

8-1-2012

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Angela Richardson
SIT Graduate Institute

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Higher Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Richardson, Angela, "The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice" (2012). *MA TESOL Collection*. 519.
https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection/519

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Graduate Institute at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in MA TESOL Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact digitalcollections@sit.edu.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Angela M. Richardson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in TESOL degree at the SIT Graduate Institute, Brattleboro, Vermont.

August 1, 2012

IPP Advisor: Leslie Turpin

Consent to Use

I hereby grant permission for World Learning to publish my IPP on its websites and in any of its digital/electronic collections, and to reproduce and transmit my IPP electronically. I understand that World Learning's websites and digital collections are publicly available via the Internet. I agree that World Learning is NOT responsible for any unauthorized use of my Thesis by any third party who might access it on the Internet or otherwise.

Author name: Angela Richardson

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'AR' with a stylized flourish.

Date: August 1, 2012

Abstract

In this paper I discuss the value of exploring student culture through ongoing reflective processes for effective and responsible language teaching. I reflect on my own experience of teaching in a foreign language context for the first time, and discuss how developing cultural awareness helped me move from a place of frustration to understanding, and how a change in attitude and teaching approach impacted my relationships and significantly improved the quality of teaching and learning in my classroom. Using Pat Moran's 'Cultural Knowings' framework as a guide, I reflect on my personal transformation while working in South Korea and report on my experience of moving through the stages of learning about the culture of my students (knowing about), investigating the reasons behind their cultural practices (knowing why), exploring my own beliefs (knowing oneself), and applying it all to make informed decisions about my teaching approach (knowing how). This case study highlights the importance of considering culture in foreign language pedagogy and demonstrates how the 'Cultural Knowings' framework can be used as a tool for teachers seeking to find balance and harmony in a foreign teaching context, or for teacher training in general.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Descriptors

Cultural Awareness

Cultural Differences

Cultural Inter-relationships

EFL Teacher Effectiveness

EFL Teacher Education

Teacher Improvement

Classroom Techniques

Teaching Styles

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Culture shock Korea	4
3. From frustration to understanding	7
3.1. The cultural knowings framework	7
3.2. Exploring myself as a cultural being (knowing oneself).....	9
3.3. Exploring Korean culture (knowing about and knowing why).....	10
4. How awareness informs teaching practice	24
4.1. The art of balance (knowing how)	24
4.2. Impact on teacher, students and learning	42
5. Conclusion	44
Appendix	47
References	64

Chapter 1

Introduction

Culture is all around us. As foreign language teachers, it is an integral part of what we do. Culture dictates perceptions, expectations, behaviors and beliefs, and determines what is appropriate for how we teach and interact with our students. Unfortunately, many EFL/ESL teacher training programs focus heavily on methodology, curriculum design, second language acquisition research and assessment, and neglect to recognize the importance of culture in foreign language pedagogy. By focusing on the most recently acclaimed methodology, rather than emphasizing the need to adapt approaches according to the specific needs of each group of students, such programs may leave teachers with the impression that there is a set formula for effective language teaching, regardless of culture or context. This will ultimately lead to conflict when teachers find themselves in a context where currently venerated approaches aren't appropriate, and they will inevitably blame themselves, their students, or their administration for their students' insufficient progress. This is the predicament I found myself in the first time I taught in a foreign language context.

When I was offered a job teaching at a university in South Korea in 2007, I jumped at the prospect of living and working in an entirely different culture for a year. At the time I was a part-time science tutorial teacher at my university in Canada, but had no language teaching experience. To prepare myself I read a number of popular books on the subject of foreign language teaching, and brushed up on the basics of Korean culture from my Lonely Planet travel guide. I had no problems adapting to life in Korea, and greatly enjoyed my experience living there. However, the education system was quite different from what I was accustomed to, and

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

despite hearing that Korean students were hard-working and eager, I found that my students generally exhibited a poor attitude and showed little progress by the end of the year.

I blamed myself initially, attributing their poor performance to my own inexperience and lack of training. Therefore, during our first summer holiday, I took an intensive Cambridge CELTA course (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) back home in Canada, hoping to improve my teaching abilities. The course focused on using well established and currently popular teaching approaches to design and deliver lessons in each of the four skills to volunteer students. Many essential components of good language teaching were covered, including classroom management and how to design lessons that engage different types of learners; however, culture was not a large part of the curriculum.

I returned to Korea with renewed motivation, expecting that my students would respond well to the approaches and techniques that had worked so well for the students in my CELTA program. To my disappointment, however, they remained unengaged and performed no better than before I had taken the course. Confident that the problem was no longer with my teaching, I concluded that the students were disinterested and lazy and that the curriculum was inappropriate. I suggested making some changes to the syllabus, methods of instruction and assessment to my superiors, but they were unwilling to discuss the matter and denied all of my requests without further consideration.

When I began the SMAT program at SIT Graduate Institute, I was feeling quite frustrated and by this time had developed a negative view of the Korean education system. At SIT, however, I experienced my first dose of culture training and it challenged me to re-examine all of my negative perceptions. I developed a new awareness of how deeply my beliefs and

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

expectations about teaching and learning were shaped by my own cultural experiences, and I realized and understood for the first time that my students and administration likely had completely different expectations than I did about what should go on inside a language classroom. Moreover, one of my classmates knew a great deal about Korean culture and was able to clarify a number of my misconceptions, which opened my eyes to the fact that much of my frustration stemmed from my lack of cultural awareness.

As my knowledge of Korean culture grew, I began to wonder if my view of teaching and learning in Korea had been too narrow. Upon returning to Korea, this time in a new position at Honam University in Gwangju, I set out to learn as much as I could about Korean culture to determine if becoming more culturally aware would decrease my frustration in my context and help me become a more effective teacher. I wanted to find out whether learning more about Korean culture would have any effect on my attitude and approach towards teaching in Korea, and whether this would affect the quality of learning in my classroom.

Chapter 2

Culture Shock Korea

In this chapter I describe my teaching context in South Korea and discuss how it differed from my personal expectations of teaching and learning at the university level, as well as how this affected my attitude towards teaching in Korea.

In Canada, students are encouraged from a young age to think outside the box, to be creative, and that the process of getting to the right answer can be just as important as the answer itself. Innovation, leadership and the ability to solve complex problems are all highly valued qualities. By the time students begin university they are expected to be self-motivated, to possess good organizational and time management skills, and to maintain effective study habits. All my life I had assumed that these were the universal standards for higher-level education. However, teaching in Korea taught me that education standards around the world can be quite different.

I worked in three different universities throughout Korea; the first in Gangneung, the second in Hongseong, and the third in Gwangju. In all three schools I taught mostly freshman students, but I also taught a few second and third year English major classes as well. As a country that desires to be more globally competitive and that has a reputation for highly valuing education, I expected that Korean students would be highly innovative and motivated to learn English. However, quite on the contrary, my students seemed to me to care little about learning English and I was surprised to find that initially many of them didn't even bring a pen or paper to class. I had to remind them repeatedly to take notes from the board, and often found important handouts left carelessly behind on desks after class. Many students seemed unengaged, refused to partake in group work or class discussions, resisted participating in class activities beyond the basic

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

textbook exercises and wanted me to give them the answers to exercises rather than attempt them on their own. The more creative and fun I thought an activity was, the more they seemed to dislike it. Moreover, they rarely did their homework assignments, often copied answers from one another when they did, and a number of students openly admitted to me that they never studied outside of class time. When I was in university I studied for countless hours and would never have even thought about refusing to do something asked of me by one of my professors, so I quickly grew frustrated with what I perceived as a lack of cooperation, insolence and laziness.

I felt Korean students generally needed to learn a greater sense of responsibility and that they should be held more accountable for their learning. It seemed no wonder to me that they weren't taking their studies seriously: they were rarely penalized for plagiarism; sports and social events were considered legitimate excuses for missing class; if they found employment they were simply excused from their classes with little more than a small make-up project; and I knew a number of teachers who were pushed by their school administration to change grades at the end of the semester. I found this last practice particularly difficult to accept because I believe strongly in the value of merit and always try to evaluate my students fairly based on their effort and abilities. When I approached the school administration I found they were very resistant to change and weren't interested in even discussing the potential benefits of things such as increasing student accountability, leveling classes according to student ability, modifying the curriculum, or implementing different teaching or assessment techniques.

After several years of pushing for change at the administrative level without success and being unable to achieve the results I wanted with my students, I formed harsh judgments of the Korean education system. I continually compared it to the western teaching system I was accustomed to, and found it falling short. I was discouraged and felt as though the only way for

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

me to be able to work harmoniously within the Korean system would be to abandon my teaching principles, and I wasn't prepared to do that. As time went on my frustration grew, and it began to affect my relationships with both my students and colleagues. However, my cultural exploration project helped me realize that through understanding one can achieve balance and harmony in teaching without sacrificing one's beliefs about teaching and learning.

Chapter 3

From Frustration to Understanding

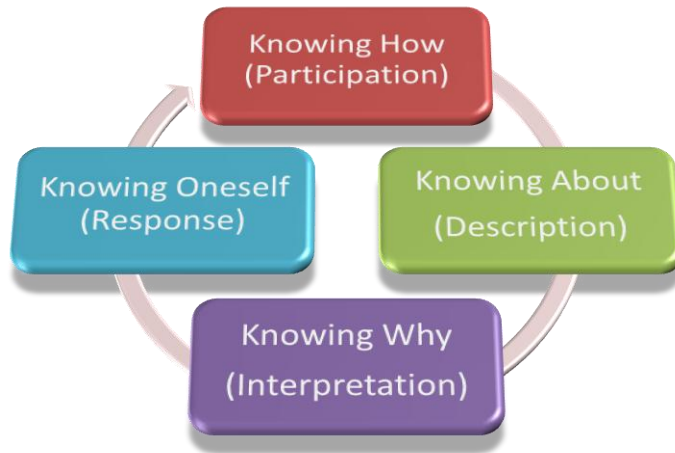
In this chapter I give an overview of the framework I used to guide me through my cultural exploration. I explain each stage of the framework, the activities I engaged in, and how they contributed to my overall learning experience. I share how I was able to move from a place of frustration with my situation in Korea to one of understanding, and in the next chapter I will explore how this impacted my teaching, as well as my relationships and ability to integrate into Korean society.

3.1. The Cultural Knowings Framework

The cultural knowings framework is presented by Pat Moran in his book, *Teaching Culture* (2001, p. 15), as a tool for learning and teaching culture in order to help learners develop cultural competence. According to this framework, there are four interconnected learning interactions involved in the cultural experience: Knowing About, Knowing How, Knowing Why, and Knowing Oneself (figure 3.1). In order to develop cultural competence one must actively engage in each of these four interactions while also undergoing a rigorous process of self-reflection. Each of the four cultural knowings corresponds to the four stages of the experiential learning cycle: Description, Participation, Interpretation, and Response (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning and self reflection are two of the central pillars of the SIT MATESOL program, which is why I chose this framework to guide me through my exploration.

The first interaction, knowing about, involves gathering information and acquiring knowledge about the products, practices, and perspectives of a culture. Knowing how refers to having the ability to behave in a manner that is appropriate for the culture. Knowing why

Figure 3.1: The Cultural Knowings Framework (Moran, 1991)



includes developing an understanding of the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes that underlie all aspects of a culture. This process involves analyzing one’s cultural experiences and comparing them with the perspectives of their own culture. Finally, self-awareness, the interaction of knowing oneself, refers to the ability to understand how one’s own culture affects their values, views, beliefs, and reactions towards their experiences in a new culture. Understanding oneself as a cultural being helps learners comprehend, adapt, and integrate into another culture. The content, activities and outcomes involved in each of the four competencies are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Cultural Knowings: Content, Activities, Outcomes (Moran, 1991, p. 18)

	Content	Activities	Outcomes
Knowing About Knowing How	Cultural information	Gathering information	Cultural knowledge
	Cultural practices	Developing skills	Cultural behaviors
Knowing Why	Cultural perspectives	Discovering expectations	Cultural understanding
Knowing Oneself	Self	Reflection	Self-awareness

3.2. Exploring Myself as a Cultural Being (Knowing Oneself)

I began my exploration by analyzing myself. If I was to understand the views, beliefs and practices of my students and school administration staff, I first needed to define my own beliefs and principles, and understand where they stemmed from. In our ICLT (intercultural communication for language teachers) class at SIT, our teacher asked us to explore the question “Who am I as a cultural being?”. Although this question might seem simple, truly knowing and being able to define my cultural self was a process that required structure, guidance, and a lot of reflection on my personal experiences compared to those of others.

My class was small, but diverse, and analyzing the role our different experiences had in shaping each of our core values, beliefs and perceptions helped me develop a greater awareness of the multitude of influences that shape who we are. An individual’s perceptions of what is best or appropriate reflect those of their local communities and society at large, and these are inherent in many aspects of daily life, including education systems, work habits, family values, and social customs.

In order to identify my own cultural influences, I first had to define the groups I was a part of and analyze how membership in each had shaped how I perceive the world around me. To do this, my teacher guided my classmates and me through a process of diagramming our community groups as different sized circles on a piece of paper according to their significance in our lives. She asked us to contemplate what was required for membership in each group, what were the core beliefs and values of each group, how their values and beliefs differed from other groups, what sources of conflict existed for each group and why, and how each group had influenced our perceptions of what was ‘normal’. Importantly, she asked us to do all of this in

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

groups so we could compare our different experiences. It was eye opening to observe just how deeply we had each been influenced, and in such different ways.

Other activities included processing cultural conflicts we had experienced in the past, reading and analyzing personal memoirs from a culturally diverse range of individuals, and writing a cultural autobiography. Through these guided activities and reflections, I realized that much of the conflict I had been experiencing as a teacher in Korea was a result of our different experiences and influences, resulting in differing views of learning and teaching, hierarchy in relationships, efficiency, work ethic, etc. I began working in Korea with preconceived notions of what good education is, how good students should act, what the role of administration should be, what a good work ethic is, and how conflict should be dealt with. When my expectations weren't met, I jumped to judgment, trying to change things to suit my view of what was best, rather than trying to understand why they did things differently.

Understanding oneself culturally is a very important first step in being able to truly comprehend and integrate into another culture. It helps one to understand where different people's views come from, and to be able to recognize and sensitively deal with cultural conflicts when they arise.

3.3. Exploring Korean culture (knowing about and knowing why)

In an effort to more fully understand the general Korean perceptions and behaviors that were causing conflict in my life, I read widely about Korean culture, conducted interviews about the Korean education system, and engaged my students in a dialogue about their cultural influences and perception of education. My goal was to reach a place of understanding that

would allow me to work more harmoniously within the Korean education system without having to sacrifice my beliefs and principles about education.

Reading and research

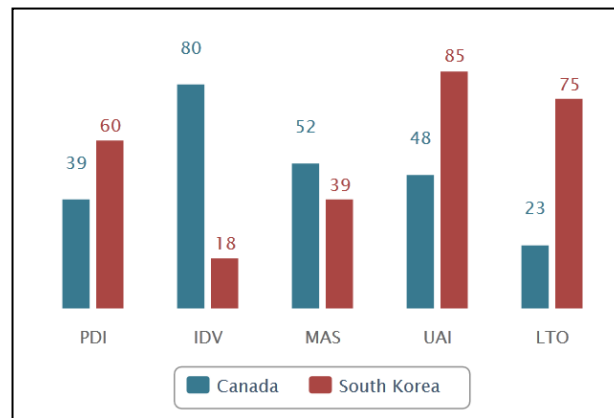
The authors of the book *Culture Shock Korea* (Hur & Hur, 1988) describe culture shock as “*being confused, anxious, and puzzled by the way others behave; and confusing, causing anxiety to, and puzzling others by behaving in one’s own way*” (p. 196). This confusion occurs because our cultural experiences heavily shape our perception of what are appropriate social and societal norms. When we encounter opposing views they are often difficult to accept, or even understand, because we perceive our own way as the correct way of doing things.

A study of over 40 different countries around the world by Geert Hofstede in the 1970s revealed five dimensions of culture: power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Itim, 2012). Attitudes, expectations and behaviors in the classroom can vary significantly from one country to another, depending on whether they score high or low in each cultural dimension. This model can be of great use to compare differences in populations, but it should be kept in mind that it is a general descriptor and not every individual or region of a country will fit into the mould. The different scorings for South Korean and Canadian societies for each of the five dimensions are shown in figure 3.2.

The rather large difference in each dimension between Korean and Canadian societies explains the culture shock I experienced when moving from Canada to Korea, and why I had such a difficult time accepting the educational practices in Korea. My views of education and role expectations differed greatly from those of my Korean students and administration. Canada is more individualistic and masculine than Korea, and Korea has greater long-term orientation and power-distance and avoidance uncertainty indices.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Figure 3.2. Comparison of Hofstede's cultural dimensions for South Korean and Canadian societies (Itim, 2012).



Power Distance Index (PDI) is the extent to which society accepts and expects that power is distributed unequally in organizations and institutions, such as family. Korea has a higher PDI than Canada, reflecting their greater tendency to endorse inequality in society. In individualistic societies with high IDV scores such as Canada everyone is expected to look after him/ herself and their immediate family. On the other hand, in collectivist societies with low IDV scores like Korea people from birth onwards integrate into strong in-groups, such as extended families, and are expected to care for one another unquestioningly. Masculinity refers to the extent to which qualities tend to be assertive and competitive versus modest and caring. Canada's higher masculinity score indicates that the society is driven largely by competition, achievement and success in both work and leisure pursuits, whereas in more feminine societies like Korea the dominant values are caring for others and quality of life and standing out from the crowd is not admirable. Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. A society with high UAI like Korean society is uncomfortable with novel and uncertain situations, and feels comfortable in structured situations where it is clear what they should do and how they should act. For this reason they often operate under strict laws and maintain set guidelines for how to act in social situations. Canadians, on the other hand, have a

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

larger degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovative products and a greater willingness to try new and different things. Long-term Orientation (LTO), or Confucian dynamism, was added to the first four dimensions after a later study of 23 countries by Chinese scholars revealed a fundamental difference in societies based on their Confucian influence. Societies with high LTO like Korea place emphasis on reaching a desirable future, while low LTO societies such as Canada focus more on the past and present. How each of these dimensions affects how students and teachers perform and interact in the classroom is outlined in table 3.2.

As I contemplated the information in table 3.2., it became clear to me that the conflicts I was experiencing at my school in Korea were a result of my differing expectations compared to those of my students and administration. I expected my students to take initiative, speak freely in class, to tell me when they didn't understand, to work well together in groups, and to respond positively to what I perceived as fun and creative tasks. When they didn't, my first assumption was that they weren't good students. However, it turned out that my perception of how a good student should perform in class was quite different from theirs. As one Korean student shared in the book *Learning Teaching* (Moran, 2001), a good student should "listen very carefully to the teacher and study hard after class" (p. 70). From that student's point of view, she was being a good student by not asking a lot of questions in class. Moreover, the importance of saving face in Korean society explained the students' hesitance to speak aloud in class or work together in groups. The principle of saving face dominates much of Korean behavior and stems from the influential teachings of the ancient Chinese philosopher, Confucius (Riegel, J, 2012). This principle also explained why school administrations didn't want to level the students according to their English ability, even though it would have created a more productive learning environment.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Table 3.2. Classroom implications of Hofstede’s culture dimensions (2001).

1. Power distance	
Low Power Distance	High Power Distance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality • Power minimized <p>Classroom implications: student-centered, teachers expect students to initiate some communication, students allowed to contradict teacher, free communication between student and teacher, teachers are experts who transfer impersonal truths</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality • Hierarchy <p>Classroom implications: teacher-centered, students depend highly on teachers, teachers expected to initiate all communication in class, teacher not publicly criticized, teachers are gurus who transfer personal wisdom</p>
2. Uncertainty Avoidance	
Low Uncertainty Avoidance	High Uncertainty Avoidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable with uncertainty • High risk-taking <p>Classroom implications: students comfortable with vague instructions and projects involving creativity, teacher not expected to have all the answers, students want to engage in discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious about uncertainty • Low risk-taking/safe <p>Classroom implications: students only comfortable in very structured learning situations and are uncomfortable with vague instructions, teacher is expected to have all the answers, students want to be given answers</p>
3. Collectivism/ Individualism	
Individualism	Collectivism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual’s needs before the group • Independence and self-reliance <p>Classroom implications: students expect to learn how to learn, student initiative encouraged, students associate according to interests, teacher deals with students as individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity comes from belonging to a group <p>Classroom implications: students expect to learn how to do, student initiative discouraged, students associate according to in-groups, neither teacher nor student should ever be made to lose face, teacher deals with students as a group</p>
4. Masculinity/ Femininity	
Masculinity	Femininity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional gender roles are distinct • Greater tendency towards assertive and competitive qualities <p>Classroom implications: knowledgeable teachers admired, competition in class, best student is norm, praise for good students, failing in school is taken very seriously</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional gender roles overlap • Greater tendency towards modest and caring qualities <p>Classroom implications: friendly teachers admired, over-ambition unfavorable, average students is norm, praise for weak students, failing in school is a minor incident</p>
5. Long-term/ short-term orientation (Confucian dynamism)	
Long-term Orientation	Short-term Orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on reaching a desirable future <p>Classroom implications: persistence and perseverance, studying hard is the norm, leisure time not important, children learn to save, personal adaptability, important life events perceived as going to happen in the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on fulfilling present needs and desires <p>Classroom implications: quick results expected, enjoyment is the norm, leisure time important, children learn to spend, personal stability and steadiness, important life events perceived as happening now or in the past</p>

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

None of Hofstede's culture dimensions, however, could explain the indifference many of my students seemed to show toward their university education. This was particularly confusing to me because I had always heard that Koreans were good students and highly valued education. This was definitely not the case for a good proportion of my freshman students, who often came to class late, didn't do homework, and fell asleep at their desk because they had stayed out late partying with their friends. A common assumption among foreign teachers was that the students were lazy and incompetent and that the system was flawed. Through my research, however, I realized that these were ignorant judgments made by foreigners who didn't understand Korean society and culture. I learned that from the age of six Korean schoolchildren lead difficult and serious lives, often studying more than 16 hours a day. Korean Confucian tradition considers education one of the most important things in life, and most of a child's education is aimed at getting a high score for the university entrance examination. Each day after public school and also on the weekends, the vast majority of children attend additional private schools, after which they go to the library until the early hours of the morning. The strict education system allows the children little time to socialize or relax, and when discussing the subject of hobbies and interests in class, it was not uncommon for my students to list their favorite activity as 'sleeping'.

Entrance to university is so highly competitive these days that students feel enormous pressure to get high scores in both middle and high school, and suicide rates are increasing as a result. According to one article, a fifth of Korean students feel tempted to commit suicide ("Exams," 2011). After many years of intense study, university life is, for many Koreans, a time to relax and enjoy life. It is a short break between the pressure of high school and Korea's highly demanding work life. It's actually considered an important time for forming long-lasting

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

connections and relationships that will serve them well after graduation, which is why social and sporting events were considered valid excuses for not attending class.

After learning about the extreme pressure Koreans experience both before and after university, I could truly understand and empathize with their situation. I finally understood that so much of what we believe is based on our own narrow perception of the world. From this experience I learned a valuable lesson about not making assumptions, and about the importance of always trying to understand other people's views and behaviors in terms of their differing experiences.

What I also realized was that their first year of university was the first time in their lives Korean students didn't have a study system completely structured for them. This is why they lacked self-motivation, were unable to effectively organize and had poor study habits. This enforced my desire to help them develop effective learning strategies, become autonomous learners, and to learn and a sense of responsibility and accountability for their own learning.

In Susan Oak's book, *Teaching English to Koreans*, she describes the Korean education system (2003). According to her, Korean high school teachers employ lecture and recitation techniques in order to prepare students for standardized examinations and to maintain order in classes of over sixty students. Even though Korean students learn English in school from a young age, grammar translation, repetition and memorization techniques are generally utilized, which is why university level students may have large vocabulary reserves and a basic knowledge of grammar rules, but can't effectively put either to use. She explains how students who are used to certain methods of teaching may initially resist the "alternative" approaches used by foreign university instructors, as I myself had experienced when I tried to engage students in open class discussions, interactive class mingles, and other student-centered approaches in the

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

classroom. The fact that my students were so used to working directly from a textbook also explained why they were lacking basic skills of note-taking and organizing a binder, which was something that I simply took for granted coming from Canada.

When it came to my administration and coworkers, the main problem was that I didn't realize just how important hierarchy and showing respect according to one's social rank was. In Canada I had always spoken to my superiors and colleagues in a similar manner; respectfully, but as though we were all of equal status. However, as I mentioned, Korean society is heavily shaped and influenced by the teaching of the Confucius, and one of the main principles that Korean society operates under is that all persons in society must know their place and uphold their positions.

The authors of *Culture Shock Korea* (Hur & Hur, 1988) explain that Korean interpersonal relationships operate on the principle of harmony. One's emotional state is known as *kibun*, and Koreans make crucial, important decisions based on avoiding hurting another person's *kibun*. They believe that honesty and moral integrity is much more important than efficiency, and that to accomplish something while causing unhappiness or discomfort to individuals is to accomplish nothing at all. A Korean's *kibun* can be damaged when his subordinate does not show proper respect, such as by not using honorific speech or not following the chain of command.

Understanding the principle of *kibun* was an important step in my being able to work harmoniously within the Korean education system. One of my biggest frustrations my first few years in Korea had been that change happened too slowly and many times things seemed to work less efficiently than they could. Based on my perception of what best education practices are, I pushed for change at the administrative level, often openly questioning my superiors and offering suggestions for improving our university English program. Although my intentions were good,

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

I offended my administration by questioning their ability to run the program effectively and by speaking to them as though I were of equal status. As I will explain more in the next chapter, it wasn't until I accepted and began to act according to the principles of *kibun*, putting the interests of others first, and respecting social rank, that I was able to successfully influence any of sort of positive change at my school.

Interviews and dialogues

Reading about Korean culture facilitated a change in my attitude, and shifted my view of many issues from one of bewilderment and frustration to one of tolerance, understanding, and even acceptance. However, I still had many questions about the Korean education system, and it seemed that the best way to find the answers I was seeking would be to open a dialogue with my students and administration. In order to avoid causing offense by directly questioning the way things are done in their society, I initiated a dialogue about the subject by presenting the issue in the form of a *code*. Codes are often used to initiate dialogues in the participatory approach, in which the curriculum is developed around issues that evoke strong emotional responses (Auerbach, 1997). Codes allow one to present an issue in a depersonalized way such that the issue is immediately recognizable, but can be viewed objectively (Freire, P, 2000).

My code was an essay written by a young Korean schoolgirl in which she presents some of the common criticisms Korean people themselves have about the current education system, which I obtained from a friend who was working at the local radio station where the student was interviewed for winning a national debate competition (Appendix A). By focusing our discussions on the issues raised in this article, I was able to ask questions about the Korean education system without offending anyone by being seen as placing personal judgment on the Korean way of doing things.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

The main argument that YuRi Kim makes in her article is that Korea should be aspiring to educate its students to be more successful in today's global world, which values innovation and the ability to think outside the box. However, she believes that the current Korean education system actually suppresses these abilities in children, instead forcing them all to conform to a single standard way of thinking. Her argument is that teachers insist on students memorizing spoon-fed answers and leave no room for creativity, accepting only a single answer as the 'correct answer'. By teaching students to memorize set answers, teachers are ensuring they achieve good test scores, however, this diminishes their ability to problem solve and think critically, leaving them unprepared to deal with real-world issues in their future lives.

Interview with my director

I presented this article to my director, Dr. JooKyung Park, who I felt would be a good person to talk to because she had personally experienced both Korean and American education systems. She did most of her schooling in Korea, but after graduating from university, she travelled to America to obtain her graduate degree from Texas A&M University. Because of this, she was able to discuss both the pros and cons of each education system.

I asked Dr. Park if it was true that Korean education was based on memorization and spoon-feeding students a set of pre-determined answers, which she confirmed. In her opinion the real root of the problem lies in the Korean standardized test system. According to her, all teaching in Korea prior to university is aimed at helping students pass the university entrance exam, which is a multiple choice exam that doesn't require students to be able to produce creative or original answers. In addition, both TOEFL and TOEIC scores are major hiring factors for most professional jobs in South Korea. TOEFL evaluates the ability of an individual to use and understand English in an academic setting, while TOEIC measures ability to use English in

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

everyday workplace activities. Institutions such as government agencies, licensing bodies, businesses, or scholarship programs all require TOEFL scores, and because they are only valid for two years and institutions usually consider only the most recent TOEFL score, students re-take the test often in an effort to achieve the highest score possible. However, the majority of companies in Korea don't require their employees to actually be able to use English on the job. Therefore, many students have no real desire to learn English, and are motivated only by test scores.

Because students only need to know a set of pre-determined answers for standardized tests, higher order learning skills aren't part of the curriculum. For me, as an educator, this was very difficult to accept because I believe education is more than just memorizing a set of rules or facts from a textbook. In Canada, our education system fosters skills such as creativity and problem-solving, and I was always taught that the process of arriving at the answer can be just as important as the answer itself. This method of educating went against everything I believed about good teaching practice. Although test preparation helped Korean students in the short term to get into university or secure a job at a good company, it failed to equip them with the skills they needed to deal with the complex situations they would undoubtedly encounter in the real world thereafter.

Having entered the American education system feeling inadequately prepared by her education in Korea, Dr. Park was of the opinion that the Korean system needed to change. In her own classroom she encouraged autonomous learning, taught learning strategies, and challenged her students to think more critically. But because she knew how difficult it was for them, she broke each task down into a series of steps and provided a lot of support and scaffolding for each. However, most teachers in Korea are never exposed to any other way of

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

learning, so in their classrooms they continue to model their teachers' methods of rote memorization and spoon-feeding test answers. Yet, according to D. Park, even if they were interested in implementing change they would find their efforts to introduce new teaching methods unsuccessful because the focus of the students and administration would still be on standardized test scores.

Student dialogues

I also wanted to hear my students' thoughts on the issues discussed in the article. I first asked them to write individual responses to the article with the help of some guiding questions, then asked them to discuss the issues in small groups, and finally engaged them in a class discussion on the topic. To my surprise, all twenty students in the class agreed with what was written in the article. In her response paper, one student wrote:

“Our creativity is fading now because we are used to accepting rather than thinking”,

while another student stated:

“The Korean system teaches me not to be creative because the teachers give me the “right” answers. I don't feel well prepared to solve problems alone after graduation”.

However, although they were able to recognize the problems in the system, their inexperience solving complex problems left them unable to come up with any solutions aside from sending their children abroad to be educated.

Reflections and conclusions

I reflected on the assignments I had given these students throughout the semester and how they had struggled with them. I now understood that my assignments had been de-motivating in

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

that they were too challenging compared to what my students were accustomed to. They had been forced to adjust to too many new things at once when they entered my classroom; a native speaker teacher who gave instructions completely in English, being required to share answers and ideas with the class, working daily in groups, and tasks requiring creative thought and original answers. Although I wanted to push my students to do more than memorize a set of pre-determined answers, I had pushed too hard without providing any support to help them succeed. According to Krashen (1988) in his “I + 1” (input + 1) theory of teaching and learning, the goal of good teaching should be to provide just enough challenge to the learner to help them progress and motivate without overwhelming them, which could negatively impact their learning.

It is also well established that student affect plays an important role in learning in any context. In *Working with Teaching Methods: What's at Stake?*, Stevick (1998) states that, “The preservation of our self-image is the first law of psychological survival” (p. 20). This self preservation instinct is what leads to resistance and hesitance to participate in class for fear of being inadequate. This is especially true in the Korean context, where saving face is an important principle of their society. However, because I didn't understand the needs of the students when I started working in Korea, I failed to establish a safe learning environment where they felt supported and comfortable enough to take risks with the language. By engaging them in a dialogue, however, I had opened the doors of communication. During our discussions they shared with me that they would very much like to improve their problem-solving abilities and acquire new learning strategies, but felt shy, nervous, and afraid of failure. Knowing this, in addition to everything I had learned about Korean culture, society, and education, I was able to make much more informed decisions about my teaching.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Using the cultural knowings framework to explore myself and my new context, I had learned much about myself, my students, my coworkers, and the system I was working in. I realized I was going to have to take an entirely new approach to teaching in Korea. However, if I were to completely change my style of teaching in consideration of student affect and their needs for getting good test scores, it would mean abandoning my teaching principles. In my view, teaching to the test, posing questions that only require choosing a pre-determined answer, and neglecting to foster originality, critical thinking, or problem-solving skills are not effective teaching approaches. Yet, if I continued to set such high expectations for my students without any structure or support, I was setting them up for failure. What I needed was to find a balance that would allow me to meet the emotional and short-term needs of the students in a way that was in line with my basic beliefs about teaching. This would mean adapting my teaching somewhat to include approaches the students were accustomed to, while also slowly introducing new aspects into their learning experience in a way that they would feel safe, supported, and able to succeed.

Chapter 4

How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

“We cannot change anything until we accept it. Condemnation does not liberate. It oppresses.”

~ Carl Jung ~

This chapter is an examination of how cultural awareness can affect attitudes and expectations, strengthen relationships, and lead to more effective teaching and learning. I discuss how cultural awareness allowed me to reconcile many of the differences that were leading to conflict between me, my students, and my administration, and how I was able to find a balanced approach to teaching that more effectively met the needs of my students while still being in line with my beliefs about teaching and learning. I will share how my cultural awareness improved my relationships with my students, decreased my frustration in my context, and how it affected my teaching and impacted my students' learning. I will provide examples of ways that I successfully implemented change in my classroom that can be used as a model for other teacher's seeking to foster higher order learning skills, such as problem solving and autonomous learning, in students who are accustomed to rote learning and memorization. Such new concepts may be both difficult and intimidating for students who have never been exposed to them, so it is important to introduce them slowly and sensitively in order to preserve student's self confidence, as well as to promote a positive attitude towards learning the English language.

4.1. The art of balance (knowing how)

Moving away from mainstream pedagogy

Through my cultural exploration, I learned of many differences between Canadian and Korean culture that explained our differing views, attitudes and expectations of teaching and

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

learning. Without knowing or understanding these differences, I began teaching in Korea with an expectation that my students would respond well to the mainstream teaching techniques that I had learned about in my CELTA course. However, it became evident to me that mainstream approaches were not appropriate in my context, and in fact, were detrimental to my students' learning and also to my attitude towards teaching in Korea.

I gleaned some outside perspective on my situation by reading an essay entitled *Adopting a Critical Perspective on Pedagogy* (Canagarajah, S., 1999). Canagarajah's view is that learning is not something de-contextualized that happens in a classroom and has nothing to do with the outside world. He believes that mainstream pedagogy is informed by the ideologies of dominant communities, and points out that western centers of education and research dominate teacher training and textbook publishing in the global ELT field. He states that *'Western pedagogical developments suggest a belief that cognitive strategies are universal – that learning styles found to be effective for students from one community may be assumed to be equally effective for students from others'* (p. 13). I realized the truth in this as I struggled without success to apply collaborative, process-oriented, and task-based teaching methods, which are currently acclaimed in western professional circles, in my own Korean context. I had used these methods in other contexts in the past with great success, but it was clear that my Korean students preferred and responded better to more formal, product-oriented, teacher-centered approaches which are currently looked down on by most western teaching professionals as being out of date.

As Canagarajah points out, there is a great deal of research surrounding the area of learning styles and strategies used in different cultures, and it has been shown that culture dictates beliefs, values, and perceptions which all affect language learning, including general learning styles and also specific language learning strategies employed (Oxford, R. 1996).

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Although basic learning processes may be universal, different styles of learning are fostered depending on educational experience, explaining why people from different cultures generally respond in different ways to various teaching methods. Accordingly, optimal learning may be facilitated when teachers find the correct balance between learners' preferred style and the teaching methods they employ.

Clearly the approach I had taken in my context so far was not harmonizing with my students' preferred learning style, as they did not engage in class and showed few signs of progress throughout the semester. At times they even voiced their discomfort for some of the activities I asked them to participate in, and expressed their desire to spend more class time quietly completing textbook exercises, as they had done in the past. I had dismissed this as laziness until now, believing my students would benefit more by participating in communicative activities, doing collaborative problem-solving tasks, and moving around the room to engage their kinesthetic senses.

However, in taking this attitude I didn't consider how unfamiliar my methods were to my students, and I ignored the important consideration of affect in language learning. Brown states that a student's willingness to attempt communication in a foreign language is largely affected by their self esteem and belief in their own ability to do the task (Brown, H.D., 1996). He refers to several studies that suggest certain teaching techniques can help students "unfold their wings" and that teachers can have a positive impact on the linguistic performance and emotional well-being of their students by focusing not just on linguistic goals, but also on the emotional needs of the students. Korean students are particularly self-conscious and worry a great deal about making mistakes in front of their peers, so the unfamiliar tasks I gave my students made them anxious and uncomfortable, hindering their ability to perform.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

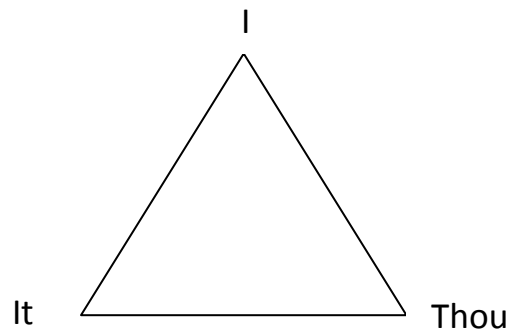
For these reasons it was clear to me that if I wanted to increase my student's learning potential, I would have to adapt my teaching style to be more in line with what they were accustomed to and find an approach that fostered learning in a way that they would be able to respond to. Yet, I still strongly disagreed with a number of Korean education practices, including spoon-feeding students the answers before they make any attempt on their own and perpetuating the idea that there is only one pre-determined correct answer, which discourages creative thinking. Therefore, I was faced with the challenge of finding a way to stimulate my students' specific processes of learning in order to help them reach their immediate learning goals, while slowly implementing changes that would help them begin to develop the higher order learning skills I believed they needed to function effectively both in Korean society in and in today's global world.

Shifting the focus of I, Thou and It

In his *I-Thou-It* framework, Hawkins describes the interplay between three indispensable factors in teaching and learning (Hawkins, D. 1967). In this triangle, he describes the "I" as the teacher, the "Thou" as the learner, and the "It" as the subject matter that serves to link teacher and student together in a dynamic relationship (figure 4.1).

Realistically the focus shifts frequently, but in an ideal classroom there will generally be a harmonistic balance and strong relationships between the elements. Optimal learning will occur when the emotional and cognitive needs of both teacher and learner are met, when the learner is engaged by the material, and when the teacher is in tune with how what is happening in the classroom is affecting the learner.

Figure 4.1. Hawkins' *I-Thou-It* framework.



In my Korean context I had been focusing too much on the ‘I and It’, and neglecting the ‘Thou’. I prided myself on using venerated teaching techniques and spent hours designing creative activities that I thought would engage my students, and when they didn’t respond I assumed they were bad students because I didn’t know enough about Korean culture to understand their behavior. When I finally took the time to learn more about my students, I discovered that they did not possess the skills they needed to be able to successfully complete the tasks I gave them, which triggered anxiety and negatively impacted their self-confidence.

Moreover, after reading the Canagarajah essay about Critical Pedagogy, I began noticing a divide between the issues presented in our textbook and my students’ reality, which helped explain their lack of engagement with the material. My students couldn’t relate to textbook topics such as traveling, studying abroad and free time activities. The vast majority of my students had never travelled outside of Korea, spent much of their time studying for exams, and were not planning to study abroad. Many of them were studying English only because they were pressured by their parents to get high paying jobs and take care of the family. But even in this case the students usually only cared about standardized test scores because very few jobs in Korea required them to actually be able to use English.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

In order to achieve harmony, balance, and optimal learning in my classroom according to the *I-Thou-It* framework, I had to shift some of the focus away from myself and back towards the students, equally nurturing both the ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ in the teaching and learning relationship. I also needed to build better rapport with my students to strengthen the relationship between the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou’, and find a way to help the students engage more with the material to strengthen the relationship between the ‘Thou’ and the ‘It’.

This wasn’t possible without some knowledge of my students’ cultural background. By exploring Korean culture I had come to understand much of their behavior, perspectives, expectations and needs. With that knowledge, I was now able to make better informed decisions about what was best for my students, as opposed to what I believed was best based on my preconceived notions of teaching and learning from my own Canadian educational experiences. Moreover, my attitude changed considerably, and I realized that in order to meet the needs of my students I had to be more patient, understanding, receptive, and flexible.

Taking a new approach

In order to attain a better balance between ‘I’ and ‘Thou’ in my classroom, I began changing my teaching approach to better meet the learning needs of my students based on their experience and expectations of teaching and learning. By adapting to their preferred style of instruction and structuring the class in a way that was familiar to them, I hoped to create a more comfortable and productive learning environment.

I began doing this based on some advice that was given to me from my IYTP supervisor, Kevin Giddens. During one of his observations he noticed that when I took a more active, teacher-centered approach the students were far more likely to be productive and stay on task

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

than when I took a more passive role, sitting among the students during the lecture and giving them freedom to organize and work on independent group projects. Although I prefer student-centered teaching, it was clear that my students responded better to having an authority figure at the front of the classroom, and that they preferred simple and structured tasks.

At the same time, I still wanted my students to be challenged on a greater level, and to have the ability to successfully complete tasks requiring more cognitive skill than basic textbook exercises, which would prepare them for using English in the real world. I was able to find balance by introducing a predictable daily routine that integrated both new and familiar elements of teaching to my students. In the beginning stages of teaching something new I would use the standard techniques that they were comfortable with so they could focus on the language without distraction and build confidence in their abilities. Then, once I felt they had a good grasp of the target language, I could introduce new elements into their learning experience. The key to successfully implementing change was to do so slowly and sensitively; I didn't introduce too much at once because I didn't want to overwhelm them, and I carefully observed their reactions to each change I implemented, adapting my approach when necessary.

In my new approach, I avoided open class activities that made the students feel vulnerable and did mostly pair and small group activities instead. When soliciting answers or ideas I asked that individuals answer on behalf of their groups, which didn't put any one person at risk of losing face. I also decided to do more work from the textbook and abandoned my usual task-based method of teaching grammar for a more traditional deductive approach. Until now, I rarely referred to the textbook when introducing grammar because I didn't want the students to rely on rote learning and I found that they didn't particularly engage with the textbook material. Instead, I relied heavily on supplementary interactive activities and

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

worksheets that I thought they would find more interesting, and tried to use as many different types of activities as I could to prevent the students from getting bored. However, I found that without the structure of a textbook and activities that they were familiar with, the students were often confused and spent more time trying to figure out the task than focusing on the language. I realized I needed to go back to using the textbook to provide structure and familiarity to my students, yet also find a way to help them better engage with the material.

Providing structure and scaffolding

Providing adequate structure and scaffolding was a key part of successfully being able to integrate more challenging tasks into my students' routine. I began to break each task down into steps, providing detailed models and assessing my students' progress at each stage throughout the process so that I didn't move on until everyone was ready. This required a lot of patience, and activities took much longer to complete than I was accustomed to, but it was necessary because these students had never been required to do more than memorize a set of pre-defined answers, and their creativity and critical thinking skills hadn't yet been fostered.

I knew that my students had the potential to do much more, and that just like learning any other skill they just needed guidance and practice. Take learning to drive a car for example; if you were to put a complete beginner behind the wheel, you would never expect that they would be able to drive competently without an instructor first breaking the procedure down into steps for them and then giving them adequate opportunities to practice in a safe, supported environment. Although it would initially require a great deal of effort to carry out each step correctly, over time and with practice the process would eventually become automatic to the learner. My goal was to help my students become more competent learners and to familiarize

them with the process of carrying out tasks requiring creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

As I mentioned, I felt that my students could benefit from the familiar structure of using a textbook when learning new concepts, but the problem was that they weren't engaging with the material presented in our prescribed text. I initially thought that they just weren't interested in learning English, but during my cultural exploration I learned that in actuality a large part of the problem was that they couldn't relate to the contents of a western textbook. Therefore, I asked my students to help me adapt the textbook content to be more relevant to their lives and interests. When introducing a new grammar point, I would use the examples from the textbook first, having the students follow along in the book. Using the textbook for support, I then asked them to work together in groups using dictionaries to create new examples that were more personalized. For example, the statement '*Chris likes to relax on weekends*' might be reconstructed into '*MinJeong likes to go to the PC room after class*'. Using their ideas, I would write correct versions of their sentences on the board and we used those as the basis for the lesson. I never corrected their grammar at this stage because I wanted to encourage them to share their ideas and help build their confidence in their abilities. After deriving the grammar rule together from the example we again turned to the textbook, reviewing the grammar summary and focusing solely on the language by completing the familiar closed textbook exercises. Finally, I asked the students to change some of the language in the exercises to make it their own, which challenged them to a greater degree yet still provided enough structure for them to be able to complete the task without raising their affective filter. In the previous example I would have asked them to write about what their friends and family like to do, and if it were a dialogue between two people they would have to choose a role and fill in information

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

about their own interests, schedule, family, etc. To provide even more scaffolding we would also do a class brainstorm before the task to generate relevant language.

The structured textbook exercises allowed the students to build both confidence and competence using the target language and allowed them to see many examples of the language used in context. This was the foundation they had been missing in my original approach, and it was hugely important in helping them succeed. From there, I was able to introduce more challenging tasks to both reinforce what they had learned and start working on other higher order skills. Importantly, I stopped trying to make new and exciting activities all the time, settling on five or six standard activities to integrate into our routine. This was critical because changing activities all the time meant that the students had been spending most of their time trying to understand what they should be doing, rather than becoming competent users of the language. At first the students were hesitant to partake in activities as challenging as conducting peer interviews and writing their own dialogues and I had to be very patient while they learned how to adequately complete these types of activities. With time and support, however, they became as much a part of our routine as the textbook exercises. To demonstrate how scaffolding can be incorporated into activities that are challenging for students, I have broken down the steps I would follow to support my students through a goal writing activity in Appendix B. I will discuss goal setting further in the next section.

Teaching Learning Strategies

I also began regularly incorporating learning skills and strategies into my teaching to help my students form better study skills and habits. Rebecca Oxford, a leading researcher in the field of language learning strategies, defines learning strategies as steps taken by students to assist

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

their own learning (1996). They are ways to understand, remember and recall information, and ways to practice skills effectively. Research has repeatedly shown that the conscious and tailored use of strategies is related to language achievement and proficiency. By incorporating learning strategies, Oxford has shown that teachers can help struggling students become better language learners through identification of appropriate strategies and study skills for them. This helps them gain confidence and they will be able to apply these skills to become better lifelong learners in other aspects of their lives.

I was inspired to do this by Caleb Gattegno, an influential individual in the field of education, and his philosophy of subordinating teaching to learning. According to Gattegno, the responsibility of a teacher is to *“create the climate and offer activities that nourish the human capacity for self-awareness, and allow human evolving through self-education”* (Gattegno, S. 1998). However, he believed that this evolution is prevented by learning processes such as rote learning and memorization, as well as by artificially induced motives, such as the desire to please an authority figure or pass a test. My university’s goal was to prepare its students to be “global leaders”, but even my English major students who were in their third year of university study told me they felt unprepared to compete in today’s global world or even in their own society because they lacked organization and time management skills and didn’t have the ability to be innovative, take initiative or think outside the box.

An extensive list of learning strategies can be found in any of Rebecca Oxford’s books and on websites promoting strategies-based instruction (Chamot, A., 2006). For my group of Korean students, though, I felt the most beneficial strategies to incorporate would be planning and organizing, setting goals and objectives, self and peer evaluating, ways of compensating for knowledge gaps, lowering anxiety, self-encouragement and rewards, and making associations

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

with what they already knew. Of particular importance for my students, however, were the organization and goal-setting strategies.

As I explained in Chapter 3, it is very important in Korean society to attend a prestigious university. Therefore, Korean junior high and high school students are forced to follow a very strict study regimen so that they can get good scores on their university entrance exams. For my first year students, this was the first time in their lives that their study schedule wasn't prescribed, and it was obvious to me that they didn't quite know how to manage their time effectively. Nor did any of my students know how to organize a notebook because they were used to working directly out of a textbook and answering only very basic questions. In fact, many students often didn't even bring a pen or paper to class because most of their classes required that they just sit and listen to their teacher lecture and read along from a set of handouts.

To help them organize more effectively I required that every student purchase a three-ring binder from the store on-campus and brought a demo binder to class with three sections in it: one filled with lined paper for taking notes, one for keeping handouts, and one for making a vocabulary notebook of words that were new or difficult for them each class, which I encouraged them to review weekly. Each day the students were awarded points for bringing their pen, notebook and textbook to class, and at random times throughout the semester I collected their notebooks to make sure they were keeping them up appropriately and gave them feedback about how to better organize and how to take notes more effectively. Although I had many students, I found it to be a manageable task if I collected just five notebooks at a time. Again, it took time for this to become a regular habit for them, and I spent weeks reminding students that they must take notes from the board and add words to their vocabulary notebooks each day. With the knowledge that working outside the textbook was a new concept for them, however, I was able

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

to be patient and supportive, in contrast to before my exploration when I felt frustrated and lectured the students for being lazy and disorganized. This new approach was much more effective, and I began to see positive results in just weeks.

I knew the students needed guidance in this area of goal setting because they often came to me seeking advice about how they could improve their English skills on their own. Because English was so rarely spoken in our part of Korea, they had little chance to practice or consolidate what we learned outside of the classroom. Therefore, early in the semester I asked my students to rate their speaking, listening, reading, writing, and vocabulary skills on a scale of one to ten, and then to choose the two areas they wanted to improve the most. Once they did this we had a class brainstorm to generate ideas for how to improve each of the skills, and then using their ideas I guided them through the process of writing two learning goals for the semester and two to three strategies for reaching each goal. As a model, I showed them my own goals for improving my Korean speaking and listening skills, which were specific about when and how often I would work on each strategy.

About a month later, and every month for the rest of the semester, I asked the students to reflect on their goals and strategies. I asked them to tell me if they had been carrying out their strategies, if they were effective for helping them reach their goals or not and why, and if they felt they needed to make any changes. By doing this I eventually helped them each construct a set of goals and strategies that were both realistic and achievable, and I could see their confidence growing as a result of feeling that they were taking an active and effective role in their learning. Finally, at the end of the semester I asked each student to choose the one strategy that had been most effective for them and we did a gallery walk so they could simultaneously share their ideas and adopt new strategies from their classmates for further improving their

English skills in the future. Several examples of my English major students' goals, strategies and reflections are included in Appendix C.

Establishing an open dialogue

Effective language learning necessitates making mistakes, so it is very important that teachers establish a safe learning space where students feel comfortable taking risks with the language. This is particularly true in Korea, where saving face is an important aspect of their society. Korean people aren't generally comfortable making mistakes in public so they often avoid situations where they have to communicate in English. Because of this, I knew that most of my students were feeling vulnerable and anxious whenever they stepped into my classroom. Raising their inhibitions even further was the fact that my classroom was a very different learning environment than they were accustomed to. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Korean and Western expectations of teaching and learning are quite different. While I expected my students to actively participate in class, ask me questions, and respond positively to activities that allowed for creativity and freedom of expression, they expected to quietly and respectfully listen to their teacher lecture, to be given structure, and to do most of their work out of a textbook. Moreover, because I couldn't speak Korean there was a language barrier that made communication between us difficult at times.

Raised inhibitions are a problem because learners test out hypotheses about language by trial and error, so if they only attempt communication when they are absolutely sure of the correctness of their sentences they can't effectively progress in their learning (Brown, H. D., 1996). Furthermore, the output hypothesis states that when attempting to produce language, either written or spoken, learners notice gaps in their knowledge that prevent them from being

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

able to express themselves as they would like (Swain, 2000). This contributes to learning because it leads students to then either seek the answer or pay more attention to relevant input in the future. Testing out hypotheses is also important because learners modify their output when given external feedback from their teacher or peers. Therefore, in order for my students to be able to learn effectively in my class I knew I would need to do something to lower their defenses.

To ease the transition from a teacher-centered to a more student-centered learning environment, I attempted to establish a community in our classroom in which every student felt comfortable, valued, safe, and supported. For this to be possible, it was necessary that I maintain an open dialogue with my students throughout the semester, explaining my rationale behind all class decisions, including them in the decision making processes for the class, eliciting their feedback regularly, and recognizing their successes by giving lots of positive feedback.

We began the new semester with a discussion about learning and I tried to emphasize that making mistakes was a normal and necessary part of language learning. I prepared a class goals worksheet to help them understand that the goal of my class was not to be a perfect native speaker, as every Korean student strived to be, or to impress their classmates, but rather to work together to help one another realistically improve their English skills while also improving their confidence and learning some new study skills (Appendix D). I told them that to be successful they would have to help one another, rather than relying on me as their only resource, and included activities daily to help them learn each other's names and get to know one another better so they would feel comfortable working together. When they asked me questions I often directed them back to the class or asked the students to work together in small groups to come up with an answer, enforcing the idea of community and supporting one another.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

I discussed my teaching style and expectations openly with my students on the first day so that they would understand from the beginning that I expected them to behave differently in my class than in their other classes. Then to help them understand further what my expectations were I prepared interactive worksheets for them which highlighted what I considered good and bad class behavior. My worksheet for homework and class participation is included in Appendix E. Additionally, to increase accountability and encourage students to be active in their learning, I asked them each to fill out daily self-evaluation forms that contributed to their overall grade for the class (Appendix F).

To encourage the students to give me input and feedback about the class I asked them to fill out a needs assessment questionnaire on the first day that gave them the opportunity to tell me what sorts of activities they liked doing and what topics they wanted to cover in class. This questionnaire also helped me learn a bit about their experience, motivations, personal goals and learning styles (Appendix G). However, I knew the students wouldn't be comfortable telling me how they felt about my teaching openly because this is considered very rude in Korean society, so I put an envelope on my office door and encouraged them to give me anonymous feedback about the class anytime. I also distributed feedback forms regularly in class, again assuring the students that they didn't have to identify themselves, and making sure I structured them so that I would be able to gather effective feedback from students of all levels (Appendix H).

By communicating openly with my students, we were able to successfully build a productive and supportive learning environment. Because they felt supported by one another and knew that I was taking their feelings into account with each decision I made about the class, they were able to lower their inhibitions and this allowed them to progress further in their learning.

Working within the system

In order to influence change beyond the walls of my classroom, I learned that I needed to learn to work within the Korean education system rather than pushing against it. Exploring Korean culture helped me in this capacity because I learned about the principle of Kibun and the importance of respecting social hierarchy. At my previous school I had unintentionally offended my superiors by openly questioning the efficiency and organization of the English program. Although my intentions were good, by offering unsolicited advice about how to make the program better, I caused them to raise their defenses, making any sort of productive communication impossible.

At my most recent school, I decided to take a new approach. This time I was respectful of the social order and did my best not to make any judgments about the school, the program, or the education system. Instead, I made an effort to learn more about the system and why things were done as they were so I could learn to work better within it. I was fortunate at this school to have a director who truly cared about quality education and who was open and receptive to feedback about the program. When I told her about my cultural exploration and how I was trying to become a better teacher by learning more about my students, she agreed to meet with me to discuss the Korean education system and share her perspective on teaching in Korea.

Because I had approached her in a respectful manner, Dr. Park and I were able to have an honest and fruitful discussion about education in which we discovered that we shared many of the same views about teaching and learning. We compared Korean and Western education systems, discussed the short and long term needs of Korean students, and in what ways we were each working to fulfill those needs. I told her about the changes I was trying to implement in my classes and asked her if she felt they were beneficial for the students, and she agreed that they

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

were. In fact, she told me that she also regularly tried to incorporate higher order learning skills into her own teaching because she felt students needed to be better prepared to function as effective and productive members of society after graduation.

Seeing that we shared the same goals and desires for our students to succeed, she then asked me if there was anything I felt the administration could do to improve the English program. Being careful to avoid criticizing the program, I told her about some of the things which were controlled at the administrative level and that seemed to be hindering the students' progress. She listened carefully to my position, and after further discussion she agreed to do her best to negotiate some changes on behalf of the teachers. I gratefully accepted her offer to help me and didn't push her any further on the issues that she told me weren't negotiable because I understood that she had to act based on what she felt was best overall for both the students and university, and that she too had to respect social hierarchy.

By respecting and working within the system, I believe Dr. Park and I were able to make some significant improvements in the quality of our English program. First of all, we managed to reduce the number of units covered each semester so that students had sufficient time to consolidate what they were learning, rather than our usual routine of rushing from one unit to the next before the students were ready to move on. This also allowed teachers to dedicate some class time to working on developing higher order learning skills in addition to the basic skills covered in the textbook. Secondly, we negotiated changes in both the grade scheme and test structure so as to increase the incentive for students to study and actively practice using the language in class. Participation and homework were now worth more of their final grade, and rather than choosing from a list of pre-defined answers for their final exam, students had to demonstrate what they had learned by creating a dialogue containing the language structures and

vocabulary from class. These changes, together with those I had already implemented, helped lay the foundation for a much more productive and positive learning experience for my students.

4.2. Impact on teacher, students and learning

By deepening my understanding of the needs, expectations and abilities of my students I was able to teach them much more effectively. I no longer felt frustrated in my context because I could understand my students' behavior and finally felt I had the tools to help them progress in their learning. Because I was now more patient, understanding and supportive, I formed stronger relationships with my students which allowed them to lower their defenses. Moreover, having a greater understanding of Korean culture and society enabled me to work more harmoniously with my superiors to negotiate beneficial changes at the administrative level.

Before my cultural exploration my students showed little improvement on their progress checks, but after learning more about the students and adopting a new approach to teaching I watched them unfold their wings and reach new heights in their learning. I challenged them, but not so much as to overwhelm them, and with support and scaffolding they realized their unknown potential. My classroom evolved into a safe space where students could test out language hypotheses and attempt new learning strategies. As their confidence grew they began to take greater risks, and I saw significant improvements on their progress checks.

By using material they could relate to and openly communicating about the purpose of each activity the students were more engaged in class, and by changing the grade scheme and test structure their incentive to work hard was greater than ever before. As the students took a more active role in their learning and I watched them strengthen and build on both their language and learning skills. By the end of the semester I felt that they had become more competent and

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

confident learners and that they had fostered their creativity, strengthened their critical thinking and organizational skills, and developed new problem solving abilities. Moreover, they had learned to set realistic and achievable goals and to reflect on them so they could direct their own learning in the future.

Learning about my students' culture, changing my attitude and expectations, and adapting my teaching approach were all necessary in order for me to achieve success and find harmony as a teacher in Korea. Achieving balance in the classroom led to improved attitudes, stronger relationships, and a richer and more effective learning experience for us all.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

“The fact is that most of us, most of the time, are prone to act bound by the force of our habits and compelled by our pet ideas, our fears, our superstitions, preconceptions, prejudices, etc., all of which are rooted in our adherence to our past. We stay there until we become aware of what is in us that keeps us there and take steps to transcend it.”

~ Caleb Gattegno ~

This case study demonstrates the value of exploring student culture using ongoing reflective processes for effective teaching. I found Pat Moran’s “Cultural Knowings Framework” to be a particularly useful tool in this endeavor, as it breaks down the cultural exploration process into workable stages and incorporates reflection into each. Engaging in this process taught me that in order to avoid conflict and achieve balance and harmony in a foreign language classroom, it is essential for teachers to understand their students’ affective needs, expectations, experiences, goals and motivations, as well as their own cultural biases and teaching beliefs. This is because, as in my experience, unless one really understands themselves as a cultural being they won’t be able to truly appreciate or empathize with how and why others view the world in a different way.

Increasing my cultural awareness in Korea yielded many positive outcomes. As I gained a greater understanding of my students’ behaviors and attitudes I grew more patient and supportive, which allowed us to build stronger relationships. Without understanding how their expectations of teaching and learning differed from my own it had been impossible for me to meet my students’ affective needs and create a safe learning space for them; however, once I was able to do so, they started to take more risks in class and to push themselves to new heights. Because I implemented changes slowly and provided them with support and scaffolding, they

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

were able to successfully complete tasks requiring originality, creativity and critical thinking that they previously had no idea how to tackle. They even began to manage their own learning by doing self-evaluations, creating and reflecting on learning goals, and developing their own learning strategies. The improvement in their self confidence was evident, and finally I felt that I was making a positive impact through my teaching. In the end I discovered that accepting and working within the system was a much more effective way of achieving results than forming harsh judgments and pushing against it.

Overall, this project taught me that there is no set formula for “good teaching” that can be easily applied to every context in such a culturally diverse world. Therefore, good teaching requires one to be able to adapt their teaching style and approach to suit their context. However, it is important to recognize that using teaching methods appropriate for your context doesn’t mean sacrificing your own teaching beliefs and principles. On the contrary, having the courage to move outside the “comfort zone” of our teaching empowers us as educators. It is essential, however, to be knowledgeable about our students’ backgrounds, expectations, abilities and limitations so that we can provide the support they need to succeed as they strive to reach new heights in their learning.

The culture-specific understanding I gained throughout this project helped me be a better teacher in my Korean context and contributed to my overall experience of living and working in Korea. More importantly, though, is the self awareness and culture-general understanding that I took away from this experience. I gleaned new insight into general concepts of culture and developed transferrable culture learning skills that will benefit me in future foreign language teaching contexts, just as they are helping me in my current context working at a university in Saudi Arabia. Here I am facing a whole new host of questions and challenges; however, the

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

transition was much easier this time. Rather than making judgments and getting frustrated about things I didn't understand or agree with when I started working here, I immediately began asking questions in an effort to better understand my context. In this way I was able to differentiate between institutional and cultural issues fairly quickly, which helped me identify early on what things I would need to accept and adapt to and where there was room to negotiate change. Just as in Korea, the process of finding balance between *I, Thou and It* in my classroom is taking time, but my attitude is completely different this time around. From the very beginning I have been patient, supportive, understanding and open, which has made a huge difference in terms of building rapport with my students and creating a safe learning space for them. Moreover, by maintaining an open dialogue with them from the beginning it seems they are adjusting to change more readily.

After this experience I believe that being adaptable and using teaching methods appropriate for your context is essential for effective teaching. Although culture training should be a significant part of all EFL and ESL teacher training programs, many programs are still lacking in this area. Fortunately, I believe that teachers can explore culture on their own using the “Cultural Knowings Framework”, and that this will help them develop the self awareness, cultural-general understanding and culture learning skills they need to achieve culture-specific understanding in any foreign language context they encounter throughout their teaching career.

Appendix A

Essay written about the Korean education system by YuRi Kim

The Korean education system is severely criticized by the people in our society. Everyone states that it is killing the future of our students, and that we should be working to change the problem. The question here would be: why is this system considered to be so harmful for the students? This issue is what I'd like to discuss today.

Before looking at its faults, we have to first look at the facts of the educational system of Korea today. The teachers today are known to spoon feed the students, telling them to simply memorize how to solve this question and what the answer is. Solely looking at the effects that this method has, it does not seem to be so bad. In schools, the students do well on their tests, and have a long lasting memory of the information due to the cramming that is done. They know what to do to solve a problem, or what the answer is to a certain type of question. It is an undeniable fact that this system forces and ensures that the students will memorize and know this information.

At this point, it does not sound like it has much of a detrimental effect on the students. However, we have to take into consideration that this is being debated upon as a huge issue, and there is a reason for that. Personally, I thought that the main catch in this education system is that it is extremely short sighted. That is, this system only ensures that the student knows how to do well in school, not in their future lives. The main reasons for this are that the students' abilities to solve problems deteriorate, and that they cannot think creatively anymore. First comes the issue of dealing with problems. As mentioned previously, the status quo of the Korean education system is that the students are spoon fed the methods of solving the problems by the teachers. At

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

this point, I would like to give a similar situation. A child wants to learn how to ride a bicycle. As he or she does not know how to ride it at all in the beginning, he or she is assisted by auxiliary wheels on the bicycle. However, to truly learn how to ride the bicycle, the child must learn to ride without the auxiliary wheels. He or she may fall a few times, but the child cannot keep depending on the auxiliary wheel. This is a similar situation to the Korean students. The students do not need to work in our current system, as the answers are given to them by the teachers. They don't need to work to figure out how to solve the problem; it's already written down for them. Like the child dependent on the auxiliary wheel, the students depend on the teachers to tell them how to solve a problem. Going back to my example, what would happen if those wheels were suddenly to be removed? The child would obviously lose his or her balance, and would not be able to ride the bicycle anymore- because they were so dependent. The students are in a similar situation. As they graduate and go out into society, there is no one there to guide them anymore. In this situation, these individuals, who were so used to having solutions handed to them, now no longer know how to solve problems by themselves. The school, for ages, had taught them to memorize- but not to think of solutions.

The second issue is that of creativity. As the teachers teach the students what the "right" answer is, everyone has the same answer, the same process, and basically the same thinking. Students are like dough. Depending on what ingredients you put in the dough, how you knead it, and how you bake it, there are hundreds of different ways your bread could turn out to be. The process in which this "baking" is done for us is in our schools, where we are educated for our futures. However, this system is what changes all this. Consider this system to be a cookie cutter. Instead of every single batch of dough having its own unique characteristics, this cutter forces the dough to comply with certain shapes, and cuts off everything that does not fit into the border.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Everyone is forced to be equal. To be at the top, to be noticed by other people around you, people need to be unique. The Korean education system, under the pretense of teaching, is killing off the creativity of the students, restricting them to certain answers. The teachers and the society have already defined what is “right” as the answer. Our society is not teaching the students to think- we’re teaching them to comply with the standards.

As can be seen above, in society, the methods with which the youth are being educated with can result in serious flaws to their future. Especially considering that this is an age in which thinking out of the box is being valued, I think that this is a major problem that people need to work to fix. The society should not be setting clear boundaries on which to limit the ideas of the youth, but instead ponder more on how they could be doing things. We should not be teaching them what the answers are- we should be teaching them to work to get the answers, and let the students have more freedom in the way they learn.

Appendix B

Scaffolding in Goal Setting

Time: 1 - 1.5 hours (+ monthly homework reflections)

Level: Pre-intermediate

Objectives: SWBAT write two learning goals and 2-3 strategies for reaching each, including how often and when they will work on them

Materials needed: White board and either OHP or poster paper

Stage	Activity	Scaffolding
Introduce topic/ warm-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T tells SS: “I have a problem” - SS ask T questions to determine the problem <p>(A: T is trying to learn Korean, but it’s so difficult!)</p>	
Model how to write goals and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T writes on board: ‘<i>speaking, listening, writing, reading & vocabulary</i>’ and beside each skill rates their abilities out of 10 (e.g. speaking 3/10, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a model to follow will help SS in creating their own products later
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T elicits some ideas from SS orally of when and where T needs to use each skill (e.g.; asking directions, to read labels at the grocery store, etc.) and makes notes on board as SS give answers (<i>if SS need help T prompts with questions, such as “Do I need to use Korean in the market? Why?”</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussing where and when T needs to use Korean will give SS a basis for choosing which two skills T should work on improving in the next step, and also prepares SS to do the same for themselves later - Prompting questions sometimes help SS generate ideas
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T divides the class into five groups, assigns each group a different skill, and asks each group to brainstorm things T can do to improve that skill (<i>before the task T assigns writer and reporter roles within each group, and also elicits one idea for each skill and writes it on the board</i>) - Reporters write each group’s ideas on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working in groups allows students to share ideas and build confidence in their answers before sharing with the class - Assigning group roles helps SS work together more efficiently and effectively - Eliciting and writing some examples

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

	<p>board</p> <p>- T elicits SS help in correcting any grammar or spelling errors on the board</p>	<p>allows T to check SS understand the task while also providing a model for those who need it</p>
	<p>- Based on T's self-rated Korean abilities and ideas generated by the class for when and where T would need to use Korean, SS discuss in small groups which two skills they think are most important for T to focus on improving (<i>before the task T assigns writer, reporter and discussion leader roles within the group and refers to discussion language that is posted on the left wall</i>)</p> <p>- Each group shares their ideas with the class, and a consensus is reached (S & L skills)</p>	<p>- Previous tasks prepared SS to do this</p> <p>- Providing important language needed for the discussion task reduces anxiety, allows SS to focus on the task at hand, and enforces correct language use</p>
	<p>- T elicits SS' help in writing two learning goals for the semester either on poster paper or using an OHP:</p> <p>1. I will improve my Korean speaking skills. 2. I will improve my Korean listening skills.</p>	<p>- SS are actively involved in creating the model they will need to create their own products later</p>
	<p>- Referring back to S-generated ideas on the board for how to improve language skills, T chooses two strategies for each S & L and circles them</p>	
	<p>- T elicits SS' help in writing two strategies underneath each goal on the poster paper or OHP</p> <p>-T adds a time phrase to each strategy if necessary indicating when or how often they will do each strategy (this is underlined for emphasis)</p> <p>e.g. I will watch one Korean TV show <u>every week</u>.</p>	<p>- SS are actively involved in creating the model they will need to create their own products later</p> <p>- T is modeling how to make strategies more effective by planning for when or how often they will work on them</p>
SS create their own	<p>- T asks SS to rate their own abilities in each of the five skills (S, L, W, R & V) from 1-10</p>	<p>- SS are using the same process and model for the Ts goals to create their own product</p>

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

products based on the model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T elicits some ideas from SS orally of when and where SS needs to use each skill and makes notes on board as SS give answers (<i>if SS need help T prompts with questions, such as “Do you need English at your part-time job? Why?”</i>) - Based on their abilities and why they need English, SS choose the two skills they want to work on this semester 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using T’s model students write two learning goals for themselves (<i>T walks around and observes to make sure SS are on track</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SS are using the same process and model for the Ts goals to create their own product
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SS peer share their goals, then class share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer sharing gives SS a chance to check their work and build confidence before sharing with the class - Class sharing allows T to make sure all SS are on track before moving on to the next step
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using T’s model students write two or more strategies for reaching each goal – they may use the ideas on the board or their own ideas (<i>T walks around and observes to make sure SS are on track</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SS are using the same process and model for the Ts goals to create their own product
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SS peer share their strategies (<i>T asks SS to check that partner has written when or how often they will work on their goal</i>), then class share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer sharing gives SS a chance to check their work and build confidence before sharing with the class - Class sharing allows T to make sure all SS are on track before moving on to the next step
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T collects final products, checking that they are accurate, realistic and achievable, commenting as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T must check that all SS have done the task properly and that their goals and realistic and achievable before moving on to the next step of action and reflection

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

<p>Post-task (Action & Reflection)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - T encourages SS to work on their goals throughout the semester - At the beginning of each month, SS are asked to reflect on their goals using guiding questions, and T collects and comments <p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are your learning goals? 2. How did you originally plan to reach your goals? 3. Have you been doing it? If not, why not? 4. Would you like to make any changes? 5. Would you like to add any new goals or strategies? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing guiding questions helps students reflect on their goals, since they have never done it before and don't know where to begin - Giving feedback helps SS improve on the goal-reflecting process - Positive feedback encourages SS that they have succeeded in a challenging new task and are taking control of their own learning
--	---	---

Appendix C

Example Student Goal Reflections

1. Write 2 learning goals
① I will improve my reading.
② I will improve my listening.
2. How did you originally plan to reach them?
① I will read one English news story every week
② I will watch English TV program for one hour every week.
③ I will listen TOEIC listening for 30 minutes every week
④ I will read a English text book every week
⑤ I will listen one English song every week.
3. Have you been following your plan?
I am following my plan.
I. Yes, it is helping.
4. If you haven't made progress how will you change your goals?
No, I will not change my goals.
5. Do you want to add any new goals?
No, I don't want to add any new goals.

★ Write your 2 goals on a piece of paper.

- I will learn more English Pronunciation.
- I will study English Toeic.

★ How did you plan to reach them?

- I will read and speak five sentences every day.
I will watch CNN at the EELC.
- I will give a test "imitation toeic" every month.

★ Have you been doing it?

Yes, I have.

★ Do you want to add any new goals?

No, I'm satisfied. 😊❤️

Appendix D

Class Goals Worksheet

Note – I have highlighted the correct answers in blue.

English Conversation Class | **Class Goals**

What are the 5 goals for this class?
Choose the correct answers and write them in the blanks.

Students will speak English more **fluently** (유창하게) and **confidently** (자신있게)

Students will speak like a **native English speaker**

Students will improve English **listening skills** and learn **new vocabulary words**

Students will **impress** (감동) **classmates**

```
graph TD; A([ ]) --> C((CLASS GOALS)); B([ ]) --> C; D([ ]) --> C; E([ ]) --> C; F([ ]) --> C;
```

~~Students will improve **pronunciation** (발음)~~

Students will learn new **study skills** and become **better learners**






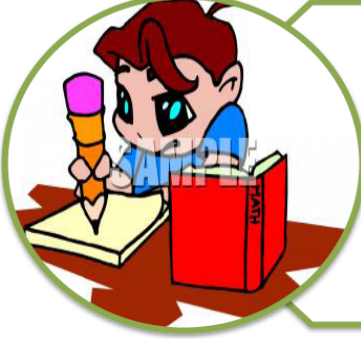
Students will never **make mistakes**

Students will work well in a **group**

Appendix E

Participation and Homework Worksheet

Note – I have highlighted the correct answers in blue.

GRADES [PARTICIPATION AND HOMEWORK]	
<p>Your <u>participation</u> and <u>homework</u> together are 30% of your grade. <i>Participation</i> is what you do during class.</p> <p>Use these symbols to tell me what is good and bad for your grade:</p>	<p>good (higher grade) = </p> <p>bad (lower grade) = </p>
	<p>PARTICIPATION GRADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•  I speak mostly Korean in class.•  I listen when the teacher talks.• <input type="checkbox"/> I don't listen to my classmates.• <input type="checkbox"/> I work alone during group or pair activities• <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I have a good attitude in class• <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I write notes from the board in my notebook.• <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I put all handouts from the teacher in my notebook.• <input type="checkbox"/> I use my cell phone in class to text or play games.• <input type="checkbox"/> I don't help my classmates during activities.
	<p>HOMEWORK GRADE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <input type="checkbox"/> I copy homework answers from my friend.• <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I do my homework for each class.• <input type="checkbox"/> I bring my homework to the teacher one day late.• <input type="checkbox"/> I let my friends copy homework answers from me.• <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If I am sick, I do my homework for the next class.
<p>Worksheet by: Angela Richardson</p>	

Appendix F



Daily Self Evaluation Forms

English Conversation Class Self Participation Grade

- I spoke mostly Korean
- I played games or texted on my phone
- I slept
- I didn't do my homework
- I didn't bring my textbook ,workbook, notebook, pen, and paper
- I didn't answer the teacher's questions

0-3 points

4-7 points



- I spoke a little English
- I did some of my homework
- I brought my textbook and workbook, but no notebook or paper
- I worked alone, but not with my partner or group

8-10 points

Date/ Grade
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____


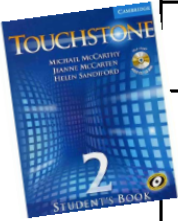


Date/ Grade
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____

Date/ Grade
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____
• _____

Handout by: Angela Richardson

Appendix G



Needs Assessment

[ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLASS]	Self Information Form																				
<p>Name: _____</p> <p>Student Number: _____</p> <p>Major: _____</p> <p>Cell phone number: _____</p> <p>Email address: _____</p>	<p>Tape a photo of yourself HERE</p> 																				
	<p style="text-align: center;">In the past, I... ✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Check the answers that are true for you...</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">... studied English at another school. (Where? _____)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">... studied with a foreign teacher. (When? _____ How long? _____)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">... studied an English conversation textbook (Which one? _____)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">... lived in another country. (What country? _____ How long? _____)</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	... studied English at another school. (Where? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	... studied with a foreign teacher . (When? _____ How long? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	... studied an English conversation textbook (Which one? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	... lived in another country. (What country? _____ How long? _____)												
<input type="checkbox"/>	... studied English at another school. (Where? _____)																				
<input type="checkbox"/>	... studied with a foreign teacher . (When? _____ How long? _____)																				
<input type="checkbox"/>	... studied an English conversation textbook (Which one? _____)																				
<input type="checkbox"/>	... lived in another country. (What country? _____ How long? _____)																				
	<p style="text-align: center;">I am studying English because... ✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Check the answers that are true for you...</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">It's fun</td> <td style="width: 5%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I want to travel</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Someone (my parents, boss, school) says I should (Who? _____)</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I need it for my job now (What job? _____)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I need to prepare for a test (Which one? _____)</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I will need it for my job in the future (What job? _____)</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I want to make friends</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I want to understand other cultures and people</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">I want to get into another class or school</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Other: _____</td> </tr> </table> 	<input type="checkbox"/>	It's fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to travel	<input type="checkbox"/>	Someone (my parents, boss, school) says I should (Who? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I need it for my job now (What job? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I need to prepare for a test (Which one? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I will need it for my job in the future (What job? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to make friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to understand other cultures and people	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to get into another class or school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	It's fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to travel																		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Someone (my parents, boss, school) says I should (Who? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I need it for my job now (What job? _____)																		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I need to prepare for a test (Which one? _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	I will need it for my job in the future (What job? _____)																		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to make friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to understand other cultures and people																		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I want to get into another class or school	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____																		

I need English for...

Check the answers that are true for you...



Personal		Work	
Speaking with friends		Speaking to bosses and workmates	
Talking on the phone		Talking on the phone	
Emailing		Emailing	
Watching movies , listening to music , reading books and magazines ...		Writing reports	
School		Giving presentations (프레젠테이션)	
Getting a good test score [example: TOEIC] [What test? _____]		Writing a resume , filling out job applications & having a job interview	
Writing papers		Travel/ Living abroad	
Giving presentations (프레젠테이션)		Ordering in restaurants , going to the bank , asking for directions	
Preparing to study abroad [Where? _____]		Other: _____	

How comfortable are you speaking English?

Circle the box that best describes you...

Very comfortable - I can speak easily to strangers	I am uncomfortable, but I try my best	I try not to speak any English at all
--	---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------

I WANT to improve...


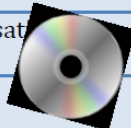
Number 1-10 [1= very important, 10=not important]

7	Speaking		Listening comprehension
	Writing		Reading comprehension
	Grammar		Vocabulary



I expect [기대하다] this class will improve my...			
Number 1-10 [10= very much, 1=none]			
7	Speaking		Listening comprehension
	Writing		Reading comprehension
	Grammar		Vocabulary



In class I like...			
1= I like it 2=I don't care 3=I don't like it			
Group work			
3	Working alone		Working with the whole class
	Working with 1 other student		Working with different people each class
	Working with 2 or 3 students		
Activities			
	Writing answers in a textbook		Free talking with other people
	Acting out English conversations from a textbook with a partner		Standing and moving a class 
	Writing my own conversat 		Games and races
	Repeating the teacher / CD track		Writing answers on the board

Appendix H

Midterm Feedback Form

[ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLASS] Feedback form 1

What is **helpful/not helpful** for your learning in class?

Check your answer.



	This helps me	This doesn't help me	I don't like doing this
Filling out a 'can-do' checklist before & after each unit			
Writing and thinking about learning goals			
Seeing 'today's objectives (plan)' on the board			
Learning about and practicing native speaker pronunciation			
Practicing having longer conversations			
Seeing pictures with vocabulary words			
Writing a conversation after the unit to practice what you learned			
Writing 5 things you learned after the unit			

What do you think about...? (circle one)

1. The **pace** (속도) of our studying:
too fast / good / too slow

2. How **I speak**:
i. too fast / good / too slow
ii. too loud / good / too quiet

3. Class **material**:
interesting and fun / okay / boring

4. Class **activities**:
interesting and fun / okay / boring

5. **Instructions**:
difficult to understand / good / good, but a bit long



What would you like to do **more/less** of?



Check your answer.

	I want to do more	Good amount	I want to do less
Homework			
Working alone			
Working with a partner			
Working with a group			
Changing partners/ group members			
Standing and moving around the class			
Grammar			
Listening			
Writing			
Free speaking			
Supported speaking (using sentences from the book/teacher)			
Practicing book conversations			
Practicing having longer conversations			
Practicing native speaker pronunciation			
Listening and repeating the teacher			
Writing conversations			
Moving things with your hands (paper strips, ordering, categorizing, matching...)			
Reviewing what was learned in class at the beginning of the next class			



Please answer these **free** questions:

> What do you **like** about class?

> What changes would make the class **better** for you?

References

- Anonymous (2011). Exams in South Korea: The one shot society. *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/21541713>
- Auerbach, E. (1997). Making meaning, making change: Participatory curriculum development for adult ESL literacy. *Center for applied linguistics*.
- Brown, H. D. (2006). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (5th Edition). Pearson ESL.
- Canagarajah, S. (1999). Adopting a critical perspective on pedagogy. *Resisting linguistic imperialism in English teaching*. Oxford University Press.
- Chamot, A. (2006). CALLA content and language learning strategies [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://calla.ws/strategies/index.html>
- Freire, P. (2000). Education for critical consciousness: Education and conscientizacao. *The Paulo Freire reader*. The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Gattegno, S. (1998). Caleb Gattegno's philosophy of education. Transcript of the keynote address to the International Conference of The Science of Education held at John Jay College, City University of New York, and at Columbia Teachers College, Columbia University, NYC. Retrieved from http://eslus.com/articles/shakti_gattegno_keynote.htm.
- Hawkins, D. (1967). I, thou, and it. *The informed vision: Essays and Learning and human nature*. Agathon Press.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations* (2nd Ed). Sage Publications, London.
- Hur, S. V. & Hur, B. S. (2004). *Culture shock Korea*. Graphic Arts Center Publishing.
- Itim Culture and Management Consultancy. Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions. <http://geert-hofstede.com/> (accessed June 3, 2012).
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Krashen, S. D. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Prentice-Hall International.

The Culture Boundary: How Awareness Informs Teaching Practice

Moran, P. (2001). *Teaching culture: Perspectives in practice*. Heinle.

Oak, S. (2003). *Teaching English to Koreans*. Hollym International Corporation.

Oxford, R. (1996). *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross cultural perspectives*. National Foreign Language Resource Center.

Riegel, J. (2012). Confucius. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/confucius/>.

Stevick, E. (1998). *Working with teaching methods: What's at stake?* Heinle.

Swain, M. (2000). The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue. *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford University Press.