

# The English Connection

*A Korea TESOL Publication*

**SPRING 2021, Volume 25, Issue 1**

N' MORTAR  
VERSITY

'GONE  
ONLINE'

## Articles

Reading activities' increased motivation  
Writing classes going online  
Tech for professional development  
Student-teacher online interactions  
Inclusive teaching methods and materials

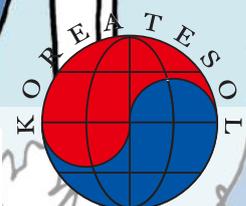
## Interviews

JALT-KOTESOL: Connections thru conferences  
Dr. Park Joo-Kyung: AsiaTEFL 2020 IC Chair  
Member Spotlight: Lucinda Estrada

## Column

Kelly's The Brain Connection

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**KOTESOL**  
대한영어교육학회



# The English Connection

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

# Fool Them with Lexical Fluency Hacks (LFH)

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

I have always felt there have been problems with the term “learning strategies,” defined as the mental and communicative procedures learners employ to learn and use language (Chamot, 2005). *Learner* is such a restrained and decisive word, when oftentimes there really is no conscious effort one is taking on the role. *Strategies*, as well, implies a set of logical, drawn-out methods that are tried and true, created for a learner to best follow towards success, not to be confused with *styles*, a more general term that describes the natural and habitual traits that a person brings into the learning process. *Strategies*, then, are outwardly gotten and followed, while *styles* intuitively come from within. As Oxford (1993) explains, once a learner is aware of their own styles, they can easily choose and adapt their strategies.



In my case, learning Korean, rarely have I classified myself as an explicit learner as I go about with my day-to-day life, nor have I set upon learning Korean with a set of strategies that were anything more than vague distant goals. I think this is the case with many “learners” – one has a goal to achieve, anywhere from saying “Please take me to the subway station” to passing TOPIK Level 5. We are taught, however, that reaching these goals requires attending to some kind of theoretical framework (amounting to nothing more than study/study/study and attend class), and learners fall into a pedagogical trap and become disillusioned.

While I would argue it is hard to follow good strategies until you have actually immersed yourself and personalized the learning, I do concede I have taken an interest, both passive and active, in increasing my fluency in the Korean language and have gathered several tips that have helped me personally. Rather than learner strategies, I consider them Korean lexical fluency hacks (LFH), specifically used to fool people into believing my Korean is better than it actually is.

- 1. Learn repetitious verbs.** If you’re like me, faulty memory is the bane of language success. Words that lyrically repeat are more easily remembered, such as 주거나받거나 (give and take) and 왔다가다 (come and go), and the action verbs will add better energy to your language.
- 2. Learn mimic words (의태어).** Mimic words are much like onomatopoeia in English, except they deal with both movement and sound. In addition to their repetitive sounds easing memory (See 1 above), mimic words are a fun way to add better visual description and increase the richness of your Korean. Examples are 반짝반짝 (twinkle twinkle), 말랑말랑 (chewy chewy), and 두근두근 (bum-bump bum-bump heart beats). See 90daykorean.com for more explanation.
- 3. Learn a few hanja-based idioms (사자성어).** These expressions, normally consisting of four Chinese characters, will bring a sense of tradition to your Korean conversations. The elders around the table will be amazed, the youngsters won’t understand you, and you will sound wise and educated, more befitting to your rank as educator and mentor to your disciples. My favorite is 신토불이 (身土不二), which is what you say when everyone’s offering you kimchi and you want a hamburger. Many more are explained at wiseinit.com.
- 4. Learn Konglish, and then mix and match.** By knowing which English words Koreans have appropriated as loanwords, you have an immediate large range of lexical words at your disposal. This will immediately put you in the driver’s seat in any conversation, as Koreans wonder if you’re speaking Korean or English, but definitely a hybrid of modern trendy terms on which they’re just not educated. I, for example, am a 스마트폰 eating my 소울푸드 핫바 wearing my 패딩 with 센서. Be aware, however, that pronunciation and meaning are rarely a 1-to-1 transfer.
- 5. Learn discourse markers.** A large part of the vocabulary in any spoken language, discourse markers give cohesion to your Korean sentences, and gives you more interactional power in conversation. Plus you can pretend you understand what’s going on without actually comprehending or listening (as with your first language). Some useful ones are 그런데 (by the way), 그리고? (and then?) and 그렇구나 (is that so?).
- 6. Two minds better than one.** Being exposed to Korean naturally, you’re going to pick up the language differently than you might, say, in a classroom (despite what the coursebook may claim). Thus, what I consider my conversational arsenal may be based on a lexical order very different from that of my fellow Korean-learner friend, who picked up the language out and about in his/her special way. We can thus better attack any situation, assured in knowing between the two of us, a patchwork of correct phrases to use.

“Everyone has a game plan until you get punched in the face,” warns Mike Tyson (a unique linguist in his own right), and week after week of 것 같아요 and 는데 stem endings, one can certainly get tired of getting grammatically beat up in the classroom. As you become aware of your own learning styles, hopefully these LFH will add punch to your Korean conversations.

# President's Message

## Let's Appreciate How Much We've Grown

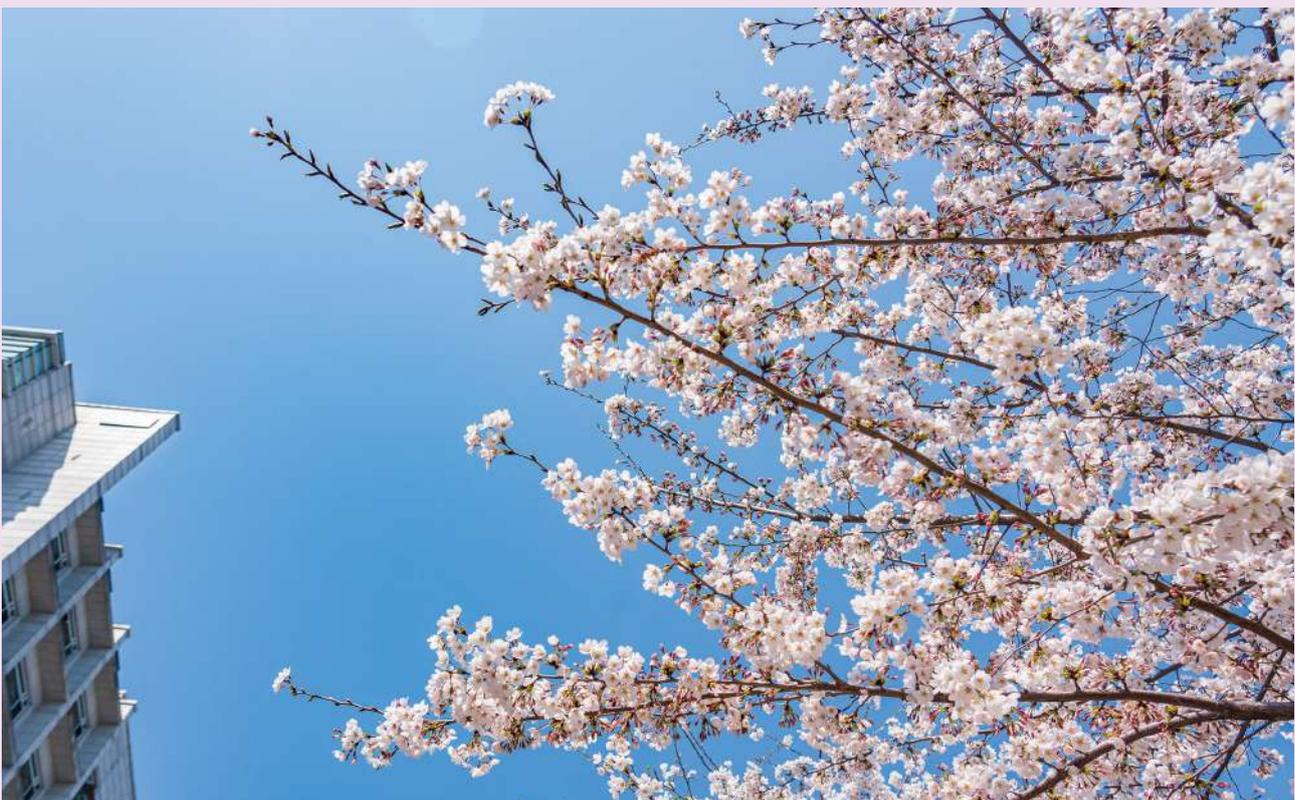
By Bryan Hale KOTESOL President

If you're like me, you might be feeling tired of talking about COVID-19. At this point in the pandemic, it is becoming customary to begin or end many conversations, meetings, and messages such as this one by noting the ongoing difficulties and disruption, lamenting the lack of certainty ahead, and highlighting some things worthy of appreciation or optimism. The one constant in this ever-evolving situation seems to be the lack of resolution. Perhaps this feels especially acute at the moment, given that the beginning of the new year might have held out a symbolic hope of passage into something different and better when, of course, the pandemic doesn't really care about calendar years or academic cycles.



Given all this, I think it's important for us to pause and acknowledge the sheer weight of the experiences we have been through. I mean this both as individuals and as an organization. I want to express true gratitude to everybody involved in KOTESOL. This includes those who have been able to contribute so much in recent months and who have made possible our online events, not least of which has been our recently concluded International Conference! (Thank you SO MUCH, International Conference organizers!) It also includes the attendees who have made events so dynamic and vital. And, of course, those who have worked so hard on our publications, including this one. But if you have not been able to offer KOTESOL your time, please know that you are still greatly cherished as a part of our community. We are all going through unique, often unpredictable professional, social, and emotional circumstances, and sometimes hitting unforeseeable walls. I hope you are getting the support you need and that as KOTESOL members we can both help and hold space for each other. Please know that many in KOTESOL are eager to welcome you to our online events in the months ahead and to help you to understand the ways in which KOTESOL can support you.

I also think we should pause and recognize the awesome amount of growth we have experienced as educators. That's why I think this issue of *The English Connection* is important and timely. For many of us, last year involved an unprecedented level of new skills and strategies, developed at a frantic and chaotic pace. I am very grateful for the opportunity to sit down with this issue and begin reflecting on and consolidating my experiences as I learn more deeply about what others have accomplished as teachers, learners, conference organizers, and people. I hope you will find this issue of *The English Connection* a valuable testament to our achievements and inspiration for the new academic year ahead.



# Influencing Learner Motivation and Developing Skills Through Reading Activities

By Greg Rouault

## Background

A year ago, I began teaching in a new institutional context, at yet another different private university in Japan. Of course, since it is actually the students that we teach and not a curriculum or coursebook, for us as language educators virtually every new school year presents a fresh context made up of the learners who appear in our classes. While national statistics or averages and OECD rankings can reflect how certain aspects of the broader governmental policies on education are trending, for teachers in the classroom, it is those students in front of us who are the priority. Amid the growing calls for “teaching the learners where they are at,” both novice and seasoned educators should be interested in and focused on better understanding each new crop of students that arrive in their classrooms – be they held in-person or more recently conducted online under COVID-19 conditions.

## Means Analysis

Instructors new to an institution, like I was, as well as those looking to establish an initial baseline or track the impact of policy changes or program innovations should first take stock of their learners. More relevant for program leaders, course designers, and even individual teachers than the well-known needs analysis is the opportunity to consider and identify situational factors through a *means analysis* (Long, 2015, p. 112). While the range of these factors is very broad, for such analysis, teachers may want to take into account or do some research to support their general intuition into what Munby (1978, p. 217) listed as

in Japan tend to focus on raising test scores through memorization and translation, yet still have some vision of using English for international communication, which she calls “international posture.” Noting that L2 learning is unpredictable, non-linear, and unstable, Kim (2017) summarized that the motivational changes for Korean EFL learners are affected mostly by parental involvement and social pressure. These past influences that our learners have faced as well as their social orientation toward language use in the future can explain the range of positive to negative motivation shown toward foreign language study and courses. Kikuchi (2013) provided a summary of studies into learner demotivation that reported six common factors: (a) teacher attitude, competence, and style, (b) characteristics of class content, (c) experiences of failure in test scores and rote memorization, (d) classroom environment, (e) class materials, and (f) lack of personal goals or practical interest.

## From the Research on Extensive Reading

Different from the academic purpose of *reading to learn* disciplinary content, L2 learners still *learning to read* will benefit from simplified, graded content that controls for the vocabulary and grammatical structures. In his Four Strands model, Nation (2007) explains that reading at the right level with comprehension for fluency development means having 98% vocabulary coverage or no more than 2% unfamiliar words. See McLean and Rouault (2017) for evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of extensive

**“With this underlying rationale, I decided to conduct action research (a) to understand the reading profiles of my students in their first and foreign languages before my course and (b) to summarize the actions they took during the reading project that I implemented in the course.”**

the importance of political and social matters (e.g., the status of the L1 and L2), logistical matters (e.g., the time, money, and human or physical resources available), and methodological matters (e.g., previous language learning experience or pedagogical preferences). Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 61) also distinguish between (a) *target needs*, or the linguistic knowledge and attitudes to perform in a situation, which can help define the contents of a language course, and (b) the *learning needs*, shaped by the educational background and experience of students and which impact how people go about learning to do what they can with language.

## From the Research into L2 Motivation

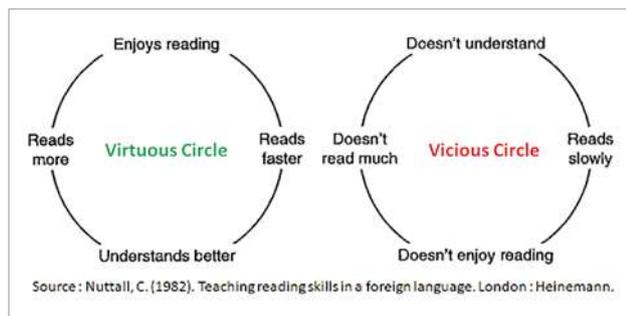
In many EFL contexts, language learning is anchored in the rote memory work needed to get higher grades on exams and not in using language for real communication. Yashima (2009) identified that adolescent English learners

reading versus grammar translation over the same time on task in what Nation and Waring (2020) called “the most thoroughly controlled study of the effect of extensive reading on reading fluency development” (p. 105). Waring and McLean (2015) sought to operationalize the various distinctions of extensive reading (ER) and in doing so have identified the essential core attributes of the construct of ER as: fluent comprehension, high reading speed, reading large amounts of text, and focus on meaning of text. Surveying actual learner data, Beglar and Hunt (2014) showed that simplified texts were significantly more effective for increasing reading rate than a mixture of simplified and unsimplified texts and estimated that a minimum of 200,000 words of highly comprehensible extensive reading is needed in a year to achieve significant improvements in reading rate for learners who start with up to 800 headword-level graded readers and move up to 1600 headwords.

### Action Research for Teaching Practice

With this underlying rationale, I decided to conduct action research (a) to understand the reading profiles of my students in their first and foreign languages before my course and (b) to summarize the actions they took during the reading project (described below) that I implemented in the course. Burns (2010) describes action research as taking “a self-reflective, critical approach to exploring your own teaching context” (p. 2) to identify a situation or issue worth looking into, to intervene in a deliberate way to bring about change, and to base improvements on information or collected data. Hypothesizing that during six years of foreign language study my first year university students had fallen into what Nuttall (1982) calls “the vicious cycle of the weak reader” (see Figure 1), graded reading, timed reading, and reader’s theater were activities conducted as a reading project in my first-year compulsory reading classes. The goal was to build skills, increase motivation, and improve self-efficacy to help the learners overcome negative self-talk of being poor learners and weak users of English. The learners were low proficiency (<128 TOEIC Bridge), non-English majors, with (Ministry of Education targets for foreign language abilities in grade school notwithstanding) sadly little to no experience with reading graded readers for pleasure (called *tadoku*) before this course. As this study predated COVID-19, we met face-to-face in classes of 25–30 students for 90 minutes per week over two 15-week semesters in a course for credit.

**Figure 1.** The Vicious and Virtuous Circles for Readers



### Graded Reading

My “graded” reading project had far lower word count targets than the earlier mentioned data for “extensive” reading since I was focused on motivating inexperienced readers and wanted to ensure the task was achievable. Students conducted 15 minutes of in-class silent sustained reading with graded readers of their choice and were to complete out-of-class reading weekly as homework. Fortunately, my campus library already had a sufficient stock of books at their level. While there is not adequate space in this article to address the challenges of acquiring a suitable quantity of books or sets of materials or securing the budget for them, interested TEC readers may want to check the Extensive Reading Foundation website and its free multilingual guides (<https://erfoundation.org/wordpress/guides/>) and the placement test available to set reading levels (<https://erfoundation.org/wordpress/the-erf-placement-test/>). For classes conducted remotely with limited access to campus libraries, instructors looking to run with graded reading content may want to consider options such as (a) <https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/> for 200–300 free titles at beginner to false beginner level, (b) <https://www.er-central.com/> with free online texts and quizzes for false beginner to intermediate level and above,

or (c) the subscription-based service <https://xreading.com/>, which provides quizzes and includes access to readers from international publishers across several levels from false beginner and up, which is different from (d) <https://mreader.org/>, which is a quiz module with comprehension questions only, which is what I used together with short written summaries as confirmation of completed reading.

### Measuring Reading Rate and Comprehension

The timed reading materials included in many EFL coursebooks or freely available on Paul Nation’s website ([www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/about/staff/paul-nation)) can be used to help students track their own reading rate in words per minute. By incorporating quiz questions on the reading, the learners and their teachers can monitor reading rate improvements while ensuring comprehension is maintained. In my classes, when students finished a timed reading, they recorded in a graph the time duration I had written on the board (in 10 second increments). Together with results from a five-question comprehension quiz, this chart served as a visual to provide concrete feedback to my learners for self-assessment on their progress and to overcome negative self-beliefs. In an online class, if learners have a reading rate chart in their textbook or on a worksheet, I have found that asking them to simply upload a photo of the document to Google Classroom or an LMS provides an easy bridge between the paper and digital modes. Logging reading rates has been observed in class and has shown up in past comments on end-of-course evaluations to have engaged students in their learning. This is what Hattie and Clarke (2019, p. 13) refer to as “the skill, the will, and the thrill” of knowing what to do and subsequently being motivated to attain the success criteria for visible learning achievements.

### Reader’s Theater

As the name suggests, reader’s theater is the dramatic representation of a scripted text but where costumes, sets, and props are kept to a minimum, thus requiring the audience to fill in the gaps with their imagination while the actors are literally reading the text. Interested instructors can readily search online and find examples of scripts and view various types of delivery to select what would best suit their learners and course goals. In true reader’s theater, however, the expressive reading of the text retains the spotlight. The academic rationale for this activity aligns with three actions cited for fluency development as featured in Paul Nation’s 2009 book, *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing* (see Table 1). In their practice time, students did repeated reading, were reading aloud to themselves and their groups, and since points were being given for eye contact on the reader’s theater presentation day, some (but not all) were willing to try read-and-look-up by looking away from their script to speak with eye contact.

**Table 1.** Fluency Development Activities

<b>Repeated reading</b>	Improves L1 oral reading fluency after 5 repetitions
<b>Reading aloud</b>	Helps diagnose decoding fluency needed (but unseen) in sustained silent reading
<b>Read-and-look-up</b>	Develops the ability to work with larger chunks of text and read with expression

The materials I selected were Young Learner’s Classic Readers (Levels 1–3) from Compass Publishing: *The Three Bears*, *The Fir Tree*, *Noah’s Ark*, and *The Three Little Pigs* (the only story students had prior knowledge of). The

procedure involved me first reading the story in class and then assigning presentation day groups (who then decided the role for each learner), with the students then practicing reading using the additional script provided in this book series. My observations noted the extra effort that some students put in and that some learners “performed” better in the reader’s theater than in other reading class activities. Brief feedback from students, captured on sticky notes, indicated that, although they experienced some nervousness, the learners overall enjoyed the activity and – the gold standard of takeaways – that I should continue doing it next year. Additionally, while probably not an activity to open with on the first day of using the technology for remote classes, there should be no reason why a seasoned Zoom or Teams room of learners, each with microphones on, could not read their character’s parts from a script distributed in advance.

## Results

At the end of the course, I wanted to capture my students’ reflections on how they felt their approach to completing the graded reading affected their skill development, motivation, and understanding of what they were reading. Additionally, there were Likert scale questions for student opinions of the reading project and its impact on their reading abilities, confidence, motivation, and awareness of strengths and weaknesses for reading in English. To make it easier for the respondents, all of the survey questions were translated into Japanese.

Reading profile results showed that initially more than half (52%) spent “less than one hour per week of reading for fun in L1 Japanese” and that 52% “never read in English,” and 24% only “read a few times a year in English.” Through the two-semester reading project, these patterns for reading in English by my (pre)A1–A2 CEFR-level university freshmen changed to

- 44% read every week,
- 24% read each month,
- 20% read the second half of the term,
- 10.7% read the last weeks of the term (an issue that demands better future teacher control), and
- only 1% read every day.

Over 86% of the total respondents (N = 75) felt their reading pattern actions during the project were a favorable way to (a) improve reading skills and abilities, (b) increase motivation and interest for reading both during the course and after the course, and (c) improve understanding of the stories.

**Table 2.** Reading Project Outcomes

After this reading project, do you have...	No, not at all	Not really	I think so	Yes, sure
the ability to read a graded reader at your level?	12.0%	12.0%	72.0%	4.0%
more confidence in reading in English?	10.7%	26.7%	57.3%	5.3%
greater motivation to continue reading outside of class?	12.0%	25.3%	52.0%	10.7%
a better understanding of your strong points?	10.7%	26.7%	49.3%	13.3%
a better understanding of your weak points?	8.0%	18.7%	52.0%	21.3%

As to the self-report data on the impact of the reading project activities, Table 2 shows that a significant majority were on the favorable side (*I think so; Yes, sure*) of the four-point scale. Only 10–12% responded *No, not at all*. Follow up interviews should be used in the future to

collect feedback to better adapt classroom support for all learners and to create continuous improvements to this or any curriculum project. This need for additional support may quite surely be accentuated further when introducing a new activity in remote teaching with unfamiliar tech tools.

## Conclusion

There are no quick fixes for the hard work of learning a foreign language. However, once a profile baseline is established, teachers can help their learners engage more with the reading activities planned and spend the time needed to *learn by doing* according to the course aims. With graded reading, timed reading, and reader’s theater, seeing explicit evidence of progress or achievement has shown to improve learner confidence and motivation toward foreign language study and can only help us as teachers to address the unique challenges we face in our context, be it face-to-face or online.

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# Thank you!

Korea TESOL is nothing without its volunteers. Thank you to everyone who made the 2021 Korea TESOL International Conference such a special event for teachers all around the world!

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# Moving Writing Classes Online

By Laurence Craven & Daniel Fredrick

## Introduction

Since the 1970s, when ESL departments were highly influenced by the process approach to writing, ESL writing teachers have made great efforts to synthesize theory with practice (Deqi, 2005). It is no surprise then that when flipped learning made its way alongside the advent of technology in the classroom, ESL writing teachers were among those at the forefront of this new and improved way to instate active learning. Flipped learning is popular at all levels of education due to its focus on active and self-regulated learning (Craven & Fredrick, 2020). The relative ease with which ESL educators can seamlessly incorporate technology (videos, social media, etc.) into flipped learning has become popular among not only students but also teachers. Indeed, some educational programs expect new teachers to have flipped learning experience as part of the job requirements (Graziona, 2017). In terms of ESL composition, we found that everything we do in a live classroom regarding the use of flipped learning easily transfers to the online classroom.

Flipped learning in the ESL classroom can be defined as “inverting the classroom” so that “events [e.g., lectures] that have traditionally taken place *inside* the classroom now take place *outside* the classroom and vice versa [writing activities, readings, etc.]” (Lage et al., 2000). Research in the field of ESL strongly supports flipped learning (Chiu, 2016). Since 2000, studies as to the effectiveness of flipped learning have increased and tend to focus on the effectiveness of assignments, using tests or other scores to determine improvement. For example, the findings of Abdelrahman et al. (2017) showed that there was improvement in learning paragraph writing from a pre- and post-test in which students wrote a 100-word descriptive paragraph on their best friend and favorite person, respectively. The study concluded that there was not only improvement in the writing but also more engagement and satisfaction while learning to write in an FL classroom (online and face-to-face). One of the key reasons was that students felt that their teacher was paying more personal attention to them, an interaction that especially fostered greater interaction with shy students (Abdelrahman et al., 2017). We should emphasize as well that the majority of research concludes that flipped learning does improve learning (Akçayir & Akçayir, 2018). Of course, there are plenty of studies that still challenge the majority of the research findings, arguing that flipped learning needs far more study especially in ESL because many studies show no significant improvement. In a 2018 study by Craven and Fredrick, it was found, for example, that active learning spaces that were especially designed to increase activities in an FL environment had no significant impact on the writing proficiencies measured in the study, which examined first and last essays in the semester (Craven & Fredrick, 2018). Because teaching and learning is fraught with complexities, research into flipped learning remains of great interest to the field of ESL.

This interest increased greatly during the global lockdowns in the early part of 2020 due to the COVID-19 virus,

when teachers of all disciplines were abruptly forced to teach online, faced to deal with the inevitable truth that the use of technology was necessary if education were to continue. Fortunately, for those ESL teachers already well versed in flipped and blended learning, the transition to full online teaching was relatively easy. We argue that it is now time for all ESL educators to realize that this global phenomenon is a great opportunity to enhance our pedagogical practices for when students return to brick-and-mortar classrooms. In this article, we will not only discuss how to seamlessly move from face-to-face learning to flipped learning with a twist, that is, how to continue the “classroom” part of flipped learning online (face to face in cyberspace), but we will also highlight some important cultural factors that need to be taken into account by practitioners operating in this new environment.

## Participating in Blackboard Collaborate

When the COVID shutdown disrupted our spring 2020 courses at the American University of Sharjah, UAE, we were each teaching four sections of Academic Writing I and Academic Writing II. All sections were comprised of approximately 20 first- or second-year university ESL students. At the start of the semester, the two of us were already implementing flipped learning in our brick-and-mortar classroom, so all we had to do was figure out how to switch to synchronous online teaching during the

“What we learned from moving the entire course online was that flipped learning, student interaction, group work, and teacher accessibility were just as effective as in the physical classroom.”

COVID-19 pandemic. The new classroom process led to some interesting discoveries. First of all, there is a wide variety of what constitutes classroom participation in cyber rooms. Students can, for example, show themselves live to the whole class, or click in and out. In the classroom, of course, student facial expressions are visible to the instructor at all times and can be very useful in gauging confusion, boredom, disgust, or other discomforts students feel during a teacher's presentation of material.

We should also compare audio or student voices in these two scenarios. In the cyber classroom, students can interrupt with the audio microphone at any time or add a text in the chat area. In Blackboard Collaborate, there is a "raise your hand" function that allows students to cue to ask a question through their audio microphone. By selecting the "raise your hand" function, the instructor is able to manage when students voice themselves. In other words, the students cannot "talk" out of turn disruptively during class as they can in regular brick-and-mortar classrooms. On this issue, classroom management is easier online.

Another function is the text in the chat box. This function allows students to communicate incessantly. Students need not wait their turn to speak. They can simply text as much as they like during the entire class, even during directions or lectures. The text is only disruptive to the instructor if the instructor chooses to read them. We found that much of the texting in the chat box was relevant, whereas some of it was banter between students. One thing we noticed is that students enjoy joking in text in the style one could find in the comment section under YouTube videos or articles online. The instructor's attention given to audio or chats is still under

the control of the instructor, but each student can decide alone whether to follow the chats or ignore them. The interesting discovery here is that students are less likely to interrupt other students when they use audio, as the medium will end up distorting the simultaneous voices. This "one voice at a time" feature helps adjudicate any issues rising from students attempting to talk over or interrupt each other.

### **Breakout Groups and Class Communication**

Of course, the points above (the audio and the chat box) show varying ways to engage with the course, yet they assume all is going well not only with internet connections but also with student engagement. It is far easier for students to "hide" in the cyber class than in the brick-and-mortar classroom. Therefore, to keep the students engaged while online, we had to review all of the functions of Blackboard Collaborate. There were many items that were directly useful for teachers, (sharing documents, an option to record sessions, etc.), but we knew that we had to immediately dive in and see what would appeal to the students. The greatest function was Breakout Groups. This allowed students to engage in focused, collaborative learning while online. The Breakout Groups function gave the students more control over their learning and increased their engagement because groups always need to do something and then report on their activities.

What we learned from the students is that they greatly enjoyed the online group work far more than group work in the regular classroom. One of the key reasons was that students were isolated during COVID-19 restrictions and, by regulation or by choice, many were not interacting at all with peers or people in general. Thus, for our



students, group activity was a welcome and highly desired activity during class time. One advantage with Blackboard Collaborate in determining groups is that it can randomize students instantly and thus the burden of selecting groups is no longer on the students or instructor. We were surprised to find that not only did students enjoy the group activities, but they also requested more activities to do in Breakout Groups. We also noticed that when Breakout Groups was used with apps such as Perusall or even Google Docs, students engaged even more because they could collectively comment in writing, interacting with ideas in published texts as well as their own drafts. To them, the format was more like chat conversations and perhaps made the school task more like conversation. We wondered, if sending students into breakout groups meant that the instructor was now out of the picture, left alone in the main cyber room, twiddling their thumbs, listening to cyber crickets? Not at all, the instructor has the means to pop in and out of all the groups with one click of a button. Students could also contact the instructor via audio or text from each group. The obvious benefit during a pandemic need not be stated. Students with symptoms, coughs, sneezes, etc. were unable to infect their peers.

What we learned from moving the entire course online was that flipped learning, student interaction, group work, and teacher accessibility were just as effective as in the physical classroom. We even realized that instructor office hours were also easily conducted. As a general policy, instructor office hours are typically required to be posted on a physical office door and noted in syllabi. Since no on-site presence was allowed during the COVID-19 restrictions, we realized that online “cyber” office hours, in the form of email communication, had been with us for decades. Are physical office hours perhaps obsolete? With notification services in email apps and the omnipresence of the internet in our lives, what teacher in this era does

not respond to a student email within a few hours? The internet has made the office a 24/7 service center. Thus, as the office was a physical space with limited availability, one’s presence on the web offers extended office hours, which add up to far more availability.

### Our Student Satisfaction Survey

At the end of the semester, we conducted a satisfaction survey. Although students missed the social elements of university life, their satisfaction in learning academic writing strategies were equal to regular classes. When answering the question “How easily did you communicate with your professor during the COVID-19 online portion of the course?” 95% of the students over eight sections answered *highly effective*, while the remaining 5% answered *effective*.

On a similar question, “How easily did you collaborate and interact with your peers during the COVID-19 online portion of the course?” 88% of the students answered *highly effective*, whereas 10% stated *effective*, and 2% stated *ineffective*. The satisfaction levels went beyond their views of communicating online; there were also positive responses in student perception regarding how much they learned in the course. To the question “How did the move to online instruction affect your learning process?” 87% of the students stated they felt it had the same effect as being in a live class, 10% stated that it had a positive affect, and 3% stated the move had a negative affect. It is important to note, however, that the students surveyed already had five weeks of classes, creating a contrastive dynamic that may not have existed if they went straight to online learning at the start of the semester. It will be interesting to see if future survey results show similar

results as during spring semester 2020.

Lastly, we would like to say a word about “humanizing” the experience when teacher and students meet, for



“...this global phenomenon is a great opportunity to enhance our pedagogical practices for when students return to brick-and-mortar classrooms.”

example, using tools such as collaboration in Blackboard. Many believe they can humanize the session by having students post their photos or by using video and audio. However, what makes the interaction more human is that students have the option and control to make their own choices on whether they will post a photo or show their face. To elaborate, in a Middle Eastern or Asian environment, many students, especially female students, are more comfortable using the chat functions rather than posting photos of themselves. For a teacher to impose their own cultural ideals and values on another is simply to abuse their authority. Therefore, we encourage students to show their faces both in icons and in video chat so that facial expressions can be a part of the communication, but we never enforce or demand that students appear in video. Thus, one of the great advantages of online instruction is the freedom it brings to the student. As educators, we must always be aware of how our authority and power might disrupt the feelings and cultural values of our diverse students.

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# Engaging in Informal Technology Professional Development Activities

By Lauren J.H. Woo

## Acceleration in Digital Learning

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have entered an accelerated period of growth and expansion in digital learning. In Korea, schools and universities continue to deliver a majority of their classes online utilizing a variety of online learning platforms, resources, and applications (Korean Ministry of Education, 2020). Many universities are planning to implement a long-term hybrid education model, combining the best features of online education and offline classes (Kalenzi et al., 2020).

Amid these rapid changes, teachers have struggled to effectively teach online. Foremost, teachers have not had sufficient training and practice in online classroom management. According to a survey administered by the Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations, major obstacles to online teaching include conducting administrative tasks and communicating with students online (Yoon, 2020). Additionally, it has been difficult for teachers to maintain flexibility, engagement, and social connectedness in online learning environments (Lowenthal et al., 2020). For language teaching, it has been especially challenging to modify and facilitate collaborative activities (e.g., group projects/discussions) online. To overcome these challenges, teachers need to become more confident and comfortable with new technologies.

## Recommendations for Informal Technology Professional Development Activities

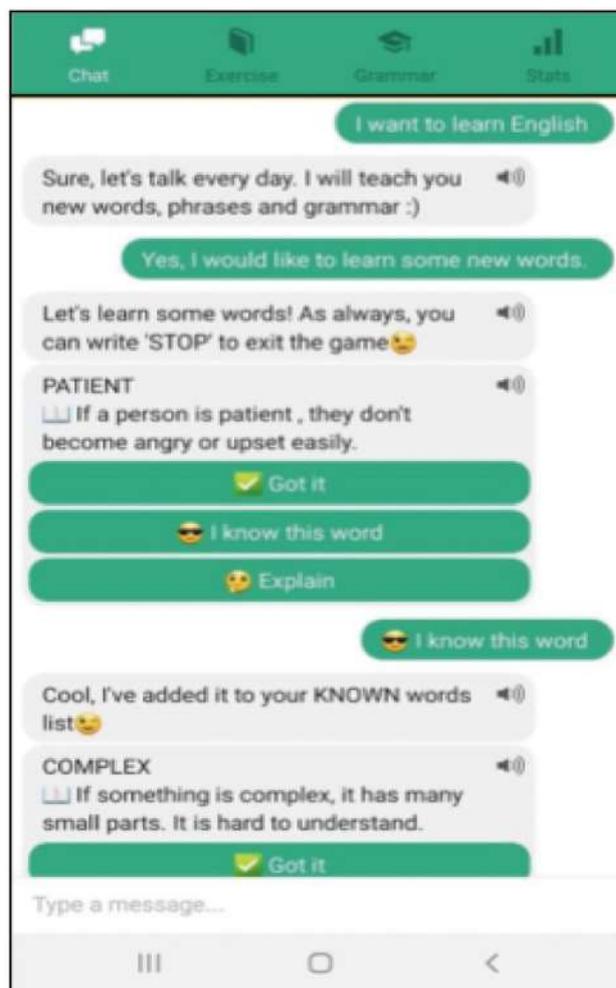
In addition to formal workshops and training sessions, teachers need to continuously engage in informal technology professional development activities to bring about meaningful changes in their technology integration practices. Thus, I would like to recommend three easy-to-do activities that can be completed within 10–15 minutes on a smartphone at any time.

### Activity 1: Try Out New Apps

By experimenting with new mobile apps, teachers will be able to move beyond using technology as direct tool substitutions (e.g., PowerPoints, e-books). As teachers become familiarized with the interactive, collaborative, and customizable features of recently developed apps, they will gain the motivation and insight needed to implement student-centered technology use (Liu et al., 2019). Teachers can try out new English language learning apps like "Andy, English-Speaking Bot" or a variety of trending apps. For instance, Google Play's Best Apps of 2020 include Timecap for habit-tracking, Reface for creating face-swap videos, and Dolby On for high-quality video-/audio-recording.

### Activity 2: Reflect on Beliefs & Perceptions of Technology

By reflecting on their teaching beliefs and perceptions of technology, teachers will be able to build on their technology integration practices. Through reflection, teachers will be able to identify connections between their actual use of technology for teaching and their pedagogical orientations (e.g., rule-based, function-



▲ *Andy, English-Speaking Bot chat interface.*

based), perceptions of technology (e.g., degree of usefulness), and self-efficacy towards technology integration (Ding et al., 2018; Kwon et al., 2019). Teachers can begin reflecting by downloading a journaling app like Daybook and answering the following questions:

- What language learning goals do you tend to prioritize? What types of technology have you used to help your students achieve these goals?
- How does technology enhance or hinder language teaching?
- What types of technology-related skills, knowledge, or experiences would you like to acquire?

### Activity 3: Connect with Other Teachers Online

When taking on new pedagogical challenges, teachers need emotional support from other teachers. As teachers share and respond to personal stories and vulnerabilities, they will be able to overcome feelings of professional uncertainty and become more open to utilizing new technologies (Shelton & Archambault, 2018). While it may take some time to form meaningful relationships, teachers can take the first step by reaching out to other teachers in these ways:



▲ A #pedagoofriday tweet (Potter, 2020).

- Join a channel in the KOTESOL Membership Lounge on Discord.
- Respond to one of the latest tweets on Twitter with the hashtag #edtechchat, #langchat, or #pedagoofriday (used to share classroom highlights).
- Respond to a trending post on the TeachersConnect platform.
- Connect and send a message to a colleague on the Edmodo platform.

### Closing Thoughts

Although recent advancements in educational technology have been remarkable, technology is still just a tool. Teachers decide whether these tools gather dust or are used in innovative ways to transform teaching. In the words of Steve Jobs, “Technology is nothing. What’s more important is that you have faith in people, that they’re basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they’ll do wonderful things with them.”



▲ A trending TeachersConnect post (Bhatia, 2020).

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“...if you give (people) tools, they’ll do wonderful things with them.”

— Steve Jobs

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# Online Teacher–Student Interactions: Diary Reflections of an “Old-School” Teacher

By Valentin Tassev

This past year, 2020, witnessed the emergence of a new phenomenon of a socio-environmental nature: COVID-19. The COVID-19 crisis has had a profound impact on every aspect of human life. In particular, it has had huge implications on education all over the world, and perhaps for the first time in human history, learning at all educational levels has been conducted mostly or entirely online. This practice has affected not only the nature and methodology of teaching but also how both teachers and students have come to perceive their own presence, involvement, and contribution to the whole process.

## Background and Context

Throughout most of my career, I have relied on maintaining and re-affirming my presence in the classroom through standing in front of students and monitoring all activities in the classroom. I have remained an “old-school” fellow for most of my teaching career, that is, predominantly writing on the board, largely resisting the use of technology, adhering to a more teacher-centered environment, and conducting through a single and linear way of provision of input from teacher to students.

Nevertheless, as a result of COVID-19, I have changed my perceptions in terms of interactions and relationships with

chat-box, either through the computer, the mobile phone, or both. So, throughout the whole 19-week semester, cameras were never turned on, and the students never saw each other's faces. The online curriculum consisted of tasks and activities as described below.

## Online Tasks and Activities

The online format resulted in the curriculum being mostly a listening and speaking curriculum. The speaking tasks involved mostly giving pair presentations, group presentations, individual presentations, and providing short individual answers.

For example, in terms of group presentations, students were asked to give presentations describing a festival in a country of their choice and the common cultural practices related to it. Regarding individual presentations, students were asked to describe a non-existing national or international festival that they each would like to introduce to the existing calendar(s), and convince the audience of its importance and cultural meaning. Also, in pairs or individually, students were asked to give short presentations making predictions about the future and, in particular, make a prognosis about peoples' future behaviors. One of these predictions, for example, was that online learning would become more and more popular in the future because of its convenience and usability. The speaking activities, and especially the presentations, mostly served the purpose of teaching students persuasive speaking skills.

## Impact of Online Learning on Student's Motivation, Student's Identities, and Students' Personalities

All of these lessons, moved to online practices, proved beneficial for students because they were allowed to be relieved from the pressure of visual contact and, especially, physical presence, both of which presuppose immediate answers and then the approval of the teacher, which would determine the success of a student's performance. These procedures also relieved students from the practice of being exposed to their fellow classmates as in a traditional classroom learning atmosphere, which often could be a highly demotivating factor as well.

The students were liberated to communicate their viewpoints in an unregulated manner and speak their voices freely with no fear of being monitored, rejected, or labeled and graded as right or wrong. The lack of physical exposure presented them with new opportunities to communicate their ideas. In this regard, some students expressed feeling more relaxed and comfortable in communicating their points of view, liberated from having to seek approval and having to adjust their behaviour accordingly, as in a usual classroom setting.

students, and largely the process of teaching/learning. For example, I was supposed to go to teach university students in China during the Spring 2020 semester, who were later supposed to come to South Korea and complete their education at a local, South Korean university. I had never taught in China before, nor online. Because of the pandemic, I could not go to China and had to teach these exchange students solely online. Moreover, I did not have a prescribed syllabus in mind, as I was initially relying on conducting a needs analysis in China. Finally, I ended up deciding how and what to teach online on a week-to-week basis, depending on students' progress.

Throughout the whole Spring 2020 semester, while interacting with my students online, there was no visual contact between us at all, only audio. I could only rely on names, nicknames, profile pictures, and written exchanges in communication with all 284 students. I provided shared screen activities and played audio and video files. I also communicated with students via writing in the common

“...online teaching allowed for learning to be more fluid, and it helped define learning progress on an ongoing basis...”

Other students commented that online teaching actually helped them express their feelings and attitudes more openly, freely, and sincerely. They also shared that they had become more confident and attentive in class, more willing to listen and learn. A few students shared that online teaching brought lots of new experiences and opportunities to the classroom. Lastly, one student commented that the online experience helped reduce the distance existing among students, compared to a usual classroom environment.

Here are some opinions students shared:

— "...because online courses force us to speak English.... On the contrary, face-to-face teaching will make us even more shy."

— "I think in online courses, you can speak at will, you can chat at will, very active atmosphere."

— "In this way, I don't have too much stress when I communicate with foreign teachers."

— "I can speak what I want to speak, and don't worry about anybody.... You can have a discussion on a topic everyone is interested in, and everyone should express their own unique opinions."

— "I just need to say what I want to say and don't care about others."

— "In the online course, we may express what we want to express more fluently.... I can speak what I want to speak."

It could be argued, therefore, that students' creativity and the originality of their thoughts presented a picture of who they truly were in the eyes of their teacher, rather than the image they would have portrayed in the hope of being perceived in a certain way, as usually happens in a traditional, classroom setting. It was perhaps the first time that they could experience the liberation of talking as well as listening to themselves in the foreign language while also enjoying the freedom, satisfaction, and even pleasure of being heard, recognized, acknowledged, and respected. As a result, the students' levels of confidence improved largely throughout the semester.

Here are some opinions students shared:

— "In online classes, I don't need to see anyone's face or attitude, so I will feel relaxed and comfortable. It makes me more eager to answer all the questions."

— "Online classes can also improve our confidence."

— "It's like talking to a friend on the phone...just relaxed and at ease."

— "Online learning can increase the interest of learning and help exercise our listening and speaking skills. Compared with face-to-face classes, online teaching gives us more opportunities to exercise our expressions' skills."

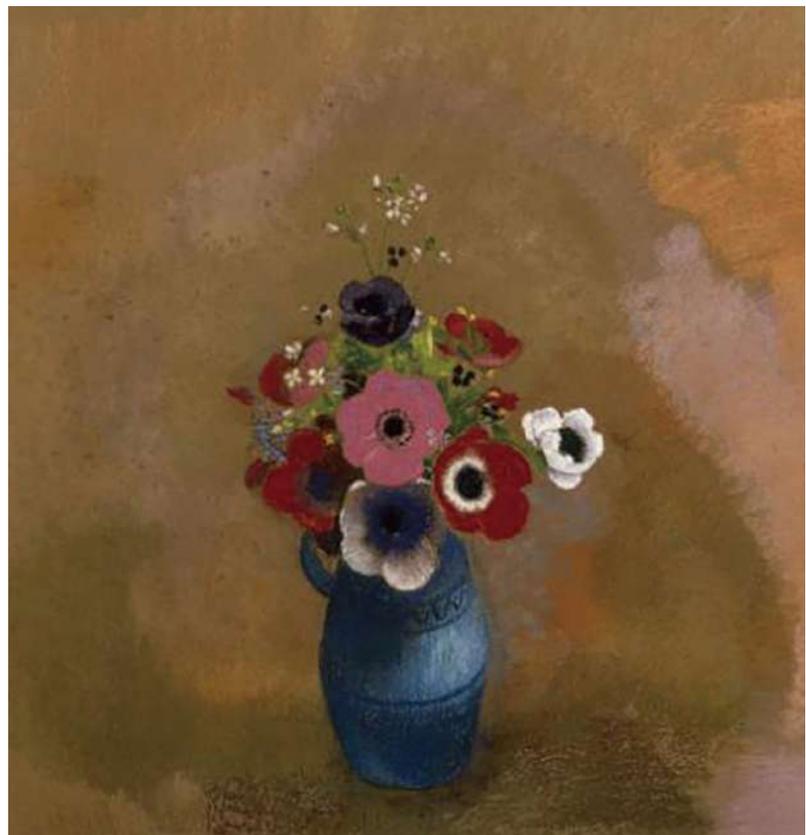
Communicating in the digital space, with no clear idea of the kind of person their teacher was, provided a new social space for the students to explore and project their identities, share their interests, and perhaps reveal a new picture of their true personas: a more authentic and

reflective one. Communicating online in the L2 enabled learners to perform new social roles and see themselves from a different perspective as agents in a new socio-cultural spatial zone, that is, a more personalized and liberating one.

### **Impact of Online Learning on the Teacher–Student Relationship**

Online learning also had a huge impact on the teacher–student relationship. Students could behave freely and unforced online, sometimes make jokes with the teacher and vice versa, be unpredictable and spontaneous in their own ways, make confessions, and reveal their weaknesses in a sincere manner.

One of these jokes, for example, was me being able to tell students that being a teacher was "3 in 1," making an analogy to the coffee mix in the sense that for me teaching was my job, a hobby, and also a learning



experience as a student (because I was pursuing a MA degree in TESOL).

A student made a very interesting observation regarding the nature of the teacher–student relationship:

— "In online classes, we can enhance the relationship among teacher and students through one-to-one communication. In my opinion, online learning can better promote the relationship between teachers and students. When we have doubts, we can communicate with teachers through the internet anytime and anywhere. It is more timely than traditional face-to-face teaching."

There was a sense that breaking down the barriers of time and space enabled students to expose themselves and, moreover, face their new identities with ease, with no fear

**“...students commented that online teaching actually helped them express their feelings and attitudes more openly, freely, and sincerely. They also shared that they had become more confident and attentive in class, more willing to listen and learn.”**

or attempts for later resistance or escape from whom they truly had become online. They also did not mind how they were being perceived by their teacher. They welcomed their new identities with confidence, pride, and joy. As a result, their relationship with me evolved into a new kind of relationship based on mutual trust, warmth, and solidarity.

### **Suggestions and Tips**

Having said all this, my reflections are not trying to argue that I already had a preference for an online environment, as opposed to a traditional offline one. My perceptions mentioned here might be mostly correct, perhaps inaccurate, or even completely false. As I mentioned, I was confronted with this situation involuntarily, and this has been my first encounter with online teaching. Pedagogically speaking, it is therefore hard to determine whether students have fulfilled their learning potential as a result of online teaching.

As a matter of fact, as a whole, students commented that despite the benefits of online learning, they still

would prefer face-to-face teaching in the long-term. They shared that in terms of learning outcomes and building a teacher–student relationship, offline teaching would still be more productive. More recent students have gone further and claimed that online teaching could not replace conventional classroom teaching and that they were looking forward to meeting their teacher face-to-face.

Therefore, my reflections should not be regarded as a study proclaiming the benefits of online learning, but rather to highlight my observations on the extent to which online learning could help contribute to the formation of students’ new identities in the process of learning, which could also affect the teacher–student relationship in various ways.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

One big lesson that I have learned from this transition to online language teaching is that it can be a motivating factor towards the learning process, as it helps students build new identities. Another lesson learned is that online teaching allows for more flexibility and more uncontrolled output from students. As mentioned earlier, the lack of physical contact allowed students to share their opinions more freely with no control or required approval by the teacher or fellow classmates. As such, online teaching allowed for learning to be more fluid, and it helped define learning progress on an ongoing basis rather than through a predetermined and prescribed syllabus. Thus, it allowed students to control and direct the learning process, often aspired to in both communicative language teaching and learner-centred environments. Furthermore, online learning helped build more trust between teacher and students as well as transform my teacher–student relationship and the relationships amongst students themselves in new and different ways.

Last but not least, I suggest that online learning can be promoted successfully in combination with traditional classroom learning environments. One often takes it for granted that individuality and creativity exist and flourish in our traditional classrooms. In fact, in many contemporary societies, they hardly do, and individuality results in being more of a burden than a virtue. Online learning could provide an alternative for students to express their individuality and creativity in these cases. As a result of blending these two modes of learning, new relationships and identities can evolve in various ways with scenarios that can have great impact on the theory and practice of language learning in the years ahead!

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# Why Inclusive Teaching Needs to Become the Norm

By James M. Taylor and Ilá Coimbra

In recent years, terms such as *inclusion*, *diversity*, and *representation* have become more widespread in education and wider society. In an ELT context, these terms are usually used to describe our teaching materials and how they choose to represent (or more accurately, ignore) various social groups as well as hiring practices and the line-ups of speakers at conferences. Another important aspect is materials design and how students with various learning differences are able to interact with the tools they are provided with to facilitate their learning. Over the last few years, there has been growing pressure in all these aspects of our profession for improvements, and while certain advancements have been made, there is undoubtedly a lot of work to do. In this article, Ilá Coimbra and I will look at how teachers can continue to make progress in the area related to materials.

## Inclusive Teaching Materials

In 2019, Ilá Coimbra and I launched a project called Raise Up! in which we identified the groups and identities that

“...fostering a sense of belonging through identity in the classroom is crucially important...”

we feel are neglected in varying degrees by ELT materials (for the full list, check our website [raiseupforelt.com](http://raiseupforelt.com)). We feel that the portrayal of these social groups and identities are not currently adequate in international mainstream ELT materials. Many of them are completely absent (e.g., LGBTQIA+, various faiths) or portrayed in limited ways (e.g., disabled, elderly, or working class people). In response to this, we have created a series of coursebooks that show how inclusion is possible and provide teachers with an alternative source of material for their lessons. All of our profits go to various charitable causes.

We think that there are numerous reasons why inclusion of commonly ignored groups should become a natural part of teaching practice. Our belief is that fostering a sense of belonging through identity in the classroom is crucially important for three main reasons.

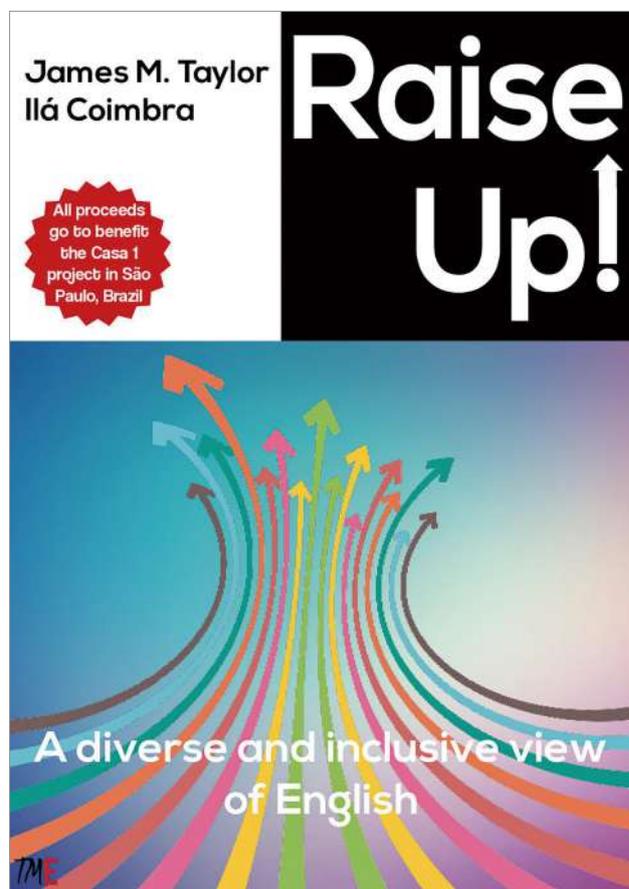
Firstly, as John Gray identified in *The Construction of English* (2010), by excluding and failing to recognize learners' identities in our materials, materials creators and subsequently teachers are suppressing learners by forcing them either to keep elements of their identity hidden or to confront the teacher and other students with who they really are. Students should never be forced to adopt either of these positions. It is an unfortunate irony that while English language teaching has continued to ask for more and more personalization from its learners, it has

simultaneously refused to open a space for the majority of those learners to be their true selves.

Secondly, acceptance has been identified (Dörnyei, 2001) as a basic condition for motivating students. By having a non-judgmental and positive attitude towards learners and how they see themselves, they are more likely to feel a sense of intrinsic motivation towards their language lessons. More broadly, Dörnyei stated that a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere is indispensable, and we fail to see how this is possible when students feel that an essential part of their experience is not acknowledged.

Finally, it is our argument that inclusion is beneficial to all learners. For the learners who find themselves represented, by now the benefits should be clear, but for the other students, it enables us to offer a wider and more interesting vision of the world. All students, regardless of their background, stand to benefit by being exposed to ways of living and points of view that are different to their own. Empathy and understanding can be encouraged, as well as expand the learners world view. At a time of deep polarization in many countries, this seems more valuable than ever.

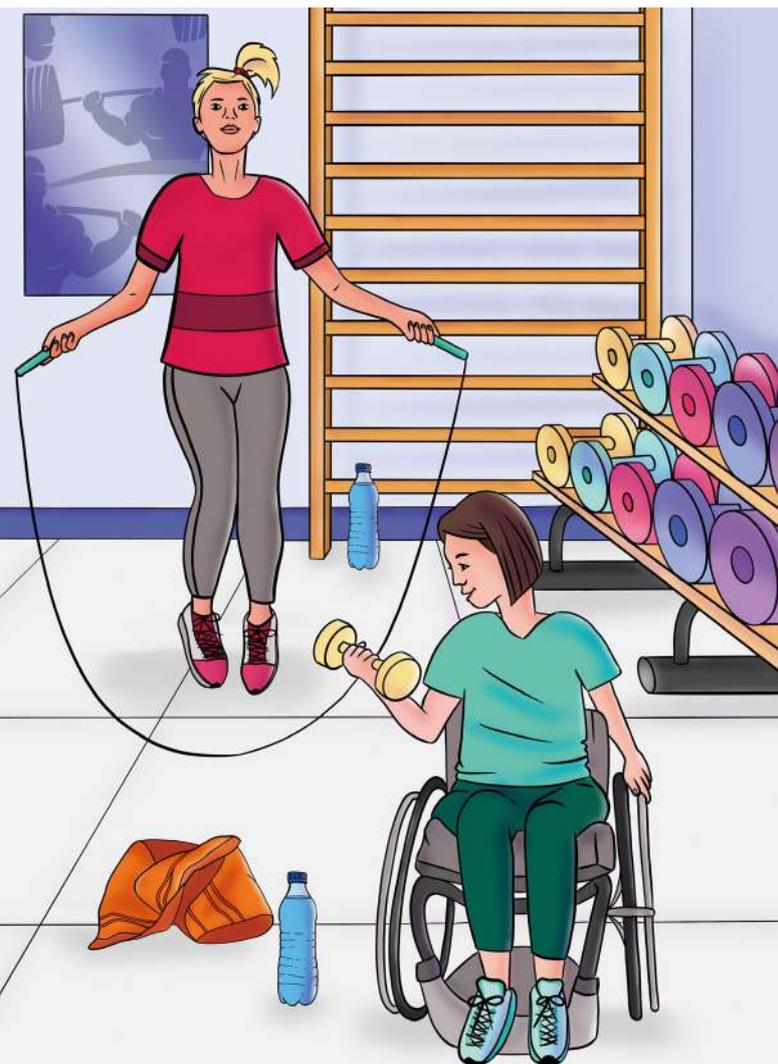
There are many things we would like to see the ELT profession do in order to be more inclusive, but here is a short list of what we think teachers can do with their lessons. These tips are not a prescriptive list because we



are aware that teachers operate in a variety of contexts and that there are cultures in which some of these are difficult to approach. As general principles, however, they can be applied in many contexts.

### 1. Resist thinking that inclusion only means discussing controversial social issues.

Keep in mind that you should be attempting to create an inclusive, encouraging environment for all learners. You may have noticed that during this article we haven't talked about dealing with controversial social problems in the classroom, and this is not because we are opposed to these discussions but because we are more interested in how students are treated than turning their lives into topics to be judged by other students.



▲ An image from *Raise Up! (2019) coursebook*.

### 2. Use images.

Pictures can be a powerful and quick way to adapt coursebooks. If you feel that your teaching materials are not adequately representing a diversity of experiences, replace the images with pictures of the people who are missing, whether that is disabled people, people living in poverty, or the numerous other groups that we have identified.

### 3. Add your own discussion questions.

This is an effective and easy way to encourage students to engage with the lack of representation in their lessons.

You can do this by asking them to analyze their lessons or the whole book by focusing on what and who are shown, how they are presented, and who is absent. Key questions you can ask them are (a) Why is this topic here? (b) How is the topic and the subjects being presented? (c) What other ways of presenting about the topic and the subjects are there? (Gray, 2010).

### 4. Look for ways to adapt, not censor.

Encourage empathy and intercultural understanding, criticism, self-discovery, alternative perspectives, and learner-centeredness. Achieve this by critiquing the materials that you have, as opposed to replacing them. This will provide the students with an opportunity to work on their critical skills and develop their sensitivity to people who identify differently to them.

### Inclusive Materials Design

Another area that we feel is neglected in offering inclusion for learners is in materials design, specifically related to handouts and slides, the latter becoming increasingly important with the recent boom in online teaching. With this, our focus moves away from representation and towards inclusive practice with the emphasis on beginning to understand the many possible learning differences that students can encounter. These include ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia, to name a few. Many of these are not readily recognizable in that they have no outwardly noticeable manifestations for those who haven't received training specifically in this area, meaning that it may be impossible for the teacher to be aware that the student has it without being informed.

As educators, whatever age group we teach, we need to be cognizant of the high probability that we have learners who fit this description in our classrooms. Research suggests that as many as one in five students have some variance of learning difference. In our subjective experience, this is a topic that is rarely if ever mentioned in schools, training courses, or at ELT conferences, and yet it is fundamental to making sure that students feel a sense of belonging in the lessons. If learners are unable to comfortably interact with the materials that you use with them, aren't they likely to find it more difficult to improve their English?

This is a highly complex area that Ilá Coimbra and I don't have space to discuss adequately, but there are some things that teachers can easily do when designing classroom materials that can make them more inclusive for the majority of their learners. It is important to point out that there is a wide range of learning differences and that it is impossible for teachers to apply "a universal design" that will make their materials accessible to all learners all of the time. In the best-case scenario, educational institutions should make teachers aware of any students who may require special attention in their learning and give them the support to be able to tailor the materials to those learners, but in lieu of this, the teacher can apply these tips to better help them.

With text,

1. don't write in upper case.
2. use a consistent design from one slide/page to the next.
3. don't use abbreviations.
4. use wide margins and leave space around separate texts.



▲ An image from *Raise Up! (2019) coursebook*.

5. use a large font.
6. use a clear font like Arial.
7. use numbers not the words: "8" not "eight."
8. present one idea per slide; don't include too much information.
9. use headings and subheadings.
10. use color, bold, and large font to highlight information (not underline or other effects).
11. always finish a word on the line.
12. pastel colour backgrounds. Avoid patterns or faded pictures.
13. use bullet points.

With images,

1. embrace their power. Images can do many things, some of which are described in this list. Maximize their potential to your advantage.
2. use symbols, pictures, photos, or drawings.
3. one image for the main point is sufficient.
4. don't put words over the pictures.
5. keep them to the left of the writing.
6. use them to preview texts.
7. use them to make text look less intimidating by supporting complicated ideas.
8. make sure they are clear, using good quality images from legal sources.
9. make them as big as you can.
10. use ticks (checkmarks) or thumbs, arrows, and colors to clarify meaning.

With video,

1. make sure it is visible on all sizes and types of screens.
2. it needs to work on all operating systems.
3. it has to be reliable and quick loading.
4. accurate subtitles are very helpful.
5. make sure it is available for the learners to look at and download later.

Just as with fostering a sense of belonging in the classroom, we believe that by adopting these design

principles, they benefit all students. Accessibility is not limited to people with learning differences only, and by making the effort to make life easier for everyone in your classrooms, your students will be grateful and motivated by your commitment to their learning. If you wish to find out more, search for "Easy Read Information" and "Universal Design for Learning."

### In Conclusion

The concepts outlined in this article are unified around one central principle: creating a sense of belonging in the classroom by eradicating unnecessary barriers to inclusion, whether that is through representation or materials design. What we are asking from you is that you do what you can in order to advance the state of inclusion in ELT. If you look at the list of identities that we mentioned on the Raise Up! website, it is highly unlikely that you will identify as more than three or four, and you may not experience any learning differences of your own. But if ELT professionals at all levels are to do a better job at giving all of our students the opportunity to feel that they belong in our lessons, our students will need to see themselves represented in their lessons as well as those people who are not there, and feel that they are having their learning needs catered for.

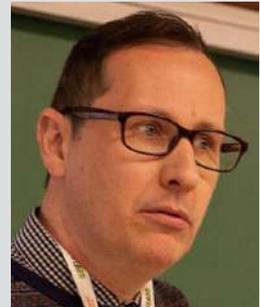
Find out more about the Raise Up! project at [raiseupforelt.com](http://raiseupforelt.com).

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### The Authors

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**Ilá Coimbra** has been an English teacher since 2001 and a teacher trainer since 2011. Ilá is based in Munich, Germany, holds DELTA Modules 1 and 2, and CELTA and CPE certificates. She is also one of the founding members of BRAZ-TESOL Voices SIG, a special interest group that focuses on equality in ELT.



# JALT2020, JALT–KOTESOL Connections, and Conferencing in a Pandemic

By Rhea Metituk

## Introduction

This is a story about the space–time continuum as altered in pandemic times, and conferencing in its flux. Each attendee, to any event, moves into the same space and exits with their unique version of that event. This experience depends on a number of factors including interest and purpose, the venue, the community, and the style of the conference. In the age of online conferencing, distance between cities and countries dissolves; instead of the hefty investment usually required to traverse time and space, you can join in the click of a mouse.

JALT is the Japan Association for Language Teaching and JALT2020 was their first online international conference, which I attended as a presenter and participant. As a KOTESOL event planner, my interest was focused on how the JALT conference facilitators, in response to restrictions as a result of the pandemic, put on a virtual conference of gargantuan proportions. Throughout 2020, English language teaching (ELT) organizations throughout the world either canceled conferences, planned them as hybrid, or held them totally online. JALT and KOTESOL, as partner organizations joined in several global alliances including PAC (The Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies), are particularly close in geographical proximity, and in some ways, in cultural similarities, and have a strong history of connectedness. To event planners both domestic and abroad, each event witnessed is a blueprint

choosing a session and joining it in real time was elegantly simple. Each session could be joined in one click – without the tedious business of entering Zoom URLs, meeting IDs, or passwords. Once in the presentation space, we were greeted by a room host with the presentation title and basic information set as their background, guiding the attendees while assisting presenters.

Initially, I had joined JALT2020 as one of twelve panelists in the Performance in Education (PIE) SIG forum. A few minutes before presentation time, I found my session and clicked in, ready to begin. The discussion focused on student motivation, teacher/student feedback, teacher/student self- and peer-evaluation, and how these came together to support communities of teachers and students in the midst of emergency remote teaching. The session was as promised: interactive, enriching, educative, and practical. In addition to participating on the panel, I perused and enjoyed a rich array of synchronous sessions (in real time on Zoom) on offer at the conference.

Having had attended offline JALT conferences that involved trudging through snow across campuses in Hokkaido in the wrong shoes or squeezing by fellow attendees in crowded stairways between sessions in Nagoya, I relished watching the program – whilst in pajamas with a fully stocked refrigerator at hand and minus the onerous expense of plane tickets and hotel bills – a world of ELT

**“Strong connections can be made online, if enthusiasm is applied.”**

for future events. At the time of this story’s recording, the 2021 Korea TESOL International Conference, KOTESOL’s biggest annual event, was in its planning and promotion stages. This article shares my experience of JALT2020 and how its host platform, Eventzil.la, came to be the host platform for the KOTESOL 2021 International Conference, as well as projections for the future of conferencing throughout the pandemic and beyond.

## JALT2020, as a Presenter and Participant

As both a participant and a presenter, I found the silky-smooth execution of the event impressive. It was easy to navigate all the way along: After registering on the Eventzil.la platform and purchasing a ticket from the JALT homepage, it was a cakewalk to create my own profile and upload my biographical information. The website was intuitive and the minimalistic, functional design cleanly balanced information with white space. The search bar was keyed to find sessions by title, presenter name, or presentation theme. The main page contained a stream of all the options for sessions available in the moment, so

action accessible through my screen. Though we are all wistful for face-to-face connections, travel, and the real-life glitter of offline conferences, this online version was a delightful substitute given the circumstances.

Session choices were voluminous, and the week-long instead of weekend-long nature of the event played as an advantage since the choices were dispersed into more manageable bites throughout the week, making it feasible to attend many more presentations than usual. In addition, the virtual aspect vastly expanded the global reach of countries from which presenters and attendees could join, with conference-goers from as far away as Iceland.

The major sticky point with online events can be the social aspect. Face-to-face offline conferences hold ample chances for spontaneous interaction with attendees: during or between sessions we can ask questions to presenters. We can share ideas with a friend at a coffee table or over dinner, or network at the legendary KOTESOL

wine and cheese party. How can we fill this social milieu in an online event? In my case, I was lucky as a PIE SIG member to attend their social hosted on Zoom in the evening, where we reflected on our presentation, rehashed the highlights of the day, and played party games. As well, during presentations I “met” other attendees, organizers, and presenters by asking questions, by using the chat function, and by joining social hangout rooms. As a result, I was able to follow up with people I had met and extend invitations for video interviews and presentations at future KOTESOL events. Strong connections can be made online, if enthusiasm is applied.

### JALT2020 and Its Creation

JALT2020 was JALT’s 46th annual international conference held November 16–23, with well over 700 presentations, including featured sessions, workshops, research reports, poster sessions, panel and roundtable discussions, planning meetings, and more. JALT2020 had over 30 chapters and almost 30 special interest groups involved in events. The conference earned a platinum EVE (Equal Voices in ELT) Award for attention to diversity. Conference chair Wayne Malcolm and co-chairs Louise Ohashi and Mizuka Tsukamoto emphasized the call for joint sessions and collaborative presentations, using the event theme, “Communities of Teachers and Learners,” as a springboard to forge connections. Indeed, the creation of the event itself was particularly a collaborative effort. Interviewees mentioned in this article include Wayne Malcolm, JALT director of program; Bill Pellowe, JALT PR director; Gary Ross, JALT CALL program chair and creator of the web host platform, as well as José Domingo Cruz and Jenni Crittenden, Zoom room host coordinators. Some interviews were performed with the KOTESOL president, Bryan Hale, and IC chairs, Michael Free and Lindsay Herron, listening in to share ideas.

Wayne Malcolm researched potential plans by looking at other conferences and started building a team: “I’m not a micromanager. Delegating is the most important skill... Humility makes you approachable.” He and Bill Pellowe emphasized most the necessity of teamwork, designing a framework of clear communication and sharing responsibility in a distributed leadership style, pointing out that this offers chances to not only bring new people into the organization but provides opportunities for growth and skill development to potential volunteers. Bill: “Be on the lookout for people who can join and help [who are looking for places] to share great talents and creativity. People will work really hard [when you openly provide] a common

vision to be shaped.” Bill also volunteered as a room host (RH), subsequently marveling at the training offered to the nearly 70 RH volunteers.

At the heart of every great event are its volunteers. What are some differences between the inner workings of an offline event in physical space and one in virtual space? As we know, instead of managing rooms in buildings and hardware like USBs or connecting laptops to projector screens, a key point of consideration in creating a virtual event is how to connect presenters with the virtual platform. This process is very complex. At JALT2020, José Domingo Cruz and Jenni Crittenden affectionately referred to their department as the “fire station,” as they coordinated nearly 70 RH volunteers to manage over 600 sessions, as well as facilitating troubleshooting in real time. It involved preparing meticulously, and during the event, being “on” and reacting quickly to problems that arose.



▲ **Central Command’s setup: Multi-screen displays of simultaneous multiple Zoom rooms (aka the “fire station”).**

Instructional documents and videos were designed and shared, so each RH would attend on average three hours, with ten hours of training on offer. José strongly emphasized that for an event of such largess in terms of number of live sessions, the need for human resources should not be underestimated. José: “Scheduling is a bear.” Each presenter came in with varying levels of comfort with technology, requiring various degrees of support before and during presentations. Jenni added that the most important job above all else was “keeping people calm” and remembering all the volunteers have day jobs and lives outside of the event. The advantages outweighed the difficulties according to Jenni, who also stated that being an assistant to a presenter virtually was an advantage because assistance was much less intrusive than if help were needed in a room in physical space. In general, coordinating numerous volunteers virtually may be achieved with more ease and less expense than offline.

A virtual event, of course, occurs in a different space and time than an offline event, and the technical design

is vital. Gary Ross, creator of Eventzil.la, described the process of his site creation as a result of experiencing one event after another. The first inspiration was a KOTESOL event which Gary attended: our 2020 National Conference on a Wordpress site created by Jeonju KOTESOL member Aaron Snowberger. Gary designed Eventzil.la first for the JALT CALL SIG 2020 conference, followed by Pan SIG 2020, Extensive Reading SIG 2020, and JALT2020, improving it for each conference. One of the best features of the site was how it utilized self-selecting breakout rooms, which created a more multi-dimensional aspect to the conference. Upon entering the main presentation Zoom room, the attendee could further see a menu of options for breakout rooms, how many attendees were in each, and freely move between them. Other great

real time on Zoom with asynchronous sessions that may be accessed in a video library. Padlet is a utility that presenters can use to furnish their presentation information URL by adding videos, links, articles, and more. Discord is a communication app, similar to Slack, used often in gaming circles. Michael's greatest praise of the online conference is that "we can bring in people we wouldn't otherwise have access to (such as Paulo Rebolledo in Chile) and have more plenaries, which means we can have more diverse topics." Lindsay Herron, 2021 co-chair and KOTESOL 2022 IC chair, says she "will be keeping an eye on Eventzil.la at the IC and, depending on how it performs, might use it in 2022 to support a hybrid conference."

**"The main thing that differentiates the online conference from the successful online conference is making sure the conversation continues once the conference is finished."**

The future of conferences is multidimensional and includes potential opportunities for collaboration domestically and beyond, strengthening and showcasing the strong ELT network created in KOTESOL as well as further interconnection with our partner organizations. In the future, when offline venues are again open, we will likely still utilize online spaces in combination with the traditional-style conference to create hybrid events – more international, more accessible, more diverse, and more fantastic than ever. The pandemic has been a challenge, which just might push us to be more creative and improve ourselves to beyond what we could have imagined, if we lean into our community connections and maintain a positive outlook.

additions were the Flipgrid station for checking out and replying to video comments left by attendees. In terms of sponsorship, options for platinum, gold, silver, and basic levels, and interactive Zoom rooms were available. After the conference, presenters could upload their session to a YouTube library. Additionally, registered Eventzil.la attendees have access to all future events and may consider purchasing tickets for said events – a great advantage to each future conference planner. "The main thing that differentiates the online conference from the successful online conference is making sure the conversation continues once the conference is finished," according to Gary. So, the conversation continues.

#### **KOTESOL at a Glance and Conferences Henceforth**

The 2021 KOTESOL International Conference, chaired by Michael Free, will have been held online by the time this is read, using Eventzil.la with creative embellishments suggested by Michael, including adding Padlet and Discord, and combining synchronous presentations in

#### **The Author**

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“Two heads are better than one”

## Interview with Dr. Park Joo-Kyung AsiaTEFL 2020 International Conference Chair

*Dr. Park Joo-Kyung is a professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Honam University, where she has been teaching since 1995. She's been involved with ELT in many different roles and functions, including researcher, educator, teacher trainer, invited speaker at domestic and international conferences, curriculum/program developer and evaluator, and prior president and vice-president of KOTESOL. AsiaTEFL and KOTESOL are the top two ELT associations through which she has achieved her professional development.*

*As part of The English Connection's multifaceted look behind the scenes of conference planning and organization, with an emphasis on online production, we are fortunate that Dr. Park has agreed to talk about her role as AsiaTEFL 2020 International Conference chair. — Ed.*

**The English Connection (TEC):** Dr. Park, it's a pleasure to be in touch with you, and thank you for agreeing to this interview. Could you please describe your role in the AsiaTEFL 2020 conference?

**Dr. Park:** I was the conference chair, but only from this past April when the designated conference chair could not continue for personal reasons and her baton was handed to me. So I call myself the second runner to finish up our race on November 27–29, 2020, when AsiaTEFL 2020 was held.

**TEC:** This AsiaTEFL 2020 conference was a united effort of two organizations: AsiaTEFL and KOTESOL. Can you discuss how this cooperation came about?

**Dr. Park:** AsiaTEFL 2020 has proven the power of three words: commitment, collaboration, and creativity. Collaboration is always a key factor of hosting a successful conference. Collaboration between AsiaTEFL and KOTESOL came about very easily and naturally because the key persons in both associations, including me, have worked for both, which have one goal: To host a successful conference and grow both associations. For its part in the collaboration, AsiaTEFL provided KOTESOL members conference registration at the same low rates as for AsiaTEFL members, as well as a free one-year membership to AsiaTEFL, and scheduling preference for KOTESOL presenters. KOTESOL promoted the conference to its members and broader network through its website, quarterly magazine, and monthly e-newsletter, Facebook groups, and other social media platforms. It also provided support for the publication of the digital conference program book in the form of copy editing.

**TEC:** What are the advantages, and possible disadvantages, of two organizations holding an international conference together?

**Dr. Park:** “Two heads are better than one.” The biggest advantages are, first, the work can be shared and divided between people who have different abilities, experiences, and expertise, drawing out synergistic effects. Second, the conference can attract more participants from both organizations, particularly when not many members of both organizations overlap, which was the case with AsiaTEFL and KOTESOL. The possible disadvantages are that the decision-making process can be more complicated and time-consuming, which can cause conflicts between both parties. Luckily, we didn't have this problem mainly because we had a very detailed, well-thought-out agreement on the duties and responsibilities of each organization. For AsiaTEFL 2020, AsiaTEFL took the lead as the initiator, planner, fundraiser,

conference organizer, and operator. KOTESOL filled the small and big voids, which, if not filled, the conference would have been impossible.

**TEC:** The conference was held from November 27 to 29. So in terms of working around the COVID-19 pandemic, organizers had close to a year to prepare. From an organizer's standpoint, what sort of preparations were done for AsiaTEFL 2020?

**Dr. Park:** Due to the fluctuating state of COVID-19 both inside and outside of Korea, we had to change our plans several times regarding the conference hours and dates, conference mode, and presentation method. In order to resolve the traveling difficulties and cope with the needs of all the participants from different parts of the world and in different time zones, we made very important changes and decisions on our conference:

First, we moved the original conference dates from June to November. Then, having slightly moved our conference times and dates to improve Asia-wide participation, the conference sessions were 1–9 p.m. on the first two days and 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. on the third, both online and at the KINTEX venue. Second, all presenters not in Korea were to present online only. Those in Korea were allowed to choose to present either online or in person. Third, the presenters' video files and PowerPoint files were provided to registered conference attendees for one month after the conference. Fourth, AsiaTEFL created a registration fee waiver for presenters and non-presenters who experienced severe hardship in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Last, selected as a promising international conference for growth by the Korea Tourism Organization's Meeting Technology competition, AsiaTEFL 2020 introduced diverse technologies such as hologram telepresence, MC robots, and a virtual 3D platform, to name a few. COVID-19 has certainly brought us a huge crisis, but



▲ Dr. Park Joo-Kyung



▲ **A holographic telepresence presentation on teacher presence, by plenary speaker Paul Kei Matuda.**

we have turned it into an opportunity for us to be creative enough to make our conference successful.

**TEC:** Having a majority of the conference online, with so many synchronous and asynchronous presentations occurring, were there any technical issues that occurred during the AsiaTEFL 2020 conference? How can future conferences plan for and avoid such technical issues?

**Dr. Park:** Having observed several other online conferences held before AsiaTEFL 2020, which had lots of technical problems, we required all the presenters, both synchronous and asynchronous, and onsite as well, to submit a video file of their presentation. We played them on our conference platform at the presentation time scheduled in the conference program. All the invited presentations, however, including the one keynote, six plenary, six featured sessions, and special events such as the conference opening and closing ceremonies were delivered synchronously and live-streamed. Q&As were done by text chat and through 1-to-1 and group video conferencing rooms on our conference platform. In addition, we had all the invited speakers rehearse before their synchronous presentations in order to make sure the volume and quality of their audio and video, as well as their PowerPoint slides, could be viewed properly. The biggest problem we had was that participants in some countries such as Indonesia could not get access to our 3D virtual platform, Vimeo, so that we had to upload all the presentation video files on YouTube during the conference.

For future conferences, conference organizers need to first know about what kind of regulations each participating country or region has regarding the usage of online platforms and solutions and get alternatives ready for those who cannot access those to be used for the conference. Second, minimize the number of synchronous presentations, allowing only for the highlights of the conference to be synchronous, and be sure to have rehearsals for them. Third, have all the presenters submit presentation video files either to be played for asynchronous presentations or as a backup for synchronous presentations in case some technical problems occur.

**TEC:** What advice would you give to other conference organizers, in a post-COVID-19 era.

**Dr. Park:** AsiaTEFL 2020 was planned to be held onsite in June but ended up being a hybrid conference held in November. We had a lot more presenters who wanted to

present in person, but they had to present online due to the COVID-19 situation. These abrupt and constant changes made in an unpredictable situation kept us very busy and nervous up to the last minute. The lesson I learned is that you need to make the best decision under your given circumstances and then stick to it. Also, find people who know what to do and how to do things properly and professionally, particularly in the technical field, and make sure that the conference organizing committee shares the necessary knowledge and information among its members. As a hybrid conference has become a new normal and trend, make the most out of the strengths of both online and onsite conferences. A technology and human-integrated, safe, and successful conference is what AsiaTEFL 2020 was meant to be and

future conferences need to be.

**TEC:** What suggestions can you give to ensure online attendees get the best experience possible?

**Dr. Park:** How to best enjoy the conference will be pretty much the same, regardless of the mode of the conference, online or onsite, except the technological aspect. When you attend online conferences, you need to know what kind of online technology you are supposed to use and how to install and operate it, including the platform, solutions, and mobile apps. Make a plan for which presentations you are going to attend in advance, read the abstracts and presenters' biographical data, and think of possible questions for you to ask. Make the most use of the conference mobile app and interact with other participants through diverse functions available on the virtual platform or the app. Most importantly, stay updated about the conference by frequently visiting



▲ **Participants from around the world at the opening ceremony of AsiaTEFL 2020.**

the conference website, checking your email messages, and asking conference organizers for information you need. Do not just wait until you get the information, without knowing that some important messages are held in your email trash or spam folder. "Seek and it shall be given!"

**TEC:** Thank you so much, Dr. Park, for sharing with me and TEC readers your valuable insights and suggestions.

**Dr. Park:** Thank you for having me.

(Interviewed by Editor-in-Chief Andrew White)

## Member Spotlight: Lucinda Estrada

*Beginning her Korean teaching career in Daejeon, she soon moved to a position in Seoul. There she soon got involved with the Seoul Chapter of KOTESOL, and before long, she was the chapter president. In addition, she is now KOTESOL's 2nd vice-president and working closely with KOTESOL's special interest groups. When not busy with teaching and KOTESOL affairs, she has 101 hobbies to keep her occupied. This issue of The English Connection focuses its spotlight on Lucinda Estrada. — Ed.*

**The English Connection (TEC):** Thank you, Lucinda, for agreeing to do this interview for *The English Connection*. Would you begin by telling our readers a little background information about yourself – where you're from, what you did there, why you came to Korea, etc.?

**Lucinda:** I'd be glad to. I was born in Los Angeles, California, and grew up in Washington State. My father was a stablehand on horse farms, which is, ironically, not a very stable position (please pardon the pun), so we moved a lot. One could say that I developed my "itchy feet" from that. I saw the struggles he, as an immigrant from Mexico, had with advocating for himself as a non-native English speaker. I think that's what first sparked my interest in language learning. As I got older I saw how English language learning was enmeshed with class and race and discrimination. I saw how it affected him and my family. I studied language learning and multiculturalism in university. When I received my bachelor's degree, I came to Korea to teach. Right now, I'm still deeply interested in legitimizing World Englishes and destigmatizing accents. I hope to explore this more in the future.



▲ *Enjoying a quiet drink after testing season.*

**TEC:** You're teaching in a middle school – that must have its challenges. What are the biggest challenges that you face compared to teaching, say, young learners or university students?

**Lucinda:** I can't speak for young learners, as I've never worked with very young children, but I did work with adults before I came to Korea. The biggest difference I've found is that of motivation. The adults I taught were self-motivated to learn. They were mostly working immigrants who were trying to settle in English-speaking communities. Their desire to learn was extrinsically motivated, but they understood those motivators, internalized them, and pushed themselves forward accordingly. I sometimes feel that my middle school students have no understanding of their motivations. They have parents and schools

telling them that they must learn English, but many of them don't have an internal desire to learn nor an understanding of the external factors mandating that they learn. This can be challenging, but I've enjoyed changing my tactics to appeal more to my current students. I am planning to move to teaching at a university in the next year or so, and I hope I can carry what I've learned about motivation from my middle-schoolers over to them.

**TEC:** How has the COVID-19 situation affected you and how you go about teaching?

**Lucinda:** I'm the type of teacher who finalizes her syllabus and plans her lessons at the beginning of the year so that I can relax later. This year however, I really had to adjust my expectations. The first month that my school started going online, I frantically tried to readjust my entire curriculum with the expectation that the changes my school made would be permanent. Of course, they weren't. The students would come back, and then we'd go online again, and then we'd change our online format, and on and on with changes coming in weekly and at the last minute. Each time I'd overhaul everything I had prepared. It was stressful. I had to learn to let go and accept that my lessons couldn't be as planned or as cohesive as I



▲ *Lucinda's yeasty winter mead settling after being bottled.*

usually preferred. I had to plan each lesson separately according to our format on that particular day and to not stress myself out when changes were inevitably required. I'm still struggling, as this style of teaching goes against my personality, but we are all struggling in one way or another.

**TEC:** I imagine many teachers are still very much struggling under COVID conditions. How has it been during this time to be the president of KOTESOL's largest chapter, Seoul Chapter? What have been the challenges,

the goals you have set, and what do you consider to have been your successes?

**Lucinda:** I became the president of Seoul Chapter at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Seoul Chapter is usually self-running. It's well-established and has a strong team of leaders. It was lucky that we had that strong foundation, or the current year would have been much more debilitating. As it is, in this new light we were able to better see our weak points, but they didn't bring us down. The Seoul Chapter's current bylaws did not and could not foresee a situation like the one we are currently experiencing, and we were therefore limited in unforeseen ways this past year. We've taken the time this year to

draft a new constitution that we hope is more fitting for the modern world and its unique challenges. I'm also so proud of how our committee has been diligent in continuing workshops and acclimating to online meetings.

**TEC:** In a very short time, you have gone from a new teacher in Korea to Seoul Chapter president and now national 2nd vice-president. How did you get involved with KOTESOL so much so quickly?

**Lucinda:** It has been fast. Some of you may remember Mitzi from the Daejeon Chapter. My friendship with her was

sadly cut short by tragic events. But it was her who first introduced me to KOTESOL. I began my career in teaching in Daejeon in 2016. I met Mitzi there, and she really



▲ *The last camping trip of 2020 at a blissfully empty beach.*

**“Right now, I’m still deeply interested in legitimizing World Englishes and destigmatizing accents.”**

talked up the organization. I was still getting my sea-legs in regard to living on my own in a foreign country, so it wasn't until I moved to Seoul in 2018 that I became really involved. I started right away as a web-editor in Seoul Chapter, but the chapter was going through a turbulent period with committee members moving or changing positions and, seeing the opportunity, I quickly stepped in to become vice-president. Then COVID began, things

changed, and I stepped into the position of chapter president. I worked to increase interaction with KOTESOL's special interest groups (SIGs) and promoted them through Seoul Chapter resources. I think it was this activity that brought me to the attention of the National Council and is probably why I was put forward as a candidate for national 2nd vice-president. These are highly demanding positions by themselves, but I am determined to continue my involvement with the organization. It's such an important resource for teachers in Korea.

**TEC:** The 2nd vice-president is in charge of SIG affairs and in charge of organizing KOTESOL's annual team-building and planning event, newly named "KOTESOL Connections." What are your plans in these areas for this year?



▲ *Lucinda's much adored jalapeno plant at its most chaotic.*

**Lucinda:** There are so many exciting plans in the works this year! First of all, KOTESOL Connections is being hosted during the international conference this year! The new time frame for the conference provided a great opportunity to give the committees presenting this year a firm foundation to build upon, as well as a broader audience for their content. The committees are so important to KOTESOL's functioning, and our members would do well to attend their workshops and sessions. They are excellent sessions to network and build connections within the teaching community, as well as to learn about the different avenues of growth for academic professionals.

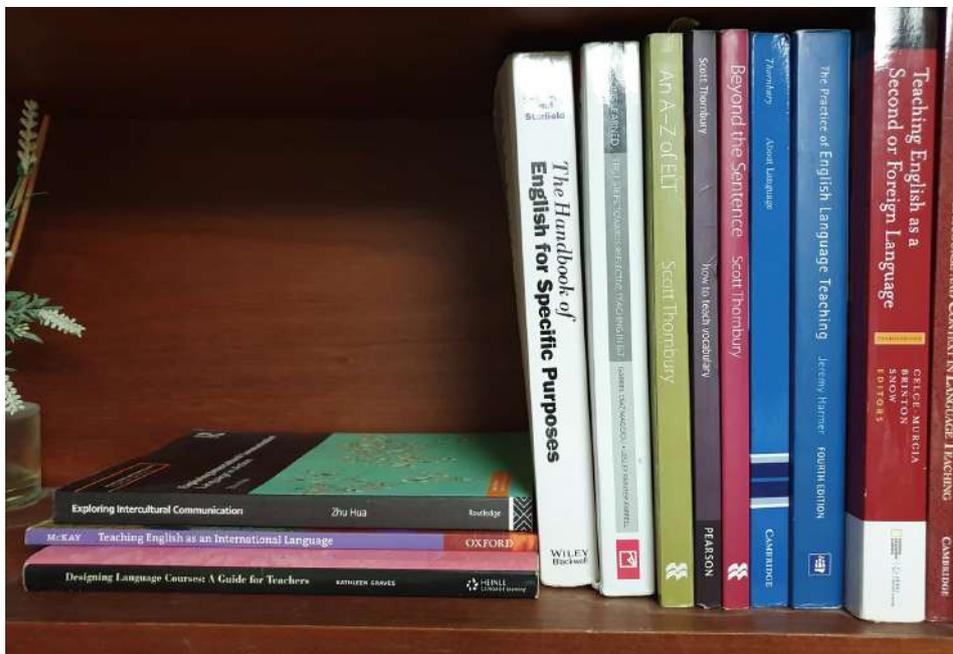
SIGs will also be presenting in a few KOTESOL Connections sessions. Brian Raisbeck will be hosting a reflective practice session on behalf of the Reflective Practice SIG. And a group of SIG representatives will be hosting a panel discussion in place of the KOTESOL Diversity Committee. I am very excited for this panel as KOTESOL has been diligent in increasing our diversity and addressing the needs and issues that teachers of different backgrounds face in the Korean teaching context. I hope this panel will create awareness of how we all have different experiences and different challenges based on our diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and identities.

**TEC:** KOTESOL is a professional development organization. Has KOTESOL been helpful to you in this respect? And what would you like to see KOTESOL do to improve the professional development that it offers to its members?

**Lucinda:** KOTESOL has been very valuable to me. The networking opportunities it has provided as well as the professional and academic environment it provides are nearly invaluable. As for growth, I know that there are many teachers pursuing their master's degree while teaching in Korea. I myself completed my master's while here. I would love to see more resources for graduate students. I think research resources, opportunities for publication (with the plethora of thesis and research papers we know graduate students are all feverishly writing), and perhaps, even student teaching opportunities would be invaluable to the graduate students. We already have some of those things, but I know that while I was studying, I didn't find a lot of information about them. I hope that in the future we can increase the availability and visibility of these resources.

**TEC:** What would you like to see KOTESOL doing in the coming months and years – things that it could possibly be doing better or things that it may not be doing now?

**Lucinda:** I would, of course, love to see face-to-face meetings happening again. Once COVID is under control, I want to see us rush back to in-person workshops and events. However, this past year has provided us an opportunity to better explore online resources. I would like to see that continue. I want us to continue utilizing Zoom and similar software and producing online video content. I'll be ecstatic to go back to face-to-face, but what I would



▲ **Lucinda's favorite books from her time in university.**

like to see is an integration of increased online resources and in-person events.

**TEC:** I have heard that you have some very interesting hobbies. Could you tell us what they may be?

**Lucinda:** I don't think my hobbies are all that interesting, just varied. I like to write and to read. And I like to brew mead. I always brew too much to drink myself, so I end up gifting a lot of it. Most recently, I brewed a batch of black currant mead that turned out really good. I sew a bit, just basic clothes. I cook and bake and love those sip and paint events that used to happen before the pandemic. I have managed to keep up my gardening hobby, albeit indoors, now that I live in Korea. I grew jalapeño and guajillo chiles and tomatillos this year. And some other non-edible plants. I hope to "branch" out into some other species this spring. I dearly love traveling, and I plan to recommence seeing the world when I can. I love to camp, and I've enjoyed exploring Korea in that way. There are some really gorgeous areas you can only see if you get out there and wander.

**TEC:** Brewing, sewing, baking, gardening, traveling, and KOTESOLing...you do have a varied life. I hope that everything that you have planned for this year – with KOTESOL, with work, and with your pastimes – comes to fruition. Thank you, Lucinda.

(Interviewed by David Shaffer)

**"I'll be ecstatic to go back to face-to-face, but what I would like to see is an integration of increased online resources and in-person events."**

# The Brain Connection

## Maslow and the Psychology of Disruptive Students

By Dr. Curtis Kelly

Do you want to hear a story? It's about how a man called Abraham got me to a wedding I should not have been at.

It is a true story about an English Speaking class I taught at a women's junior college in Osaka. There were only 18 students in the class, so I had a lot of room for innovation. I was studying adult education, so I decided to use some of those techniques in this class. The main ideas in adult education are that adults are self-directed and dislike being controlled, and that adults are life-centered and need to be in charge of their own learning. All these were exciting notions for me in the teacher-driven milieu of Japan. (See my article in the last TEC.)

Since my college students are on the cusp of adulthood, might not they also benefit from an adult education approach? I decided to find out by transforming my junior college class of 18 girls into a faux adult one. I let the students set the rules for the class and choose the materials we would use. I forced myself to imagine each of them as being older than me and talked to them as such. I remember the confusion one day when a student came to class late. I smiled and thanked her for making the effort to join us, even though half the class was already over. She froze in the doorway, staring at me, wondering if it was some kind of trap.

Anyway, it was a cheerful, relaxed class, and everything was going well...except for one thing, or rather, three: Kumi, Saki, and Ai. No matter how hard I tried, I just could not get those three to engage. Kumi was always turning around and talking to Saki. I'd politely ask her to listen for 60 seconds, she'd nod yes, and ten seconds later turn around again. That put a lot of pressure on me. But Ai was even more disturbing. She was not disruptive at all. She just sat there silently, with these big, sad, brown eyes, doing nothing. When I asked the class to do an exercise, she'd pick up her pencil for a second and then just put it down again, silently staring forward. Ai was "learned helplessness" in the flesh, and it tore at my heart to see it.

Well, I tried to take all that in, until one day, I snapped. I shouted, "Would you two just be quiet!", and as soon as I said it, I knew the adult education

atmosphere I had so carefully cultivated had been lost forever. Feeling dejected, I stopped the lesson, apologized, and I'm not sure where the idea came from, but I asked the class to write down answers to four questions: (1) What do you want to do after you graduate? (2) Why do you come to this school? (3) What are the most important things in your life? (4) How do you get along with your family?

Their short answers revealed a world to me. For "most important things" every single student had "friends" at the top, followed by "part-time job, family, boyfriend, club," etc., and surprisingly, only one student wrote "school." Likewise, their main reason for coming to school was to "meet their friends," not to study. For jobs, 15 of them all had some future career in mind. The other three wrote "I have no idea," and that sent up a warning flag.

So, here is where Abraham Maslow and his contributions to psychology come in. Maslow developed a Hierarchy of Needs (1943), a wonderful way to understand difficult learners, especially if we add "autonomy" for teens (Deci & Ryan, 1980).

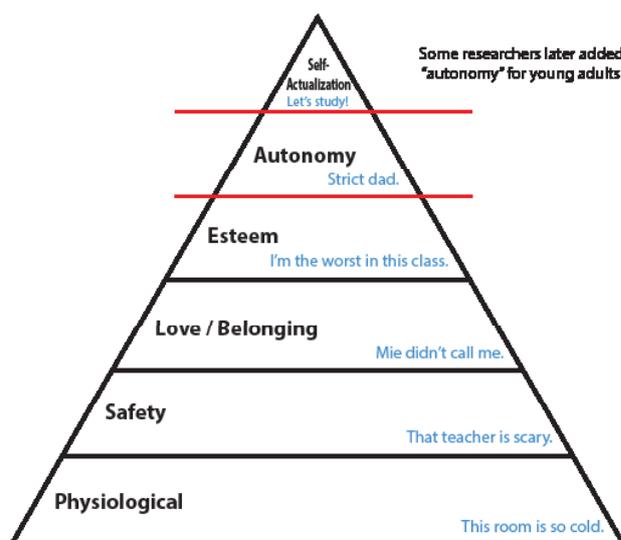


Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Additions by Kelly (2020).

Maslow stated that a need at a lower level eclipsed those above, and that explained why those three had "no idea what to do in the future." They could not attend to that need at the self-actualization level, along with their studies, because their energy was

going to some lower-level problem. What could that be?

The answer came in what they wrote about family relations. Each of those three, and yes, they were Kumi, Saki, and Ai, wrote about a demanding parent that they did not get along with. These girls were suffering from a famine of autonomy.

Autonomy. It is the need to act on one's own volition, to make choices according to one's own values, and that need skyrockets in young adults, as it did in those three. Think about their lives. From early morning those girls went to school. Teachers told them what to do. Then they went to part-time jobs, where bosses told them what to do. After going home, a strict parent harangued them about doing homework, talking on the phone, the proper way to sit, and so on. Where's the autonomy? No wonder they talked in class, as Kumi and Saki did, or just stared forward, as Ai did. I doubt anyone could stand being controlled to that degree.

So, I thought about it hard and realized two things. First, what we often see as bad behavior is more likely desperation. It's a flaw in the situation, not a flaw in morals, upbringing, or commonsense. Second, according to Maslow's theory, as long as a learner has to attend to an unsatisfied lower need, there is no way that a learner is going to learn English, an act of self-actualization. I could use anger to silence them, thereby creating a threat to their safety (even further down the pyramid), but that would not free them for learning, and it would probably make everyone else feel threatened as well. No, the only solutions would be to either remove them from class, tolerate them, or try to solve their problem. I chose the latter.

Fueled by the Hierarchy, I came up with a solution that, surprisingly, worked, but it is not one I can ever tell the administration about. Since there was no way these girls could commit to studying English when their need for autonomy was blocking their natural trajectory of development, autonomy is what I let them work on. Each class, I let the students decide to stay with me and practice speaking, or go to my office and talk freely on any topic. After all, it is those

precious explorations with peers that lead to moral development and a sense of autonomy. I asked them to speak English, knowing they wouldn't, but they did keep a record of what they talked about.

Well, Kumi, Saki, and Ai went to my office every class, sometimes with an additional student or two. I don't know exactly what they discussed, but their notes indicated they talked about their relationships, dilemmas, and perspectives, which is the perfect way to engender moral development. And they started to look happier than before. At grading time, I passed them, knowing they did not learn English, but I was hoping they ended up in a better place.

Then, some amazing things started to happen. After the course ended, they came to my house and brought me a present of appreciation. What a surprise! The card that came with the present said something like: "We always felt angry, and we did not know why. Then you showed us, and we understood." After I went on sabbatical for a year, guess who put together a party for me when I came back? Those three women (not girls anymore; Adult Day had come). And we met a few times after that as well. Then, in her last semester, Kumi was in my English class again. She had changed. She had turned into a serious, hard-studying learner of English.

...I wish. In reality, there was hardly any change in her behavior. She was still talking to other students during class, just as much as before. But in the end, it did not matter. Kumi and the other two all got good jobs in high-level companies, such as Panasonic, where I suppose they rarely used English anyway. And then, years later, another surprise came. When Kumi got married, she asked me to come to her wedding.

I will never be sure whether breaking my pact with the school was right. But when I feel doubt, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs comes in again. The same theory that let me understand their problem and choose an intervention also tells me that letting them attend to their most pressing need was both humanistic and human, the right thing to do. I think so. And I'm sure Kumi, Saki, and Ai think so, too.

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#### The Author

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