

# The English Connection

A Korea TESOL Publication

Summer 2018, Volume 22, Issue 2

## **Focus on Reflection:**

Top tips for extensive reading – Roxy Lee  
Creating collaborative cards – by Maria Lisak  
Adding themes to daily schemes – by Douglas Baumwoll

## **Regular Columns:**

Curtis Kelly's *On the BALL*: The Power of Stories  
KOTESOL People: Rhea Metituk



**KOTESOL**  
대한영어교육학회



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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.**

By **Julian Warmington** Editor-in-Chief

It's good to be back. Thanks to Gil Coombe, outgoing editor-in-chief, for a steady hand over the last two years, and for the hand in reminding me what all the red flashing lights mean on the TEC control panel here.

It was an easy decision to come back with such a top editorial team, supportive powers-that-be, and a steady flow of excellent material to offer back to you, learn'ed, gentle readers. I am especially pleased that this issue – quite naturally, and with no effort from anyone here – sees as many female contributors as male. Furthermore, the featured KOTESOL member interviewed this issue is Busan-Gyeongsan Chapter's president and rising star Rhea Metituk. She has plenty of energy, ideas, and interesting things to say in response to Gil's good questions to round out the pages.



Back at the start of the features section, Kathleen Kelley gives a brief introduction to the upcoming international conference in October. Then, the ever-enthusiastic Maria Lisak explains the Gwangju-based reflective practice group's collection of "collaborative cards" that they developed and continue to use for personal and group professional reflection. Robert Dickey reviews his trip to the TESOL convention in Chicago for us this year, and Roxy Lee continues the focus on creative, yet practical, ideas but returns us to the classroom with her set of techniques that she has found to be successful in teaching extensive reading. Douglas Baumwoll brings some big-picture thinking as he describes how he has found effective, everyday ways to introduce thoughtful themes not common to regular classroom discussions, provoking genuine interest and learning well beyond the basics of the current text. Our final feature is a contribution from "KOTESOL's youngest member," as Nargiza Iskandarova shares her learning and reflections on age appropriateness in language learning.

Our regular columnists continue apace, as Heidi Vande Voort Nam reviews a book that delves into the research-based science of learning and teaching second languages: *Second Language Acquisition Applied to English Language Teaching*. Dr. Tom Farrell highlights the importance of encouraging teachers to take time to reflect professionally, within his reflective practice column. And Dr. Curtis Kelly tells us the tale of the power of stories in his regular section on learning.

Another note of thanks to Chris Miller, who has rejoined the team as top talent recruiter, already finding and encouraging writers to send in great articles. We usually have room for one more though, sooner or later, so if you have a favorite surefire classroom technique or lesson plan, please feel free to write it up and send it in. Contact us for the straightforward details of how we like that done.

Finally, we are also looking for two more of a rare breed of locally based contributors: top readers and good heads experienced in the realm of publishing. Whether you have experience as a copy editor or proofreader, or just a confidently solid understanding of the details of English grammar, punctuation, and capitalization; an enjoyment of standard modern English; and a perverse predilection for detail; then please contact us if you would like to be included in the article review team. Even if you have just a little previous experience publishing though, we would like to consider inviting you to join the editorial team for a new consultancy role; please get in touch.

In the meantime, we hope you find these articles useful and enjoyable. Have a cool summer with the expensive air conditioner used as sparingly as possible, and see you at the international conference in October.

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# President's Message

By Dr. David E. Shaffer KOTESOL President

Spring is in full swing across the nation, bringing with it its typical brightness, warmth, and liveliness. The same can be equally said of Korea TESOL. Chapters have held conferences in the north, the southeast, and the southwest. Chapters everywhere are holding meetings and workshops. And one chapter has been the primary force behind this year's National Conference. KOTESOL chapters have been very much alive this spring, testimony that KOTESOL is very much alive and well. A rough count reveals that nearly 40 KOTESOL face-to-face "events," large and small, have taken place already this year!



**Chapters** – The health of our smaller chapters has been a concern of mine. This concern, coupled with its inviting program, led me to a recent monthly meeting of the Jeonju–North Jeolla Chapter. The presentations were informative; the audience was engaged, and the attendance was quite high – rivalling that of our larger chapters! The chapter, I found, is very effectively reaching out to the larger ELT community. Thank you Aaron Snowberger and your team!

Another chapter reaching out to the ELT community is Busan-Gyeongnam, who held in April its first chapter conference in years. The event at the University of Ulsan was well attended; the presentations were varied and stimulating. I see much growth at the chapter. Thank you Rhea Metituk and your team. And thank you, Daegu-Gyeongbuk Chapter for making a trip to the conference your monthly event.

**Special Interest Groups (SIGs)** – Numerous SIGs have also been buzzing. The Seoul and Gwangju groups of our Reflective Practice SIG have been meeting regularly, the Social Justice SIG is presenting at conferences, and both are active online, as is the Research SIG and our other SIGs. We encourage you to become active in one or more of our SIGs if you are not already.

**National Conference** – By the time this issue of TEC comes off the press, the May 12 KOTESOL National Conference will have concluded, and everyone will be calling it a success. I say this because I am aware of all the work that is going into its preparations, and that author and teacher trainer Barbara Hoskins Sakamoto is the plenary speaker. Hats off to Conference Chair Stewart Gray and the entire conference team – many of whom are from the Yongin-Gyeonggi Chapter! We are now open for proposals to organize the 2019 National Conference.

**International Conference (IC)** – The IC committee is busy laying plans for the October 13–14 IC at Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul, and they will continue to be busy throughout the summer. Two of our international speakers will be Scott Thornbury and Jill Hadfield. Check the IC webpages for regular updates. The IC team is still looking for volunteers to fill some of the positions on the team that require service only near or at conference time. Consider volunteering your services. Thank you IC Chair Kathleen Kelley and your team for your service!

**Volunteer Service** – Speaking of volunteering, KOTESOL is beginning a volunteer service initiative to facilitate volunteering for tasks large and small for those who wish to contribute to KOTESOL but do not have enough information to do so. This information is now becoming available online via our Membership Committee. Thank you Lindsay Herron and Maria Lisak! I personally have gained a lot by attending KOTESOL events, but I think I have gained even more by volunteering to help out on KOTESOL events and projects.

**Pass-It-On Challenge** – Do not forget our Pass-It-On Challenge: If you feel that you have benefitted as a member of KOTESOL, pass on the word. The challenge is for every member to bring one new member into the KOTESOL family in 2018. Are you up to the challenge?

KOTESOL is "Teachers Helping Teachers." Get involved – by attending KOTESOL events, by helping to organize events, by helping a colleague, by introducing a colleague to KOTESOL. Get involved in your own way.

As a final note, I would like to welcome back to the position of editor-in-chief of *The English Connection* Julian Warmington. After two years away from the helm, he has returned to steer the TEC vessel in new and adventurous directions. Welcome back, Julian!





clear **understanding**  
**confident** listening reading  
smooth **FLUENT** writing  
flowing **fluid** speaking  
natural **competent** **connecting**  
comprehensible

# Focus on Fluency

**26<sup>th</sup> Annual**

## The 2018 Korea TESOL International Conference

October 13-14, Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul

**Invited  
Speakers**

Stephen Krashen

Scott Thornbury

Jill Hadfield

Steven Herder

Ki Hun Kim

Jill Murray

Jennifer Book

Boyoung Lee

*and more*



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[koreatesol.org/ic2018](http://koreatesol.org/ic2018)

#KOTESOL #KOTESOL2018

#FocusOnFluency



# Introducing... KOTESOL International Conference, v.2018

By Kathleen Kelley, ICC Chair

I attended my first KOTESOL International Conference in 2014. I remember leaving that conference feeling inspired and reenergized. I was excited to get back to work and try all the new things I had learned. Now, as chair of the 2018 Korea TESOL International Conference Committee (ICC), I would like for this year's attendees to go forward with the same sense of inspiration and purpose.

## The Conference

The 26th Annual Korea TESOL International Conference will be held on October 13 and 14 (Saturday and Sunday). The conference will take place at Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul. The theme is simply "Focus on Fluency."

## Focus on Fluency

Fluency is a fascinating topic. In his well-known blog, *An A-Z of ELT*, Scott Thornbury writes, "Fluency is one of those elusive, fuzzy, even contested, terms that means different things to different people." Even though it can be a fluid concept, fluency is the goal many language learners strive to attain.

In the Korean English classroom, building conversational fluency is often neglected in exchange for more hours spent on vocabulary and grammar lessons intended to boost the students' all-important TOEIC scores. As one of my students once put it,

I always learned English only from books and only from CDs or seeing American movies. I had never actively learned English before this class. And now I know that English is interesting and we need learn English speaking as well.

My goal in the classroom is to teach my students to be confident and competent English speakers. I think this is a goal that many of us share, and that is why "Focus on Fluency" is the theme of this year's conference.

## Invited Speakers

I am very excited to announce that Scott Thornbury, author of the book *The New A-Z of ELT* and much, much more, will be a plenary speaker at our international conference this autumn. We have also confirmed as invited speakers teacher, trainer, and author Jill Hadfield, best known for her resource and activities books; Steven Herder, an author and editor of *Exploring EFL Fluency in Asia*; millionaire instructor Kim Ki Hun of Mega Study; Jill Murray of Macquarie University; and Jennifer Book of IATEFL's TTEd SIG. We are also planning an invited panel discussion on English fluency in the Korean

context that will feature celebrity English instructor Lee Boyoung and Yeum Kyungsook, director of SMU-TESOL at Sookmyung Women's University. Additional speakers will be announced once confirmed.

In addition to our invited speakers, there will be hundreds of other sessions by teachers and researchers from Korea, across Asia, and beyond. The program team is currently vetting the many presentation proposals that have been submitted.

**"In addition to our invited speakers, there will be hundreds of other sessions by teachers and researchers from Korea, across Asia, and beyond."**

## Additional Information

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

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

If you are interested in learning more about the International Conference, and we hope you are, please visit our website at [koreatesol.org/ic2018](http://koreatesol.org/ic2018).

## The Author

**Kathleen Kelley** teaches at Wonkwang University in Iksan. She earned her master's in marketing and communication from Franklin University. In addition to being International Conference chair, Kathleen is KOTESOL Publicity Committee chair and a past president of KOTESOL's Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her husband, bicycling, and eating barbeque.



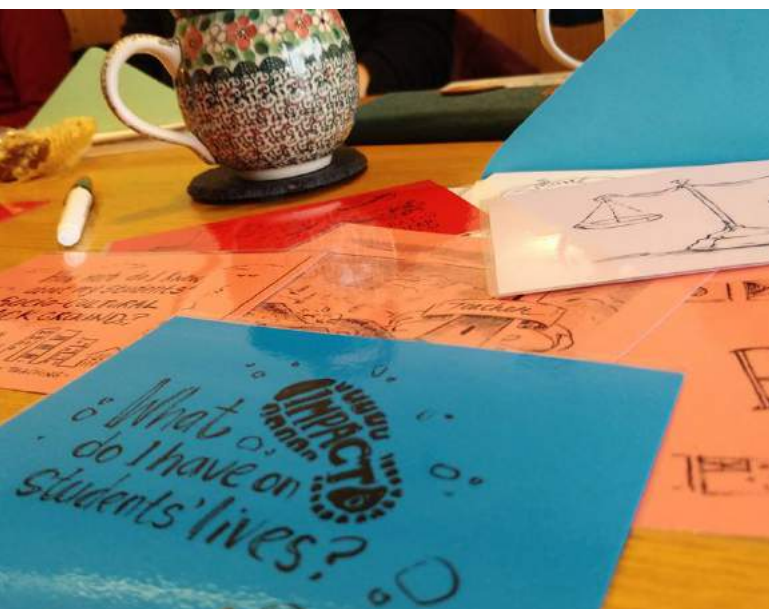


# Reflective Practice Cards: Learning Collaboratively

By Maria Lisak

## Shift into Reflective Practice

A *ppalli-ppalli* world surrounds us here in South Korea, and it is easy to get sucked into this fast momentum for both work and lifestyle. But as educators, we need to both practice and encourage a slower pace, remembering to reflect back on our own learning as teachers and to help our students reflect back on their learning process. Reflection on our teaching is an important practice that is not given enough attention or value by our work institutions. Despite this lack of institutional support, many teachers regularly set up reflective practice activities in order to provide self-support for their teaching. Reflective practice doesn't have to be something that is done alone though. Professional development groups, like the Reflective Practice Special Interest Group (RP-SIG), one of the many support networks available in the larger KOTESOL professional community, encourage group support of reflective practices for teaching. Not only are there regular national RP-SIG meetings in Seoul, but the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter Reflective Practice Group meets nearly every month during the year.



## Gwangju-Jeonnam Collaboration

The Gwangju RP community usually hosts ten monthly gatherings per year, providing peer support while encouraging members to develop their own personal reflective practices. In 2017, these monthly gatherings, a type of teacher training, were designed to promote reflection on teaching, and sent attendees home with activities, resources, and materials to develop a personal reflective practice.

One material that was given to the participants at the end of the year, a laminated set of illustrated reflective practice cards with questions created by the community, was made by two members, Lisa Casaus and Maria Lisak. These reflective practice cards, a collaborative project, drew on a year's collection of teachers' questions that the Gwangju group shared as concerns about their practice. Reflective practice, as grounded by Schön, is the ability to reflect on one's actions so as to engage in a process of continuous learning. These reflective practice cards are a manifestation of the Gwangju group's continuous learning in 2017. These cards prompt reflection, but how they were made shows the discursive nature that reflection engenders. These cards were made from dialogue on belief and practice as discussed during face-to-face meetings, the evidence of an online document of teacher questions, and member collaboration that moves reflective practice into a way of life (Farrell, 2015).

## Unpacking the Process

In January of 2017, a workshop, "Reflecting on Diversity in the Year Ahead: From Your Classroom to the World," was given by Maria Lisak (2017), and the Gwangju group talked about their upcoming year of reflective practice. Participants wrote questions that they would like to focus on for their personal practice. Some participants are researching-teachers and shared what they would like to know: "How can I design my lessons to facilitate non-invasive research?" Other attendees come from a young learner environment and shared their thoughts: "Am I listening to my students (enough/in the right way/...)" Participants from Gwangju-Jeonnam are from a variety of teaching backgrounds. The workshop, by looking at the classroom (micro), the immediate community of school, parents and local institutions (meso), and then at the macro level of either South Korea or the world, allowed participants to see similarities and differences in their teaching contexts, and to share their personal reflective lens. After the event, these contributions were typed into a database and shared on the Facebook group page where people could add questions to the list.

During the rest of the year, Gwangju-Jeonnam RP-SIG not only held meetings but also helped out at regular chapter workshops. For example, in October, Lisa Casaus, a regular RP member, wowed the Gwangju Chapter in their "swap shop" session as she let loose her illustrations that she used to elicit student work in class. She drew on the board as she shared a mingling activity on comparative adjectives. The drawings were of hand motions and the target language: "Are you (taller,



bigger, stronger) than me?" This was followed with a handout that attendees could use in their classrooms. The attending educators did a demo lesson by walking around to find people who were shorter, faster, stronger. With this visual bonanza share under her belt, Lisa, a regular attendee at KOTESOL events in Gwangju, agreed to work with Maria to make some year-end reflection cards.

The list of teacher questions that Maria moderated in January and Lisa's creative skills were combined in a brainstorming meeting between the two of them at Gwangju International Center. Gwangju KOTESOL leaders, Bryan Hale (2018 GJRP facilitator), Jocelyn



Wright (GJRP founder and facilitator) and Dr. David Shaffer (2018 KOTESOL President), gave feedback via private messages about their favorite questions. With their feedback and another hour finalizing question choice and brainstorming visual embodiment of the questions with Maria, Lisa was off to work her magic by drawing the cards.

The big reveal happened in the year-end gathering on December 9th. In the late morning at Coffee Lab Mujii near Gwangju National University of Education, the attendees received a free set of 16 reflective cards. Dealing with issues from the micro-setting of the classroom (How can I make my classroom more interesting?), the meso-setting of our schools and communities (How much do I know about my students' socio-cultural background?) to the macro-setting of English language teaching in South Korea (Is all teaching political?), participants had a chance to look through and chat with each other about a card that spoke to an issue in their current teaching practice.

### Reflection Cards: Group Activities

The year-end meeting started with an explanation about where the questions came from and the decisions made about illustrating them. Participants were asked to choose their top five from the set of sixteen. In small groups of three, attendees shared why they chose the cards, implicitly sharing a teaching reflection as they shared their rationale for what they chose. After small group shares, everyone shared with the group as a whole a personal favorite, or one they hadn't yet shared. There was overlap, with "What impact do I have on students' lives?" being very popular. As Dr. Shaffer observed,

"I also select 'What impact do I have on students' lives?'

After all, to have an impact on students is a teacher's ultimate goal. We don't often know what impact we have after the students' final exam, but when they come back years later thanking you for being the impetus for them getting a PhD in TESOL in the US or for opening their own language school, you feel that you have made a difference."

There are other ways to use these cards in group settings with teachers. In *Reflective Language Teaching: From Research to Practice*, Farrell (2015) mentions four principles of reflective practice as

evidence-based, dialogic, about belief and practices, and as a way of life. Reflective practice group meetings can be organized around the four principles Farrell outlines.

**Evidence-Based Reflective Practice.** There are sixteen cards in the Reflective Practice set. With regular weekly, monthly, or quarterly meetings of a group of educators, these cards can be used to see the change over time that the teachers are going through. One card, for example "Silence," can prompt a teacher, by themselves, to write a daily journal around that topic. At the weekly or monthly meeting, the teacher then has a journal to refer to as evidence of their experiences and thinking over time.

**Dialogue.** Another way to use the cards is to have a pair or small group talk about the topic of one card. For one example, the card with the illustration of a scale is ambiguous and with two or more people talking together in conversation, they can create meaning together. This also gives a chance to find multiple meanings when

teachers perhaps come from different contexts – a classroom teacher and a lead teacher may have different expressions of what that scale means. This dialogue can act as a think-out-loud reflection that can bring people together to talk about issues that might not get attention during regular routine encounters.

**Beliefs & Practices.** Some of the pictures focus on beliefs and practices different teachers hold. With the card “Which hat(s) did I wear today?” teachers can document their practice and then interrogate what beliefs they are expressing with those practices. Are our practices in line with our beliefs? Are we walking our talk? This is a good chance to question ourselves and our peers on teaching beliefs and practices.

**Way of Life.** Some of the cards, since they were made by reflective practice teachers for reflective practice teachers, challenge group participants to reflect on their reflective practice habits. “How is my reflective practice like Snakes and Ladders?” is a chance for teachers to understand how they are self-supporting their practice,

“These reflective practice cards, a collaborative project, drew on a year’s collection of teachers’ questions that the Gwangju group shared as concerns about their practice.”

but this question also positions the teacher in wider contexts. How has reflective practice helped improve my teaching practice, or challenge stagnant teaching norms at an institution? Or, how am I as a teacher working within and against systems to make them equitable for all stakeholders?

### Reflective Practice: Personal Practice

One Gwangju-Jeonnam RP participant says that the cards are so wonderful he keeps wanting to put them in a safe space to protect them. Moving them out of the way of daily use misses the opportunity for regular reflection. The cards are laminated for regular daily or weekly use; they can take the heat of daily use! But, can you make the time for daily reflection? Additionally, since the cards are laminated, you can use a whiteboard marker on them, filling in blanks or writing a reflection on the back of the illustration. This would allow for reflection on the same topic at different times and help elicit different responses based on changes we encounter in our regular teaching practice. Shuffling through the sixteen cards can

provide a fresh lens to assess and review your teaching practice.

### P(I)ay It Forward

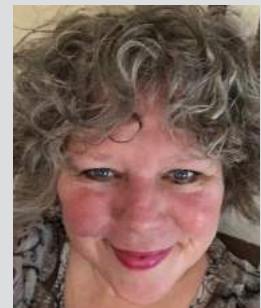
The cards can act as tools for groups to reflect together or be used by individuals to set up daily, weekly, or monthly reflective practice prompts. The Gwangju-Jeonnam RP card collaboration helps to show how peers are mentoring each other to develop reflective practice habits. Hopefully, your school or organization can implement these cards, or other resources, to support regular reflective practice and professional development. As educators, we are always engaged in the process of continuous learning, and Schön reminds us to reflect on that engagement. Dr. David Shaffer’s comment on the “Flower of Growth” card reminds us, “With the number of years that I’ve been in this profession, I have recognized how I HAVE grown – and I have come to realize how important KOTESOL has been in that growth.” Reflective practice has never been more fun or more accessible. Contact Lisa or Maria to get a copy of the cards.

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### The Author

**Maria Lisak** is celebrating the 22nd anniversary of her first steps in South Korea. From the Midwest in the US, her Chicago accent still plagues her Korean pronunciation. In answering a Korean colleague’s question, she stated that she is still here because she can live a simple life while pursuing her love of learning in a community that values education. She has been teaching public administration and social welfare at Chosun University since 2012. Website: [koreamaria.typepad.com/gwangju](http://koreamaria.typepad.com/gwangju) Email: [koreamaria@yahoo.com](mailto:koreamaria@yahoo.com)





# TESOL International Convention 2018

By Rob Dickey

Overwhelming, in the best possible way.

Mix 6,000 English language teachers from across the globe with more than 900 educational sessions, 177 poster sessions, dozens of special meetings, 30 pre-convention institutes, 19 invited speaker sessions, and five onsite visits, plus affiliate workshops and assemblies, a couple dozen interest section (SIG) meetings, and 27 "Tea with Distinguished TESOLers" sessions. Add Chicago food, nearly 100 promotional displays from book publishers and materials distributors, schools, and employers. Wrap with the theme "The World Comes Together at TESOL."

Delightful professionally, socially, intellectually, and emotionally, to be touched by the diversity, unified in a passion for excellence on behalf of our learners.



TESOL offers a full week of activities, Monday through Saturday, with days starting as early as 7 a.m., running

as late as 8 p.m. Take your walking shoes to criss-cross the huge convention center, and your resume (if you're looking). Clean out your phone for new photographs, the conference app, and the conference program book (in PDF), or maybe buy the hardcopy book. Since you can't possibly see even one-tenth of the sessions, you might want to buy videos of other sessions. Zoltan Dörnyei and Ester de Jong were the big names this year – they started at 8 a.m.!

The TESOL Convention, unlike many other associations' conferences, is extremely diverse: attendees range from

teachers and employers at small private schools to widely read scholars, even those who aren't presenting that year. Retirees continue their annual trek to TESOL, as do MA TESOL students just beginning new careers. Sessions are not limited to the traditional TESOL topics either, as keynote presentations included a neuropsychologist and a girls' school founder, neither of whom claimed special ties to teaching English. There are also many additional ticketed sessions (for additional fees), the pre-convention institutes, a PreK–12 day, and educational site visits, the Teas, and admission to the Electronic Village.

As the KOTESOL representative, I attended nearly 12 hours of affiliate meetings and workshops. I also staffed a KOTESOL stand for an hour, and had the pleasure of meeting visitors reminiscing about their experiences in Korea and chatting with those considering Korea as their next teaching environment. I also had my own networking session and bumped into lots of old KOTESOL colleagues who have moved to other lands (Doug Margolis, Bill Snyder, and Tom Farrell, among many others). I didn't see as many sessions as I'd hoped... but it was a great week, and I thank KOTESOL for allowing me to serve, report my findings, and reimbursing some of my costs.



I heartily recommend your attendance at the TESOL Convention next year in Atlanta: March 12–15, 2019. The call for proposals will open in late May and close July 2, 2018.





# Extensive Reading in an Elementary School Setting

By Roxy Lee

## The Trouble with Textbooks

I have taught English in various places, from the *hagwon* to public schools, and to kindergarteners and elementary students. If you have ever taught a class of young learners, you have some idea of how varied they are in terms of interests, characteristics, and English levels. However, in most classes, I have been given particular textbooks to teach, regardless of students' levels and interests.

Public schools would provide a textbook pre-selected by the Ministry of Education. *Hagwons*, meanwhile, often required students to buy books that the *hagwon* had made. Imposing one textbook on students in differing circumstances makes me feel like I am trying to push knowledge into their heads. This might be why, here in Korea, we are spending so much money on English yet getting such a very modest outcome. Students suffer from "English fatigue" and eventually give up on learning the language. One of the ways of tackling this problem may be extensive reading (ER): encouraging students to choose English books they want to read and allowing them to read at their own pace. The purpose of this article is to share my experience with ER, some of the activities I have used, and the results I have observed.

## What is Extensive Reading?

The fundamental idea of ER is "reading a lot for pleasure." This is not new or surprising. Essentially, it involves doing what we do with our phones and computers on a daily basis, only with books, and possibly in a second language. For teachers, Day and Bamford (2002) famously established ten principles for ER education.

1. Reading materials should be easy.
2. Varied, interesting materials should be available.
3. Students choose what to read.
4. Students read as much as possible.
5. Students read for pleasure.
6. Reading is its own reward.
7. Reading speed is faster, rather than slower.
8. Reading is individual and silent.
9. Teachers guide students.
10. The teacher is a role model of a reader.

## Why Do ER?

In an EFL environment like Korea, where conversational English interactions may be rare, reading is a convenient way of getting the huge amount of input necessary for learning. Through the process of reading, students are exposed to linguistic and cultural information, plus they develop their strategies for comprehending a text.

"People acquiring a second language have the best chance for success through reading" – Stephen D. Krashen

## My Summer Camp

As part of my current job, I have a five-day English camp every vacation that I am free to design as I want. Usually, around 40 third- to sixth-grade students attend. On a few occasions, I have designed it around ER. The photo is an example of a camp classroom in which I have arranged books by level for students to choose from.

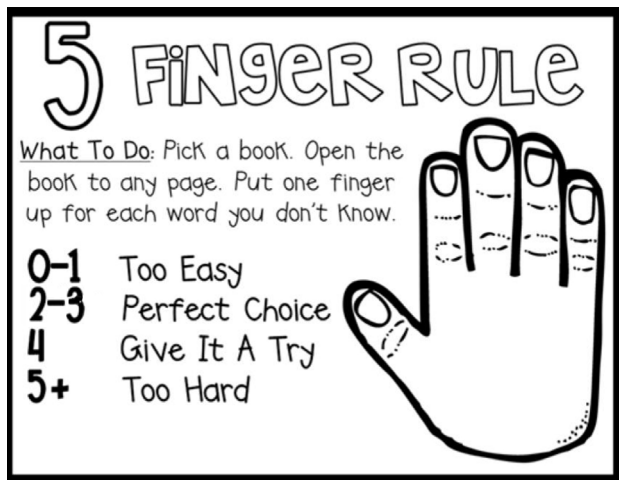


**"I thought reading English books was no fun. Now that I've read some, it is fun."**

In choosing activities for my camp, I set three core criteria: enjoyment, reading a lot, and collaboration. While they were enjoying reading, I encouraged students to help each other to maximize the advantage of having lots of students, as well as fostering a collaborative classroom culture.

### (1) The 5-Finger Rule

Students would often reject books, saying, "This is too difficult," when they saw a single new word in the book. Or sometimes they would choose books too difficult for themselves, just because there were characters they loved in those books. I used the five-finger rule (described in the image) to encourage them to select level-appropriate books.



### (2) Share and Exchange

This was a vocabulary game. Each student wrote one word from their book on a small-size card to teach other students. Then the student found a partner to teach the word to, and vice versa. When finished, they exchanged cards and found new partners, again and again. Because all the students were reading different books, I could not teach vocabulary myself. This was a way to fit vocabulary learning into the ER class. Going by student comments, they learned a lot of words this way, and had fun doing so.

### (3) Teacher's Storytelling

As the teacher can be a reading role model (Day & Bamford, 2002), I decided to read books to students. As I did so, I tried to demonstrate storytelling skills: acting, doing voices, singing, dancing, making jokes, etc. This seemed to work. Once I had read a book, many students would then ask to read it themselves.

### (4) Book Talk

This was simply a book talk like we do with our friends. Students talked about things they liked about their book (characters, scenes, storylines, and so on). Talking in English was the goal. However, I did not stop them when they talked in Korean, because book talk has to be comfortable. Students practiced expressing their opinions about their books and heard lots of opinions about their friends' books, too.

### Results and Reflections

On the final day of the camp, I conducted a survey. A total of 84% of the students responded that they had experienced positive changes in their perspectives on reading English books. Some qualitative examples were the following:

- "By playing English vocabulary games I have learned to read and understand words easily."
- "I used to leave books if they were written in English. I can read them if they are the right level for me, now."
- "I thought reading English books was no fun. Now that I've read some, it is fun."

I was so happy to read these. I felt like the students' resistance to reading in English might have been reduced, and they might be able to enjoy reading English books. My ER camps were only five days long, but in just that time I saw some of the possibilities of ER to change student perspectives and help them learn English. I would love to see ER in mainstream English education, but because of textbooks and curricula, it might be a big jump. However, ER is definitely suitable for English camps. To teachers planning camps, English clubs, and other such classes, I recommend you try it.

**"In an EFL environment like Korea, where conversational English interactions may be rare, reading is a convenient way of getting the huge amount of input necessary for learning."**

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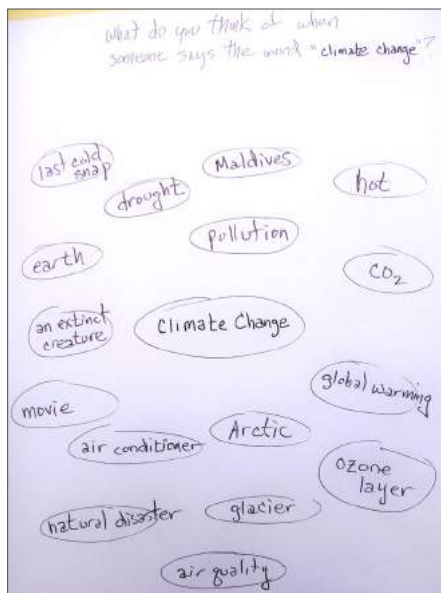


# Incorporating Theme-Based Instruction into Skills-Based Courses: Environmentalism and Social Justice

By Douglas Baumwoll

Whether we teach English language skills to public school students, private academy (*hakwon*) students, or university students, we all must consider the theme of the content that we deliver in our lessons. I don't refer here to the concept of "content" incorporated into educational theories such as Content-Based Instruction (CBI) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Rather, I mean the overall theme of the instructional language we use in explaining and modeling in class, and that of the exercises and worksheets we design for our students regardless of their ages or language skills levels. My goal in writing this essay is to promote discussion of such instructional elements and to encourage reflective practice as it pertains to each reader's personal teaching environment.

So, how do we as language instructors choose our lesson content for our academic year or semester, and for our daily lessons and communicative language exercises? Our choices relate to many facets of ESL instruction: teaching philosophy, reflective practice, lesson design, elicited student interests, and scripting instructional language, to name a few. First off, I say write (or rewrite) your teaching philosophy. Some years



ago, I saw Graham Crookes (University of Hawaii) speak at the KOTESOL International Conference (IC), and he left us with a challenge: go home, reflect, and rewrite our teaching philosophy. I did so the very next day. That exercise marked an evolutionary advance in my teaching career, as I articulated in writing changes in my educational approach gained through classroom experience and reflective practice.

A year or two after that, at another IC, I listened to reflective practice guru Thomas Farrell (Brock University) speak. I asked him a question there, and then sent him a follow-up email a few days later, to which he responded immediately. What did we discuss? Simple: the empowering effects of a student choosing his or her own content for writing and speaking assignments. Through my teaching of hundreds of students and thousands of classroom hours since then, I have found this singular idea to be the most influential on student motivation, enthusiasm, enjoyment, and quality of output.

Finally, as an instructor, what are your course goals and objectives regarding critical thinking and creative thinking? How do these determine the design of your lesson materials? How do you foster them in your students' spoken and written output during class time and their eventual learner outcomes? I reflect on all of this with every course I teach, and I annually revise my teaching philosophy accordingly.



During the teaching year, the notions of critical thinking, creative thinking, and overall theme-based instruction influence my teaching style. During my actual lessons, I consciously choose age-appropriate vocabulary that deals with egalitarian themes such as social and environmental justice when speaking instructional English (explaining, modelling) and designing activities. I incorporate this lexicon into focused-output exercises, be they minute-long partner interactions, five- to ten-minute oral presentations, or writing assignments the length of a sentence, paragraph, or essay. Science, politics, economics, social issues, nature, environmentalism, and climate change: any Korean student who takes a conversation or writing class from me will receive and produce English language related to these themes, while also gaining grammatical and functional proficiency in the productive macro language skills.



For example, one exercise I use is written (or spoken) brainstorms, or cluster diagrams. The critical choice now is what topic to give for the guided practice portion of the activity or lesson. My Korean students collectively enjoy different topics, but I will choose animals as the first topic. I won't make them write about a specific animal because that is controlling and teacher-centered. I will simply choose "animals" as the topic in this example, providing some guidance, but allowing students freedom to choose any animal they like and then to brainstorm any words they choose. After this first brainstorm, I do a second, where the student can choose any topic. Some students may want me to assign a second topic, and depending upon whether I am emphasizing creative thinking that day or not, I may provide one. The overarching themes here – meaning the themes I will revisit throughout the course and all the exercises done in lessons – are science, the environment, climate change, and social justice.

A second example involves the "he/she likes, I like" speaking game. I will provide a familiar topic for the first round, such as "food." The second-round topic will be "nature," "oceans," or "animals." Students choose the final-round topic, with choices varying wildly (which is the point). A third example is an exercise I do with students of all ages. I show an interesting photo incorporating themes such as the beach, the forest, animals, nature, hiking, or even factories and pollution. Students write five nouns, five verbs, and five adjectives that the photo makes them think about; their words do not have to be visible in the photo. In this exercise, students practice critical thinking while learning about parts of speech and using active vocabulary. Later in the lesson or soon thereafter, learners will complete independent practice by choosing any photo they like and writing or speaking the 15 words required.

Regarding teaching university students, I believe that university is not a place to simply memorize knowledge in major courses and rehash old topics and skills in language learning courses. I believe that refining critical and creative thinking skills, increasing worldly general and specific knowledge, developing cultural and societal sensitivities, understanding civic responsibilities, and increasing personal confidence and self-expression abilities are all critical to receiving a quality, holistic university education. Consequently, I consciously design my language learning courses, lessons, and activities with these goals, objectives, and outcomes in mind.

In my experience as a public school teacher trainer, I have found that – regardless of any required textbook

or departmentally mandated language goals – all foreign teachers in Korea enjoy the freedom to bring in outside materials. This is a luxury for us as the foreign teacher, particularly in primary and secondary public school settings where, generally speaking, Korean language teachers do not have such freedom.

As a university instructor in particular, you may be required to teach units on family, leisure time, and jobs, topics that all of your students have had before, but which you can now teach to them keeping theme-based instruction in mind. If you teach a family unit, you could talk about activities involving the environment, where the family is hiking together (in Korea or in the Amazon), appreciating organic food, experiencing a vegetarian meal, or caring for dogs or cats at the shelter. In your jobs unit, consider mention of the forest ranger, environmental scientist, documentary filmmaker, environmental reporter, and climate change



scientist as real jobs that pay good money. These jobs are available to Korean-only speakers, but also to EFL speakers who interact globally with others in the field, including businesses and consumers.

Imagine one planned learner outcome is to demonstrate critical thinking and effective use of the cause-effect rhetorical form in sentence-level speaking and writing. During my teacher talk of modelling and explaining, I would choose "fishing too much in the oceans" or "destruction of the Amazon" and model causes and effects showing a graphic organizer to the students. Next, in the guided portion of the activity, I will suggest an effect of air pollution, garbage in the ocean, or adverse human health. Students (individually, in pairs, or in groups) choose one topic and discuss three causes, writing in their graphic organizer. They then discuss their ideas with others. Finally, in the independent practice activity, students choose their

own causes and effects. Choices have included the effects of divorce on children, the effect of lack of sleep on students, the causes of air pollution, the effects of cell phones in the classroom, and the causes of the K-wave around the world. Developing their creative and critical thinking skills in this exercise, they can choose whatever topic they desire at this point; however, they have heard, written, and spoken about the environment in the first parts of the lesson.

Another example would be asking students to write or speak complex sentences (or, for younger students, basic subject + verb + object sentences). In the explanation and modelling phase of such lessons, I use examples from environmentalism or social justice – factual examples, not dogmatic ones – such as

“Developing their creative and critical thinking skills in this exercise, they can choose whatever topic they desire at this point; however, they have heard, written, and spoken about the environment in the first parts of the lesson.”

“oceans,” “animals,” or even “poverty.” Again, students end up with 100% freedom of choice on their topics for independent practice. I do, however, exercise my professional judgement in deciding whether a topic is acceptable or not. In the university classroom, I don’t allow cause-effect or comparison-contrast topics pertaining to shopping, baseball, or Samsung vs. iPhones because I consider such content frivolous in this specific learning environment. If students choose topics like these, I can always elicit appropriate content from them with just a couple of questions about their interests, thus better satisfying the lesson objectives for the day and falling in line with the overall course goals and learner outcomes for the year.

In conclusion, I will share one example of how my use of competency-based language teaching and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) changed people’s lives outside of the classroom. I gave a community talk in Gwangju, Jeollanamdo, where I spoke for an hour about Korea’s current issues with pollution in general, and its air pollution in particular. I touched on the fact that Korea’s coal-fired electric power plants, numbering more than 50, have a measurable, scientifically proven adverse effect on air quality. We talked about many other issues involving energy, transportation (including diesel engine emissions), agriculture, and

vegetarianism, and their effects on economics, health care costs, and quality of life in Korea.

After the presentation, two middle school girls shyly approached me and thanked me for sharing my time and information with them. They told me that my words had moved them, and that they considered these issues of extreme importance to them and to the world. They promised they would tell all of their friends about what I had said. They shook my hand, thanked me again, and meandered happily away. And I hadn’t spoken a single word in Korean to them.

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## The Author

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# When to Start Teaching Children English?

By Nargiza Iskandarova

Parents want the best for their children. Many adults also think children need to learn foreign languages, as they can be beneficial for the future. But some parents can become obsessed with the idea of starting language training as early as possible. It has been

## Developmental Theory

The developmental theory says that a child should be taught English as early as possible. Children from birth and up to 5–6 years of age can easily learn any language. They learn their native language naturally, and in the same way, they can learn an additional language.



A younger child learns language unconsciously. Parents believe that children can learn English as they do their native language; that is, they listen passively, and then reproduce words and phrases themselves. For instance, by the age of seven, every child knows Russian well in my country, despite the fact that they do not know what a noun, a subject, or present tense is. Hence, it follows that one can similarly learn English naturally, without consciously learning grammar rules.

As a result, children in their younger years are generally not afraid to talk. A child at this age is less afraid of making a mistake than an adult, so children more boldly use the language they are learning. Children do not have a language barrier because they are more direct

documented that if child starts learning English as a second language from three or four years of age, they can eventually acquire native-like speech and understanding. A clear example can be seen in the example of a Russian girl, Svetlana Arkhangelskaya, who can now speak seven languages, including English. This girl started learning languages at the age of two.

Each child is an individual, so the “universal age” for the beginning of training is almost impossible to designate; however, while there is no definitive answer to this question of when to start teaching a child English, let us consider the benefits of learning English from an early age, based on my personal experience, and three different approaches to this age-old question of when a child is ready to start studying and learning a second language.





and less fearful than adults. They just say what they want without paying attention to their pronunciation or mistakes in speech. Their focus is on the message. Adults may correct these mistakes, and gradually the child gets used to speaking more correctly.

### Toy Theory

Children also have good memories. They repeat much of what they hear and seize new words for themselves. The toy theory offers an effective practical approach for a parent to practice English with their child, as, for example, they might motivate the child with an "English doll." One can buy a doll (or use a glove doll) and introduce it to the young child using English words; L1 language may follow. It might be more interesting to

that language-based learning is best from the ages of two or three. The Zaitsev System uses a variety of techniques such as playing English games and singing English songs.

3. The Card Play technique is designed primarily for very young learners. This technique helps the visual memory of the child and relies on the belief that pictures and words written on cards will be remembered and simplify the learning of reading and writing in the future. Cards can be created as an independent activity: paper, glue, and a variety of colorful pens are needed. First, students cut paper cards into squares and stick on pictures of target language words. Then they write the word in different colors to make it interesting. You can use such cards with children up to middle school age.

4. The Make Me Speak technique is suitable for children from the ages of four or five years. With this technique, the teacher chooses a topic and devotes a series of class periods to it. He or she offers different types of activities through which children

learn something interesting about a project in addition to completing tasks for independent work, or with parents, depending on age. By the end of the lesson, children should be able to share their completed work; for example, given a topic such as fruit and vegetables, they could draw pictures of fruits and vegetables and include names in English.

5. The Mixed Method sees a combination of techniques such as playing with the child in games, learning songs, and developing projects. The main advantage is diversity. It will be easier to keep the child interested as he or she will not know beforehand what the "teacher" is planning to do next, and therefore avoids creating feelings of being trapped into a routine.

**“Svetlana Arkhangelskaya, who can now speak seven languages ... started learning languages at the age of two”**

the child to learn by playing and watching. Moreover, watching English cartoons, singing English songs, and children’s rhymes and poems will help to develop speaking and understanding ability.

It is also easier for the child to determine good pronunciation. The "Repeat-After-Me" approach is also key for developing their knowledge in terms of English. This idea sees students repeating various English words with their parents because the onomatopoeic abilities of children are at an elevated level, meaning that children catch the sounds of words more easily. Children quickly learn to pronounce all the sounds of their native language as an adult models them. Similarly, they learn to pronounce the sounds of English speech quickly and correctly.

### Teaching Techniques for Children

When choosing a method of teaching English, there are a range of different techniques for each stage of development.

1. The Game Technique is simple, interesting, and effective. The teacher conducts games during which children improve their language skills. The advantage of this technique is that games can be adapted for any age, from the age of one year, onward. By playing games, the child develops both oral speech and knowledge of grammar, spelling, etc.

2. St. Petersburg scientist Nikolai Zaitsev’s approach also focuses on having fun, however, it is his belief

### The Author

**Nargiza Iskandarova** comes from Uzbekistan and is a graduate of the Medical College in Fergana. She is currently studying English language and literature at Chonnam National University. Nargiza is likely the youngest member of KOTESOL. Nargiza has many ideas to share with international teachers on their shared path into the future of higher education. Email: [iskandarovanargiz99@gmail.com](mailto:iskandarovanargiz99@gmail.com)



# Book Review: *SLA Applied to English Language Teaching*

By Michael Lessard-Clouston

TESOL International Association, 2018.

Reviewed by Heidi Vande Voort Nam

How do people learn new languages? This basic question lies at the heart of language education and drives research into second language acquisition (SLA). No matter how long we have been teaching, it is a question that we should revisit as we refine our teaching methodologies. *SLA Applied to English Language Teaching* by Michael Lessard-Clouston is a tool to help teachers do that.

Since no prior knowledge is assumed, the book will be accessible to novice teachers. The first chapter starts by addressing the basic question "What is SLA?" and as the book proceeds, relevant terminology is defined in the text. Since the chapters are short (generally four to six pages), readers at a C1 level or higher will probably find them light reading. Compared to other SLA textbooks, this book does not describe SLA research in great detail. Instead, it highlights conclusions and points out areas of consensus or debate. References are provided so that curious readers will know where to look for more information.

*SLA Applied to English Language Teaching* is part of the English Language Teacher Development series edited by Tom Farrell, which aims to help teachers find connections between theory and their own classroom practices. This book accomplishes that goal by inviting readers to respond to a set of reflective questions that focus on a particular aspect of SLA at the end of each chapter section. A few of the questions are more theoretical: for example, "What are your thoughts on acquisition versus learning distinction?" But most questions are clearly practical, calling on readers to describe their own teaching experiences within the provided framework: for example, "How do you encourage students to give each other feedback?" Generally, five to eight of these reflection questions are spread throughout each chapter.

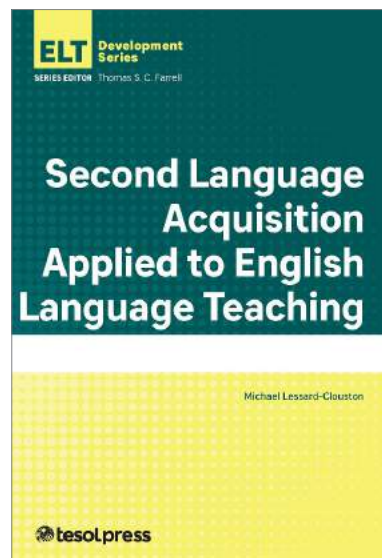
The book provides an overview of a range of SLA topics. After introducing the concept of SLA, an entire chapter is devoted to discussing Stephen Krashen's five hypotheses, and readers are challenged to decide which of these ideas are relevant to their own teaching. The following chapters define different types of input and output, highlighting the importance of negative input and presenting reasons for pushed output. Drawing on Paul Nation's four-strands framework, readers are encouraged to consider the balance of different types of input and output in their own lessons. The book introduces Michael Long's Interaction Hypothesis and provides practical suggestions for increasing interaction in the classroom. It discusses possible effects of age and anxiety on language learning, and it distinguishes different types of errors, pointing out which types of error correction learning. The book also presents Brian Tomlinson's

principles for evaluating ELT materials and challenges readers to evaluate their own course design in light of SLA theories.

Here are several ideas for using *SLA Applied to English Language Teaching*:

- Use it as a guide for personal reflective practice or with a reflective practice group. The questions invite teachers to describe and evaluate their own teaching practices.
- Use it as background reading for faculty professional development. By focusing on key terms, the brief readings can provide a common vocabulary for discussing school practices and policies.
- Use it as part of a pre-service teaching program that also includes a teaching practicum. Since most of the questions address the readers' current teaching practices, readers will need some classroom experience in order to answer them.

Overall, *SLA Applied to English Language Teaching* will be a valuable resource for teachers who need a short, accessible overview of SLA that encourages the application of theory to practice.



## The Reviewer

**Heidi Vande Voort Nam** teaches general English and English education courses at Chongshin University in Seoul. She is a presenter for KOTESOL's teacher training arm, KOTESOL Teacher Training, and co-facilitator of the KOTESOL Christian Teachers SIG. Email: heidnam@gmail.com



# Encouraging Teachers to Engage in Reflective Practice: An Asian Focus

By Dr. Thomas S. C. Farrell



**Dr. Thomas Farrell**

## Introduction

In a very early article in TEC, Donald Freeman (1998) reminded us that language teachers are best suited to carry out research in their own classrooms because they are “more insiders to their settings than researchers whose work lives are elsewhere” (p. 6).

In one of my recent TEC articles last year, I suggested that teachers matter when conducting research because they will be the ones that truly matter when it comes to putting or not putting the results of any research into practice (Farrell, 2017). Now as a follow up, in this article I want to outline some topics that teachers in Korea can consider reflecting on in terms of

classroom-oriented research. These topics come from a book I edited on language teacher research in Asia (Farrell, 2006), and I believe that teachers in Korea can replicate many or all of these studies in their own contexts and thus “get their feet wet” when reflecting on their practice.

## Reflecting on Practice

I am the editor of TESOL’s Language Teacher Research series that reported studies outlining how language teachers systematically reflected on their own practice on six different continents (68 different chapters in total), including Asia. *Language Teacher Research in Asia* (Farrell, 2006) presented research that was conducted by language teachers at all levels, with countries representing both north and south Asia. Table 1 summarizes some the Asian topics, their methods of research, the results, and the author(s) reflections.

**Table 1: Language Teacher Research in Asia**

Topic / Issue	Method	Results	Reflections
Improve writing	Teach genre	Students’ writing improved	Continue using genre
Expert and non-expert teachers differences	Diaries, lesson plans, observations, interviews	Non-expert teachers used surface approaches; experts applied concepts beyond the course	Teachers need regular opportunities to reflect
Learner autonomously	Observations, interviews	Independent work does not always mean independent learning	Teachers should “step back” during independent work
What student teachers learn	Pre-course and post-course concept maps	Students showed more detail in answers, but lack complexity	Reflection with concept maps useful
Impact of self-access language learning centers	Questionnaires, implementation of self-access center	Hours spent voluntarily at center indication of usefulness of program	Diverse learning preferences and needs served in centers
Improve students’ listening	Questionnaires	Used more cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies	Students developed greater self-awareness as learners
Balance language learning and testing	Student survey	Students wanted more TOEFL test instruction	Importance of curriculum review; consult stakeholders
Student impressions of lessons	Learning logs, course evaluations	Students focused on process and content	Teacher learned impressions students develop on lessons
Implementing Project-Based Learning	PBL program, class discussions, observations	Success dependent on appropriate planning, implementation, and assessment	Use materials appropriate to linguistic abilities & interests of students
Increase willingness to communicate in L2	Teaching journal, audio-recorded lessons, peer observation	Comprehension and participation better when content familiar	Need to increase student extrinsic motivation



A common theme revealed in Table 1 is how teachers can improve student performance in various aspects of language learning with the majority of researchers using some kind of qualitative research method as their preferred mode of data collection. More specifically, the topics tended to focus on the learner, learning, how learning can become more autonomous, creating a self-access language learning center in a high school, and developing project-based learning, to name but a few. The reflecting teachers tended to use interviews, observations, and questionnaires as their preferred modes of data collection, and this seems to be common for many teachers in other contexts as well.

### Conclusion

Many teachers think that they have nothing to say or reflect on concerning their practice. However, as the results of the research previously conducted in Asian settings confirm, teachers have plenty to say, and the topics of over ten years ago remain today. Teachers who reflect on their practice can generate new understandings and knowledge of their own workplace, and thus become generators rather than consumers of others' research. More often than not,

the results of such research generated by others (i.e., teacher cognition research) rarely gets back to the teachers or to the institutions that hosted the outside researchers in the first place. Of course, teachers in Korea and elsewhere can reflect on different topics than those summarized above. But if teachers want to experience reflection by replicating the studies outlined above in their own context and by following the same methods, they can experience the reflecting process in a less stressful manner while at the same time learning how to reflect on their own practice

**“Teachers ... truly matter when it comes to putting or not putting the results of any research into practice.”**

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## Getting Involved with KOTESOL

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# VOLUNTEER



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

## Part 6: The Power of Stories

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

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

Gregersen, T., & MacIntyre, P. D. (Eds.). (2017). *Innovative practices in language teacher education: Spanning the Spectrum from intra- to inter-personal teacher development*. New York, NY: Springer Nature.

What is it about stories that so captivates our students?

We have long known that stories are powerful teaching tools, and now neuroscience is telling us why. In terms of retention, research shows information delivered in stories is better learned than through other means, such as explanations and lectures. Oaks (1995) compared retention from traditional lectures to storytelling. He found that even after five weeks, about twice as many people in the group hearing the stories still remembered the key points. Berkowitz and Taylor (1981) found that children recalled significantly more information from the narrative passages than they did from expository passages with similar content. George and Schaer (1986) found that kindergarten children's recall of prose content was significantly higher when given by storytelling than other means, including *television!*



Dr. Curtis Kelly

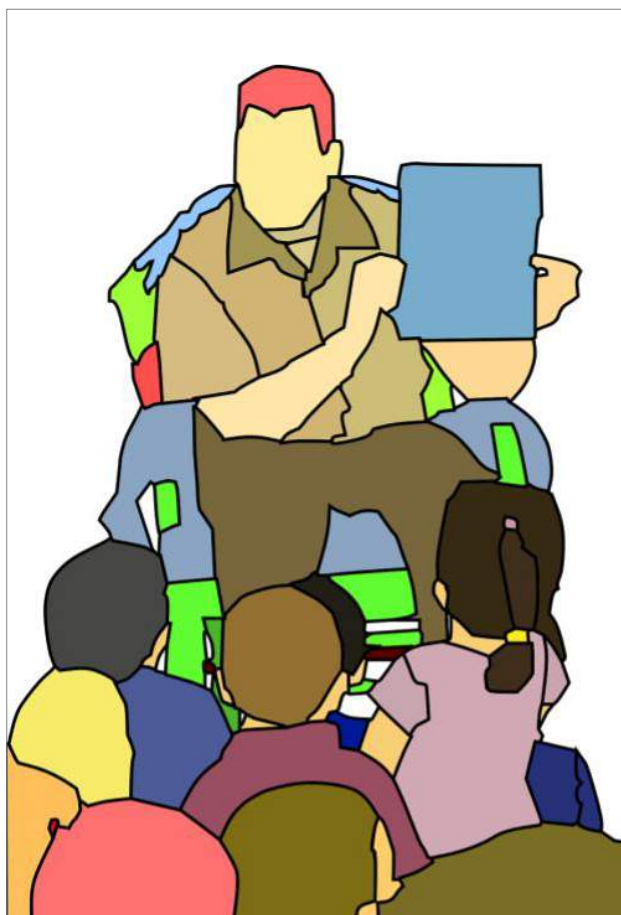
One might conclude that we retain more from stories because they are inherently more interesting, so researchers from University of California tested for this (Graesser et al., 1980). As expected, narrative texts were read about twice as fast as the expository texts and remembered twice as well, with a strong correlation

between narrativity and the amount of information recalled (0.92). Unexpectedly, however, familiarity and interestingness had very little effect on either speed or retention. As we will see later, there is something special about the narrative format, regardless of the content.

Stories can be actively used by the learners as well. In two studies (Bower & Clark, 1969; Higbee, 1977) participants were given word lists to memorize. Half were told to memorize them any way they wanted, and the other half were told to put the words in stories. The story group showed far better retention. How much better? They remembered from two to seven times as many words. This is amazing! Imagine if you could get your students to remember twice as many vocabulary items, and that was just the worst case.

How does neuroscience explain this? As discussed earlier, the reticular activating system, in cooperation with other areas, tags information with personal relevance and emotional valence as important to remember. Stories that arouse emotion do so through the release of three important neurotransmitters: (a) dopamine, the neurotransmitter of drive, reward, and deeper learning; (b) cortisol, the stress hormone associated with distress and focus; and (c) everyone's favorite, oxytocin, the neurotransmitter associated with bonding.<sup>1</sup>

Neuroscientist Paul Zak (2015) has been doing amazing research on cortisol and oxytocin release caused by moving stories. He found that touching stories cause the



release of both compounds, resulting in greater attention, more sympathy, and changes in attitudes. Because of oxytocin release, Zak's subjects were more willing to give money to strangers after experiencing a touching story. Zak found something else, too. The information must be structured in a particular way for these neurotransmitters to be released, the structure that stories most are made of: the arc of rising action, climax, and falling action.

Once again, we find that not just the content of a story affects the brain, but so does the format. Why does narrative organization, where events occur one after the other, have such a great impact on learning? The answer is because that is how we are wired:

A story, if broken down into the simplest form, is cause and effect. And that is exactly how we think. We think in narratives all day long, no matter if it is about buying groceries, whether we think about work or our spouse at home. We make up (short) stories in our heads for every action and conversation. (Widrich, 2012, p. 1)



If I do this, then I hope to get this result. This is an unconscious, uncontrollable process, even when we are asleep. Our brains are prediction machines.

Our brains are built to remember things that are important to us. Stories are important because they are encapsulated experience. As Wilson (2002) puts it, "The stories we tell ourselves and others are our survival manuals" (p. 10). They help decode the world, exploit our environment, and hone our social skills. Mar and Oatley (2008) reported in two studies that individuals who frequently read fiction seem to be better able to understand other people, empathize with them, and see the world from their perspective.

Oatley notes,

Fiction is a particularly useful simulation because negotiating the social world effectively is extremely tricky, requiring us to weigh up myriad interacting instances of cause and effect. Just as computer simulations can help us get to grips with complex problems such as flying a plane or forecasting the weather, so novels, stories, and dramas can help us understand the complexities of social life. (p. 42)

The success of our species is mainly due to the way we have made these manuals of encapsulated experience transferable. Uri Hasson from Princeton examined the brains of someone telling a story and someone listening, and found something surprising. Their brains linked up:

[When the teller] had activity in her insula, an emotional brain region, the listeners did too. When her frontal cortex lit up, so did theirs. By simply telling a story, the woman could plant ideas, thoughts, and emotions into the listeners' brains. (Widrich, 2012, p. 1)

We must respect the power of stories. One of the greatest changes in language teaching in the last 20 years has been the spread of extensive reading (ER). Advocates have long said ER causes language learning because (a) it is comprehensible, (b) it builds automaticity, and (c) it increases learner exposure to the language (Richard Day, personal communication, 2004). They might also add, as an aside, that since reading is pleasurable, students are more likely to keep doing it. Neuroscience paints a different picture. After all, most of what language students do is comprehensible, builds automaticity,



**“Children’s recall of prose content was significantly higher when given by storytelling than other means, including television!”**



and increases exposure to the language. Instead, what makes ER particularly effective is that our brains are built to remember information in the narrative format, and even more so if it arouses emotion.

I tell short stories at the end of class. My students really seem to like that. I avoid stories that are fairy tales or children's stories because the message they contain, such as "obey your parents," are not as relevant in today's world. Instead, I choose true stories that are either humorous or heart-warming. Stories like these are more likely to connect to the moral values my young learners are developing, and thus be more moving to them.

I do not preface the stories with vocabulary practice, nor do I ask comprehension questions after. The story itself is the best vehicle for language learning, and a shift to language practice saps the power of the message. If I have learners who have trouble following the English, I'll summarize the story in L1 once or twice in the middle to help. The occasional short stories are always the most complimented aspect of the class in class evaluations.

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### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Note the functions of these three neurotransmitters are simplified here. They are also associated with many other behaviors as well, including aggression, addiction, and prejudice.

## The KOTESOL Pass-It-On Challenge

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



I hope you are happy to be a KOTESOL member, too. If that is the case, I encourage you to **pass it on** – to pass on the word about the benefits to be gained from KOTESOL, to introduce to your ELT colleagues the advantages of membership in the KOTESOL community. Our challenge to each KOTESOL member is to bring one new member into our organization in 2018. Are you up to the challenge?

— David Shaffer, KOTESOL President

## KOTESOL People: Rhea Metituk

**Rhea Metituk is currently the president of the Busan-Gyeongnam KOTESOL Chapter. *The English Connection* caught up with her to ask her about her time with KOTESOL and in Korea in general.**

**TEC: Where do you currently work, and how are you enjoying it?**

**Rhea Metituk:** I currently work at the University of Ulsan in the Language Education Department, and I love it. I teach freshman English conversation and other



classes that vary each semester, including World English (an immersion-style lecture course), Screen English, Business English Writing, TOEIC, and Topic Discussion and Writing in English immersion camps. I am piloting a class on a flipped-learning environment for which I have been awarded a small research grant. My

director and manager are wonderful people and were instrumental in the robust success of Busan-Gyeongnam KOTESOL Chapter's recent regional conference. I am looking forward to seeing what transpires next. It is a beautiful campus, and Ulsan has been treating me well since I moved here a year ago, with a theatre troupe, good camping in the nearby mountains, vegan potlucks, yoga classes, and trivia nights. The local community is warm and friendly, and a bonus too is that living here makes it easy to keep one foot in Busan on weekends, as it is so close.

**TEC: What is your current role within KOTESOL?**

**RM:** This year, I am chapter president of Busan-Gyeongnam KOTESOL. I have also recently been appointed Financial Affairs Committee chair on the National Council. I thoroughly enjoy all the meetings at my local chapter, as well as the Council meetings in Seoul. It is my goal to visit all the chapters this year, and I have made it to Daegu and Gwangju thus far. I have met great people who inspired me with excellent organizational management, and I got to know volunteers in their voluminously

active chapters. Since then, I have reached out to regional chapter officers and members of the National Council who generously assisted my chapter with manifesting our "Gamechangers in ELT" conference. We had 58 in attendance, which exceeded our expectations, and we continue to receive glowing reviews about the presenters and how well our volunteers managed the event. Hopefully we have revived an annual tradition that we can look forward to next year, in 2019.

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

**RM:** In Canada, while completing my BA in psychology at the University of Alberta, I was an active volunteer in NGOs during my student career, and paid the bills as a line cook making various cuisines, including French, German, Portuguese, Western gourmet, and vegan. I did my final research project with a professor of dream psychology and the psychology of aesthetics, Dr. Donald Kuiken, in a study on art therapy. Immediately after graduation, I left for Swaziland, where I volunteered as a health educator and liaison in a local Swazi HIV/AIDS organization through Canadian Crossroads International, and I also traveled around Southern Africa, including South Africa and Mozambique. I saw lions, cheetahs,



giraffes, monkeys, hippos, and rhinos up close on safari, got severe food poisoning from eating meat, and survived. I was inspired by the social and emotional intelligence of the culture I was immersed in, and from then on really understood how important it is to be a global citizen. After a short stint in an ESL school upon return to Canada, I jumped over to Asia into ELT, arriving in Korea on Valentine's Day, 2002, just in time for the World Cup. I joke that Korea is the love of my life. Our affair has had turbulent times, but we always work it out.

**TEC: How well have you adjusted to life in Korea, and what advice would you give to newcomers?**

**RM:** Follow your whims and take advantage of the opportunities here in our unique, dynamic expat community, and also be a good diplomat. Start learning Korean immediately and continue digging into the language earnestly so you can have close relationships and a deeper perspective of your life here. Keep nurturing your connections made through travel and experiences. Cultivate gratitude – be patient and compassionate to yourself and others.

I remember being overwhelmed by the crowds and the frantic pace, not always enamored with the food, and feeling at a loss when first starting to try to learn the language. Adjustment has come in waves, and reflection has helped this process. So do vacations. My hobbies and friends have always anchored me, and with persistence continued to define my place and identity as a member of our global house – a word I borrow from Han Biya.

While based in Korea, I have been fortunate enough to indulge in a lot of travel, including being one of the first on the Wonhyo pilgrimage, and to study kung fu, ki gong, hapkido, reiki, Korean music, and zendance. I have also completed advanced Raja yoga teacher certification and scuba diving certification, learned rock and ice climbing, took meditation courses, did temple stays, attended theater performances, played team handball and Gaelic football, and dabbled in learning more French and some Spanish while chipping away steadily at Korean.

Learning Korean is like banging your head against the wall. It is painful at first, or at least it was for me, but eventually though, once you can break through to fluency enough for conversations, it is the most satisfying language to have the privilege to know. To be swimming in another culture is having a lifelong learning opportunity around you all the time. This is the perfect environment for teachers, as the best teachers are lifelong learners themselves.

**TEC: Did learning Korean help you to better understand what your students are going through while trying to learn English?**

**RM:** Absolutely. It allowed me to have more empathy as an instructor, experiencing the vulnerability, excitement, and frustrations of the process of being a language learner. Being a learner in the L1 of your students also gives specific insight to L1 to L2 translation errors and differences in perceiving and expressing in the two languages. It is also a useful way to use oneself as a guinea pig to try to experiment with different learning methods. When is it best to sit down and memorize grammar and vocabulary? How much does it help to listen to movies and music? When is it best to stop worrying about being perfect and make yourself understood with persistent practice? I have tried many methods over the years, and I am still working on it.



For me, my best classroom experience was in the Sogang University Korean language program. This was when I was able to break through and have conversations, due to the high emphasis on practice and also how well-organized the program and instructors were. As I go beyond, self-study has become important, but creating my own need to use the language is always a priori. Currently, I am working on passing the KIIP level 5, and I am considering whether studying TOPIK would be useful or trying some immersion style methods through taking classes at a community center or university. So to answer your question, yes, it helped me to understand my students and reflect on a deeper level about the differences between Korean and English and on the best ways to learn different aspects of language. I try to remember and to remind my students of all the real-life marvels having language skills can give.



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

**RM:** KOTESOL is a word that had been imprinted in my psyche from some mysterious place. Everyone knows about it, but what is it? Upon recommendation by a friend who boasted about presenting at her local chapter in Gwangju, I decided to become a member, initially to update my specs while searching for a position in a post-secondary institution in Korea. From the first meeting, I was hooked, and also at my first meeting I was voted in as chapter secretary, uncontested as it was, and it has been a happy blur since then. I was impressed with

**“[Learning Korean] allowed me to have more empathy as an instructor, experiencing the vulnerability, excitement, and frustrations of the process of being a language learner.”**

the engaging discussions about teaching and positive attitudes of the attendees. I owe a lot to Jeannette Kranick and Ian Adkins, who were the Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter treasurer and president, respectively, as well as to Andrew MacIsaac, the current vice president, for a really great first year that made KOTESOL an important part of my life from the get-go.

**TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL?**

**RM:** The people, the people, the people. Feeling empowered by taking charge of your own personal development and working to take on challenges and improve your situation. “Gamechangers in ELT” was the name of our recent conference, and it is how I see KOTESOL. A game changer is a catalyst, a doer, and a creator. A game changer is also someone who is curious and has spark. KOTESOL members are looking at their careers and want to amp up their trajectory; KOTESOL members are people people and enjoy working together to reflect on where we are going. KOTESOL members are people who like to develop their reach insofar as what they can achieve as teachers, and they value making a strong professional network. KOTESOL people are nesting here, and they take their work seriously, or they want to have their specs solid before moving on to the next stage. KOTESOL members are theatrical and musical, as well as quiet and introspective. KOTESOL people are the perfect ambiverts, and they are usually quite comfortable in their own skin, except when they’re not, but they are not afraid to show their human side. It is all quite a lot of fun.

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

**RM:** Online developments and greater investment in tech. Plainly said, we need to upgrade our website. We need to support social justice SIGs and be as inclusive as possible, including encouraging people from all perspectives to be involved and give them influential roles in the organization. We also need to reexamine training and workshops and how we may be of service. The same-old-same-old is so 19th century, so we ought not get caught in that trap. Modern education is meant to equip students to face modern problems, so we have

to be on top of our game as language teachers and as any kind of people of influence. We will influence regardless, so we must work towards a more elevated consciousness and keep revising our strategies. Without a doubt, the developing Climate Change Education SIG could be the most important group we have in terms of the future. If Earth were 24 hours old, we have been here for three seconds, and we will

not last another second without drastically adapting our collective behavior. Without an inhabitable planet 25 years from now, there is not much else to say about that, is there? Researching problems, accountability, and prioritization are the work of a good academic, and so is the role of being a record keeper, which involves looking at the long-term story. If the house is burning down, the first priority is putting out the fire. Then we can teach students to write poetry about heroes.

**TEC: You mention the Climate Change SIG. Is there a fundamental connection between climate change and EFL learning, or is it more that we can use our positions to advance a good cause?**

**RM:** Good question. This is in part a recognition of valuing the lives and futures of my students and shepherding them towards making good choices, and developing critical thinking skills, and in part, working towards developing habits that help me contribute to all our futures in a responsible manner. I am an activist for the environment, as well as for human and animal rights, and I am also a teacher by profession, so naturally these concerns will be integrated in how I manifest as an EFL instructor. I would say it is our responsibility to advance not a good cause, but a necessary cause. Political leaders who don’t address this nowadays are considered irresponsible, and it is a movement that requires working together as a global community. I think inaction is irresponsible. We may not be able to include the big lessons in every little lesson, but I am always scouting for opportunities.



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