

# The English Connection

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**Curtis Kelly gets brainy**

**Tim Thompson goes to Russia**

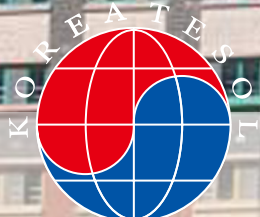
**Jessica Oliveri reviews the international conference**

**... and more!**

**Naudé on racism**

**Arturo on homophobia**

***The Social Justice Issue Issue***



**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

Welcome to the social justice issues edition of *The English Connection* (TEC)! Do your students know the word “staycation” yet? It is an important word for us NETs living overseas and far from friends and family. In recent news, two mothers in Sweden started a campaign to get 100,000 people to pledge to not taking any long-haul airplane flights, thereby avoiding the doubling of their greenhouse gas footprint for a year. It is good news that the first solar-powered airplane circumnavigated the world two years ago, and battery technology seems to be finally developing to allow the rapid adaptation to scaled-up designs of commercial electric flights, but we’re not there yet.



Have you seen *Bohemian Rhapsody* yet?! I want to say it had special resonance for me as a child of the early '70s with Mr. Mercury's golden voice, that piercing guitar, and all their audible attitude ringing loudly even down in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, in chatting with a younger friend from India, and an even younger friend from Vietnam, while neither of them saw the original live broadcast of the Live Aid concert in '84, the songs and the story of the man and his band mean much to them, too. And all three of us are heterosexual.

My Vietnamese friend Cuong and I went to see the film five weeks after it started screening in Korea. The theater was sold out. This is highly unusual for Korea. A brief news clip on Arirang News just announced it's the most popular music movie in Korea, surpassing *Les Misérables*. I suspect it will become the most popular foreign film to ever screen in Korea.

The layers of irony here are interesting and potentially positive. The film certainly celebrates the unique talent of an obvious immigrant. Although he was not a refugee and was quite middle class, he was still subject to ongoing racist jibes as even this politely toned-down telling of his life story makes clear.

Another layer of irony is that this year also saw violence and a potentially wonderfully positive celebration of diversity and life turn sour due to ignorant protestors hijacking the first-ever Incheon Queer Culture Festival with their own form of utterly misplaced and entitled prejudice.

It is a further irony that in this, the year of the worst famine our global village has ever seen, the biggest movie of the year starts and ends with a focus on Live Aid. That concert remains an example of how beautiful and exciting it can be when people work together creatively for a common cause, especially for others in need. When will we see that attitude and effort for the good people of Yemen? After all, there are barely 100 kilometers between there and Ethiopia.

In this issue of TEC, Arturo Collado offers an introduction to his educational experiences in Korea addressing issues of identity and homophobia, including insights into dealing openly and frankly with rapidly developing young students and their equally evolving educational environment. Alaric Naudé offers a focus on teaching to move students beyond gender discrimination and stereotyping in the Korean cultural context.

But, that's not all! In this issue, you can experience this year's excellent international conference as a first-time conference-goer with Jessica Oliveri, go to Russia for a local conference with long-time TEC contributor Tim Thompson, and check out all our excellent columns and even more new contributions from nearby and as far away as Bolivia!

So, whether you are flying “back home” this holiday season, or if you've looked at the climate and then determined to enjoy a “staycation” to watch *Bohemian Rhapsody* again, or to just get to know your (new) hometown better, remember: TEC is a great companion for the road as well as for reflection on this year and preparation for the next, Jesus was a refugee from the Middle East, and Freddie Mercury's first *first* name was Farrokh, darling!

# President's Message

By **Dr. David E. Shaffer** KOTESOL President

Winter is setting in over the Peninsula, the semester is headed toward its end for many, and vacations are being planned. While this suggests a period of hibernation for Korean education and for bears, KOTESOL remains ever active.

Since our last issue of *The English Connection* (TEC), we have had conferences, workshops, and a leadership retreat. Ahead of us are year-end events, more chapter workshops and conferences, and a National Council meeting.

Our October International Conference was a huge success; this is supported by feedback from the invited speakers, presenters, attendees, and the conference committee itself. The attendance was the highest in recent years, and the conference sessions were praised for their quality. Thank you, Conference Chair Kathleen Kelley and your entire team, for a job exceptionally well done!



Immediately following the conference, our Annual Business Meeting (ABM) was held. Highlights of the reports were that KOTESOL has increased its partnerships with other ELT associations, the Environmental Justice SIG has been established, and KOTESOL publications and publicity are healthier than ever before. New initiatives included the Pass-It-On Challenge for membership and the Volunteer Service Initiative. The Research Paper of the Year Award has been initiated this year, and the Teacher of the Year Award has been set in motion for next year.

The annual service awards were also announced and presented. KOTESOL's highest service award, the President's Award, went to the very deserving Lindsay Herron, and Outstanding Service Awards were presented to the following: Kathleen Kelley, Robert J. Dickey, Kara Mac Donald, Michael Free, Rhea Metituk, Allison Bill, Stewart Gray, Michael Peacock, and John Phillips. Meritorious Service Awards went to 12 additional recipients, and service certificates to 27 others. We are extremely grateful for the volunteer service of so many for our organization.

National election results were also announced. KOTESOL's elected officers for 2018–19 are President: David Shaffer; First Vice-President: James "Jake" Kimball; Second Vice-President: Mike Peacock; Secretary: Martin Todd; Treasurer: John Simmons; International Conference Comm. Co-chair: Michael Free; and Nominations and Elections Comm. Chair: Maria Lisak. I thank the membership for the confidence that they have expressed in me and pledge to work with this outstanding team of officers as well as the other members of the National Council for the betterment of KOTESOL and its members in the coming year.

In addition to a dozen chapter workshops this autumn, three chapters have held their annual conferences: Jeonju–North Jeolla Chapter; Yongin Chapter; and Daejeon Chapter, whose accompanying turkey dinner was their best ever! This is also the season of leadership changes at numerous chapters: Daegu Chapter has selected Kimberley Roberts as their new chapter president, Bryan Hale is the newly elected president at Gwangju Chapter, Arturo Collado takes over as president at Gangwon Chapter, and Rhea Metituk continues as president at Busan Chapter. Congratulations and best wishes for the coming year!

Leadership Retreat, our annual meeting with the membership for collecting ideas and planning for the coming year, and beyond, was held in Seoul the last weekend of November with an emphasis on volunteerism. Look for an upgraded Volunteer page on our website in the near future. Two recurring themes throughout the day were the need for better communication with the general membership and increased attention to diversity.

Vacation time is a great time for professional development. Keep in mind the KOTESOL events near you: Gwangju, Gangwon, Yongin, Daegu, Busan, and Daejeon Chapters are all planning end-of-year events. This is the time of year for reflecting. Reflect on your year of teaching, buttress the areas that could use support, and be creative in planning for your next teaching year. Make the New Year's resolutions that you need to make, and have a very, very joyous holiday season!

# Addressing Homophobia in the Korean Classroom

By Arturo Collado

***This piece was originally posted in KOTESOL's Social Justice (Critical Educators in Korea) SIG Facebook group as part of a longer discussion. It has been edited for clarity and accuracy, and the names of people mentioned have been changed. — Ed.***

What follows is my response to Lynn Bee who made this comment: "What would you do if you had a class with differing opinions? Really this is every class I've ever taught; for a single example with a single class (this was an intensive English class), one student was LBGTQ (not open, but less able to hide it). He had several good friends in the class (which was great), and there were 3–4 students who were verging on violently homophobic. – I guess what I'm asking is if you believe it's a teacher's (or anyone's) job to advance the cause of social justice? – I wholeheartedly agree to not forcing anyone to learn anything. We don't get to choose our students most of the time, however. How do you reconcile that?"

I decided to make a proper post because I think that her points are valid, they speak to what many teachers are curious about, and I didn't want it to be buried in the comments. I also want to say to Lynn: Thank you for engaging with me on this, and I'll do my best to address your points.

To your question: "Do you believe it's a teacher's (or anyone's) job to advance the cause of social justice?"

Joe Swift brought this up before in this space, and I didn't really put in my two cents then, so now's my chance. Zim Travilla said "no" and he went on to use the word "vigilante," and I didn't understand his point, which happens a lot, and I think it's more my failing. Feel free to clarify, Zim. FYI, when I get excited, it takes a while for me to understand what is being said to me. In this room of academics and educators, I'm not one of the sharpest tools in the shed, sadly. But I still believe in using my limited faculties to articulate my ideas anyway. It looks like this was even brought up in the Reflective Practice SIG. The Social Justice (Critical Educators in Korea) SIG also covered this topic as a part of a strand at a conference in Gwangju. But most significantly for me, it came up three times.

Once was in a lecture in the "Crossing Borders" conference. The lecturer was a philosopher, and he was sharing how he uses philosophy to engage his university students in conversation class. He was a charming man. Everyone was very excited about the strategies that he was sharing. He was passing around his manuscript, and I also was along for the ride. And then I asked him, "So how would you use these strategies to engage your students in discussions about social justice issues like

the #Metoo movement or the LGBT community?" He staggered back a little, put both hands up to block the question and simply said, "Oh, I don't do political issues in my class." And the fun sort of ended for me right then. In the same conference, I sat next to a person that I've seen in many other conferences but never really got to know. I brought up the same point and almost word for word, he said the same thing, "Oh, I don't do controversial issues in my class." I wasn't surprised at that point. The third instance was in a Facebook post. Some other guy, an assistant professor at a prestigious university said, "I don't usually make political posts but..." then goes on to post something "political" for that exceptional one time, an enviable privilege.

The reason why I've laid this out in the sprawling way that I just have is to underscore the fact that many educators in KOTESOL feel that advocating for fairness and equality for *all* learners (aka social justice) is not part of their jobs and not their responsibility. I've been in Korea for two years and realizing this was a shock to my system. I'm a certified teacher from New York City, I got my master's degree in English adolescent education at CUNY, Hunter College, and this view runs completely counter to my training as an educator and to my own sense of responsibility. I'm running on the belief that in a democratic society, citizens have the right to get free public education, that students should be given access to it, and that they should be free from discrimination and harassment. Equally important is that they should feel safe in their learning environment.

As part of my degree, I took classes on inclusion that pertained to students with disabilities. We read about and discussed culturally relevant pedagogy, meaning we should not be teaching narratives with predominantly straight white middle-class values to our students – none of whom are – and that doing so not only disregards our students' cultures but is also inherently oppressive. What will people of color whose countries have been colonized by European countries gain from learning about European history told through their conqueror's perspective? Or why are you giving standardized tests to inner-city POC kids with vocabulary about lawns and suburban life when your kids don't have lawns (shocking) and have never left the city? Why are all the people in the textbook and in the movies they consume white? Ethnically speaking, whose English is standard English?

Before I address your question, let me go ahead by reminding you that the way the world is set up is not neutral or equal. In terms of gender, it is mostly tilted towards men; sexual orientation, towards straight people; and race, towards white people. You know this. Gay men are being murdered by the state in Chechnya right now, altercations are happening between hate-preaching religious groups and the LGBT+ community here in Korea, and women are oppressed in every corner of the world. The systems in place everywhere guarantee that straight white men are given the easiest access to goods, highest paying jobs, prestigious positions, etc., which has very little to do with their merit. (You can look to stories about native English teacher hiring practices for evidence, or just go outside; you'll find it without much effort.) These interlocking systems (employment, banking, Hollywood, housing, politics, academia, etc.) are specifically designed to elevate a minority of the population and oppress everyone else. They are so embedded at the core of societies that if you are not thinking critically and not enacting any kind of resistance, you will inadvertently recreate the current system with all its injustices intact. This is called the "*hidden curriculum*." I've learned that one of the central pillars of oppression is actually the education system itself and the unquestioned ideas that it passes down from generation to generation. This is also called "*hegemony*." This is where culturally responsive teaching and critical pedagogy come in, if you don't know these terms, please look them up.

I sometimes get pegged as "political" because I advocate for fairness and equality, which I feel *all* teachers are responsible for. Too often, I think we mistake those teachers who label themselves "non-political," whom I described above as neutral or non-partisan when, in fact, they are extremely political. Teaching by its very nature is a political act. But in their refusal to engage, they don't challenge patriarchy and are fine with instilling white supremacist and heteronormative values to their students, without much inclusion for those human beings who are perfectly normal but deviate from the narrowly defined norms. We *all* have LGBT+ students in *all* of our classrooms, straight kids can look to every narrative system in the world for validation and guidance, but what scripts and models are given to LGBT+ students to help them figure themselves out? When a teacher tells me that they're non-political, I don't think that that's true at all. I think that they are consciously or unconsciously contributing to an oppressive system. By doing nothing, they do harm.

This is my answer to your question: In your classroom, if you are not teaching or showing critical thinking skills and advocating for fairness and equality (aka social justice) with your students, I don't think you're doing your job as an educator. If you are not attempting to

grapple with real-world issues that your students know all too well – they see it in the news, they read about it in social media, they discuss it among their peers and their parents, and they most definitely bring it up in class – as an educator, or more consequently, as an educator of educators, how exactly are you relevant? What ideology are you reinforcing? When your kids go off on vacation and come back with double eyelid surgery, and laugh when a dark-skinned person comes onto the screen, do you question where these ideas come from? Personally, are you okay with it? What kind of conversations do you have with Korean teachers regarding these key issues? Do you have them at all? I think it's good to keep in mind that whatever ideas you let freely flow in your classroom shows your complicity with these ideas. Staying silent and doing nothing doesn't make you neutral, it means you're allowing these ideas to travel unchecked, and you are thereby reinforcing them. You are the authority in your classroom; your students look to you to see what you'll allow. What are you allowing to happen in your classroom?

I'm going to add this one last bit. I don't know if it will be useful, but here it is: I used to work for Harlem Children's Zone. Harlem is a historically and predominantly black neighborhood in NYC (though less and less so). I was at a training; me and my colleagues,

**"If you are not thinking critically and not enacting any kind of resistance, you will inadvertently recreate the current system with all its injustices intact. This is called the 'hidden curriculum.'"**

all black and one white woman, were doing a read-aloud from Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*. There was a fraught moment when it came to my turn, and I had to read aloud the word "nigger." They coaxed me to read it, but I couldn't. I didn't. We had a discussion about it, and to this day, I disagree with my boss, but she did say something very important. "You have to realize what these kids need. You need to get over your own personal hang-ups and attend to what these kids need."

I now want to shift over to the LGBT+ student who is subject to violence and hate in your classroom. I've shared my experience about this same thing in this same space before when I told the story of one of my former students, Minjun. It was Yui Green, who engaged me in conversation, I'll continue it here. We both agreed that LGBT+ people have the right to exist and live, which is nice. The point you bring up about my advocacy for equal rights in the class and how that may look, I think Yui described nicely. She said, "I think there are ways of making students aware of the harm they do without

taking an overt political stance. So, my quick response (based on experience and intuition) would be no – no overt angles; I’d just take the human angle,” which I think is both wise and pragmatic. You have to pay attention to your particular teaching situation and the very real danger of getting fired. I’ve heard a story about a gay teacher who came out in his first three months in a Christian school and was abruptly let go, but I also know a white male professor in his 50s in one of the SKY universities where he says he’s open about his identity and said it’s “never been an issue.” So it’s key to know your situation and how much you can do, which in many cases, I think is still a lot.

I’ve just started a new job and for me, the way I secure the space for LGBT+ students is, like Yui said, by taking the “human angle.” Let me share some practices and strategies.

On the first day, I present a mini-bio of myself with pictures. In my powerpoint are pictures of me dining out with my friends. I point out that my friend Jan is Korean-American, Gregory is African-American, his friend whom he brought along was born in Ethiopia and now lives in LA, Jen is Puerto-Rican American, and Jas is Chinese-

bit about me, and many say they want to know about Filipino culture or NY style, or movie genres, etc. And then, there are those who bring up feminism, the #metoo movement, “how to get a girlfriend,” and the other day, I saw a student drawing the head of a person on a whiteboard, and he wrote down the word “refugee.” Most, if not all, Korean kids know what is happening in the world and do bring them into the classroom. The problem is whether the teacher is listening or not. Does the teacher care about what students want to learn about? Is the teacher creating openings in the curriculum where students also get a chance to say what they’re interested in and are given an opportunity to direct their own learning?

I usually take my time to go over each one of the topics and make a comment on how well I can address what they want to learn in class. (Eg. Filipino culture: My family left the Philippines when I was nine so the Filipino culture I can talk about is really just my family and growing up in Queens. I’m more of a New Yorker. My best friends in high school and college were almost entirely all black girls.) When they bring up “love” or “dating” or “how to get girlfriend,” I take that as an opening. I said to a class of all boys, high school second-

**“In their refusal to engage, they don’t challenge patriarchy and are fine with instilling white supremacist and heteronormative values to their students without much inclusion for those human beings who are perfectly normal but deviate from the narrowly defined norms.”**

New Zealander. This indirectly clues them in that perhaps making fun of black people is not respectful to me, their teacher, and that my friendship and family circle are composed of different people.

The final slide in my powerpoint includes ground rules for the class. Along with not being late and other rules, I bullet point “No bullying.” I act out a few examples, which they recognize, and I make the X sign, and they nod and understand. It’s good to know the kinds of training that students already have received so you can just reiterate them. Even at the elementary school level, students understand phrases like “Be nice” and “No bullying.” Having short and understandable phrases like these are great tools to deploy when you do see bullying happening. It disrupts their negative behavior right away, and it reasserts the safety of the space, but you first have to go over it with them. I state that points will be taken off their “class behavior” grades if they are seen bullying anyone, and I make that understood.

The second activity on my first day with them is that, in groups of four, they write down five topics they want to learn from me. At this point, they have learned a

graders, “Girlfriend or boyfriend,” and then I segued into, “You guys do know that in America two men and two women can get married, right?” They nod. I quickly add, “And I think that’s okay.” Then I move on. Or sometimes I name several countries out of the current 30 or so where marriage equality is legal. I say, the US, Australia, the UK, Canada, France, New Zealand, etc.

In the times when I’ve done this, it has never caused any controversy in any of my teaching situations here in Korea. By linking marriage equality with highly developed countries, which South Korea is so proud to be part of, I’m letting them know that in order for them – my students and their country in general – to be able to participate in global conversations about human rights, they have to know and must be articulate about these issues, and I leave it there. At the high school level, I frame the mere mention of same-sex relationships and the LGBT community under “cultural exchange” or me talking about the culture I come from, and oddly enough, this semester, most of my teachers at the end of class looked appreciative that I broached this topic. Maybe they wanted to do the same, but they are under greater restrictions than the floating figure that is the NET.



In doing this, I also did all my students a service because I did not assume that all 34 boys in the classroom were straight, which I guarantee most NETS in Korea would. By going about it casually, I telegraphed that whatever their sexual orientation, I'm okay with it. The fact that a teacher acknowledged this and said he's okay with it is invaluable to a young LGBT+ kid, who is just figuring themselves out; maybe this moment is the only thing they can hold onto to keep themselves stable and sane as they deal with the challenges of a homophobic world that too often turns deadly.

Another example: Last semester, mid-spring, I taught at a boys' middle school; it was school foundation day, and the whole school had to go on a procession around town as a ritual to honor our school. I was walking along, my hands in my pockets, and one of my kids wanted to nuzzle up and grabbed my right arm. I let it happen, so another kid took this as a sign that it's okay so he hooked his arm around my left. Then he said, as he sometimes does, "Arturo Sem, I'm gaeeyyyy." The boy to my right playfully aghast said, "waaaahhhh." As I always do, I gave the one to my left a thumbs up and said, "Yeah, sure. Cool." He seemed satisfied and he ran along.

For another example, take another boy (though I don't know what they'll identify as, in the future). They're smart as whip, great in English, a chatterbox, and very effeminate. My co-teacher noted, "It's like he is female." This student, with their high voice, likes to do little song-and-dance numbers, and a few times they said, "Arturo

message. It is very important for kids to know that you care about them, that they feel safe, and that they are loved. It makes it that much easier to teach them, too.

### **Indoctrination?**

Some native teachers I've talked to about these incidents use the word "indoctrination" to attack my ideas: to say that I'm not giving students the opportunity, the freedom, or the choice to be hateful or not; that students are not given enough freedom in my classroom about whom they can bully and coax into a suicide; that by making sure that the learning environment I provide is safe for *all* learners, I'm actually feeding my students predetermined, biased, "liberal" politics. Yikes. I just want *all* my kids to grow up, live healthy lives, and thrive. And I think to myself, "Any teacher with a shred of moral or ethical standards would want this."

If I am not mistaken, you asked in a previous post: What about the straight kids who the whole society validates and supports? What if they feel "icky" and walk out of your classroom? I feel that these worries are not based on facts (or at least not in my experience). My sense is that in your effort to reject my ideas, you catastrophized a "what-about" situation, just so you could have a basis from which to argue your point. I use my experience, and that's all I can tell you.

In my previous high school, I'd developed enough of a rapport with my students that when I saw homophobia or bullying, it was easy to defuse and course-correct. In an excited situation, when I saw pointing and heard,

**“When a teacher tells me that they’re non-political, I don’t think that that’s true at all. I think that they are consciously or unconsciously contributing to an oppressive system. By doing nothing, they do harm.”**

Sem, I'm a girl." And with a smile, I've always said, "Okay."

With both these kids, what I described was a semi-regular interaction with me. My sense was they are always testing me to see how "cool" I was with them, whether I would support them or not, and without fail, through thumbs ups, saying "Okay," or giving them a smile and a shrug in order to say "It's no big deal," I always did support them.

By the way, these interactions were done in front of other kids, and in front of my co-teacher, who chuckled if off. This is the atmosphere of my classroom. These simple and easy interactions with my students are one of the main ways I keep my classroom safe. Each time I censure or reassure a student, it sends an immediate

"Arturo Sem! They are gay! He is gay!" I calmly and soothingly said, "Chaaagh, it's okay, it's okay. I think, gay is okay," or "In America, gay is okay," or "I have gay friends." The accusing students humbly said, "Okay, okay, respect, respect," then laughed it off.

To those who disagree with these practices, and charge teachers like me with injecting political bias in the classroom, I want to say that if I really did want to teach predetermined, biased politics, all I have to do is follow the program: teach the curriculum as given, where families are exclusively composed of a mother and father and two kids. Everyone's jobs, clothes, mannerism, appearance, are in gender alignment. The white male character gets to drive the story, the dark-skinned woman gets to pick the fruits, and the white girl puts her arms up and asks, "I don't know what to do?"

What are we going to do now?" Again, not augmenting the curriculum and the learning environment where hegemonic values and harmful behavior are allowed to flow freely, I think, is a disservice to our students.

### **Korea**

I want to push back a little bit with Yui Green, who wrote the following: "It highlights the importance of questioning the impact of exposing students to culturally challenging ideas in countries/contexts that don't seem 'up to speed' on certain issues (and checking myself as someone who recognizes the privilege of taking the position of being 'up to speed')." "

I want to take up the part where Yui says that Korea "don't seem 'up to speed' on certain issues." This could be true. I mean if you look for evidence, you can certainly find it. But sometimes, I'm surprised about what comes up without my intervention.

Two semesters ago, I was helping prep and later judge my girls' middle school speech contest. To my surprise, a third-grader opened her powerpoint presentation by telling the story of her gay friend on Hello Talk. She went on to define LGBT+, ticking off each letter, then she referenced prominent Korean gay celebrities, and a Korean presidential candidate who supports LGBT+ rights. Then she went on to call for the acceptance of LGBT+ people in Korean society. It was a moving presentation. Other than giving her a few formal tips on how to use the stage and how to modulate her voice for affect, the content was all hers. I had no hand in it.

The teachers throughout had always been encouraging. When it was time to show it to the school, the principal, a former English teacher whom I've chatted with on occasion sat patiently and openly. There is no doubt that he understood every word. The vice principal, more surprisingly, nodded along in agreement, my co-teachers beaming, the girl's classmates respectfully listening and politely clapping. At the end, though there was a second-grader whose English was more fluent, the top prize ultimately went to the third-grader. We agreed that it was the immediate relevance of her content that gave her the edge. This was in my former town of about 5,000 people. The following semester, when it was time to introduce the same activity to our new students, we showed the winner's video as a model, and my co-teachers explained to our new students what LGBT means.

Last story: My main co-teacher left for a semester-long training program that included taking many classes in Yangyang (I believe) and a trip to Australia. When she came back, she showed me her packet of readings and told me that the American teacher trainer had them engage on their views on LGBT+ people. She also told me that the teacher trainer revealed that they have a gay nephew. Most of the trainees were young teachers in their 20s, and she said that all of the teachers, except for one woman, had favorable views on LGBT people. She

said she felt bad for the one teacher who was Christian, as her English was not as fluent as everyone else's, and she felt out-numbered when trying to articulate her position. She was reduced to tears.

Teacher to teacher, I personally don't know what to do about this. But I will say that, even here in Korea, I've recently watched a mandatory training video that does assert that students should not be discriminated against on the bases of their "gender and sexual orientation." The full sentence states, "We hope that, through this video, all members of the university community can work together to build a culture in which no one is harassed because of his or her gender, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, social identity, etc., and in which consideration and respect are practiced in everyday life."

This video was made by the Seoul National University Human Rights Center, and it was mandatory for the staff of my school, which is a satellite school of a major university, to sign off and view. So as an educator, I'm not just going by my training as a NYC teacher but also going on the mandates for public school teachers here in Korea. And I'm holding the line that other teachers' and students' assertions of their religious freedom to hate and discriminate has no place in a state-funded public school.

I think what happens sometimes is that foreign teachers have this unexamined, fall-back position: Korea is just a conservative, homophobic, and backward country, so therefore let's not bother touching up on key issues that affect our students' lives. I think that this is lazy thinking and a refusal to engage authentically with Korean society with its various many changes; it's a refusal to stay current; and it's a refusal to do their jobs. It is up to teachers, especially those in leadership positions within organizations like KOTESOL to work towards greater inclusivity in education. Doing so would signal their willingness to keep in touch with current global issues. And more importantly, honor their responsibility towards their students and make a more positive impact towards Korea's wider culture.

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# Tying It All Together: Video Recording Speaking Assessments

By Neil Briggs

## Introduction

If a student were to approach their teacher to inquire about a test score, the teacher would naturally be expected to look over the paper to identify any mistakes or resolve student misunderstandings. If the teacher were to refuse, or to inform the student that the test paper had already been disposed of, the student would undoubtedly and understandably be outraged. Not only would this act be unjust, it would also deprive the student of access to valuable formative feedback. Now, imagine the same conditions but in relation to an oral speaking assessment. Suddenly, it seems a lot more reasonable for teachers to pass judgement without evidence, does it not?

Historically speaking, limitations of technology left language teachers with few practical options in terms of recording students' speaking performance. Nowadays, however, the ubiquity of video-recording devices (e.g., smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.) in the Korean context makes it easy to obtain and store this evidence. Although this may seem a trivial detail, I will argue in this article

based speaking assessments, each of which were video-recorded. These assessments were not viewed by the class as a whole; however, a third speaking assessment required the students to produce and record a "talk show" interview outside of class and was viewed in the whole-class setting during class time. The students were assured by the teacher that their video recordings would also be kept private and confidential. The course was subject to a mandatory relative grading system.

## The Importance of Communicative Assessment

In a language learning classroom purporting to be communicative in nature, it is essential that the course objectives and corresponding assessment procedures are reflective of that goal. This is a fundamental aspect of meaningful and valid assessment (Davison & Leung, 2009) as well as the developmental activity of humans in general (Engeström, 1987; Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, it should come as little surprise when courses which are assessed by non-communicative means fall short of facilitating robust communicative activity among students.

**Table 1. Student Opinions About Having Speaking Performances Recorded (% of responses)**

Item	Description	SA	SA	A	SD
1	Recordings of performances can be valuable (e.g., in the case that the teacher makes a mistake in grading).	30	53	8	9
2	If I were to disagree with the teacher's score, I would ask to watch the video.	17	60	12	12
3	I feel more anxious when I know that my speaking is being recorded.	10	42	32	16
4	I worry that the video may be made public (e.g., social media, YouTube).	12	16	35	38
5	I think that being recorded is an invasion of my privacy.	1	14	44	40
6	It would bother me if the teacher shared the videos with the whole class.	14	48	26	12
7	I would like to have the opportunity to watch my speaking videos.	6	29	39	26
8	It would be helpful to watch examples of successful performances from previous classes.	23	57	16	4
9	It would bother me if my video is used as an example in future classes.	10	38	38	14
10	Knowing that my speaking will be recorded motivates me to prepare more for the evaluation.	19	58	18	4

Note. SA = strongly agree, A = agree, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

that it can go a long way in terms of addressing the concern that "more thinking is needed around ethics, trustworthiness, and fairness; and the relationship between assessment, feedback, and learning" (Davison & Leung, 2009, p. 410).

To explore students' opinions with respect to having their speaking assessments recorded, data was collected from 77 students enrolled in four mixed-major English classes that were designed to be communicative in nature. I personally taught each of the courses and required the students to participate in two formal, group-

## Enhancing Learning

Video recordings can provide students with opportunities to observe, reflect, and learn from their own performances (Christianson, Hoskins, & Watanabe, 2009). The students can use their phones to obtain a copy, or the teacher can privately distribute the files to the students. With video recordings, teachers can also encourage students to reflect upon their performance or engage in self-assessment as homework. In this way, what would otherwise be a finalistic, summative assessment can be transformed into a powerful formative learning tool.

After hiding student identities and/or obtaining permission from students to use video samples in other classes, video recordings can also serve as models for future classes. By viewing sample performances, students can better realize that the learning objectives are attainable and that with adequate practice and support from the teacher and their peers, success is possible. In particular, videos can aid in the processes of scaffolding, as described by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), by means of capturing their attention and orienting them towards the assignment at hand, by identifying specific parameters and expectations of the assignment, and by reducing existing ambiguities by demonstrating to students' partial solutions to the problem.

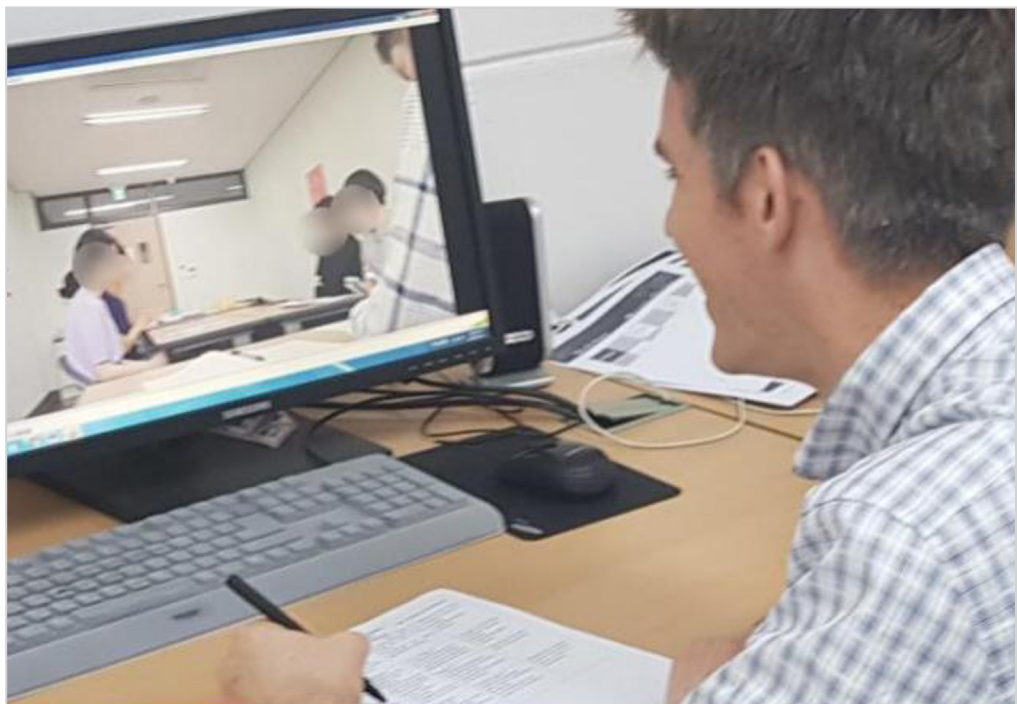
Teachers can also learn a lot by sharing and reviewing students' performances amongst themselves. For example, observing the communicative successes of particular groups of students may help to transform the perspectives of teachers who rely heavily on the comforts of traditional, non-communicative testing procedures. With concrete evidence of successful outcomes in hand, teachers can collaborate about their teaching approaches and support each other in attaining more active and meaningful communicative language learning environments. In this way, discussions and professional development meetings can begin with "This is what my students can do" in order to establish credibility before moving on to "This is how I do it."

### **Coping with the Subjectivity of Communicative Assessment**

If we truly wish to orient students towards participating in communicative activity in the classroom, we must be willing and able to embrace the subjectivity associated with teacher-based assessment (Davison & Leung, 2009). In doing so, it is essential for students to know that their performances will be evaluated reliably and without undue bias. Well-developed rubrics generally serve as the primary means by which this ideal is achieved and by which detailed feedback is conveyed to students (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Even the most rigorously developed of rubrics, however, cannot connect students' performances with tangible evidence. In the absence of evidence such as video recordings, unfortunately, students have little grounds on which to challenge a teacher's judgement.

As humans, teachers are subject to making errors or perpetuating biases in their assessments that are categorically unfair to students. A teacher's expectations and preconceived notions of a particular student's

abilities, for example, can cloud a teacher's judgement. Factors such as teacher fatigue or boredom during extended periods of assessment can also undermine the reliability of their judgement. In other words, even the most vigilant of assessors can struggle to maintain intra-rater reliability, a concept which can be defined as "the extent to which the same rater would be consistent if applying the same criteria to the same performance repeatedly" (Hasselgreen, 2004, p. 21). Accordingly, opportunities to double-check and potentially even seek the opinions of other teachers as a means of establishing



a sense of inter-rater reliability (Luoma, 2004) is a must. Recording student performances on video represents a simple and accessible solution to this problem.

### **Coping with Complexity in Group Performances**

The content of communicative assessments can be complex. In order to ensure that students gain access to much-needed peer support and have ample opportunity to engage in preparation and practice, it is helpful to conduct communicative activity in small groups (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). Group-based communication also helps to reduce the cognitive load, which can be overwhelming to students of limited proficiency levels, by creating more time before speaking turns and providing students access to peer support. In this way, the teacher need not assume an active speaking role in the assessment.

Despite its advantages from the perspective of the students, group-based performances are particularly difficult to assess. The teacher must divide their attention among the participants and in relation to a range of assessment criteria. They must also avoid assessing students at a single fixed point in time because the quality of student performances can vary substantially over time. The obvious problem with this is that by

waiting until the end to begin assessing, the teacher may be unable to accurately recall the intricate details of individual student performances. Again, the acquisition of video evidence presents a clear solution to such issues.

### Student Affect and Issues of Privacy

Some students are likely to experience an initial sense of concern or anxiety with respect to having their speaking performances recorded. Accordingly, it is important for teachers to maintain transparency with respect to the ways in which the videos will or will not be used. Students, for example, may be concerned that their videos may appear on school websites or be posted on social media sites. To ease such concerns, it is important for teachers to assure their students that videos will be kept confidential or that explicit consent will be sought if the teacher wishes to share the video in a more public forum.

### Conclusion

The value of evidence, even if it is never referenced, should not be underestimated. When conducted properly, assessment can serve as a powerful mechanism for encouraging students to participate actively in communicative language learning approaches and persevere in the face of associated discomforts. Knowing that their assessments will be reviewed with due diligence in a manner that seeks to ensure fair and reliable scoring can help to reassure students that their hard work will pay off.

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## The KOTESOL Pass-It-On Challenge

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



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

— David Shaffer, KOTESOL President

# In Search of Balance: Gender, Race, & Culture

By Alaric Naudé

In an ever-polarized world, the issues that face society affect not only adults, but also children. Children are also often targeted by the most damaging of ideologies, and hence, it becomes the educator's role to bring balance to the one tiny part of the globe that is within their jurisdiction of control: the classroom.

Three factors can impact the teacher's ability to not only control their classroom but also impact the types of students that they will release into society, with the classroom being a microcosm of social development. While behavioral issues are numerous and the techniques within this article can be applied to all types of behavior problems, this article will deal with those stemming from a gender, racial, or cultural source. So, how can balance be achieved?

## Breaking the Barrier

Simply "being strict" is not a proper platform for discipline in the classroom because it lacks direction and purpose. Discipline should not be misconstrued as punishment, as the two are not synonyms, but rather, discipline is a guided process of cognitive development. Three basic steps provide a platform for building a connection not only with students but in any type of relationship.

**Step 1: Understanding.** To get anywhere with anyone who has a problem or negative personality traits, it is important to understand why they have those traits. Are they really a terrible person or is their behavior a cry for help? Try to ascertain whether or not they have suffered from the following: (a) physical or emotional abuse or neglect, (b) mental illness, (c) parental mental illness, (d) alcoholism, (e) drug addiction, (f) criminal behavior, and/or (g) parental indifference (Deiro, 2005).

The results of suffering from these often include behavior in which students attempt to vent their own frustrations, which may be comprised of but not limited to teasing, physical bullying, cyber bullying (an increasing problem), sexual harassment, targeted sexual discrimination (excluding boys/girls from their group, sexist comments inherited from parental speech patterns, etc.), racial profiling of classmates, racially charged comments or negativity (especially around patriotic occasions or after negative news features), picking on students with darker skin

tones (especially Korean girls when comparing each other or other girls in multiethnic classes) or the creation of offensive nicknames.

As a foreign teacher, if it is difficult to know directly what may be the cause of behavioral problems, one may attempt to gain such information from Korean co-teachers and, in the case of public schools, the students' homeroom teacher will be the most reliable source of information.

**Step 2: Connecting.** Mender (2001) states, "Connecting with students means that we must sometimes separate our personal beliefs, judgements, and moral standards from our responsibility to feel compassion and concern for those we find different or perhaps even personally unacceptable" (p. 12).

One must be weary of confusing the understanding of a person's behavior as the condoning of such behavior. We may personally find such behavior repulsive or against our value system, yet it is under our duty of care to at least understand and attempt to either control the behavior, to some extent or prevent it

**"The problem with discourses based on gender or race is that a majority of us avoid it for fear of causing offense or disturbing the social order ... avoiding an issue because it has the potential to be mildly unpleasant will not resolve the problem."**

from negatively impacting other students. By fully connecting with the student, the educator will then be able to take steps to correct the disruptive forms of behavior, regardless of whether they are due to obedience issues or are rooted in a specific gender, racial, or sociocultural cause.

**Step 3: Gain a deeper understanding of the individual.** Step 3 is simple and includes the

implementation of a cognitive development plan: (a) Avoid what does not work. (b) Repeat what works. (c) Reinforce positive behavior. (d) Follow a cognitive development plan that you as the instructor feel confident in implementing, taking into consideration the age, general maturity, and number of students under your tutelage. Recommended plans include Skinner's Operant Conditioning (Holland & Skinner, 1961), Glasser's (1999) Choice Theory, and Evertson and Emmer's (2003) Classroom Management Model.

Following these steps will certainly assist in creating a better teaching environment for the teacher as well as providing students with a positive and safe environment that facilitates learning. Once this barrier is overcome, the issues surrounding gender, race, and culture will follow.

### **Gender**

For the purposes of this article and the field of study, the term "gender" refers to the biological gender/sex as governed by sex-chromosomes (XX for female and XY for males) as well as mutations of these chromosomes based on their scientific classification and does not refer to personal gender identification.

Many of the problems witnessed in the classroom are a direct result of Korean sociocultural norms with most individuals already being preprogrammed to respond in a certain way. In all fairness, most individuals are somewhat preprogrammed to a certain level by their childhood experiences, family values, and the influence of the media, but also by their own biological traits associated with their sex, regardless of where they come from. How can certain stereotypes be overcome in the classroom without causing unnecessary offense?

Firstly, be aware that there are irrefutable biological constraints on both genders. Intelligence, for example, is equal for both males and females. However, the spacing shows more males than females as extreme outliers, and hence, a larger disposition by total percentage for low-IQ male students than females, which has been demonstrated by the increase in female academic performance as a whole. The role of the instructor is to take into consideration these biological constraints while not enforcing stereotypes (Goldstein et al., 2001).

Secondly, the aim then should be not to classify either masculinity or femininity as negatives, but to encourage the positive aspects of both. Rather than encouraging emasculation, educators should encourage and channel positive masculine instincts such as protection, healthy competition, and teamwork (Burton et al., 2007). Female students should be encouraged to embrace positive feminine traits such as attention to detail, deeper social sensitivity, and stronger linguistic aptitude.

I have developed the Theoretical Framework of Gender Equivalentism (Naudé, 2018), which while aimed at the wider society, provides an ethical framework for behavior in the classroom. The original framework is comprised of eight precepts. However, only the first five are pertinent to the classroom setting:

1. Both genders have equivalent value and neither is superior to the other.
2. Differences and/or lack of differences between genders are to be respected.
3. Characteristics common to a gender may not define all members of that gender.
4. All humans, regardless of gender, are to enjoy the same freedoms, rights, and protection. All humans have the same responsibilities for their actions regardless of gender.
5. Women and girls have the same right as men and boys to education at all levels and vice versa.

Korea is experiencing a rise in radical forms of feminism that espouse behavior and mindsets rejected by the majority of Korean society (Kim, 1996). If these ideologies were to flow into the classroom, it would contaminate and disrupt the learning environment. Equal opportunity, however, is not a feminist issue. It is a basic issue of human rights and can be remedied by simply enforcing human rights within the classroom alongside fostering a positive attitude between the sexes, ensuring that male and female students compete with and not against each other.

Among OECD countries, Korea ranks the worst in gender pay gap, with women earning 36.7% less than men (OECD, 2017). This pay gap is believed to not be a result of women being paid less, but is an issue of women "settling" for fields that pay less or a reluctance (when compared to men) to ask for or indeed push for a pay rise (Hanson, 2018).

The disparity is highlighted in a recent paper published by the researcher Miyeon Song (2016), who in studying schools in Korea, found that "Korea is ranked as the second lowest in percentage of female principals among OECD countries. This implies that female bureaucrats in Korean schools experience a rigid glass ceiling, thus their representative roles and subsequent influence on students are likely to be limited" (p. 354).

However, having a self-defeatist attitude, or worse yet, instilling this attitude in the next generation of young women will be damaging. Studies considering biology and cognitive science show that women have a higher degree of risk aversion than men (Borghans et al., 2009) as well as higher levels of the personality trait "agreeableness" (Burton et al., 2007), meaning they are in general less confrontational and less prone to aggression. Of course, these are not undesirable traits. Understanding this biological axiom and then

proactively encouraging girls to have more self confidence in presenting themselves will greatly assist in eradicating patterns in society that have been amplified by the sexual dimorphism of our species.

**“Language teaching is more than just teaching a few sentences or vocabulary; true language is learning to see out of the eyes of another culture and thinking in the mind of someone else.”**

### Race and Culture

The best antidote to racism is education about other cultures and other ways of life. Of course, aiming at young students for the prevention of racial bias is better than attempting to cure it later on. This is best done in a non-threatening manner and in a way that helps students to develop their cognitive reasoning skills by drawing their own positive conclusions rather than being fed ideas by the teacher.

A number of years back, a teacher in Korea, Leo Fuchigami, made an excellent series of lessons designed to help students develop exactly these types of thinking skills. After hijacking and tweaking these lessons, I decided to experiment with my unsuspecting students to understand their views on race over a period of several years. In order to do so, an indirect method was used by which students were asked about their opinions on cultural differences, including beauty.

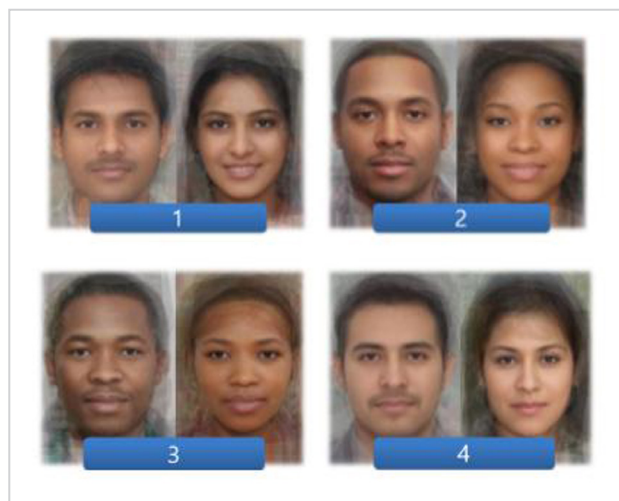
In one activity, students were shown an average face, a composite of the faces of a population. In the first instance, they were shown three male faces of actors from Japan, China, and Korea (see photos below). They were asked to choose the face they found most handsome and why they thought so. Students (about 300 middle school students over a series of lessons) routinely and almost uniformly had a tendency to prefer the second face and explained various features that made the face the most attractive to them. When asked the race of the second face, the response was always, “He is Korean.” How heartbreaking they were



to find out that he was in fact Chinese, with some students going as far as denying that I was telling the truth.

The same experiment was later conducted with about 100 university students who surprisingly also chose the second picture and believed it to be a Korean face. However, they did not show the same disappointment when the nationality of the face was revealed. Many students said that they didn't care as they had Chinese friends, meaning that it could be assumed that age has allowed more time for non-homogenous social interactions and, therefore, a restructure of personal social norms.

Just to take things a step further, additional composite faces were shown depicting couples from specific races (all average face composites), and students were told to once again choose the most attractive couple, but this time to guess the race (i.e., country of origin).



These results were disappointing, but not unpredictable. The most attractive couple was by far considered to be number four with reasons for this primarily skin tone, and most students gave the origin as some form of Southern European, with Greek and Italian being the most common guesses. (They're actually Mexican.) Number 2 was accurately chosen as being African-American and was considered the second-most attractive pair. The least popular couple was number 3. When asked to guess their country, most students just said Africa. When gently reminded that Africa is a continent and not a country, some students were at a lost for words, and only a few could actually state a handful of African countries. When asked why they thought that they were the least attractive, most students honestly stated that their concept and understanding was completely based on the media, with news reports of war and World Vision or similar aid advertisements making up the bulk of their knowledge. How then does one tackle the issue of racial stereotyping and pre-formed expectations based on ignorance?



### Solving the Problem: Just Do It!

The problem with discourses based on gender or race is that a majority of us avoid it for fear of causing offense or disturbing the social order. Of course, tact and foresight will go a long way in making the discussion or lesson more palatable. However, avoiding an issue because it has the potential to be mildly unpleasant will not solve the problem. On the contrary, it can be equated to refusing to get medical help for fear of having to see a doctor.

In approaching this subject, do your research, understand the class, and do not push ideas that may go against your students' moral or religious values. Make sure the material is suitable and understandable for the students' age level.

Another particularly effective method is where students are simply exposed to ideas such as images of men performing stereotypically "female" tasks, for example, watching the children or washing the dishes. Female imagery, likewise, can portray women in roles that are not stereotypical. Lessons can also involve introducing students to famous people who did extraordinary things, although caution should be taken as to the age of students and types of roles. The younger the age that students are exposed to both genders partaking in the same roles, the more likely they are to view this as normal behavior.

In considering images of people from different races, you should try to avoid particular stereotypes when the children are of a younger age, and once again show both genders partaking in a variety of roles and that all races can be equally affluent, attractive, and intelligent. Once students have reached an age where they have greater understanding, lessons can be given dealing with stereotypes that students may have and also common stereotypes that are obviously false.

Consider the following image.



Do Korean students know that many foreigners think that all Asians are academic overachievers? Do they agree that all Asians are smarter?

Or consider this image.



One could ask, what is her job? Where does she work? Where did she study?

Even if students give stereotypical answers, they can still be told that they made a good effort in guessing, and the correct information can be given. Rather than have teacher-to-student interaction, groups of students can be asked to discuss and then present their opinions based on a variety of images (a different image per group). Here is one example:



What is this man doing? Do you help wash the dishes? Whose responsibility is it to do housework?

These are merely a few of the possible ways images and lessons can be used to create a more balanced educational environment. With a little creativity, prejudice, bias, and racism can be slowly eroded through positive teaching.

### Conclusion

Issues surrounding gender and race abound in today's hate- and fear-driven media; students are exposed to more and more negative and outright false information as well as pseudoscience. Are you willing to act as a buffer between the socially destructive elements in society and your students? Are you willing to set clear expectations for your students as to which behavior is acceptable and which is not? Are you broad-minded

enough to give students a chance to see the reality of matters by helping their cognitive development toward appropriate behavior? Surely, all of us would want to answer yes to these questions. By building and demanding respect for men and women and by equally valuing all races in our own lives, we act as ambassadors for a brighter future, not just for our students, but for ourselves. Language teaching is more than just teaching a few sentences or vocabulary; true language is learning to see out of the eyes of another culture, and thinking in the mind of someone else. Let's all build a better society, starting in our classrooms.

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# The Value of Repeat Listening

By Victor Crispin

It is highly recommended that learners who study English in a foreign language context practice listening as much as possible. The more an English learner listens, the better. The more hours she or he spends listening, the more quickly they improve. Here is an interesting question we might ask: "How many times do students have to listen to any piece of content?" Do

difference. Students will become familiar with many structures, and they will start to understand what they say without translation in their heads. Repetition is the key to consolidation.

If students are at an intermediate level or higher, they do not need to repeat as many times. What they can do is always listen to the same person. Focus on just one item in the material and stick with it for a while. They might prefer some particular phrases, vocabulary, expressions, etc. So, if students listen to the same person, they repeat more.

Another approach is to listen to audio about the same topic consistently. Although pupils are not repeating the same audio, they are repeating the vocabulary and expressions on the same topic.

**"Repetition is the key to consolidation."**

they have to listen just one time or more than one time to understand it? What most students do is listen to certain content once or twice and then move to some other content. The typical student thinks that the more variety they encounter, the better. Well, variety is good, but what we want to do is develop and consolidate their listening comprehension ability, and the most effective way to achieve this is through repetition.

Let's say students are starting with English. They are beginners. This is a situation where they need a lot of repetition. The reason is that students need to create the most common patterns in their heads. That is why they need to repeat many times. For example, let's say that they have a five-minute audio clip adapted to their level. The pupils can repeat this audio recording twenty, thirty, or even more times. Yes, as you just read: twenty, or even thirty, or more times!

I am not saying that students have to do this all in one day. For example, they can repeat the audio three times every day during one week. This is only 15 minutes a day over seven days, which is 21 times. And they can read it or just listen to it if they need to.

Yes, it seems crazy, but I can assure you that this is very effective. Students can learn a lot! And the most important thing is that they are consolidating the phrases, the vocabulary, the pronunciation, and it becomes easier to use all of this in their conversations. If students do this as part of their routine, and they dedicate one hour a day to doing repetitions of different audio recordings, they will soon notice a big

**"What we want to do is develop and consolidate their listening comprehension ability."**

This rule of repetition is not strict, of course. The important thing is to listen for many hours, and if they can repeat, so much the better.

## The Author

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# A First-Time International Conference: A Review

By Jessica Oliveri

As a first-time attendee of the KOTESOL International Conference, I wasn't 100% sure what to expect. All I knew was that the theme of this year's conference really caught my attention and would be helpful for my conversation classes. Luckily, there was an orientation

**“When given an interesting topic and a chance to brainstorm, students will try harder to contribute what they already know.”**

session on Saturday morning to help me get the most out of this experience, which it most certainly did. In this session, Mitzi Kaufman and Heidi Nam helped us learn how to navigate the new Whova app and the program book by doing a “scavenger hunt” with partners. Some of us learned the ins and outs of the app, while others focused on the book. By the end, Whova “experts” and book “experts” were able to collaborate with each other and discuss the best features of each platform. This more interactive and collaborative style is something that I also want to use with my students for more fast-paced learning.

The only pitfall after that was that there were so many informative presentations all going on at the same time. (This is when Hermione Granger's Time Turner *really* would have come in handy.) It was difficult to choose, but the ones that I ended up attending were wonderful. One of my favorites was “Sink or Swim: Strong CLT and Unrehearsed Discussion in Class” by Joel Rian. In his session, we were able to learn about his use of the “Deep End Strategy” by becoming the students and going through the process they go through in his classes. Instead of focusing on grammar or even teaching vocabulary upfront, Joel suggests that sometimes you just have to get students to have group discussions, using what they know already without focusing on accuracy. When given an interesting topic and a chance to brainstorm, students will try harder to contribute what they already know. By allowing the students to have a voice without being corrected, they will gain more confidence, which in turn gets them to speak more. Since I teach non-credit classes

to university students and adults, my primary focus is to encourage students to have conversations without the pressure of perfection or grades. Therefore, his methodology is something that I will definitely implement in my classroom.

Another one of my favorite sessions was “Building Fluency and Community Through REAL Communication” by Cheryl Woelk. In her workshop, she discussed how focusing on community-building can increase fluency by making the learning material more relevant in the students' daily lives. In the EFL context, this is especially important because our students don't have the opportunity to use English everyday, unlike ESL students. Cheryl had us get involved in activities like drawing and sharing stories about our own teaching experiences in order to get a sense of REAL communication. We also practiced taking a grammar point and turning it into a more realistic, communicative activity. My takeaway from this session was that aiming to build relationships among students can make them feel more confident and at ease with each other, allowing them to communicate more easily. Again, since I don't give exams to my students, I plan to implement this style into my classroom as a motivational tool to get them talking.

And of course, I can't leave out the talks by Steve Krashen and Scott Thornbury that took place in the plenary hall. I don't know about anyone else, but their

**“By allowing the students to have a voice without being corrected, they will gain more confidence, which in turn gets them to speak more.”**

talks really got me thinking about how people strive to learn languages and what it means to be fluent in that new language. My reflection, based on their information, is that language learners tend to seek out unachievable perfection that can hinder their process. As adults, we focus on accuracy because we don't

want to look foolish. For exams, we focus on accuracy because we want good grades. But for the sake of communication, this accuracy is not always necessary. As teachers, I think we have to remind our students of this so that they can finally get over the “I can’t speak English well” hurdle and just speak. We can provide them with an environment where they can focus on this fluency that many are dying to achieve.

It was motivating to see passionate educators talking about solving problems related to language teaching. I learned strategies to implement in my classroom as well as information for my own language learning journey (thanks, Stephen Krashen!). In addition, I was able to make some great new connections, both professional and for the sake of having more Facebook friends, and to catch up with some past friends.

Coming back to work, I feel refreshed and motivated to work hard for my students. Thanks, KOTESOL!

### The Author

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## Excellent Hosts: FEELTA 2018 Khabarovsk, A Review

By Tim Thompson

The 2018 International Conference of the Far Eastern English Language Teachers’ Association (FEELTA) was held at Far Eastern State Transport University in Khabarovsk, Russia, on October 4–6. The theme of the conference was “Teaching English in the Era of Globalization: Bridging Gaps, Meeting Challenges.” The conference hosted nearly 86 participants from the region, including speakers from Moscow, Kamchatka, Japan, and Korea.

The first plenary talk was given by Galina Lovtsevich, the president of FEELTA. She spoke on the role of English as an international language and shared several interesting anecdotes from her experiences as an English professor in Russia and her first visit to England. Even though she was over 40 at the time, she remembered lessons about giving directions around London from her school days that helped her feel comfortable navigating the city.

I gave the second plenary talk, which was on the role of subject teachers as mentors. I drew on several of Galena’s stories and added my own examples to show how many life lessons can be taught beyond the curriculum through the students’ second language to help them become more successful after they graduate.

After lunch, featured speaker Natalya Maximova gave a talk on using content and language integrated learning (CLIL) with visual arts students, using resources from the Hermitage Museum’s website. CLIL is a teaching methodology where students are taught school subjects through a second language. The students appreciated practicing with the bilingual authentic materials of major cultural significance. This increased both student motivation and professional competence as the web resources spurred the use of all four language skills among the students.

The following day was National Teachers Day in Russia, and we were treated to three plenary talks in the

**“Peter displayed and demonstrated ... a cup that formed different questions and sentences depending on the amount of liquid in it.”**

morning. First, National Association of Teachers of English (NATE) Executive Director Peter Stepichev gave us a lively talk on challenges and solutions for teaching



▲ A traditional Russian performance at FEELTA 2018.

English in a new era. Peter displayed and demonstrated some of the learning tools that he invented, including a cup that formed different questions and sentences depending on the amount of liquid in it. Using learning props like this created surprise and made learning in the classroom fun, which led students to take pictures to show to their friends and family members.

Peter was a tough act to follow, but Steve Jugovic from Japan got us off to an interesting start by suggesting that audience members stand up and introduce themselves to someone new while giving them a shoulder massage. His talk was on the body-brain connection and the importance of intermittent movement and exercise for learning. One activity demonstrated the negative long-term effects of smartphone use on our necks. He also showed that attention, memory, and motivation can be improved through physical activity.

The third plenary was delivered by Richmond Stroup on the needs of international students in Japan. He explained that increases in diversity could bring about challenges for schools as a whole as well as in individual classes.

After a coffee break, there were two concurrent workshops before lunch. I did the one on using technology for a current events class, and the other was on using “fake news” in English classes. There were two more workshops to choose from after lunch, and then we headed out for a guided city tour.

Saturday morning began with six poster presentations, including two from Korea. There were then two concurrent workshops. I chose Amanda Gillis-

Furutaka’s, where she explained the challenges of teaching teenagers and the importance of 8–10 hours of sleep per night for them. She also spoke on using music in the language classroom.

After the coffee break, there was a panel with Steve and Amanda and three other professors from Japan via Skype to talk about NeuroELT. Predictably, there were numerous technical issues that kept the session from being as effective as the organizers had planned. Honestly, these Skype sessions are a lot like tequila: they seem like a good idea, but you end up regretting them later.

Finally, there was a closing ceremony to thank the organizers and overseas participants, and I did a teacher training session on presentation skills to wrap up the event. There was plenty of time to make new friends and professional contacts, and we were treated to excellent weather that provided many opportunities to get out and explore this welcoming city. I would highly recommend a visit to Khabarovsk for future conferences or simply for pleasure.

### The Author

**Tim Thompson** is a lifetime member of KOTESOL and was the KOTESOL representative to the FEELTA international conference in 2012 and again in 2018. Tim is also the founder of Archer English Consulting. Website: [TimThompsonELT.com](http://TimThompsonELT.com) Email: [asiatour72@gmail.com](mailto:asiatour72@gmail.com)



# Book Review: *The Teacher 50*

By Christopher Miller

**Author** Baruti K. Kafele  
**Title** *The Teacher 50: Critical Questions for Inspiring Classroom Excellence*; 107 pp.  
**Publisher** ASCD: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

Baruti K. Kafele has a storied background with over 30 years of experience and over 100 educational, professional, and community awards. Following up on his previous work *The Principal 50*, Kafele has produced *The Teacher 50*. Sequels are often known to be of lower quality, and this book, in some aspects, adheres to that conventional wisdom.

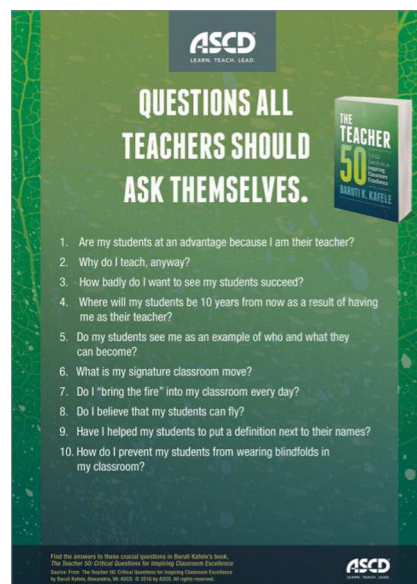
The book is divided into 10 sections: teacher attitude, student motivation, classroom climate and culture, building relationships, classroom instruction, cultural responsiveness, teacher accountability, planning and organization, professional development, and parental engagement. Following each of 10 questions, the author provides a brief commentary that may span from as small as a single paragraph to nearly two pages on occasion. The commentary might include anecdotes culled from the author's professional experience, or an elaboration on why topics or questions are relevant. At times the author speaks in clichés: "Do you bring the fire to your classroom every day?" (p. 16). That being said, the questions are often solid enough and should be sufficient to produce meaningful reflection on the part of the committed educator (e.g., "What is my classroom's way of life?" p. 23).

While the questions may have value for educational practitioners, the commentary offered by Kafele needs further buttressing. For example, "How does data drive my practice?" (p. 66). A very good question, then a few basic illustrations of data stated by Kafele are listed.

"This book can provide value in multiple ways for educators."

These include topics such as student attendance, class participation, homework completion, assessment results, and disciplinary actions. The reader would have been better served had Kafele offered anecdotes of how he actually used the data he has collected and had at his disposal, or how it informed his lesson planning. To

use a hypothetical example, if you know that 30% of your students are 2–5 minutes late on a given day due to constraints that are beyond the teachers control, then maybe you have ice-breaking activities to address that particular situation at the beginning of your lessons.



Furthermore, Kafele could have offered up an extended list of resources, such as books and websites that focus on how to develop meaningful strategies for addressing the issues and concerns mentioned by

the author, which the interested reader could, in turn, consult. Excluding the advertised items from ASCD on the final pages, this non-fiction text had a total of ten books listed in the bibliography. This pattern of deficient commentary and direction for the reader is repeated multiple times in this book. For instance, on page 59, Kafele asks, "What does my mirror say about my effectiveness as a teacher?" The author proceeds to indulge in a football metaphor about reviewing game film, without actually suggesting that educators film and review their teaching performances. This could have been an excellent opportunity to introduce the reader to the valuable framework for reflection offered up by Hatton and Smith (1995). Without more concrete guidance, inexperienced educators are more likely to engage in less fruitful forms of reflection.

Nevertheless, this book can provide value in multiple ways for educators. By scanning through the questions coupled with reflection on one's personal professional practice, Kafele's text can serve as a starting point for recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses, and hence by extension, provide a catalyst for further professional development. Likewise, this book would

be a worthwhile tool to facilitate reflective practice sessions. Additionally, given the number of questions that the author provides related to the affective domain (e.g., "How often do my students and I 'break bread' together?" p. 33), it seems likely that reflection on these items could provide teachers with inspiration to get to know students better and construct relevant survey items that might provide an educator with a deeper appreciation of his/her students, both as learners and individuals.

There are several items in this book which are of limited relevance for ELTs in South Korea (especially NESTs), such as the several questions focused on interacting with parents and the challenges of American-style poverty.

Often peddling in clichés, this is a book that does not live up to the reputation of the author. Despite having some utility, the book has a significant number of shortcomings. This book is an attempt to take a previously successful concept and apply it to a different domain. Such transplanting needs to be done with care, rather than motivated by the desire to churn out more content, irrespective of quality.

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## The Author

**Christopher Miller** has been involved in ELT for over a decade. He is a frequent KOTESOL presenter and has held numerous roles in KOTESOL since 2011. He is currently active in KOTESOL as assistant editor for the *The English Connection*. Christopher currently works at Daeil Foreign Language High School in Seoul. Email: [chriskotesol@gmail.com](mailto:chriskotesol@gmail.com)



## On the BALL: Brain-Assisted Language Learning for the ELT Classroom Part 8: Classroom Stress: An Aid or Hindrance?

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 movement 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: Spring Books.

### Stress as a Teaching Tool

If you google "stress and learning," you will come up with article after article about how stress is bad for you – the mantra of our age – and how even a small amount is bad for learning. On the other hand, I often hear teachers say, "A little stress is good for learning," though they are not always sure why. They usually say that a little stress makes the students more alert and pay more attention. Obviously, these teachers I talked to did not mean debilitating long-term stress, a disease; they meant those little single instance stresses we use all the time. Calling on students to answer, having them play games, giving them a cautionary look – our favorite tools – all cause a stress response.

So leaving long-term stress aside, which is true? The contradiction that stress is good for learning and bad for learning baffled me. As a result, I spent a number of months doing research on this topic, trying to figure

out whether a little stress aids or hinders learning. One of the first things I learned was that the notion "a little stress is good" came from animal studies. Rats dropped in cold water learned the exit routes faster.

So, the question again: Does a small, one-time dose of stress aid learning, or hinder it? Actually, neuroscience has found something amazing. It does both, and at the same time. When information comes in that the pre-frontal cortex and insula identify as a stressor, which is heavily dependent on the psychological disposition of the recipient, the hypothalamus is signaled and two key structures in the nervous system are activated (Joëls et al., 2006). The faster of the two is the autonomic nervous system (ANS), which controls overall bodily response. It activates the fight-or-flight response, which is characterized by an increase in heart rate, harder breathing, loss of hunger, release of glucose from energy stores, and the flow of blood into skeletal muscles. It



also causes the release of noradrenaline, which helps orient the organism towards dealing with threats.



While the autonomic nervous system just shapes an immediate response, the second system, the hypothalamic pituitary adrenocortical axis (HPA) shapes a longer-lasting response. It causes the release of stress-related hormones such as cortisol that both sharpen attention and shield neurons. In a kind of two-stage rocket, information related to the stressor is deeply learned, but learning from before the stress, or up to an hour after, is lost (Koolhaas et al., 2011). This makes sense. An organism needs to learn that something might be dangerous or vital, and that learning needs to be shielded from other learning that might overwrite it. This probably explains why students playing intense computer games, pleasurable because of the stress, show lower retention of any study they do just before or after the gaming.

The place in the brain targeted by stress is important, too. For some classroom stresses, such as a student being scolded about improper use of the past tense, the emotional part (the insula) is activated, not the part of the brain that deals with verb tenses. The scolded student is likely to remember the scolding for a long time, and maybe even the particular mistake that led to it, but unlikely to remember much about verb tenses, or anything else taught in the next hour.

#### Additional Comments for TEC Readers

I was at the International Mind, Brain, and Education Society Conference in Ecuador a few years ago, when I had the chance to meet one of my heroes, Adele Diamond. She has done extensive work on an area I am interested in, executive function in the prefrontal cortex, and we had communicated by email. I told her about my research on stress, which I knew she was working on too, and then she hit me with an amazing statement. She said that one of the things she found in her lab was that stress effects are gender-related. "A little stress is always good for men and bad for women" (personal communication, 2013). Her comment left me speechless and with a desire to find out more.

In reading her papers later, I found out why. It seems that cortisol, the hormone released by stress, raises the level of dopamine in the pre-frontal cortex, and dopamine levels influence executive functions, such as working memory. The level of dopamine, however, works on a Yerkes-Dodson curve. There is just the right amount for optimal function. A little too much or too little interferes with executive function. Women, because of estrogen, have close to the optimal level naturally, while men are below it. (Does this mean women *are* naturally smarter than men?) However, if cortisol is present, a hormone released by mild stress, the level of dopamine goes up. It pushes men into the optimal level and women out! That explains Diamond's surprising statement that a little stress is always good for men and bad for women.

This finding made me think back on my days when I was a teacher in a women's college. I would often ask students about their classes – whether they liked them or not, whether they were useful – and I kept getting what I thought at the time were odd responses: "X sensei is scary." Or "X sensei is *yasashii* (kind)." I expected them to say the subject was "interesting" or "useful," but instead, I kept getting replies about the teacher's demeanor. Then, one day, I suddenly understood what they meant. These young women were telling me about their ability to engage in each class. The ability to learn, for them, required a classroom environment that felt safe and comfortable. Even mild stress caused by a teacher who often got angry made them feel uneasy, stressed, and it interfered with their ability to learn.

I learned a lot from that realization, and my advice to you, as fellow teachers, is to always pay attention to the atmosphere you create. Keep in mind that whenever you scold a single student, you scold them all; just like praising a single student means praising them all.

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#### The Author

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# Professional Development for Language Teachers: More Higher Education?

By Dr. Thomas S.C. Farrell

I travel a lot to give talks to practicing teachers of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), and increasingly these days, I am getting the same question from many of the teachers who attend my talks: Should I do a PhD or any equivalent doctoral work? Well, this is definitely a time for some serious, self-initiated, self-directed self-reflection. In this short article, I will attempt to point out some of my thoughts on this issue, with the hope of providing some ideas for those teachers considering such a move into even higher education.

## More Higher Education?

So you have a job in a university language school or a university department teaching English to speakers of other languages. Some teachers do not like to say they teach English conversation, but instead say the courses are on cross-cultural communication or the like. Regardless of what you call your courses, you have settled into a nice lifestyle in that particular country. You are in an educational environment, where perhaps people call you “professor” because you teach in a

also, you have secured your master’s degree (be it online or on campus, and you feel even more settled and qualified to teach English to speakers of other languages.

Some years pass, and you have even more experience beyond your master’s degree, but you notice some changes on the horizon. Perhaps you are in a country where your contract lasts five years, and then you must move to another university for another five-year contract and so on. Perhaps you feel then that if you do an even higher degree (e.g., a PhD or an EdD) you will be able to apply for “real” university professor jobs that were ruled out before because you did not have that higher degree. Then you begin to think more and more about “doing” a PhD (doctor of philosophy) or EdD (doctor of education) because you think you “need” it to stay competitive in your current context.

Herein lies the dilemma: You are feeling insecure as most of the other younger teachers who have entered the country/context you have been in for the past five to ten years already have master degrees and you are feeling the pressure from them, too. You begin to wonder what the future is, as you get older in your present context, and what lies ahead in an increasingly competitive environment where working conditions may be getting worse in terms of pay, contract security and length, and overall working conditions. Then you really begin to consider doing a PhD or EdD.

## Danger or Opportunity?

The Chinese characters for *change* (更改) mean “danger” and “opportunity,” and I feel this is really applicable to our present discussion: If a TESOL teacher who has a master’s degree wants to “do” a PhD, there is the “danger” that he or she will be overqualified for their present position, but there is also an “opportunity” to not only learn about something in detail but also the “opportunity” to move on or up.

First of all, let’s examine the sentences: “I want to do a PhD” and “I must do a PhD”! The first sentence is problematic in that one does not “do” a PhD because it is just an end in itself; one studies a particular topic that holds a lot of interest, and this study will lead to a PhD. The second sentence is also problematic because “must do” means that you are doing it in response to some outside pressure (such as those discussed above), not really because you “want” to!

“To consider studying for a doctor’s degree is an important decision for a TESOL teacher given the availability of jobs at the end of this journey, as well as the need to really ‘do’ a PhD.”

university setting, and you are becoming influenced more and more from the constant discussions you may be having with students about their plans to study in a Western university setting, and by some of the professors who may be going on sabbatical or to conferences in these Western settings, too. Perhaps

Secondly, one must consider the commitment it takes to “do” a PhD (or EdD) in terms of time and money. It will be six years or so, part-time, and this will be “done” in the prime of your life, when you may also be raising a family and have other obligations to consider a bit later. In addition, if a PhD is “done” part-time, one must consider whether there is value for money (and time) given that most of it will be “done” on the internet, and candidates will not receive the same socialization benefits that students receive if they “do” a PhD on campus full time. This socialization process includes going to conferences with your supervisor, meeting other professors with your supervisor, talking regularly with your supervisor face-to-face, asking questions, picking up things you see while interacting with your supervisor, and above all, networking with your supervisor and his/her networks, and much more.

Thirdly, and most importantly I am guessing, one must consider what one will do with the PhD once conferred. Will it mean that you can join another line, equally as long as the master’s degree line you just left, in the hope of getting that tenure-track job that may not even exist? Remember that PhD programs are churning out students every year from full-time programs that have full networks already in existence in the home country, and the line for these jobs is already long. Or will it be a case of degree inflation, where you now will be called “professor” or “doctor” to continue doing the job you were already doing with your master’s degree?

## Conclusion

I wrote this article in response to the many questions I get from TESOL teachers who already have a master’s degree and wonder what comes next. Teaching is a “front-loaded” job in that we receive all the professional privileges on entry, and there is no real improvement throughout a teacher’s career. To consider studying for a doctor’s degree is an important decision for a TESOL teacher, given the availability of jobs at the end of this journey, as well as the need to really “do” a PhD. Such a decision will involve some serious self-initiated, self-directed self-reflection. I hope this article helps teachers begin this self-reflection.

## The Author

**Thomas S.C. Farrell** is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Brock University, Canada. Professor Farrell’s professional interests include reflective practice and language teacher education. Professor Farrell has published widely and has presented at major conferences worldwide on these topics. A selection of his work can be found on his webpage: [www.reflectivenquiry.ca](http://www.reflectivenquiry.ca)



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