. When you see how your students treasure every little "A+" and dread every mere "A," you can't help but feel a bit of a fraud.

Of course, traditional EFL wouldn't give up without a fight. There would be – that is, there will be – a long and pointless struggle to enforce arbitrary rules against the new tech in our classrooms, just as we had long, pointless struggles to keep out cellphones. We saw a good example of how self-defeating those struggles are at the Regional KOTESOL Conference in Gwangju, where our otherwise sane presenter taught us how to use ChatGPT to design questions – in which the use of ChatGPT was very strictly forbidden to students! And of course, the new tech will inevitably eliminate a lot of those testing jobs that in the end boil down to slamming doors in people's faces. Good riddance!

▲ ***Lev Vygotsky, Psychologist***

In return, we get to focus where we should have focused all along – teaching foreign languages as if learning them was just the next logical step in learning your own language and being able to uncover it for others. Then English will really open eyes without threatening egos, it will make way for high science without stamping on the low arts of everyday speech, and it will ultimately teach kids how at home they really are Korean, not just in the way they talk but even in the way they feel and think. Learning Korean after studying English will be just like coming home after a long trip abroad. And that will make what we do far more indispensable to Korean education than any "global language" can.

Besides, Google Translate, all by itself, has eliminated the threat to diversity of having a global language and made it possible for you to read reams of stuff that is simply not economical to translate. That includes most of Vygotsky. So what's not to like?

TEC: You have done a lot of reading, writing, and research on Vygotsky and his ZPD (zone of proximal development), and translation of his works as well. What is it that keeps you so laser-focused on Vygotsky's work?

Dr. Kellogg: Back in the early years of this century, Ms. Kwon Minsuk and I wrote a piece called "Teacher Talk as a Game of Catch," and in it, we rather casually remarked that Vygotsky believed in group zones of proximal development, and we wondered whether a class represented a single zone

or several clashing ones. We submitted it to the *Canadian Modern Language Review*, which was edited by Sharon Lapkin and Merrill Swain at that time. But the reviewers rejected it, on the grounds that a collective zone was simply impossible, and that everybody knew Vygotsky had individual zones in mind: that was, after all, how teachers scaffold children one by one by one. I went off and did some homework and discovered that Vygotsky has a great deal to say about the group ZPD and how it maps onto whole classes of kids, but absolutely nothing to say about individualized scaffolding. So Merrill Swain, who was an ardent Vygotskyan, told me not to take "no" for an answer, and we eventually got it published in 2005.

That was really just the beginning. CMLR published our piece as practitioner work rather than serious research, and it was widely ignored, or written off as being dogmatic and boring. But even the most widely circulated Vygotsky quotes show that he measured ZPD in years, not in minutes or moments or even months. Besides, if he's just talking about minutes, moments, or months, why does the "D" stand for "development"? Why not just call it a zone of proximal learning? Vygotsky distinguishes between a zone of actual development, which is what individuals do alone, and a zone of proximal development that can only be shown in collaboration: If a child really can do unassisted tomorrow what the child has to have assistance to do today, doesn't that just mean that the task you've just given the child is really part of the actual and not part of the proximal zone of development? Finally, if you define the zone by the same means you use to measure it, that just means that the child is ready to learn whatever the child can learn next. That doesn't seem like a particularly useful insight for teachers, does it?

TEC: At our upcoming international conference, your featured session is entitled "Rote, Role, Rule: Halliday, Vygotsky, and Shakespeare on Play Development." Intriguing title, I must say, but I'm not quite sure of the relationship that the three "R"s have to the three luminaries? Could you unravel this teasing title a bit and give us a peek preview of this talk?

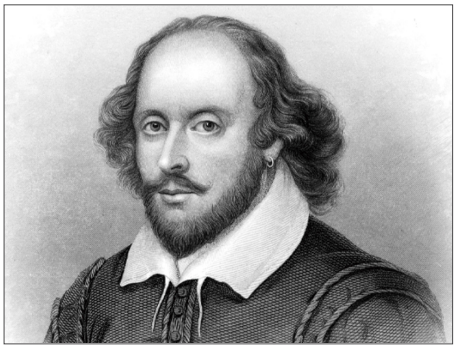
Dr. Kellogg: "Rote, Role, Rule" was the title of an article that Guy Cook helped us publish in 2009. Guy had just done a whole book on language play for Oxford, and he wanted to do a special issue of *Applied Linguistics*. Dr. Kim Yongho and I wrote a piece on how language play seems to conflate three very different things: repeating the speech and the speaker in chants and songs, varying the speech and the speaker in role play, and repeating patterns of speech and speaker in rule-based games. These three different kinds of play represent three different stages of development – and not just child development. They also represent different stages of literary history, culminating in the emergence of modern novels with all the rule-based language play you can find in Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (which, you guessed it, my wife is now teaching!).

TEC: And also teasingly titled is your other invited session: "METAPHOR IS WAR: Forming and Forgetting Science Concepts Through Language Play." I get the first part that's in all caps: It's a conceptual metaphor – at least it's formatted as one. The second part is fascinating: language play and scientific concepts? Could you elucidate on this as a presentation preview?

Dr. Kellogg: Yes, the all-caps indicates conceptual metaphor, although my presentation as a whole is quite critical of Lakoff and Johnson and the conceptual metaphor framework (in fact, I am presenting it partly because it was rejected for a seminar in which Mark Johnson was taking part!).

I just don't think that conceptual metaphor handles the most important kind of serious language play: grammatical metaphor. That's when adolescents manage to turn processes into participants, like when you turn *to grow up* into a thing, *growth*, that can be measured, classified, and – crucially – defined as a scientific concept.

This happens slowly because metaphor is a tug-of-war between the child and the teacher: The former is tugging the metaphor in the direction of a concrete image (i.e., an everyday concept), while the latter, if she's worth her salt, knows how to tug the metaphor in the direction of an abstract, academic concept. To take a highly seasonal example, the child thinks of an "examination" as an actual piece of paper with ink on it, but the teacher has to conceptualize it as a form of evaluation. The child thinks of Christmas as presents, while the adult thinks of expenses, bonuses, end-of-the-year balances and new year's resolutions, sometimes even sentimental feelings and/or religious concepts.



▲ ***William Shakespeare, Playwright***

I think this is really true of the way our scientific concepts develop out of everyday, concrete experiences – and of course, Vygotsky says that every foreign language concept is a scientific concept, even though it's, at the same time, some other person's everyday concept.

TEC: Thank you. Is there anything else you would like to add to conclude this interview?

Dr. Kellogg: Just this: I expect quite an earful at KOTESOL, and I very much look forward to it. See you there!

TEC: Yes, we'll see you at the conference on April 27 and 28 at Sookmyung Women's University. Thank you for your time for this interview.

Interviewed by David Shaffer.

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* For an extended version of this interview, go to Dr. Kellogg's invited speaker page on the KOTESOL 2024 International Conference website.

Using Classroom Games Most Effectively with Young Learners

By David Paul, Language Teaching Professionals

Games play a central role in the lives of almost all children, and most children easily become completely immersed in their favorite games. Wouldn't it be great if these children were equally positive about learning English in our classes? This is definitely possible, and I think the easiest way to make this happen is quite simple: We need to make our lessons games-based. If learning itself feels like a game, and if children feel they are discovering a fascinating new world of English through games that they would also enjoy outside the classroom, it is much more likely that the children will be motivated to learn English both in the class and between lessons away from the class. And it is much more likely that they will use English in their daily lives.

Using Games in a Teacher-Centered Way

When classroom games are used in a more teacher-centered way, they tend to be used for practicing language rather than learning it. New words and patterns tend to be introduced before playing games, and the games are then used for practicing these new language targets. Some teachers even go further than this and assume that both learning and practicing take place most effectively outside games, and that games are little more than a kind of light relief or a reward for studying hard or for good behavior.

I think this is missing the point of having classroom games in the first place, and can often have more of a negative effect on learning than a positive one. Some children will come to see the serious parts of the lesson as what they have to get through in order to play games. These children will probably begin to separate learning from having fun, and over time, they may become restless during the serious parts of the lesson and may only become fully engaged when playing the games. As a result, the teacher may have to use games as bribes, saying things like "Keep quiet or no bingo!"

▲ ***Playing the fishing game.***

A More Effective Approach

Effective child-centered games-based learning is where play and learning happen at the same time. Games are not simply for practicing language targets. They are where the most effective learning takes place. A child who encounters a new English word, expression, or pattern while immersed in a game is far more motivated to learn it, and much more likely to internalize it than a child who receives new knowledge from the teacher before the game.

Let's look at a fishing game. In this game, there are pictures or words on pieces of paper on the floor and each piece of paper has a metal paper clip attached to it. The children try to catch the pieces of paper with magnets. When they catch a picture or word, they perform a language task with it, such as identifying what it is or making a personalized sentence that includes the word.

How do the children learn new words in a game like this? The more teacher-centered way would be to pre-teach the new words before playing the game. This is, in effect, treating the children as blank slates. It is saying "Follow me. You learn because I teach. Now, practice the new language targets in the game." The game is just being used for practicing, not for learning.

In a more child-centered games-based approach, there is no real need for pre-teaching. There are new words in the game, which they discover while playing. This is treating the children as explorers rather than blank slates. The game motivates the children to try to understand and use the new words. If the words are phonically regular, the children can find out what the new words are by trying to read them. If the children need help, the teacher can hint and interact with them in a way that ensures they feel they are discovering the new words for themselves.

Keeping the Focus on Learning

It is essential that children do not see their English lessons as a time to play games for their own sake. The last thing we want is for the children to constantly look for stimulation from new exciting games rather than new exciting English. The best way to prevent this from happening is to find games the children like, and use them wisely. For example, it is best to stop a game before the children want to stop, so that the next time the game is introduced, the children feel "Oh, that's the game we wanted to play more last time, but we couldn't."

By using games wisely, we can keep children's interest in the same games but make the language content more difficult each time they play. They enjoy the game and don't feel they want to change it, so they get their stimulation from the challenge of the increasingly difficult English within the game, not from a change of games. For this to work well, we need games where the language content can easily be changed. When thinking of using a game in class or developing a game ourselves, key questions to ask are "What can we change?" and "How can the language evolve inside this game?" If we find the language content can easily evolve, the game can be used for learning.

I think it is helpful to think in terms of having a basket of games that we use with a class. The games in the basket steadily evolve over time. As the children's English develops, some games will become less appropriate, so we take them out of the basket and replace them with new games. This steady approach makes it less likely that the children will become dependent on the stimulation of new games to keep them motivated.

The Psychology Behind a Good Game

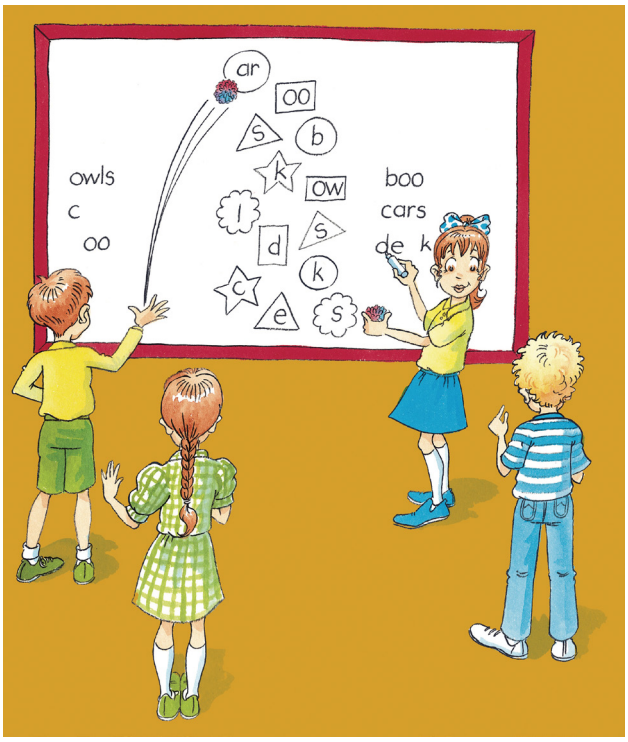
If we look at games from the constructivist perspective, which is behind the arguments I have made so far in this article, games are the almost perfect learning environment. They emphasize the central role of the child as an active learner, not as somebody who is receiving information from an adult. And the children learn through exploration – overcoming achievable challenges, making mistakes, and learning from these mistakes – and so construct their own meaningful interpretation of whatever they are learning.

But I think it is also helpful to look at games from the perspective of self-determination theory. In order to do this, I will draw on some of the ideas in the book *Glued to Games: How Video Games Draw Us In and Hold Us Spellbound* by Rigby and Ryan (2011), which looks at the psychology of why videogames are so engaging. My focus in this article will be on applying some of these ideas to classroom games for learning English. According to self-determination theory, we are motivated to develop and change if three universal psychological needs are met: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Rigby and Ryan suggest that games are most successful, engaging, and fun when they satisfy these three intrinsic needs.

Competence

Competence refers to our innate desire to develop our abilities and gain mastery of new situations and challenges. We have a deep intrinsic desire to get better at things and overcome challenges. As Rigby and Ryan say, "From the moment we're born, we naturally seek to gain mastery over ourselves and our environment, learning how things work by observing, exploring, and manipulating them – first through play and later through work, hobbies, sports, and a variety of activities. We see this intrinsic need energizing us from the very earliest ages, motivating children to stretch their abilities as they learn to crawl, stand, and walk. The truth is there is a sheer joy that comes from mastering new challenges that are an inherent part of who we are, from birth straight into adulthood."

What does this mean for classroom games? I think it means that in order for games to be engaging, they need to be challenging. They need to provide opportunities for children to puzzle things out and overcome problems. It is not enough just to play games where the same content is repeated many times. It is also not enough just to teach new words and patterns before playing a game and then get the children to practice them while playing. So self-determination theory provides additional support for introducing challenging new words and patterns inside games, not before games.



▲ ***Challenging children to learn.***

When games provide children with challenges, they give them an opportunity to stretch to new levels of mastery, which, once achieved, satisfy their intrinsic need for competence. This means, of course, that the challenges in the games need to be achievable. We need to be continually scaffolding the children's ability through the games. In effect, from a Vygotskian perspective, games are an indirect and engaging way for children to reach their potential by interacting with a more knowledgeable person, in this case, the teacher. It is the teacher who can ensure that the children encounter achievable and appropriate new words and patterns while immersed in games.

Having achievable challenges also ensures that the children take them on positively. The games themselves provide a fun, non-threatening environment where children are more likely to take on challenges, but we also need to scaffold the level of the challenges. With a new class, we can start with gentle challenges, make sure the children handle them successfully, with our hints if necessary, and then gradually increase the difficulty of the challenges. So, over time, we build up the children's belief that they can and will succeed.

Relatedness

Relatedness refers to our need to have meaningful connections with others. It is natural to seek out quality relationships simply for the intrinsic reward that comes from having a mutually supportive connection with others. As Rigby and Ryan say, "Humans inherently seek to be connected with others and feel that they are interacting in meaningful ways. This need for relatedness naturally occurs in all of us, requiring no external incentive. We are simply evolved to connect and to feel like we belong."

What does this mean for classroom games? I think it means that whether a game is engaging or not does not just depend on how interesting a particular game is or whether the game contains challenges. It also depends on the children having meaningful connections with the other children or teachers they are playing with. Even a very simple game can become highly motivating if there are positive relationships with others who are playing. Playing in teams or playing as a whole class can foster meaningful connections between the children. Cooperative games are likely to lead to supportive connections

between children, but competitive games can also provide a positive experience in terms of connections between children.

As Rigby and Ryan say, "Through competition, we contribute to the competence satisfaction of the other and them to us, which creates the kind of meaningful and supportive connections that are a hallmark of relatedness. But when we feel our opponents are trying to tear us down as people, through taunts, cheating, and mean-spirited play, our relatedness needs are thwarted."

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to our innate desire to do things because we want to do them, not because we are controlled by circumstances or by other people. According to Rigby and Ryan, "Autonomy means that one's actions are aligned with one's inner self and values; that you feel you are making the decisions and are able to stand behind what you do."

One way to strengthen children's feeling of autonomy is to do activities where they have more choices. This is easier to achieve in games than in most other activities. Children even make a lot of choices in many very simple games, such as when they choose a card in a concentration game, throw a sticky ball at a word of their choice on the board, or choose who to throw a ball to.

We can also let children choose which game to play. For a few years, I taught different groups of children one after the other in a community center. I used to arrive with a rucksack full of games, put them on a table, and let the children choose which game they wanted to play. The classes were small, so they all played the games together.

Of course, when I planned the lesson, I worked out how to achieve the language targets of the lesson with each of the games, so it didn't really matter which game they played, but giving the children the choice of which games to play was wonderful for their motivation.

Giving children choices, however, is not the only way to strengthen children's feeling of autonomy. As Rigby and Ryan say, "It is often when an individual has a sense of mission and purpose that they feel most autonomous, even though they may not perceive a lot of options or specific choices," and "We feel autonomous even when choice doesn't exist, as long as we personally endorse the path we're on."

Games provide an ideal platform for giving children a sense of purpose. Race games have finishing lines, treasure hunts have treasure to find, hopscotch has squares to hop through. And whether or not the children feel they are doing what they want to do, and so "endorse" the game, depends very much on how we introduce the game in the first place.

▲ ***Games have goals.***

If we just tell children what to do in a clear, autocratic way, the children are unlikely to have a strong feeling of autonomy, But, if we draw the children into the game with mystery, or introduce it tentatively as if we are discovering the game together with the children, they are much more likely to endorse the game, have a greater feeling of autonomy, and so be more motivated to play.

Effective child-centered games-based learning is where play and learning happen at the same time.

An Essential Element

Getting back to constructivism and, in particular, the ideas of my favorite constructivist, George Kelly, I think there is another element that is fundamental in learning and engagement that plays a key role in determining whether a video game is engaging. And it is an element we need to also maximize in classroom games, so as to maximize the children's feeling of autonomy and engagement in our lessons.

Can you guess what the element is?... It's a long word beginning with A.... The first three letters are an insect.... Can you guess?... I am introducing it in this way so as to build it up... I expect you have guessed. The element is "anticipation." In a successful video game, a child is constantly anticipating what is going to happen next. This draws them deeply into the game, and so, according to George Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory, their actions in the game become more aligned with their inner self and personal direction. At every opportunity, we need to maximize anticipation in the classroom, and games provide the ideal platform for doing this.

When a teacher pre-teaches new words or patterns before a game, explains them clearly, drills them clearly or models them clearly, the teacher is reducing anticipation. If instead, the children go straight into a game and encounter new words as surprises while playing, and if they need help, the teacher provides this help through hints and puzzles rather than clear explanation, there will be much more anticipation. And the children will be much more likely to be engaged.

So to use games effectively, we need to look at children as explorers who are anticipating and constructing their understanding of English while playing, and who are challenged to overcome problems while immersed in the games. They also need to have a feeling of autonomy while playing and feel meaningfully connected with other children and the teacher. The secret to using classroom games most effectively is to aim for all of these goals.

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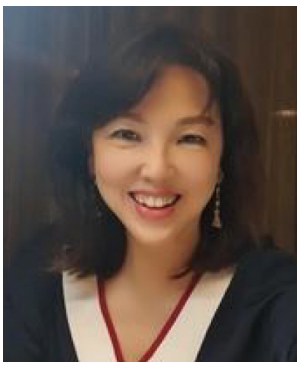
The Dilemma We Currently Confront

By Dr. Boyoung Lee, AnySpeak CEO

I must confess that I may not fit the typical mold of a successful businessperson when it comes to strategies, tactics, and profit-making attitudes. However, I have been fortunate to be able to collaborate with some of the best talent in the English education industry – individuals from highly esteemed companies. These opportunities have allowed me the time and perspective to observe how learners and consumers have been evolving in their preferences, traits, and visions over the years. From my days at Ewha University's College of Education through my career as a program developer, teaching practitioner, and teacher trainer, I have firmly rooted my beliefs about learners in both theory and practice. I've held steadfast to the notion that successful language learners should possess certain attitudes, learning styles, and practices, and these beliefs have seldom been questioned.



In summary, the more effort you invest, the greater the reward – or as they say, "the more challenging the journey, the sweeter the outcome." These words of wisdom are often intended to motivate learners to persevere, no matter how demanding the process may seem. Yet, the fundamental question remains: "Must it be arduous in the first place?" In essence, my conviction has been that learners of English as a foreign language should be active, proactive, engaged, patient, and tenacious. It's a tough path… so whatever it takes!

As I write this, I find myself in San Jose, in a speech training room at the SAP Center, typically known for hosting premier ice hockey games. Just a few minutes ago, I had the privilege of witnessing what the new Samsung smartphones equipped with AI can offer in their next model. The presenter declared, "Now you have your own personal interpreter on your phone!" While it wasn't happening simultaneously, it was still impressive enough to significantly simplify communication. It's mind-blowing! I wouldn't mind having one myself. However, as I watched the presentation, I couldn't help but wonder, "Does it even matter anymore to strive to become a 'successful English learner?'" This led me to a profound question: "Has the process of learning English become meaningless now that people have 'their own interpreter on their phone?'" And finally, I found myself introspectively asking, "Now that we have what we have, what should I say and do to keep learners motivated to continue learning, and does it still hold value?"

This issue has been a topic of numerous discussions and research in academia, and personally, I've grappled with it since I embarked on this app project two years ago. The app is called "Anyspeak" with the function of providing common daily expressions for language learning and translation service at the same time with a little bit of video lectures as well. Apparently throughout the course of developing this app (it still has lots of room for further improvement), I learned a lot about the traits of today's learners and their wants and needs. Therefore, as the producer of this supposed business item, I've often found myself torn between conventional knowledge, my convictions about how learning should be, and the opinions, wisdom, and beliefs of marketers. The challenge lies in discerning what today's learners truly value and what they might perceive as outdated. Regardless of the future developments that may emerge, the most concerning aspect is the possibility that learners might underestimate the value of learning a foreign language, cease to explore its underlying systems, and miss the beauty of the learning process itself. What a tragedy that would be!

The essence of learning lies in the expansion of our minds and intellect. It's about enriching our inner selves and nurturing our brains to lead more prosperous lives. English has never been just a practical skill; it has always been about personal growth. I still vividly remember my first English teacher's words: "Keep an open mind." At the age of 12, I didn't fully grasp the meaning behind those words. However,

now, after decades of involvement in the English teaching industry, that advice resonates deeply with me.

I've come to realize that without an open-minded mindset, no matter how extensive one's vocabulary or grammar knowledge may be, true understanding remains elusive. Communication might occur, but genuine comprehension does not. It's ironic that I only recently fully grasped the true significance of that teacher's early advice, especially in a world where distortions and misunderstandings seem all too common.

Although those words of wisdom are precious, the challenge lies in how I can convey their true significance when learners are inclined to opt for an easier path or simply prioritize the convenience of using language apps. This is indeed the dilemma we currently confront.

I actively engage with AI technology, and overall, I find it quite beneficial. However, this doesn't mean that I've lost my enthusiasm for practicing reading and speaking in English. In fact, I cherish the beauty of learning, and it's something I never want to forgo. While cultural understanding, cognitive benefits, and personal growth are invaluable, I find myself pondering whether these can still be attained through the easier route of automatic translation on AI-powered devices.

English has never been just a practical skill; it has always been about personal growth.

My intention here is not to be stubborn or resistant to embracing what we commonly refer to as "innovation." Undoubtedly, the world is progressing towards "better, faster, and more convenient" solutions. In this evolving landscape, I can't help but question the meaning and purpose of "learning." It's a perplexing dilemma. In this context, what significance does "learning" hold or need to offer? It's a whole new chapter for us ELT experts.

KOTESOL IC 2024: Featured Speaker Interview

"Native-Speakerism Is an Ideology That Benefits Western ELT Institutions"

Dr. Robert J. Lowe, Ochanomizu University

Robert J. Lowe is a professor at Ochanomizu University in Japan. Prof. Lowe is a featured speaker at our upcoming international conference in April. He will be presenting a featured session on "Native-Speakerism and (Dis)empowerment: An Autoethnography of Success and Failure in Language Teaching and Learning." He will also be conducting a featured workshop on duoethnography in ELT. Recently, Prof. Lowe provided The English Connection *with the following interview. — Ed.*

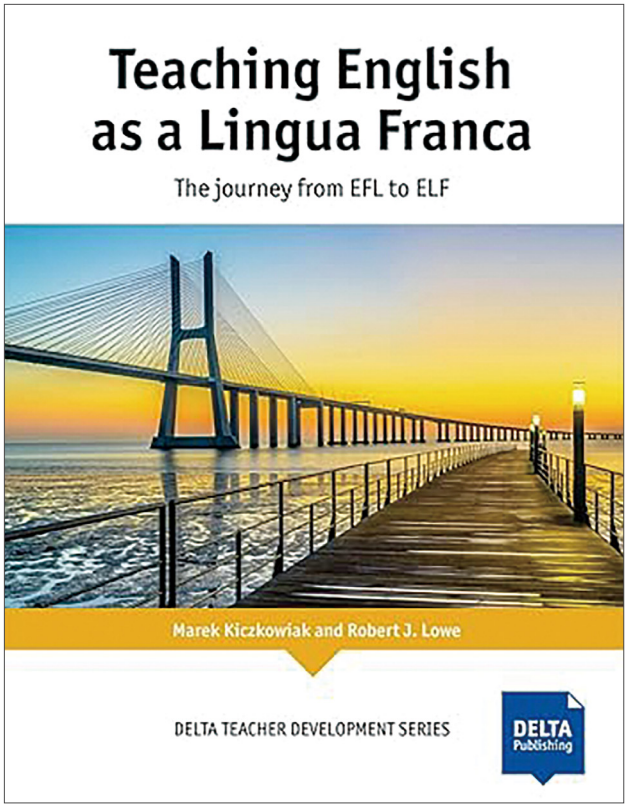
The English Connection (TEC): First of all, thank you for lending your time to do this interview for *The English Connection*. Would you begin by giving us a bit of background information on you before you began your career in Japan?

Prof. Lowe: Thank you for the invitation. I am originally from the town of Heanor, which is in the county of Derbyshire in the UK. I come from a family of educators, with many of my relatives having worked in schools both in the UK and overseas. At university, I originally enrolled as a student in the English department, but after a year of miserably trying (and failing) to diagram sentences, I decided to transfer to the sociology program instead. This was a much better match for my interests, and I graduated in 2008. Like many young graduates with an interest in travel, I decided to enroll in a CELTA course, and soon after finishing, I was given the opportunity to teach in an *eikaiwa* (English conversation) school in Japan at the age of 22. From there, my "native speaker" privilege helped open doors to part-time teaching in the higher education sector, and I capitalized on this through graduate school study to eventually get a faculty position.

TEC: It seems that many people who end up in the fields of TESOL and applied linguistics do not start out there. Your master's and doctorate degrees are both in applied linguistics. What was the impetus for moving from sociology into linguistics?

Prof. Lowe: I think it's important to distinguish between "linguistics" and "applied linguistics." I wouldn't call myself a linguist, as I don't study language directly. I think of applied linguistics as a field that studies "real-life language-related problems … in diverse social, professional, and academic contexts" (Mahboob & Knight, 2010, p. 1), and for me this means studying critical issues in the field of ELT. My background in sociology is quite important here, as I would describe my research as something like the "critical sociology of ELT." In that sense, I didn't move from sociology to linguistics so much as combine the two. I initially became interested in studying applied linguistics academically due partly to a growing interest in the field that was slowly turning into my profession, and partly for the rather mercenary reason that it would open doors to jobs at the university level. The

development of a more sociological perspective in my work was due in large part to the influence of my PhD supervisor Adrian Holliday, who I believe was also quite influenced by his early study of sociology. One of the great appeals of applied linguistics to me is that it's a very broad church. People can work on such varied topics as SLA, discourse analysis, the history of ELT, the sociology of the classroom, and so on. I think some people worry that they may have to study TESOL or applied linguistics when their interests lie elsewhere, but for many of the most engaged researchers I know, their movement into the field has been a question of connecting their interests to the field, rather than choosing between them.



TEC: It's been a few years now since you published *Teaching English as a Lingua Franca: The Journey from EFL to ELF* (Delta Publishing, 2018) with Marek Kiczkowiak. In your introductory remarks to that work, you point out, in referring to the "set of interests surrounding critical issues" in our industry, that "despite the amount of scholarly ink spilled on these challenging issues, very little change had happened at the classroom level." Do you feel any changes in classrooms have happened since? If so, which among them are most significant to you? If not, what has prevented change from happening?

Prof. Lowe: That's a hard question to answer, as I don't have any real insight into what is happening in classrooms worldwide (and admittedly perhaps didn't when that quote was written!). There has been an increase in scholarly writing about ways to integrate issues such as World Englishes into the classroom (e.g., Galloway & Rose, 2018), and anecdotally, I know that I and many of my colleagues are making efforts to use more of our second- or third-language linguistic resources (either actively or passively) in the classroom. I think one major obstacle standing in the way of the kind of changes I'd like to see in English language teaching is the need for the language of learners to conform to social expectations. For example, Ramjattan (2019, 2022) has shown how accent reduction programs in the Global North are sold on the basis that they will provide learners with the kind of speaking style that is considered professional in the workplace. Here in Japan, there is intense pressure for students to pass entrance exams, which typically require the mastery of particular forms of the language (which can sometimes even be slightly archaic; see Breaden & Goodman, 2020). So, in a way, I think some of the classroom changes we were encouraging in the book were a little idealistic. The book assumes that what should be taught in the classroom is language that facilitates intelligibility in international communication. However, it didn't really deal with the more structural and deeply entrenched systems in which teachers and learners realistically have to work. O'Regan's (2021) book on *Global English and Political Economy* provides some insight into this, as he suggests that the liberatory potential of ELF and translanguaging (i.e., the freedom they provide for speakers to creatively adapt the language for their own purposes and to express their unique identities) may, in fact, turn into a form of disadvantage, as such uses of the language may not provide the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) required to access certain spheres of education and employment. This isn't to say that ELF, Global Englishes, translanguaging, etc., are not goals to which we should be aspiring but rather that realizing them might require changing more than just hearts and minds.

TEC: Your main session at KOTESOL 2024 is entitled "Native-Speakerism and (Dis)empowerment: An Autoethnography of Success and Failure in Language Teaching and Learning." Would you share your views on native-speakerism, and how do you deconstruct "(dis)empowerment"?

Prof. Lowe: I have elsewhere defined native-speakerism as "an ideology which privileges the institutions of the West in discussions around English language teaching (ELT), and by extension normalizes the models of English, the teachers of English, and the pedagogical approaches which are most associated with those institutions" (Lowe, 2022, p. 236). This means a great amount of privilege being afforded to "native speaker" teachers, resulting in greater ease of access to language teaching jobs. Those teachers considered "non-native speakers" are accordingly given less regard in the field, resulting in employment discrimination. Holliday (2005) talks about the attitude of "cultural disbelief," which I understand to mean a fundamental disbelief that non-Western people have relevant perspectives on language teaching, resulting in their voices being accorded less significance in the field. However, the key word here is "(dis)empowerment." In an upcoming chapter (Lowe, in press) on which this talk is based, I trace my own experiences of being a young language teacher in Japan and examine how the ideology of native-speakerism affected me as a "native speaker." While acknowledging the tremendous advantages I gained through my "native speaker" privilege, I also explore some of the ways in which the ideology paradoxically led to my professional disempowerment. This is due to the fact that native-speakerism involves the act of essentializing someone on the basis of a particular facet of their identity – in this case, my identity as a "native speaker" from what Kachru (1982) calls an "inner circle" country. I was prized as an "authentic" representative of English language

...native-speakerism is an ideology that benefits Western ELT institutions, leading to both empowerment and disempowerment for individual teachers.

and culture, which led to great professional advantages. However, the fact I was valued *only* for this part of my identity meant that I was not taken seriously as a language teaching professional, and was encouraged not to learn the Japanese language or assimilate into the Japanese workforce (a point also made by Houghton & Rivers, 2013). To do so would have been to take away some of the authenticity I was imagined to represent. So, native-speakerism is an ideology that benefits Western ELT institutions, leading to both empowerment and disempowerment for individual teachers depending on how they are categorized under this ideology, and the essentialized functions they are expected to fulfill.

TEC: You have been placing the words "native speaker" and "non-native speaker" in scare quotes. Why is that?

Prof. Lowe: This is a convention adopted by Adrian Holliday (2005) when he first started writing about native-speakerism. Within the field of ELT, who is and who is not considered a "native speaker" of English is influenced by a number of factors such as race and nationality, and so, I think it is important to indicate that we are not dealing with objective labels when using the terms, hence the use of inverted commas. It is important to separate this from the psycholinguistic question of whether there is an objective difference between being a speaker of a first or second language. I don't intend to take a position on that. What I mean is that within the field of ELT, these labels are often used in a way that betrays a prejudice that only certain people from certain countries can be considered authentic "native speakers" of English. People who do not meet the stereotyped expectation of what constitutes a "native speaker" may face discrimination or have their professional status doubted, such as colleagues of mine who have had their speakerhood questioned on the basis of being British-born Chinese or coming from a country like Singapore. Nevertheless, it is necessary to continue using the labels when discussing these issues, as we must acknowledge the immense power they hold to include and exclude people from the profession.

TEC: Rather than dealing with autoethnography, your second session is a workshop on "Duoethnography in ELT: Research, Reflection, and Practice," "duoethnography" being a relatively new term in the field of TESOL. Would you elaborate on what this workshop will entail?

Prof. Lowe: Duoethnography is a research method initially developed by Joe Norris and Richard Sawyer, which emerged from the fields of social, health, and educational research (see Norris & Sawyer, 2012, for an overview). In a duoethnographic project, two (or more) researchers engage in multiple iterative discussions in order to contrast the different ways in which a particular social or cultural phenomenon has manifested in their lives. The goal of such projects is to come to new insights or understandings of these phenomena that neither researcher would have been able to discover on their own. By using their own life histories as a site for ethnographic study, the researcher-participants are able to delve deeply into the impacts of the phenomena under study on their lives and thus to develop new understandings through contrast with the experiences of another. The goal of this kind of research is not necessarily to produce generalizable insights, but rather to complicate and problematize overly simplistic representations of concepts in the field. For example, Lawrence and Nagashima (2020) have used duoethnography to examine the complex intersections between different elements of their identities as language teachers, providing us with a much more nuanced understanding of the ways in which the unique interactions between race, gender, sexuality, and speakerhood can impact the professional identity construction of individual teachers. Further, it is hoped that the dialogic, narrative presentation of data common in duoethnography will resonate with readers and thus help to communicate research results to audiences of academics and practitioners alike. It therefore aims to bridge the research–practice gap, at least to some extent. In this workshop, I plan to explain a little background about duoethnography and look at the core tenets that characterize it. Following this, I will show some examples of how it has been used in ELT as a research method, as a form of reflective practice, and even as a form of project-based learning with students. Finally, I will outline some of the dangers that new researchers (who may, understandably, be drawn to the method) ought to avoid when engaging in duoethnography for the first time.

...the dialogic, narrative presentation of data common in duoethnography will resonate with readers...

TEC: Will you be making your first trip to Korea for the conference, or have you been here before? What are your plans for this conference trip?

Prof. Lowe: This will be my first time in Korea, and I am very excited to learn about the ELT community here. I plan to attend lots of sessions so I can learn about the similarities and differences between my own teaching context and that of Korea. I am thankful to the organizers for the opportunity to attend the conference and am very much looking forward to it.

TEC: We'll be looking forward to seeing you at KOTESOL 2024!

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Epistemic Stunts

By Dr. Michael Hurt, Korea National University of Arts

I'll make no pretense about the fact that half the reason I worded the title this way was just to use the word *epistemic*. *Epistemology* is a fun word, though often taken to be an effete and fancy one. But it's actually a pretty awesome word that is uniquely useful to help us talk about some pretty important things.

As a Korea-based academic, I'm constantly thinking about why I'm here. After 23 years as a visual sociologist writing with light, along with words, I've come to realize there's no other place that can hold (or drive) my interest.

See, before I was an academic, I was a nerd. Thinking has always been fun. And thinking through theory even more so. It's why esoteric pursuits such as role-playing games and original Star Trek have always held dorky attention. These things weren't primarily visually spectacular. They weren't tactile. And they didn't addict the consumer with immediate and palpable dopamine hits from the thing itself. The thrill comes from inside, an internal mind-state – not external stimuli. Indeed, Dungeons-n-Dragons moves on a board weren't themselves the draw, just like the special effects in the 1960s run of Star Trek weren't anything to rave about.

What keeps me in Korea, and in the burgeoning field of Korean studies, is the exciting process of trying to turn Korea into theory. Inevitably, this is what one has to do in a field called "Korean studies." So when I'm asked yet *again* by a barely-there reporter to tell them why *Gangnam Style* or *Squid Game* or *Parasite* or BTS or Blackpink or anything Korean is important, I'm inevitably stuck with having to explain what the essence of the thing is. "What is special about Korean stuff?" becomes the core concern, but when you really break it down, the entire conversation ends up begging the question of just *what* is Korean, and *what* is the essence that makes *all the K-things* hot. Basically, what exactly are we talking about when we talk about *hallyu* as a global wave of interest in things Korean?

We're basically asking the hardest question of them all, which is "How do we track influence?" And "Who is really an influencer?" If you look at Instagram – the linchpin of the popular notion of influencer – one is just gauging and tracking a number within that particular platform. But we know there are myriad moving parts to becoming a successful Instagrammer, which includes working the algorithm with the right combination of hashtags, prime time windows within which to post, the strategic wording of captions, and other such digital minutiae. So, isn't a follower count just as much a measure of being able to play the game of the platform as it is a measure of actual social influence? Cuz if we're talking about the ability to bend millions of minds to one's will, every popular politician is an influencer, as is every fashion icon, quite apart from how many followers one has on YouTube. Madonna was a huge social influencer before a social media platform was even a glint in Zuckerberg's eye.

I was a street photographer when I stumbled onto the fact of Korean style. Here, I don't mean just sartorially speaking, in terms of clothes. When I teach my classes and try to get students thinking about how one even begins to think about defining an aesthetic style and how they may be able to track it, I turn to the standard James Ackerman definition from *A Theory of Style* in the realm of art, in which it is defined as "certain characteristics which are more or less stable, in the sense that they appear in other products of the same artist(s), era or locale, and flexible, in the sense that they change according to a definable pattern when observed in instances chosen from sufficiently extensive spans of time of geographical distance."

▲ ***Photo 1.*** *Vietnamese model @moneyyy_nguyn embodies and channels her interpretation of "Korean style."*

Now this gets hard when looking at the fact of millions of people across the globe looking at different works from Korea across various fields of art such as music, film, or fashion, along with the many sub-genres within even those fields, all unified by people who basically love most of those things precisely because they are, quite simply, Korean. Why model Money Nguyen (Photo 1) might like to embody Korean fashion or watch K-dramas or perhaps even go to Blackpink concerts is a thing to figure out. Because it's a thing that's happening. And if you ask anyone highly interested in all the Korean things, they tend to see Korean things as existing within a fairly unified field of Korean things, done in a Korean style. This is what I'm trying to make sense of.

The only way to really clearly discern social reality is by gathering empirical data on the ground, from people. And this is where the ethnographic method becomes useful. And in the social sciences, ethnography is hot. It's also become the

primary means to gather "business intelligence" for marketers and administrators. And since Korea is now the hot place, my last several corporate clients for whom I performed cultural consulting were Instagram, Google, Facebook, and Johnson and Johnson, all of whom wanted to know what Koreans were doing – on the ground – in the foldable phone, laptop, workplace, and beauty markets, respectively. Because what Koreans are doing today is considered by many to be what the rest of the world will likely be doing in five years.

And the only way to truly figure out what people are doing on the ground is to scaffold certain, preset social interactions directly, in ways that yield social data. A social researcher might prepare a list of specific queries that a subject would be presented with and provide answers in a conversation, which is commonly called an "interview." In the field of visual anthropology, interview subjects were given (or had sometimes even taken) photos of themselves and asked to respond to how they felt about them in a technique called "photo elicitation."

There are all kinds of ways (some of them clunky or even awkward) to set up social interactions that can yield revealing social data. John Quinones' TV show *What Would You Do?* is actually one of the greatest examples of what Quetzil Castañeda calls "the invisible theater of ethnography" in which, using performative principles such as acting and staging, specific situations are set up to let us see what Americans really think about touchy subjects, such as racism, homophobia, and other subjects people often do not talk about with any degree of candor. As we see an actor on screen deny service in a coffee shop to a woman in a hijab, watching others not in on the act sincerely, viscerally react to the situation often elicits surprising responses in his millions of viewers. We are often surprised at how many people agree with the bigot, as well as how many people put themselves into possible danger to stand up to the bully. It is often a bracing exposé of how apparently XXX-ist our society is, in a way that mere interviews-as-social-scaffolding are not, since people lie a lot, and often even lie to themselves, as we found out in the exit interviews conducted

Basically, what exactly are we talking about when we talk about hallyu as a global wave of interest in things Korean?

in the 2016 American presidential elections. Indeed, the revered anthropologist Margaret Mead once warned us, "What people say, what people do, and what they say they do are entirely different things." This is why Quinoñes' data is so rich and valuable, and why his show is so compelling. Because few (or indeed, no one, these days) would ever say, even to themselves, that when push came to shove, they'd become that racist guy. Or join in the group harassing someone for their religious beliefs. But when placed inside an "invisible theater of ethnography" in which actions are embodied, real, and recordable, sometimes we shock even ourselves. The show is actually what legendary sociologist Harold Garfinkle called a "breaching experiment" that clearly illustrates the presence of social norms by breaking one. Quinoñes' show is actually radical sociological methodology with a gargantuan budget.

For the last several years, I've been engaged in what I've come to call "photo-sartorial elicitation," in which I scaffold

▲ ***Photo 2.*** *A young Vietnamese model styles and channels her imaginings of Korean style in February 2020.*

a predetermined set of social interactions (a photoshoot of a model, with pictures to be shared across social media, as well as post-shoot interviews) and which reveals copious forms and qualities of rich social data. The model in Photo 2 is a referral from another model in Vietnam who was asked to style a "Korean look" that I would shoot and to which I would add my own, Korea-informed, aesthetic spin. I would be one constant in the formula, while the model's styling, posing and general comportment, and the immediate visual environs would be rapidly changing variables.

One of the many ideas gleaned from the photo-sartorial elicitation + post-interviews process was the idea that Korean beauty is considered paramount in Asia and that Korean culture itself is considered by many Vietnamese to be the pinnacle of cosmopolitanism and sophistication in this part of the world.

And on a more meta-level, when I brought top high-fashion brand Greedilous to Hanoi in November 2018 (see Photo 3), it was quite easy to land a shoot with one of Vietnam's top Instagram influencers Salim, who stands now at around 1 million followers strong. Korean brands, specifically, and the Korea style, more generally, almost quite literally opens doors in Vietnam.

In the process of staging these more radical "acts of ethnographic theater" and much more mundane means of eliciting social data such as interviews and simple interactions, I was able to discern a pattern of how Vietnamese people tend to think about Korean things and people, while discerning other things I would have likely otherwise missed altogether.

Ethnography's problem – and power – lies in its subjectivity and specificity. It is as much art as science. For example, in order to properly pull off a John Quinoñes-style social norm "breaching experiment," it requires actors with skill. In that sense, it's hard for just anyone to pull off. But such is true even for cut-and-dry interviews, which also require some people skills. And the data yielded in an episode of *What Would You Do?* isn't mathematically "objective." There isn't something like a correlation coefficient produced as a discrete value to stand as a measure of whether Islamophobia is tolerated or even a part of American culture. Indeed, though it is "as much art as science," it's an elegant and powerful way to know things about social moods and forces. It is also a clear reminder of how much one can't really reify actual social influence as a mere number. Because life is more complex than that.

Having fun developing my own methodologies with which we can know things is what I love to continue doing here in Korea,

▲ ***Photo 3.*** *Vietnamese model @nmtrag sports a Greedilous dress on the streets of Hanoi in 2018.*

the hottest place in academia right now and the place from where the future of things is being charted. And I take great pleasure and pride in the fact that my hunches were completely right 20 years ago, when I began having the hunch that Korea was onto something big. It's why I stay, and what I continue to have fun trying to theoretically prove through cunning epistemological stunts. Such stunting gives me many papers to write and keeps getting me invited to conferences. I've learned the value of being able to assess and explain the value of Korean popular culture outside of Korea. It literally pays. Perhaps if this can be conveyed to more young Koreans in general and Korean cultural producers more specifically, it could provide more inspiration and justification to step outside of certain boxes and lead to more useful deployments of art within science.

And as for ESL application, talking about how we know things can be the generator of lots of related sub-questions about what real-world influence Korean culture actually has around the world, as opposed to the flat, toothless discussions of "soft power" that tend to be had in uninspired conversation class sessions. Where does the soft-power rubber hit the road? And how exactly does soft power benefit the nation, especially as we think about what the nature of social-cultural "influence" even is? What are the particular levers of Korean cultural influence, and what do they look like? These are the harder – and therefore more interesting – $250 per hour, topline report questions that, if one can answer, really pay the bills.

And I take great pleasure and pride in the fact that my hunches were completely right 20 years ago, when I began having the hunch that Korea was onto something big.

Dressing Up in the Korean Past

Dr. CedarBough T. Saeji, Pusan National University

CedarBough T. Saeji is a professor of Korean and East Asian Studies at Pusan National University in Busan. Her expertise is in Koreana, from contemporary K-pop (she is known as the K-Pop Professor) to traditional mask dance drama. She is a featured speaker at our April international conference, and her featured session is entitled "Dressing Up in the Korean Past: Hanbok Wearing as Play Informed by Popular Culture." Prof. Saeji will also be doing a second invited session on pedagogical methods employing pop culture in the classroom. What follows is her interview with The English Connection*. — Ed.*

***The English Connection* (TEC)**: Thank you, Prof. Saeji, for giving us some of your time for this interview with *The English Connection*. To begin with, your name intrigues me – CedarBough T. Saeji. Would you tell us a little about the history behind it and also some background information on you before coming to Korea?

Prof. Saeji: I changed my name when I was six because I wanted an original name. And Saeji is my husband's clan name, so at this point only my middle name has been with me since I was born. Before coming to Korea, I was working a variety of environment related jobs: I worked for the Yakama Indian Nation doing salmon habitat restoration, was a naturalist, sea kayak guide, worked for Greenpeace, stuff like that.

TEC: How did you end up moving to Korea?

Prof. Saeji: I moved to Korea a few years after I finished my undergraduate work, with my ex. He wanted to try teaching to see if it was a good career for him. Coming to Korea was actually a compromise. We had to go somewhere where I could pay my loans, which meant many countries were impossible, but he wanted Taiwan, while I wanted to go to Japan. So, we ended up in Korea as a compromise. I thought I'd come to Korea for just one year, but I loved the challenges of living in Korea, and I loved how I was constantly learning. Of course, that was back when ordinary people didn't really use the internet, and there weren't big box stores in Korea. You could spend a whole day looking for dried basil and never find any. You couldn't just ask Every Expat in Korea where to find something or if something was possible, you literally just had to beat your head against the wall trying.

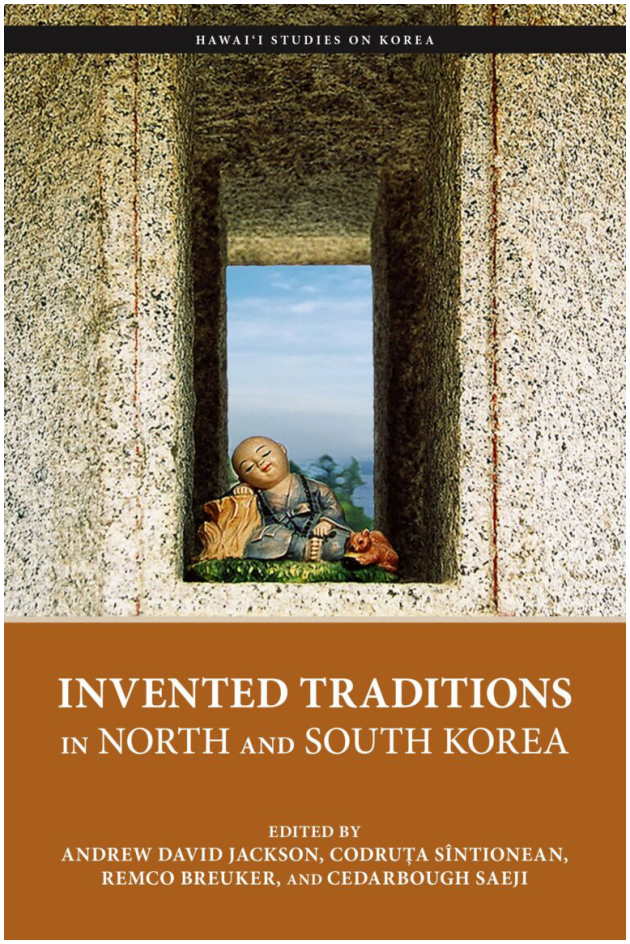
…how pop culture can influence how contemporary people, including Koreans, understand and interact with traditional culture.

TEC: It wasn't too many years ago that there were only two Korean loanwords in the English language: *kimchi* and *taekwondo* (the latter still spelled as three words in Merriam-Webster's dictionary). What exactly is behind the phenomenal rise worldwide of the Korean Wave – *hallyu* – in such a short time from a relatively small nation?

Prof. Saeji: From my perspective this has been very gradual. Somewhere, I have a newspaper clipping from HOT's first overseas performance; it was on the front page of the *Korea Times*. I was reading academic papers on hallyu already in 2004 and 2005, but not many people were looking beyond films and television at that time. My first conference presentation on K-pop was in 2009, partially inspired by BoA's attempt to break into the West.

What's behind hallyu? Well, when Korea democratized a lot of young people went to get MFAs in film schools, principally USC and UCLA (which have great film schools). When they got back to Korea in the early to mid-1990s it was initially hard to find a job, but then under Kim Youngsam, there was the *Jurassic Park* moment, where he was told that the movie had earned as much as exporting 1.5 million Hyundai automobiles. Starting then, in 1994, the government encouraged investment in the film industry and that helped television as well. A lot of *jaebeol* began film divisions, and they often hired these young innovative recent film-school graduates who began to remake the industry. Then in 1997, the financial crisis happened and the IMF partially blamed Korea's crisis on the tendency of the jaebeol to have so many subsidiary businesses, forcing them to divest subsidiaries not closely related to their core business. The film-related businesses were mostly spun off into independent (and therefore much more nimble) companies; this empowered young directors. Simultaneously, due to the economic crisis not hitting Japan, Japanese TV shows became too expensive for many neighboring countries, and Korea benefited by exporting TV programs, which had improved greatly in quality in the 1990s. The basis of hallyu can be traced to this history. The success of TV dramas (and to some extent film) was synergistic with other creative industries, including K-pop, as singers also acted, or recorded OSTs.

TEC: We usually think of K-pop as just music, but you've said that K-pop has spawned adjacent industries. Could you expound on this?



Prof. Saeji: Lots of scholars talk about how K-pop fans can organize to create exposure, drive up streaming counts, or strategically purchase music to put it on the charts. It is really amazing how hard fans work, but most of them work hard just out of love – a volunteer effort. However, I've also noticed that a statistically much smaller group of fans decided that they should take their fandom and turn it into their career by making goods or offering services that fans want. These K-pop adjacent industries, as I call them, include people who write mass market books, offer K-pop dance classes, make unique fan merchandise, and then of course, there are the people with YouTube and TikTok channels who make content about K-pop, such as explaining or reacting to a music video. I find it amazing that there are fans establishing a licensed business who take online orders, get the item produced, and ship them out to buyers, even filing taxes, at twenty years old. It takes so much initiative and drive!

TEC: Although you have the moniker "The K-Pop Prof," K-pop is not your only "K" interest. You also do research in Korean traditions and culture. In fact, your main session at KOTESOL 2024 is entitled "Dressing Up in the Korean Past: Hanbok Wearing as Play Informed by Popular Culture." I wore my *hanbok* on my wedding day, but there wasn't any play involved. Could you explain a little about your session's title?

Prof. Saeji: In addition to my work on K-pop, which I began more recently, I have published extensively on Korean heritage, everything from Buddhist art at the National Museum, to shamanic ceremonies, to gender in the performance of Korean mask dance dramas.

Hanbok wearing, by the 1990s was mostly confined to contexts such as female relatives of the couple at a wedding, and as in your case, during the *pyebaek* ceremony for the bride and groom as well. This makes the current visibility of hanbok significant. My presentation examines the phenomenon of renting hanbok, particularly foreign tourists charmed by Korean pop culture who rent hanbok and wander through Korean palaces. This and several recent publications bring together my interests in Korean tradition and in popular culture – how pop culture can influence how contemporary people, including Koreans, understand and interact with traditional culture.

TEC: The second session that you will be doing for us at the international conference will be on teaching and using pop culture in the classroom. What aspects of Korean pop culture will this focus on?

Prof. Saeji: I will mainly discuss how I productively use K-pop in the classroom because ever since my first job in Korea in the mid-1990s, I found that K-pop was one of the best ways to get my students to express themselves. I thought that introducing some of my pedagogical methods could give some good ideas to the conference attendees.

TEC: You are currently a professor of Korean and East Asian Studies at Pusan National University, not in an English-related area. How much of your past teaching has been with Korean EFL students?

Prof. Saeji: I taught EFL full time in the 1990s and became increasingly only part time in the early 2000s. Including part time, I taught English for eight years; one of those years was in China right before I started my MA at Yonsei. I was done paying off my loans by then. But honestly, even now, I teach primarily EFL students, I just don't teach them English. In my job at PNU, my classroom is usually about 15–20% Korean students, and the rest are exchange students from across the world. But curiously, we hardly get any from the US. I joke that it is like the UN because I have students from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Latin America, and of course different places in East and Southeast Asia. It's quite amazing!

TEC: You recently co-edited a volume on *Invented Traditions in North and South Korea* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2022). What are some of the "monumental" invented traditions that this compilation deals with?

Prof. Saeji: Previous publications elsewhere have discussed the inventedness of taekwondo, for example. Invented traditions are still traditions, it is just that we can pinpoint when the discourse about them as traditions (in the modern sense) arose, and invented traditions are almost always created to support certain national or nationalistic narratives. This edited volume addresses very diverse cases, for example, we have a chapter on North Korean food because culinary traditions and dishes provide a context for narratives about Kim Ilsung and the heroic guerilla fighters and the privation they overcame while fighting for Korea's independence. Another chapter addresses pseudo-historians who use wishful thinking and nationalist verve to compensate for the fact that they are not trained historians, just hobbyists. It is amazing how these pseudo-historians, by fanning the flames of nationalism, actually create barriers for real historians in contemporary Korea. The book is very wide ranging: Other chapters cover the Joseon-era discourse of Korea as the politest country in East Asia; the annual children's march in North Korea; and how certain types of Korean traditional performance, once considered plebeian and for the commoners and slaves, were elevated and given the status of "national music" in the present era.

TEC: While on the topic of books, I believe you are working on a book on Korean mask dance dramas and cultural policy. In what way do mask dance dramas relate to Korean culture policy?

Prof. Saeji: My book is under review. Korea has both nationally and regionally registered heritage mask dance dramas, now also listed with UNESCO, and the registration

process means that the government's cultural policies are enmeshed in every part of who, where, when, and why they perform. As the context of the arts dramatically shifts, performers must constantly negotiate between satisfying a system for preserving arts that paradoxically changes the arts it seeks to preserve, and the demands of life in the twenty-first century. The main argument of the book is that state interventions have compelled the practitioners into transforming their vocation into a professionalized career dissociated from its pre-modern cultural context. By presenting rich ethnographic data obtained over eighteen years of participant observation with three Korean mask dance dramas, I cut against the grain of a folkloric imagination to demonstrate different ways in which human actors carry heritage traditions forward in contemporary Korea. My book presents case studies showing how heritage bearers understand the project to protect heritage, and the decisions they make in performing, educating, and crafting cultural enterprises around the arts. In an era where Korean popular music borrows liberally from traditional arts, I raise concerns about heritage stewardship and commodification.

TEC: People often say that Korean students are reticent, or that it can be difficult to get them to speak up in the classroom. Do you find that to be true?

Prof Saeji: I think as educators, it is our job to establish, from the first day in the classroom, how much we welcome questions and student voices. Students can learn from each other and grow analytically through listening to diverse perspectives, but Korean students have been socialized to respect the needs of the group to learn from the teacher. In many of their previous educational contexts, if a student spoke, other students would have thought they were wasting group time by preventing the instructor from communicating as much. This was connected to the fear of not understanding a part of the basic curriculum that appears on the *suneung* exam (the Korean college entry exam). That socialization is built around a lecture model – instructor speaks, student listens – and around getting into college. However, in university, it is our job to make them comfortable with other teaching styles. By making it clear that I do not teach that way and by providing clear guidance in how I expect them to contribute, I have found that Korean students speak just as much as other students. It is not fair to just say "Talk! Ask questions!" you need to create structures, build new habits. For example, I use organized student-led discussions, provide space in my syllabus for student-chosen sub-topics, and even require students to submit their questions about required readings in advance of the class, so they have prepared to ask questions. Of course, it is super important to respond in a way that will encourage them to speak up next time.

TEC: Looking forward, what do you have planned for the future – new books, new areas of research, delving deeper into current areas of research, new horizons?

Prof. Saeji: Since I have mostly finished my first book project, the logical step is to work on a second book project. However, in Korea, points towards tenure are focused on articles. Topically, I am examining how Korean media producers, artists, and government agencies are framing Korea for an imagined foreign gaze. The research examines this phenomenon through hit cultural products, such as K-pop videos and K-dramas; through dedicated Korean promotional material, such as the advertisements of the Korea Tourism Organization; and through educational tools funded by the government, such as those produced by the Korea Foundation. This project ranges from archival to visual studies and will dig into the ways that "Koreanness" is communicated, often through quasi-exotification, and how Korean places and things are being re-packaged in commodified, simplified, visitable formats that are also consumed domestically. At present, I am not sure if this will take the form of a second book, or just a series of articles.

TEC: It sounds like you have all of 2024 planned out! In concluding this interview, what would you like to add for our readers?

Prof. Saeji: I know that it's hard to study Korean while also teaching in English, but I think that if you live in Korea your life will be immeasurably richer if you can speak. These days it's possible to survive without Korean, but to really thrive, I hope you learn Korean and embark on some real study of the rich history and culture of Korea.

TEC: Well, thank you for this interview. It has covered quite a range of topics – from hallyu to jaebeol, to K-pop and hanbok, to EFL and suneung, and to mask dance dramas and invented tradition – a range representative of your research. I'm eagerly looking forward to your sessions at the international conference.

Interviewed by David Shaffer.

▲ **Tourists dressed in *hanbok* visiting a Seoul palace.**

"The Conference Theme Really Resonated With Me"

Dr. Eun Sung Park, Sogang University

One of the shiniest gems at Sogang University is the soft-spoken, mild-mannered professor in their English Department: Dr. Eun Sung Park. Beginning at an early age, her journeys have taken her to Bangladesh, India, both coasts of the U.S., the Far East, and to many locations in Southeast Asia. The roads she has traveled and the "way stations" in between mirror the essence of our conference theme: "Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives." The English Connection *was recently fortunate to be able to interview this "traveler," a featured speaker at our upcoming international conference. — Ed.*

The English Connection **(TEC)**: First on the agenda is to thank you wholeheartedly for sharing your time to do this interview with us. We are quite grateful. Next is to ask you to share a bit of your background with us to better familiarize our readers with you and your work.

Prof. Park: Thank you for inviting me to do this interview for TEC. I am currently a professor in the English Department at Sogang University. I actually started out my teaching career at Sogang University as an English instructor in the General Education English Program after obtaining my MA in TESOL from Teachers College, Columbia University. I enjoyed teaching English so much that I wanted to make it a lifelong job. The only way to secure a permanent teaching position at the university level was to get a doctoral degree, so I went back to my alma mater in New York to pursue an EdD in applied linguistics. While working on my doctoral degree, I taught graduate courses in the TESOL/Applied Linguistics Programs, including teaching practicum and SLA courses.

After earning my doctorate, I started my first full-time teaching position in the MATESOL/TEFL Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California (formerly known as the Monterey Institute of International Studies). I joined the English Literature and Linguistics Department at Sogang in 2009, where I currently teach SLA- and TESOL-related courses. As you can see, my professional career has always involved teaching languages or training language teachers. More recently, I've been focusing more on conducting research related to language learning and language use. I love all aspects of my job, and I am grateful to be doing what I love to do.

TEC: In no small way, I think of you as a manifestation of our conference theme – "Players on the World Stage: From EFL Classrooms to Global Lives" – as you have yourself gone from a Korean middle school English classroom to the world stage: completing your graduate work at a major U.S. university, teaching at the university level in New York City and in California, and you are an officer in the largest international ELT organization in this part of the world, Asia TEFL. How difficult, or easy, has it been for you to adjust to the numerous identities that you have had in different contexts around the globe, including being a university professor in Korea?

Prof. Park: I have to agree that the conference theme really resonated with me. When I learned about this year's theme, it instantly took me back to my fifth grade when my father was transferred to Dhaka, Bangladesh. My family moved there, and I was enrolled in a British school run by Catholic nuns. Not knowing a word of English, I was placed in what was called the "Special English Class," an EFL class with students from different countries including Burma (now Myanmar), Cambodia, Hungary, Kuwait, and Poland, to name a few. I remember feeling quite insecure and even fearful the night before the first class. I asked my dad to teach me one English expression that I thought would be most useful: "I don't know." I would use the expression in response to any question directed at me, just to show that I wasn't dumb or being rude, and that my inability to answer was due to not knowing the language.

More than a decade later, I found myself teaching English to immigrants in New York, and several years thereafter, I found myself teaching TESOL courses to Peace Corps fellows at Teachers College, where I first taught a course called TESOL Classroom Practices. This class had 28 Peace Corps volunteers who had returned from teaching English overseas, mostly in South America and Africa. Despite my initial apprehensions, teaching this all-American, yet incredibly diverse, group turned out to be both enjoyable and memorable. It was in this class that I discovered the joy of teaching a diverse, heterogeneous group of students, in which learning can be a two-way process where both the teacher and students benefit from each other. My experiences in Seoul, Dhaka, Kodaikanal (a small town in India, where I attended middle and high school), New York, and Monterey have shaped who I am today. These transnational experiences have provided me with a variety of resources that I can draw upon and incorporate in different teaching contexts. I believe these varied experiences have equipped me to adapt appropriately to the different teaching environments that I have encountered.

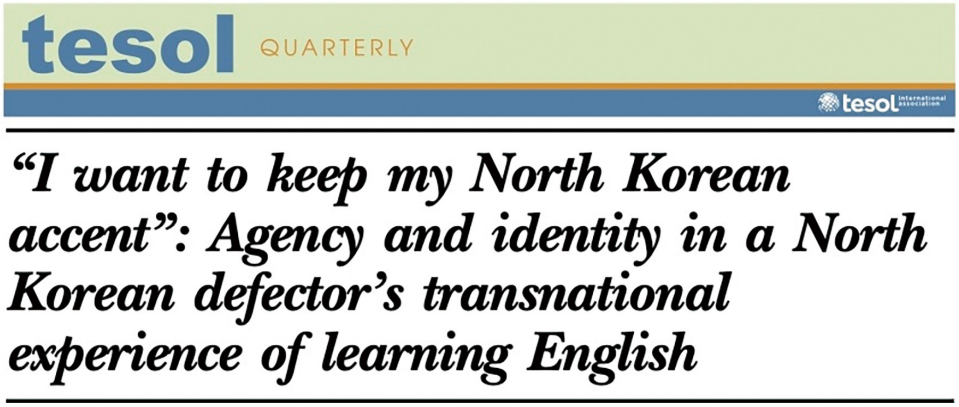
TEC: I also have both enjoyable and memorable experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer here in Korea back in the 1970s. I know that in recent years, you have done work with North Korean refugees and that you've done research on that work. Could you tell us how you got involved with this refugee work and the experiences that you have had through this association with them?

Prof. Park: Upon joining Sogang University, I was surprised to learn that there were North Korean refugee-background students in our student population. Many of these students struggled with English, and some spoke no English at all. Their difficulty with English is understandable since South Korean students receive at least ten years of English education prior

to college, compared to North Korean refugees who often experience disrupted education during the process of defection and resettlement. While serving as the director of the General Education English Program at my university, I had a chance to work with some of these students, learning about their unique experiences and challenges. Since then, I've been keen on learning more about the growing population of minority students at our school. Deepening our understanding of these students' backgrounds and experiences is essential in designing English programs that are tailored to their language-learning needs.

TEC: The title of your featured session at KOTESOL 2024 is "Resilient Roots, Global Growth: Transnational Identities as Assets in the English Classroom," and I believe it is based on some of your work with North Korean refugees. Could you give us a verbal trailer of what you will be speaking on?

Prof. Park: Yes, I will be talking about the English-learning experiences of North Korean refugee-background students, specifically focusing on their English-learning experiences and challenges in different contexts. I will also address the importance of an asset-based pedagogy in teaching these students. In the past, refugee-background students have been stereotyped as "at risk" or "under-performing." This traditional perspective tends to focus on their limitations and deficits, which can construct an incomplete account about this population. I will share stories and experiences of North Korean refugee-background and other minority students who have transformed their unique backgrounds and identities into assets that they can use to their advantage. My recent publications focus on this topic, and I hope to underscore the significance of learners' transnational identities in the process of learning English as an additional language.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"I want to keep my North Korean accent": Agency and identity in a North Korean defector's transnational experience of learning English

▲ ***Journal article on an English-learning North Korean, co-authored by Dr. Eun Sung Park.***

TEC: I'm curious as to how North Korean refugees might feel about the necessity of learning English, the mother tongue of some of North Korea's staunchest adversaries? Might they experience a clash of identities?

Prof. Park: That's an interesting question. Did you know that English is a required subject in North Korea? It's required because they believe it's important to understand the language of what they consider their "enemy," namely, the United States. Many North Korean students have reported that they once firmly believed in the political propaganda taught to them when they were young. However, upon arriving in South Korea, most of them quickly realized that they had been presented with a skewed worldview, a suspicion that some of them began to develop prior to their defection. Consequently, their attitude toward English changes drastically when they arrive in South Korea. They no longer view English as the language of the enemy but as valuable linguistic capital that can help them secure stable jobs and successfully integrate into the new society. The students that I have worked with have not particularly reported a "clash of identities." However, these students are few in number and represent a distinct subset among North Korean defectors. Therefore, the issue of "clash of identities" is something that warrants empirical investigation.

TEC: You have been a member and officer of AsiaTEFL for quite some time. Please tell us about AsiaTEFL as an international organization and about your involvement in it.

Prof. Park: I served as the book series editor for AsiaTEFL from 2015 to 2017. I usually shy away from administrative roles – I'm simply not good at them – but the book series editor position was manageable, since it did not involve many meetings or too much administrative work (just a lot of email exchanges). Also, I enjoy attending AsiaTEFL conferences, since they are held in different cities across various parts of Asia, which makes it all the more exciting. Plus, they are usually held in the summer when things are less busy at school. I like to take my graduate students to AsiaTEFL conferences to present their work, as the environment is friendly and supportive, which is helpful for emerging scholars.

TEC: Will KOTESOL 2024 be the first KOTESOL conference that you will be participating in?

Prof. Park: Actually, the first academic conference I ever attended was a KOTESOL conference – the 1998 KOTESOL Conference held at Kyung Hee University. At that time, I was teaching part-time as an English instructor in the General Education English Program at Sogang University, and I attended the conference with some of my colleagues. My second attendance was at the 2016 KOTESOL Conference, where I presented as a representative of KATE, the Korea Association of Teachers of English. Most recently, I was a plenary speaker at the Seoul KOTESOL Conference in 2018. I have fond memories from all three conferences.

TEC: As we bring this interview to a close, is there anything else that you would like to convey to our readers?

Prof. Park: Yes, I'd like to share a bit about my latest project, which diverges from the type of research I have done in the past. Together with a colleague, I am in the process of putting together an edited volume entitled *BTS: K-pop Transcending Language and Communication*. As far as I know, it will be the first scholarly volume that explores languages of and about BTS, the global septet boy band. The chapters will examine various ways in which language is adapted, hybridized, and creatively resourced by BTS and ARMY, their most dedicated fandom. The volume will be published by Routledge, hopefully within this year. Fingers crossed!

Last, but not least, many thanks go to the staff at TEC for putting this together. Also, thanks in advance to the readers for taking the time to read this interview. I hope to see many of you at the conference and at my featured session.

TEC: Your upcoming BTS K-pop volume sounds quite interesting. And many thanks to you for making time to do this interesting interview for us; *The English Connection* is most grateful. Your journeys are quite the embodiment of our conference theme – from learning English to global life experiences. I am sure that many of our conference-goers, including myself, will be eager to sit in on your session at our international conference in April. Thank you.

Interviewed by David Shaffer.

No Bad Beats: What Maria Konnikova Taught Me About Professional Learning

By Bill Snyder

It happens to all of us. We bring a well-prepared lesson plan to class and for no good reason, it doesn't work. Too many students are absent for the groupings to be right. Or students are distracted by concerns about presentations they need to make in another class later in the day. Or just the gloomy weather has brought everyone's energy a bit down and what we have planned can't overcome that. We soldier through the lesson and at the end, leave class feeling frustrated and, probably, more tired than we want. The negative impact of that outcome may stick with us. Why did our plan not work? – it was so well made. Why could the students not have been more focused? If only that announcement had not interrupted the lesson. Mostly, why does this always happen in my classes?

In 2016, having suffered a series of misfortunes for herself and her family the year before – job losses, an unexpected death, a mysterious and debilitating illness, having to move from a treasured home – the writer Maria Konnikova decided to become a professional poker player in order to explore the relationship between skill and chance that are at the heart of the game, an experience she recounts in her 2020 book *The Biggest Bluff: How I Learned to Pay Attention, Master Myself, and Win*. In poker, players make decisions based on the information they have without knowing exactly what other players know. And no one knows exactly what card will turn up next. Skill in the game lies in making the best decisions you can from your partial information while accepting at the same time that chance may not align with those decisions. "Anyone can get lucky – or unlucky – at a single hand, a single game, a single tournament. One turn and you're on top of the world – another, you are cast out, no matter your skill, training, preparation, attitude" (Konnikova, 2020, p. 21). This description may make it seem like our professional background is just a bulwark against the winds of fortune that buffet us and determine outcomes. But Konnikova is clear that luck is temporary; in the longer run, skill in making good decisions produces more positive results.

Konnikova's book resonated with me in terms of thinking about preparing novice teachers for the classroom in many ways. Konnikova's path to becoming a world-class-level poker player showed many signs of how she took a reflective approach to achieving her goal. She took on achievable challenges as she built her skill at the game, starting with lower level tournaments and building up gradually to higher stakes events. Along the way, she focused on problem areas in her game at different times: working on developing her own aggressiveness, developing inner calm to avoid tells, and creating narratives of other players' decisions in order to understand their play at different points in her journey. To me, perhaps the most important thing she did was find a mentor who was willing to work with her and also direct her to other mentors when she needed help on specific parts of her game. The book is replete with examples of the lessons she absorbed from each mentor through talking with them, observing them play, and trying out their advice in her own practice, adapting it, and making it her own. This process models what I feel a good teacher education program and teaching practicum should do for novice teachers. At the same time, it makes it clear that the novice has to take an active role in developing their skill in order for the program to be successful.

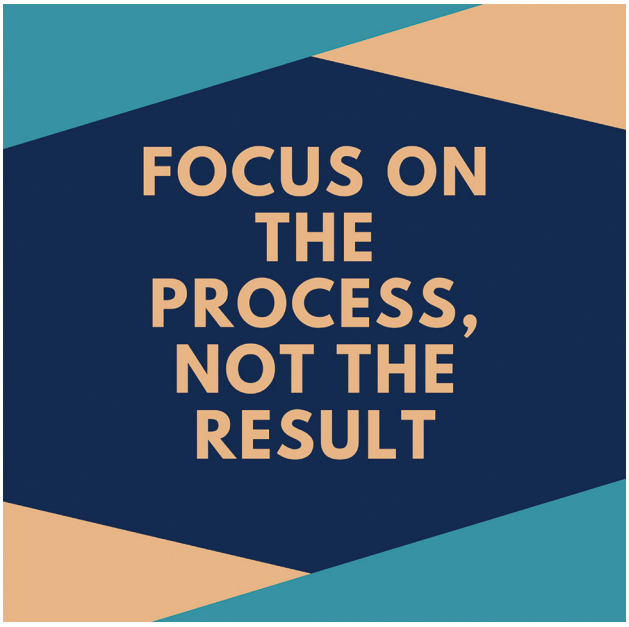
In the rest of this column, I want to focus on one particular lesson imparted to Konnikova by her primary mentor relating to the situation described in the first paragraph, when well-planned lessons don't go as well as hoped. I'd like to explore what the same lesson might mean for

teachers in how they can respond reflectively to such a situation, and how such lessons might be incorporated into professional development for teachers.

The situation is this: Konnikova has reached the point where she is playing small-stakes tournaments, but she still has not won a tournament. She plays successfully in a tournament and the number of players dwindles until finally only she and one opponent remain. Konnikova has what she believes is a winning hand and bets everything, only to have the one card that can beat her turn up next. She loses, despite having played as well as she could.

Konnikova goes to see her mentor and starts to tell him the story of the tournament and this final hand, her bad luck. Her mentor cuts her off and says he does not want to hear about what happened, explaining this way: "Look, every player is going to want to tell you about the time [they lost like this]. Don't be that player.… Bad beats are a really bad mental habit. You don't ever want to dwell on them. It doesn't help you become a better player." He continues, "Focus on the process, not the luck. … You *know* about the randomness of it but it doesn't help to think about it. You want to make sure you're not the person in the … room saying, 'Can you believe what happened?'" (pp. 132–133). Later, he adds, "I don't care about the result. … do your best to forget how it ended yourself. That won't help you" (p. 136). So, there's the lesson: No bad beats! No dwelling on negative outcomes that are beyond your control when you have prepared well.

Konnikova's takeaway from this lesson was the importance of how we see ourselves in relation to the random events that can affect us – as victims of fate or as people who almost succeeded. Victims get locked into a psychology of victimhood and the fixed mindset (Dweck, 2007) that accompanies it. They fail to see opportunities and even fail to try out of a certainty that they will not succeed. If we see ourselves as people who nearly succeeded but just had a bit of bad luck, we can be resilient. If opportunity comes again, our preparation will stand us in good stead and create the possibility of luck evening out. We recognize that even if we do not control our circumstances, we can control the decisions we make within them.



…the novice has to take an active role in developing their skill in order for the program to be successful.

So, how should we reflect on days when things do not go as we planned in class? Not on the outcomes, but on the decisions we made and how we made them. Did we make the best use of the information we had? Would we make the same decisions again in the same circumstances? Why or why not? If not, what changed our mind. Our goal in developing professionally cannot be that the outcome is always what we intend. Too many variables intervene for us to have control over that. A better goal is to feel that we made the best decisions we could, given what we knew at the time. If on reflection, we feel that we might have done something differently, then we can use the experience to learn and improve going forward. But we should not convince ourselves that any such change would necessarily have led to a more positive outcome. This approach to reflection, considering what we can control and leaving aside what we cannot, is a pathway to professional peace of mind about our work.

I recommend Konnikova's book to my students who are learning how to teach. The book is not just an entertaining read but a thoughtful exploration of the course of developing professional skill in an area. I advise students who choose to read the book to attend to the interactions between Konnikova and her mentors, and to notice how important the mentoring relationships are in her professional growth. I also suggest that they look closely at how she connects what she learns from her experiences playing poker to the lessons her mentors are trying to impart. "No bad beats" is an important lesson for my students to absorb. They should not worry about things they cannot control, like what exactly students take away from a lesson. Instead, their focus should be on how they prepared and on making good decisions as they teach. On any one day, this approach may not work out but in the long run, it is most likely to pay off.

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The Columnist

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ADHD in the Language Classroom

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

Whether you teach children, adolescents, or adults, you are bound to get students who have trouble managing classroom situations because of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). I'd like to start our examination of this problem with a typical scenario, based on something that happened in one of my classes. Imagine you were this boy's teacher, and figure out what you would do.

A Problem with Tak

Tak is a first-year college student. His moderate ADHD makes him active and energetic, but because he is very talkative, he's of mixed popularity with fellow students. He has learned to manage his need to stand up and to move around, and he usually gets his homework done. However, he often misses your classes. In fact, since he has passed the limit of acceptable absences, you pull him aside after class to let him know he has failed. He pleads he loves your class and begs you to give him another chance. You falter and then tell him you will, but he must do extra work to make up for the missed classes and cannot miss even one more, for any reason. Knowing his condition, you allow him to decide the extra work topic. He does. He gets excited and says he will put all his heart into the project. He swears he will never miss another class.

He comes to the next class and tells you his ideas for the project, which sound a bit grandiose, but you smile anyway. Then, he misses the next class, and the one after that, too. To your dismay, he has broken his promise. So, what do you do? (Decide. Read on. Then, see our perspective at the end.)

Understanding ADHD

Heather Kretschmer and I wrote an article together on ADHD for our *MindBrainEd Think Tank* last month. It included this scenario. Doing research on the topic, I found that there was far more to it than I had been aware of, even though I considered myself well-informed. Let's look at this orientation, starting with the definition.

According to the Center for Disease Control, children with ADHD may

1. experience difficulty paying attention,
2. find it hard to control impulsive behaviors, or
3. be overly active.

Note that all children behave like this at times, but with ADHD, these behaviors persist and can even intensify.

Here are the specifics. A child with ADHD might

1. daydream often,
2. tend to forget things or be unable to find them,
3. squirm or fidget,
4. talk a lot,
5. make careless mistakes,
6. engage in risky behavior,
7. often yield to temptation,
8. find it difficult to take turns,
9. have trouble getting along with other people.

If you need to make an assessment on your own, you might search for the criteria listed in the *DSM-5* and the Conners Rating Scale.

Adults with ADHD

Adults with ADHD have a slightly different set of tendencies. The symptoms might not be as obvious as they are in children, since adults usually find ways of suppressing or masking them, and some adults don't know they have ADHD. Adults with ADHD might

1. have trouble focusing,
2. tend to misplace things,
3. experience memory issues,
4. run late,
5. engage in risky behaviors,
6. struggle with verbal interactions,
7. have difficulty choosing task(s) to prioritize,
8. struggle with relationships,
9. feel restless,
10. experience mood swings,
11. anger easily (Targum & Adler, 2014).

Concerning coursework, they might have difficulty concentrating during class or during an exam. It can be a challenge to meet assignment deadlines. Group work isn't always easy for learners with ADHD, and they may feel isolated or avoid interacting with other students. Dealing with stress, worry, and low self-esteem may also interfere with their learning. Any of these issues can lead to bad grades, dissatisfaction with academic performance, and poor connections with peers.

Supporting Learners with ADHD

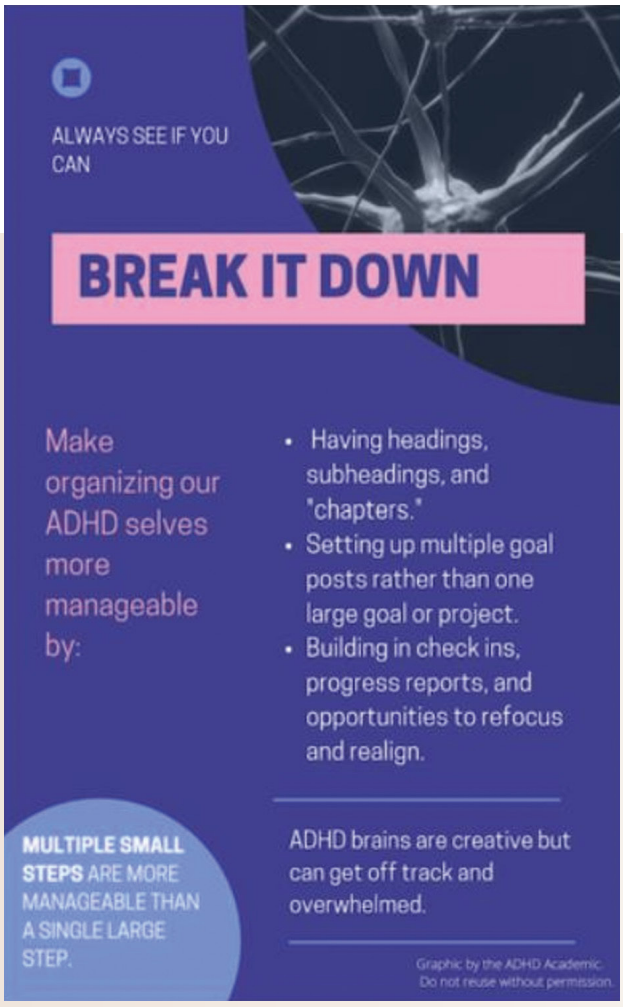
The main problem we have to help them solve is how to stay on task. Learners with ADHD have an "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" tendency, so breaking their tasks into simple steps and keeping all the tasks and resources in the same easy-to-find location makes a huge difference. Let's look at what Heather Kretchmer and I suggested in our *Think Tank* (October, 2023):

"'For those of us who work in higher ed., structured support includes a well-organized learning management system (LMS), like Canvas or Moodle, where students can quickly find what they need to prepare for class. Include all the resources students need for a particular unit in one section of your LMS so that they don't have to search for them elsewhere on the LMS or Internet. To help ADHD students find the current week or unit, highlight or mark it on your LMS. An LMS that is easy to navigate through allows students to spend their time on what's important: learning, getting ready for class, and completing assignments.' (Friel, 2023)

"Structured support also means breaking things down into

smaller segments for learners. Big projects or assignments, as well as long readings or lectures, can be overwhelming for any student and especially for students with ADHD. The ADHD Academic (2021) recommends clearly dividing up projects, assignments, readings, lectures, etc. and signposting those divisions. Imagine what you're doing is a book: give it a table of contents and break it down into chapters with headings. This allows learners to plan and stay on track. Over the course of a longer project or assignment, you can check students' progress in various ways, for example, by talking with students to see how they are meeting goals or by having your students fill out and turn in short progress reports."

Finally, be approachable, flexible, and encouraging. A student with ADHD who's experiencing difficulty in your class might be willing to talk to you about their problems even if they don't disclose their condition. Have an open ear and consider what changes you might make to your course that will still allow you to reach the course goals. Remember that students with ADHD have had a lot of negative feedback. This means we should



be on the lookout for good work and give them encouraging feedback (Friel, 2023).

Managing Tak's Problem

With this in mind, let's go back to Tak's problem. Despite his ardent promises to you, Tak broke them by missing too many classes. It is easy for a teacher to feel they were cheated when a student begs for a second chance, makes promises, and then does not keep them. It makes you want to come down on them hard and tell them they are "out." But keep the nature of the ADHD learner in mind. They were very likely totally sincere when they made the promise and were more determined than ever to keep it. But impulsiveness and distraction are not easy to wipe away with just will power. A day might come when the student gets distracted, loses sense of time, and then is shocked to find how late it has become, and rather than face another humiliating punishment, just doesn't go. Then, the impulsiveness turns into depression.

How should you respond to Tak's case? There is no easy answer. Pure punishment will probably not deter his next misstep, and it will probably just increase his sense of unrelenting failure. Showing understanding and a willingness to help Tak would probably work better. It might even be possible to use the situation as a teachable moment, discussing the problem and helping him generate possible solutions. That does not mean you have to change the rules. For example, you might, as I have done, arrange special make-up classes for that student. The key is to fully understand the dilemma. To change this learner, you probably have to change yourself.

ADHD Attention Deficit Hyperactive DIFFERENCE

ADHD lies on a spectrum. At the milder levels, its tendencies tend to provide more benefits than detriments, including hyperfocus, resilience, creativity, and an abundance of energy (Sedgwick, 2019). And so, TED Talk speakers like Stephen Tonti and Jessica McCabe redefined ADHD as being a *difference* rather than a *disorder* or *disability*, and that is the view that we should adopt. As in Tak's case, it is wrong to assume that an ADHD learner's failure to comply comes from deceit or laziness. As Jessica McCabe says in her TED Talk (2017),

"It is not about procrastinating or not caring. It is having executive function deficits that make it hard to get started. And it is not people being lazy or not trying enough. It's kids and adults struggling to succeed with a brain that doesn't want to cooperate…"

McCabe says one additional thing that should stand out for us: It is wrong to punish a learner for something they are already struggling with. It just adds to their failure. Instead, be willing to see beyond normal and look for special ways to help. It will make us better.

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The Columnist

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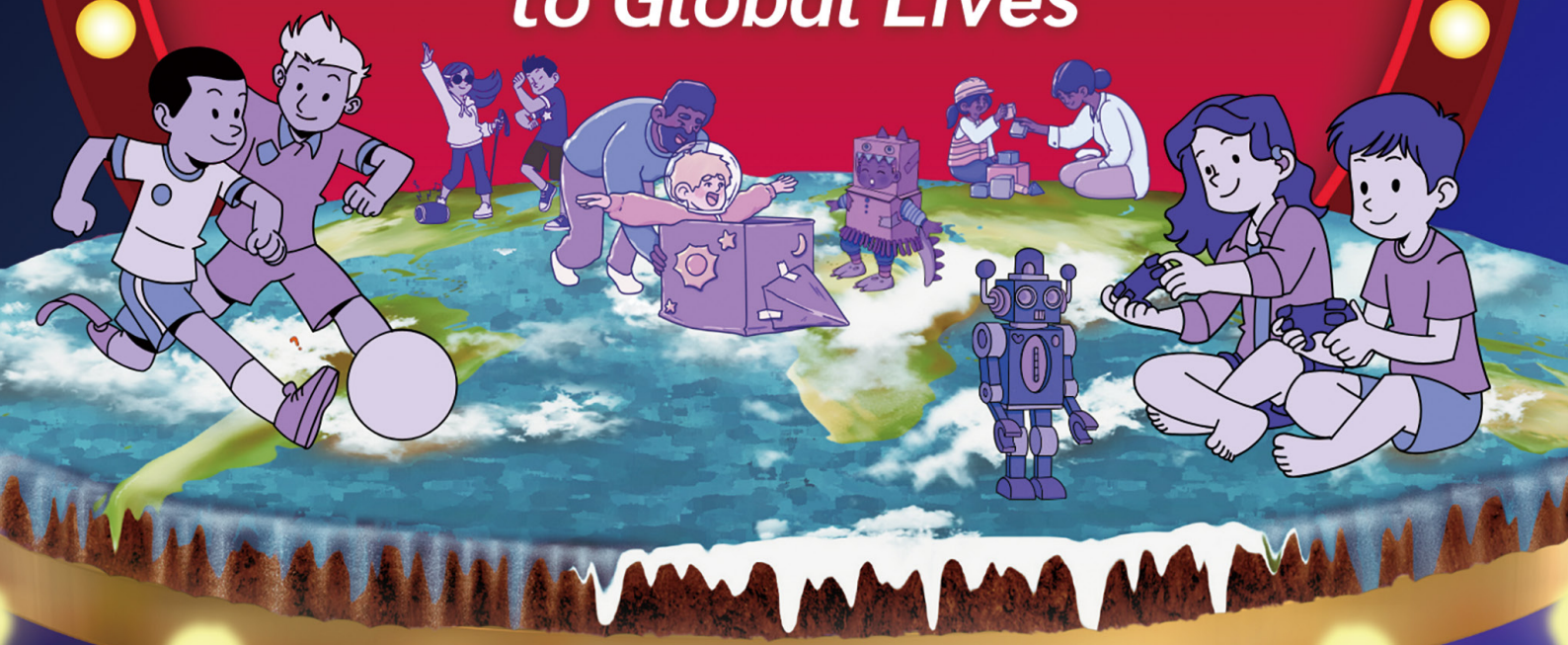

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