

“TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS DESIGNED TO TEACH WRITING IN KOREA”

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a compilation of methods and materials that I used while teaching a series of writing courses at the English Training Center in Seoul, Korea, from October 1987 to January 1989. The techniques and materials I used and applied were designed specifically to be used in Korea and represent my basic approach to teaching writing.

In this paper I will give a brief description of English teaching in Korea in general and of how writing is taught in Korea. I will then present some problems that Koreans face while learning to write in English. The second part of this paper will present a unified approach to teaching English writing to educated Korean adults. This will include strategies and some sample lesson plans.

Although Koreans study English throughout their formal school years, writing is hardly touched upon. Their first experience with writing is usually at a private institute or a company training program. I hope this paper will be of help to anyone who will be teaching writing in Korea in the future.

A. The students

I used these methods and materials while teaching English writing to college educated Koreans, enrolled at private language schools (Hagwans) in Korea. The students who en-

roll in these private language schools fall roughly into three broad categories: university students, business people and other professionals, and housewives. Some of the professional people are company sponsored while all the rest financed their tuition themselves. With the exception of a few salaried men, (office workers for a business or corporation), who have worked their way up through the company, these people are upper-middle to upper class on the economic and social ladders. An English education is still a luxury that not many can afford. With the exception of a few high school students who were emigrating to North America, all of the students I taught were either in college or had a college education.

Education is highly stressed in Korea and most of these students are highly motivated to learn English. They have all studied English throughout high school and college but still cannot speak English. This is due to many factors. First, Koreans are a homogeneous people with one language; regional dialects do exist but this does not hinder communication. Since the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945, during which the Japanese language was forced upon them, Koreans have had no experience or exposure to a foreign language. Koreans have been relatively isolated from the rest of the world. Throughout their history contact with foreign

cultures usually meant invasion and occupation by the Japanese or Chinese. Despite this, Koreans maintained their bloodlines and are proud of their ethnic purity. This limited and negative experience with foreigners has contributed to a mistrust and a reluctance to accept cultures different from their own.

Cultural and linguistic differences also contribute to making English difficult for Koreans. English speaking cultures are very different from the Korean culture, this combined with a traditional apprehension of things foreign adds to the difficulty in learning English and raises the "affective filter". A recent increase in anti-American sentiment has also raised psychological barriers to learning English. The same student who is burning the American flag in the morning may be studying for his GRE's in the afternoon. Since culture and language are bound it is more difficult to learn the language of a culture and people that you really do not like, even if you are learning the language for advancement of promotion, etc. English and Korean are very different linguistically as well. While Koreans find English a difficult language to learn, they learn Japanese, which is almost identical grammatically and shares some vocabulary, with ease despite lingering feelings of animosity and outright hostility stemming from the colonial period (1910-1945). The way English is taught in Korea and the goals of the Korean education system can also place impediments on learning English as a means of communication.

B. The School

The English Training Center is located in Yoksam-Dong, in southern Seoul. This is a new and affluent part of the city and many of these private language schools have appeared in this area in the last five years.

Prior to that these hagwans were relatively few and located in the downtown area. The English Training Center offered a general conversation course, two hours a day, five days a week, over a four week session. An intensive six-hour a day course that was divided between an academic track and a business track was offered as well. This course consisted of a three-hour "core" class, which took a notional-functional approach and was based on the Spectrum series, a one-hour conversation course and a two-hour reading and writing course. This intensive course was divided into six levels, each lasting for two months. Most of the students were recently graduated and well-to-do university students. Many of them planned to study in the United States or enter the business world, and wanted to upgrade their English writing skills. Their writing skills corresponded roughly with their speaking ability, which was the basis for which level they would be placed. The writing program followed an evolutionary course that was geared to supplement the progress made in oral communication.

This school opened on October 7, 1987, and I was one of the original teachers. We had no curriculum for the Reading and Writing courses and each teacher was responsible for developing his/her own material. Eventually, however, a unified curriculum was developed over the course of the first year. This was drawn from the materials used by the teachers who taught these initial classes.

C. English Education in Korea

English is taught in Korea from middle school through high school, (six years), for approximately six hours a week. Despite this extensive amount of formal English training most educated Koreans cannot communicate

in English, even in the most basic of functions. Throughout high school and college, communication, both spoken and written, is completely ignored. The objectives of high school and most college (English) curriculums are not related to communication and the size of the classes and the training the teachers receive in the university are also counter-productive to learning communication skills. English textbooks are structure-based, lack authenticity, and the subject matter is rarely appropriate to the interests of the learner. However, the most significant limiting factor for learning English is the lack of exposure to genuine communication in English. Communicative-centered language teaching does not exist in Korea and few or no teaching aids are used in the classroom.

The objectives for learning English in Korean high schools and colleges are strictly related to passing examinations. English is looked upon as a subject to be studied and not as a tool to be actively used as a method of communication. What is emphasized is grammar translation. Koreans do know a lot about English but have never been given the opportunity to acquire the skills required to learn a second language. Although listening comprehension is now included in the high school and middle school curriculum the emphasis is still placed upon passing examinations. Teaching how to communicate in English remains ignored.

Since most high school teachers and some college professors of English have been taught in this fashion many cannot communicate in English themselves. This is also due to the discrepancies between the reality of how English is taught in Korea, even at the university level, and what is required in communicative language teaching. High school English teachers are usually English Educa-

tion majors or English Language and Literature majors. During their four years at the university they are required to take three conversation courses, (sometimes with a native speaker) in classes with 30-40 students. These classes usually meet for two or three hours a week. This is the only exposure to English as a means of communication that they will receive at the university. All of the rest of their instructions, including linguistics and literature, are given in Korean. The same students who cannot report what they did on the weekend are required to take courses in literature that might include Upton Sinclair, Henry James and James Joyce. They read it, translate it sentence by sentence, presumably understand it, then discuss it in Korean. Any student who can communicate in English most likely acquired this skill outside the university program, either through their own study groups, by enrolling in a private language institute, or by serving in the United States Army.

Another factor which hinders communication is the lack of teachers in general. The student-teacher ratio is very high, which makes communicative activities difficult at best. English education has been tailored, out of necessity, to fit classes of up to seventy students in high school and between thirty and forty in university conversation classes, for English majors. This has always meant a teacher-dominated classroom with no room for student-centered activities and little opportunity to practice the functions being taught, let alone to create any language.

Throughout middle school and high school the textbook used for conversation and writing is the same. Written communication is ignored as much as spoken communication, writing in English is simply not taught in Korea. Beyond sentence translation there is

no teaching of written English, even at the university level, (with the exception of a few of the more progressive programs, eg. Sogang University, University of Foreign Studies).

During their high school and university years Koreans are required to do very little writing in Korean, therefore the ability to write expository prose or to write analytically has a weak foundation in L1. This is not to say that Koreans are semi-literate but that they have rarely been given the opportunity to create writing. This can be partially traced to the goals of the modern Korean education system itself. The Korean education system, since 1910, has been modeled after the Japanese system, (Korean educational philosophy draws heavily on Confucianism as well). A Korean student, like his Japanese counterpart, spends most of his time memorizing and studying to take tests. This can be very effective in some disciplines but does little to improve communicative competence in a foreign language.

To better understand English education in Korea we must also look at the teacher-student relationship, (also rooted in Confucianism). In the English classroom in Korea learner-centered classes do not exist. The teacher is dominant and omnipotent, his job is to disperse knowledge while the students absorb it. In Korea teachers dominate the classroom to such an extent that the entire learning process is controlled by the teacher and linked to his knowledge of English. This limits creative thinking and is therefore an impediment to communicative activities. Since the teacher is the one who possesses and disperses the knowledge to the students, English has been looked upon as something to be learned but not used. This perception of language learning is further strengthened by the teacher's own limitations; usually he/she

cannot speak English well so he teaches what he knows, grammar explanation and translation.

I . PROBLEMS KOREAN EFL STUDENTS CONSISTENTLY ENCOUNTER WHEN LEARNING TO WRITE IN ENGLISH

I feel that the major impediments to effective writing that Koreans face can be traced to their formal English training, which limits creative thinking and promotes the study of English for objectives other than communication. Therefore the areas I chose, for students to work on first, were; 1) a realization that writing is a form of communication and, 2) the creation of an audience to communicate with. An awareness of writing as an ongoing process and the nurturing of creativity were secondary goals. After these had been addressed I then looked at organizational and structural problems that appeared to be common to Korean EFL learners.

A. Audience Awareness

My students were always very conscious of the grammar and syntax of their writing but less aware of the message they were transmitting and almost oblivious to the fact that someone would actually read their writing. They had absolutely no experience using written English as a form of communication. I first worked to develop a sense of who am I writing to and why, and what's the purpose of my doing this? By developing an awareness of a potential audience I also instilled in my students an appreciation of English as a form of communication.

B. The Awareness of Writing as a Process

This is a new concept in Korea and one that most educators are unfamiliar with. My students had always looked at their writing as a finished product and never really paid attention to the process of writing. Korean EFL students are constantly worrying about grammar and the mechanics of writing. A second draft usually means cleaning up the grammar and spelling and nothing else. I found that I needed to work on developing and expanding ideas, I wanted my students to realize that writing can be a process of discovery.

C. Creativity

As my students had little or no experience with any form of expository or creative writing they found it a difficult task to write anything innovative. They had not done much of this, even in Korean. A somewhat related problem was the difficulty in summarizing or paraphrasing ideas. The Korean education system so emphasizes rote memorization that the skills required to interpret a piece of writing and restate it in one's own words are usually deficient. The tendency to plagiarize also exists. This can be misconstrued as laziness or dishonesty by westerners but is not necessarily so, the belief is... "the first guy said it okay, so why change it..". This feeling is also rooted in Confucianism; the writer is an expert on the subject matter, it would be pretentious to try and restate his words into your own.

D. Structural and Organizational Problems

Korean EFL students have difficulty writing a clear-cut thesis statement or topic sentence. This can be culturally based as Koreans are unaccustomed to addressing an issue directly but use implications and circumven-

tions to make a point. Subsequently Koreans have problems organizing English paragraphs. Our format, using a topic sentence, supporting ideas and a conclusion runs contrary to Korean writing and thought patterns.

All of my students appeared to write with a seemingly total and incorrigible disregard for the paragraph, it was next to impossible to get them to write consistently in paragraph form. They also had considerable difficulty with transition words and connecting thoughts. This could be a result of their formal training which consisted of mechanically removing sentences from a paragraph, dissecting and then translating them.

II .MY APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH WRITING IN KOREA

This section includes techniques and materials that were developed by myself and other colleagues to deal with the issues stated in the previous section. These methods and techniques reflect my personal views on how writing is learned and can be taught in an EFL classroom in Korea. Most of these materials can be modified to teach any level of writing but were used primarily to teach high intermediate and advanced students who were planning to study in North America and Australia. Some of these students had been accepted in American graduate schools but could not write a simple paragraph. This can be attributed to the fact that Koreans, like other Asian students, are good test-takers. They can achieve high results on GRE and TOEFEL examinations without much spoken or written ability to communicate. I might also add that as a rule some of my advanced and high intermediate students' writing abil-

ity lagged behind their conversation ability, therefore some of the techniques I used at the lower levels might be applicable at these levels. Although these methods were developed while I worked at a private language school they can be used to teach composition at the high school, university or graduate school level.

My basic outlook on writing is that writing is a form of communication. People write to communicate. I believe that writing is a skill and one acquires a skill by practicing that skill; one learns to write by writing. Writing is the process of transferring one's ideas from one's mind to the paper. The procedure for getting ideas onto paper is the first and most important step in the process of writing. This is true in L1 or a second language. When teaching writing to EFL students we have to be aware of the vocabulary limitations and other issues but the process remains the same.

The first issue I address is how to get one's ideas from one's head to the paper. The first step, after deciding upon a subject, is trying to identify what it is one has to say about the subject. This was one of the biggest problems I faced while teaching writing in Korea. My students had little or no experience creating their own English writing. Whenever they had written anything in English it was limited to directly translating a few isolated sentences.

Since writing is communication we have to identify who we are writing to and why we are writing, (we may not know what we are going to say until we start writing it). The next step then is to develop an awareness of what writing is; communication. I want my students to ask these questions to themselves: Why am I writing? Who am I writing to? What exactly do I have to say? How can I

present it clearly and make it interesting? One of the most formidable challenges to teaching writing is to provide a setting where realistic communication takes place, while furnishing a suitable medium for expressing ideas.

I believe that writing is an ongoing process that starts when we decide to write, for whatever reason, be it a letter to the milkman or a Ph. D. dissertation, and is finished after we are satisfied that we have expressed ourselves fully and correctly. We go through many phases during this process. Although we may not be able to identify each phase or what it is we do while we are writing, I try to instill an appreciation of this process in my students. This is also a novel concept to English learners in Korea and not always accepted. They assume the process of writing a new draft usually means correcting the grammar.

My main concern when teaching writing reflects my feelings about language itself, I am more concerned about content and fluency than accuracy. This is more relevant in writing since writing is retrievable whereas speech is not, therefore accuracy is less important in the early stages of the writing process. Correction comes much later.

My feelings about corrections in general are that they should be made only when communication is obstructed or when a certain function or grammar point is being taught. Corrections themselves should not hinder communication. Corrections should be made in a fashion where students learn from them and are not frustrated by them. Although providing exercises in which realistic communication is the objective, some structural and grammatical problems common to Korean EFL learners can be overcome by drills and memorization.

Some of my basic tenets on how writing is taught and learned can come into direct conflict with the Korean understanding of education and how things are learned. For Koreans, the idea is that the teacher is teaching me, he/she is giving me knowledge. In contrast I believe the student is acquiring a skill and doing most of the work. Korean students also tend to believe that the more marks and corrections the teacher puts on the paper, the better. The perception is that they can memorize the errors and make subsequent corrections. They might feel that the teacher is not doing his or her job properly if he doesn't correct everything on the page.

III . METHODES DEVELOPED TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE PROBLEMS KOREAN STUDENTS FACE WHILE LEARNING TO WRITE IN ENGLISH

A. Generating ideas

The problem of generating ideas is not so much one of creating ideas but of finding and expressing ideas. Finding and expressing ideas is not encouraged in any of the texts I have seen used in Korea, but I found these same dull, monotonous textbook assignments can be modified to generate or produce ideas on paper. Given the assignment, "Describe your Country: you have fifteen minutes to write two paragraphs about Korea", a typical writer will tell you that Korea has a unique and interesting culture and is located in northeast Asia with a population of 40,000,000 people. However if you add a purpose for this writing, for example, by assigning the role of

a group of tour agents promoting all the lovely spots in Korea to one group of student writers and the role of a group of anthropologists to another group you have given them something interesting to talk about and provided a reason for why someone might feel inclined to write a few paragraphs describing Korea as well. Some techniques I used to generate ideas are: pictures, brainstorming, free writing, reading, and completing/speculating activities.

a) Pictures

Pictures can be used to produce ideas as well. Let's use the same topic, "Describe your Country". By including pictures of points of interest in Korea into prewriting activities we can accomplish many things. We arouse interest in a routine and mundane assignment while providing visual stimuli for tapping our student's reservoir of knowledge on the subject. We can also review and recall vocabulary (as well as teach new vocabulary) . Since this is accomplished by actively engaging in English communication, we have also incorporated listening and speaking functions into the lesson.

b) Brainstorming

A writing assignment can be preceded by a free-talking activity where the students are given the opportunity to produce orally relevant information about a topic or picture within a short period of time. They may ask questions, make comments or give opinions. This can be best done in groups of five or six. I refrain from making any corrections during this period, except when the speaker cannot be understood. After a few minutes of exchanging information about the subject I instruct the students to write down the information they have learned from each other.

Now they have something to work with instead of a topic and a blank piece of paper. (Anne Raimes, **Techniques in Teaching Writing**, p.69).

c) Free writing

Free writing can also be used to generate ideas or as a prewriting exercise to "stretch" the writing muscles. This can be done on a specific topic or assignment or just a five minute period where the students are asked to just write about anything. Free writing exercises can also be modified into or followed by a more controlled version of free writing; one where the students are asked to write anything they want but instructed to concentrate on one specific grammar point or function, preferably one which has been recently taught. I found this to be helpful in overcoming structural problems as well.

Presenting free writing exercises as a constructive endeavor can be difficult in Korea. Korean EFL learners are extremely conscious of their mistakes and convincing them of the merit of writing a flawed piece of writing without correcting it can be a monumental task. This can be achieved by stressing the importance of understanding the process of writing. I also stressed that the point of the exercise was to get ideas on paper, to have something to work with. I sometimes used these pieces of free writing as first drafts and asked the students to continue improving upon each draft in subsequent classes.

d) Readings

Readings not only provide additional material for discussion and composition topics, they can also be used as a vocabulary building exercise and as a model for punctuation and style as well as examining sentence arrangement and organization. (Anne Raimes,

Techniques in Teaching Writing p.57).

They can also be used for summarizing activities. Summarizing a reading provides students with a much needed practice in searching for meaning in a particular reading and then communicating it in their own words. This ability of the language learner to understand concepts, process them, and restate them in his/her own words is a major goal in the language learning process. This is one skill in which most of my students were glaringly deficient but would need to develop for preparation in their academic pursuits in North America and Australia.

e) Completing and Speculating Activities

Completing a writing not only requires a student to think about the meaning of what the writer has stated and what the student will write but also requires him to look at the writer's intention as well. He has to ask, why was the writer writing? and to whom. He also has to pay more detailed attention to tone and register as well.

Speculating provides the student with an opportunity to be creative and imaginative. If we give our students a newspaper article about a typhoon in the Philippines we can have them summarize and discuss it. We can go a step further by asking them to speculate about the survivors of a fishing village destroyed by the typhoon. What will happen to them? How have their lives been affected?

B. Developing an Awareness of Writing as a Process

One of my main objectives was to make my students aware of the process of writing. To accomplish this I first asked my students these questions: How much do you write? (In Korean and English) How much did you write in college? What do you do when you

write? Do you do anything differently when you write in English than when you write in Korean?

To further explore this area I asked my students to do a writing assignment in Korean and to pay attention to what they did, to how they developed their ideas and to when they made their corrections. I then asked them to do the same in English and to note any similarities and differences. This would be followed by a discussion about each student's writing process. I allowed the discussion to be conducted in Korean as I felt that at this stage my priority was to nurture an understanding of the process of writing and this could be best achieved in Korean. We then continued the discussion in English. I would point out that it's not as important to know exactly what it is we do when we are writing as it is to be aware of writing as an ongoing process.

I also wanted to free my students from the distraction of constantly correcting as they developed their ideas and wrote them down but to concentrate on putting ideas on paper first and correcting later. By showing my students that the process of writing consists of more than a grammar clean-up but of expanding, revising and restating ideas, beliefs and feelings, I tried to instill in them a freedom and sense of creativity that was generally lacking in their English writing.

C. Developing Audience Awareness

Traditionally the teacher in a writing class has been looked upon as the judge of a student's writing instead of a reader, this has always been the case in Korea. Korean students have always looked at their English writing as something where what is said does not matter much as long as it is grammatically correct. This lack of an authentic reader

contributes to the perception (of the writer) that his work is not directed at anyone. But if the teacher were to take on the role of a real reader and less of a judge the student writer would begin to see his writing as a form of communication.

There are many methods that can instill this awareness that writing is a form of communication to a living audience. First the teacher should refrain from correcting errors until some predetermined point and make comments that help develop and formulate ideas. (Anne Raimes, **Techniques in Teaching Writing** p.17). The teacher becomes someone the writer can communicate with, as opposed to an evaluator only. A good way to establish this theme early on is to write a letter to the class, welcoming the students to the class and introducing the teacher as well, then ask them to answer the letter for homework. By returning the letters with comments related only to the contents of the letter the teacher can establish the spirit of writing as a communication tool. This is done simply by communicating.

On the following day the students can choose any classmate and write him or her a letter introducing himself, asking for a date etc., the only rule being that the person receiving the letter must write a reply before the next class. This creates a cycle in which the students are continuously writing and responding to each other. They are communicating and enjoying themselves as well. These letters can also be read aloud at the beginning of each class. Letter writing activities allow students to clearly concentrate on the message and the audience, which now really exists, instead of having anxiety attacks over punctuation and grammar. Authentic audiences outside the class can be utilized; students can write to penpals or stu-

dent organizations in other countries, or establish a student magazine or newspaper.

Imaginary audiences can be created. When using the "Describe your Country" exercise students can play the role of travel agents, exposing all the wonderful spots in Korea. In this case the real readers will be the teacher and classmates but they can role-play as the target audience and respond as prospective tourists would, (this can be acted out as well).

An expanded version for a more advanced class is to break the class into groups of threes and fours and to create fictitious countries with exotic names such as "Pango-Bango", "Bourgiuonia" or "Atlantia". They can then write up travel brochures for each country and try and entice their classmates into spending their vacations in their countries or compete with each other for the most creative advertisement.

a) Practical Writing

There is no better way for students to grasp the essential value of writing as a form of communication than to engage in the kind of practical writing that people do in their everyday lives. (Anne Raimes, **Techniques in Teaching Writing**, p.83). Letters, forms, inquiries, memorandums or just little notes are everyday forms of communication.

Letter writing is one of the most widespread forms of written communication. We write letters to invite, inquire, apologize and congratulate. (Anne Raimes, **Techniques in Teaching Writing** p.85). Each of these functions carries its own vocabulary, register and sentence structure, not only to fit the function but the audience as well. A good practical exercise would be to present an everyday situation, that requires writing, such as looking for a job as an English instructor, or as a

secretary for a foreign company, (many of these positions are advertised for in the classified section of Seoul's two English language dailies). The students can then apply for these positions.

b) Forms and Interviews

It is inevitable that any student traveling abroad will be asked to fill out a form and will probably be interviewed sometime during his sojourn abroad, whether it be an immigration interview, applying to a university or just filling out a hotel registration form. Interviews are a good way for students to get to know each other and for students to convey genuine information, by reporting to the class the information received in the interview. Interviews can be very basic for elementary levels, asking simple questions about hobbies, family and interests. At a higher level students can make up their own questions, listen to the answers and then reverse roles. Both students then write a report on their partner. An interesting variation is for each student to write down five to ten questions that he would want someone to ask him during an interview, he then exchanges questions with a partner and the interview proceeds based on the questions that the interviewee has written. The interviewer can then give a written or verbal report on his partner.

Another form of practical writing is using instructions or directions. A good initial activity to ask is to have students write directions to their houses. Students can find out what it is their classmates do well and ask a classmate to write out the instructions on how to perform their particular skill. They then perform the task or skill according to the instructions.

D. Overcoming Structural and Organizational Problems

Some structural and organizational problems that are common to Koreans are a seeming disregard for the paragraph, difficulty in writing a thesis statement and supporting it, as well as problems with transition.

One of my biggest challenges was one that would seem easy to overcome, that was the reluctance of my students to write in paragraph form. I found that guided writings can be effective in reinforcing the importance of a paragraph in written English. I have also found that outlines helped my students to see that a paragraph is basically a main idea supported by three or four sentences. Although I did not enforce strict adherence to an outline, which might stifle creativity, it is important that Korean EFL students be taught to use outlines as a blueprint for their expository writings. This is important in Korea as Koreans tend to write as they speak. They have culturally-based tendency to imply what they mean and not directly state it. Consequently they will write in circles around the main idea of the paragraph or paper, instead of directly stating the main idea and then supporting it. They frequently have difficulty writing only information that is relevant to the topic, or what an English speaking writer would consider relevant.

For more general grammar problems I use the Azar series and "The Grammar Handbook" by Nancy Clair and its accompanying exercise book.

IV . CORRECTIONS

As earlier stated, the teacher has traditionally been more of the judge of a student's writing than a reader. When we look at a stu-

dent's writing we automatically grab a pencil in order to put red marks on his paper. We tend not to look at his writing as a whole, we tend to look at it in pieces and to analyze it without really reading it and fail to see it for what it was meant to be, a piece of communication. We look at the mechanics of it without looking at the message. Such a practice tends to reinforce the belief that the student is just doing another assignment. He strives to do what the teacher wants him to do and forgets about his writing as an interaction between writer and reader. (Anne Raimes, **Techniques in Teaching Writing**, p.141). When the student receives his paper back with a lot of circles, lines, Xs and squiggly marks, mapping out his errors, how can he not forget about whatever it was that he was trying to communicate?

How does this type of correction help a student become a better writer?

What does he do now, besides attempt to eliminate some of the red marks? Since this is the standard by which his writing is judged, he is going to forget all about the message he has been trying to convey.

There are procedures a teacher can take to avoid passing a judgment and sentence on the paper. He can get into the habit of reading the paper and looking for the message before executing it. I have come to consciously leave my red pen in my pocket and read the paper without it.

My initial comments are related to the message and what the student can or should do next. I ask myself, What can he do now to improve this writing? I like to be aware of the student's strengths and weaknesses and how they can be used or improved upon in order

to make him a better writer.

Instead of just marking up the above example I make comments and ask questions that can provide insight, for the student and teacher, into the student's writing and let him know that I am paying attention to what he's trying to say. For example I ask him why Jeju is a favorite island; is it his favorite island or a favorite of Koreans? A comment like "I really enjoy hiking in the mountains, are there any campsites at these parks in the mountains?", lets the student know that he is communicating with you and it also helps guide him through the writing process. One thing to remember is that Korean students feel that a teacher should mark and explain every single mistake so that he can diligently memorize the proper form. I have found that it is best to explain why I am doing this early and that we will eventually work on correcting his grammatical errors later, together.

Once it has been decided to correct or point out a student's structural errors, I try to use a standardized set of editing symbols, which I have introduced to the students on the first day of class. I use the correction key found in the appendix of Betty Azar's series on teaching grammar.

One of the best methods of responding to a paper is by talking to the student about what he has to say. This is often the only way to find out what the student really wants to say and provides the student with valuable feedback that will help him develop his paper. Unfortunately it is not always possible or practical to have private sessions with your students, especially in a lower level class where the students conversational abilities are still limited.

Short conferences where three or four students discuss their writings with the teacher

can be utilized as well, (I limit this to intermediate and advanced levels). Not only does the student receive feedback from the teacher but the students are reading and discussing each others' papers, thus incorporating all four language skills and fine-tuning their understanding of the writing process as well.

Students can be used to effectively respond to each others writing if they are properly alerted as to what to look for and how to provide critical assessment that will help improve their colleagues' writing, (If not they will just attack the grammar with their own red pens.). I have found that at a lower level this does not work very well, so I generally wait until the student has reached a high-intermediate level before asking him to respond to his colleagues' writings. A way of modeling this process is for the teacher to write a student composition the blackboard, on butcher paper, or on an overhead projector and have the class analyze and discuss the paper. It is important to emphasize the contents of the paper, I have my students answer the following questions; What's good about the paper? What main point is the writer trying to make? Do the details support the topic sentence? How can the writer improve upon this writing?

When is it time for the student to actually start editing his paper? Although the answer to this question is ultimately determined by the individual writer's style, preference and learning patterns, I encourage Korean students not to worry about grammar, spelling or proper choices of words while writing a first or even a second draft. This is the time to get ideas on paper. After the second draft is written I collect the papers and return them unmarked. At this point it is easier for the writer to look at his own writing from the

point of view of the reader and will be in a better position to spot his own inconsistencies, misspellings and grammatical errors. By looking at his writing from the reader's point of view the writer can better see how his ideas can be more fully developed and made more interesting, as well.

V . POSSIBLE LESSON PLANS

a. Beginner, False Beginner:

Rationale: An introduction letter which asks the students about interests, why they want to study English and what they expect from the course establishes a personal relationship between the writer and teacher (reader) as well as the notion that writing in English is a form of communication. I like to encourage letter writing activities throughout the course, having students write and answer letters to each other while keeping a journal through which they can communicate with me.

Any activity, such as "Describe your Country", can be used creatively. I usually do not correct during the initial stages of a beginning writing course, except to insist upon writing in paragraph form. It is important to encourage creativity early and to draw attention to content and ideas and away from the final product. Instead of correcting, I point out mistakes and encourage the student to try and make his own corrections, by using the correction key that I hand out on the first day of class.

At this level it is important that students have good models to copy. It is also important that they can understand and relate to the readings.

Sample lesson plan; 90 minutes (Beginning Level)

Objectives; To instill in the learners the awareness of writing is a form of communication. To encourage creativity and present a relevant and interesting medium for students writing.

Warm-up activity, class correspondence; 15 minutes

Students respond orally to letters that their classmates have written to them, (either as a homework assignment or in the previous class). Student 1 can read and then respond to a letter written to him/her from Student 2. He then responds orally, "Yes, I will go to the movies with you" etc. Continue reading and responding to letters, until everyone who wants to do so has finished (I like to begin each lesson with a short warm-up/ icebreaking activity such as this, especially in the first few classes when the students are new to each other and reluctant to work in groups).

Pre-writing and brainstorming activities; 30-45 minutes:

As a pre-writing activity for an activity describing Korea, discuss Korea. Teacher elicits answers to such question as; What's interesting about Korea? Why do you like it? Why would a tourist want to come here? Why does it have a unique culture? Teacher then writes new and relevant vocabulary on blackboard or overhead projector.

Students write, silently and individually, about Korea. Encourage free-writing. Tell students to write anything that they can think of about Korea and not to make any corrections nor to worry too much about grammar or spelling!!

Group writing, discussion; 20-30 minutes:

Students work in groups of 4-5. Teacher assigns the role of "A group of travel agents who are working to create a brochure to entice foreign tourists to Korea", to each group. Students discuss and draw from each others' writing to create a group brochure.

Individual writing. Remainder of class:

Instruct students to begin writing their individual brochures which will be completed for homework. The group will complete their brochures during the following session. Individual brochures can be used as material for group brochures and/or handed in as a homework assignment. Encourage students to be creative! Use pictures and photos, etc.

b. Low intermediate.

Rationale: At this level I start to focus more on structural and organizational problems. A good book for teaching organization and structure to Korean EFL students is **"The Composition Book"** by Joe Blount. The Composition Book is comprised of short humorous passages, each passage is aimed at teaching a specific grammatical or structural point. The students read the passage and are then asked to reconstruct the story by answering the questions at the end of the passage. The students have a maximum number of words in which to summarize the story. The questions are designed to elicit the grammar point presented in the passage and are to be written in paragraph form. This helps the student to summarize chronologically and succinctly, something my students had trouble doing.

This is a good method for teaching structure, summarizing and how to write clearly and economically. Not only does this technique help the student to write in paragraphs,

it also forces the student to write only relevant information and helps him see how English writing is formed and organized. This is a fairly structured exercise and Korean students work well in a structured environment. Although the students handled these assignments with relative ease, I found that once the barriers were removed they had difficulty completing the assignment correctly (they would revert back to their old style of writing). I recommend using this book throughout a high beginner or low intermediate course. Halfway through the course begin to remove some of the control from the assignment, for example, give the students an occasional passage and ask them to summarize it within a limited number of words, but without any questions as guidelines. This book is also effective in teaching transition and fluidity as well. I use these exercises at the beginning of each class period and try and limit them to twenty minutes.

As much as possible I try to incorporate other language skills into a writing lesson. **"Picture Stories for Composition"** by Sandra Heyer is an excellent device for incorporating listening and speaking skills into a writing lesson. It is geared towards a high-beginner level and contains a number of humorous anecdotes and accompanying cartoons. At the beginning of an exercise, using this book, I hand out only the illustrations for the story. I then read the story as the students listen and follow along with the pictures. After I have read it several times and I am sure the students understand the gist of the story, I then pair the students. Using a set of questions that accompany each picture frame I have the students orally reconstruct the story. When they have completed this I ask them to write the story they have just verbally reconstructed. This can be done in pairs

or individually and with or without the help of the pictures and questions.

This is an excellent activity for Korean students and is especially useful when used in conjunction with **"The Composition Book"**. If used correctly the final writing activity in each unit of "Picture Stories for Composition" strikes a nice balance between structured and unstructured writing exercises. Students construct their own sentences using their own words but follow a loose blueprint, the pictures and questions which guide them, in their writing.

At the end of each chapter there is a dictation based on the story which offers the students an opportunity to practice spelling and correlating the sounds of spoken English with written English. As these stories are excellent for exposing students to humor in English speaking cultures they can be used to bring culture into the lesson as well.

Sample Lesson Plan; 90 minutes

Objectives; 1) To present, and provide practice for, methods for overcoming structural problems and guide students through summarizing activities. 2) To provide a setting for students to create their own writing, utilizing other language skills, (listening and speaking).

Warm-up activity; 20-25 minutes

Structured writing, using **"The Composition Book"**. Students read passage and individually reconstruct the story in their own words, using the questions following the passage. In groups of 4-5, students reconstruct a group story on butcher paper and tape it to classroom wall. Students then circulate and correct each others' stories. The teacher should remain silent, answering questions

only. The students usually complete this exercise successfully and generally the finished products are close to identical.

Semi-structured writing exercise; 60 minutes.

Using **Picture Stories for Composition**, teacher reads a story as students listen. Students should use the accompanying pictures as a visual blueprint. Teacher then pairs the students. Each student receives a handout with questions designed to elicit responses that will enable the students to reconstruct the story. Students A are instructed to ask students B odd numbered questions while students B ask students A even numbered questions. Students recite the story to each other and then write the story, individually, in their own words, using pictures and the handout as a guide.

Dictation; 5-10 minutes

The teacher writes on the blackboard, a number of blank spaces that correspond to each letter in each word being dictated. Students are instructed to do the same. The teacher reads the story, sentence by sentence, as the students fill in the blanks. Individual students then fill in the blanks on the blackboard.

Intermediate level

Rationale: It's at this point that my students tell me, "I don't have anything to say, I can't think of anything more to write", when in fact they do. At this level I concentrate on developing an awareness of writing as a process and methods for generating ideas. One technique that I have relied heavily on is free-writing. I utilize the first fifteen to twenty minutes of a period for a free-writing activity. This usually begins with some type

of warm-up activity, discussing subject matter, talking about how we write and what we do when we write, brainstorming, etc. I then encourage the students to write anything that comes to mind *. If they are stuck for a word or phrase, I ask them not to stop and fumble through a dictionary, but to write it in Korean. After finishing writing they are to ask the living dictionaries in the classroom, how to express the phrase or word that is giving them trouble. We can then read each other's writings (I write as well), make suggestions, (content only), and write again. We then edit, paying attention to what we are doing in the process. It is not really necessary that we identify exactly what we are doing but to become aware that writing is a process.

A good book for generating ideas is **"Exploring through Writing"** also written by Anne Raimes. **"Exploring through Writing"** provides visual stimulation, such as paintings by Edward Hopper, and excellent reading passages designed primarily for generating ideas and developing insight into one's writing. This book also provides good structure and grammar exercises.

A good first day activity for introducing the awareness of writing as a process is to ask your students to write freely on a given subject, only in Korean, and then examine what it is that they do when they write. When they have finished ask them to write in English on the same subject and try to note any similarities and differences.

* The subject matter depends on how free the free-writing is. If it is controlled or semi-controlled, I ask the students to write about the subject being discussed. If it is unrestricted free-writing, I encourage the students to write about anything that comes to mind or falls from their pens.

Although outlines can be useful at all levels, they are well-suited for intermediate and high intermediate students. This is the level where students start to put paragraphs together and write short papers. In a lower intermediate class I ask my students to outline their paragraphs, in a higher intermediate class I have them outline a larger piece of writing, (three or four paragraphs).

There are two kinds of outlines I use, one that maps out what the writer plans on writing and one that is made after he has written his piece of writing. The first can be used as a guide for what the writer wants to say while the other version charts what he has already written. The second version can be used to show the writer how much, if any, he has deviated from the organizational norms of written English discourse; topic sentence, supporting evidence, etc. It is helpful to employ both outlines and compare them when examining the writing. The second type of outline can also be used to show the writer how his writing might progress.

Summarizing activities provide the student with the opportunity to restate another's ideas into one's own words. It was at this level that I started to get my students involved in summarizing activities. This is an area of study in which my students had had little experience, even in Korean, and quite important for those who wished to study abroad. Summarizing also helps the student realize that he/she will not be held responsible for understanding and recording every detail of the reading but that they are reading for the meaning of the whole piece. (Anne Raimes, **Techniques Teaching Writing**, p.59)

By analyzing a reading passage our students ask questions about a piece of writing. This same process can become a valuable tool for critical reading of their own writing.

At this level it is imperative that the students be given an opportunity to be creative and imaginative in their writings. Speculating activities are a good way to provide that opportunity.

More on letter writing: Letter writing is an important means of written communication and probably one that our students will have to use frequently, such as applying for a job or applying for admission to a foreign university. At this level I begin to introduce some form of business writing, using the classified section of the Korean Herald or Korean Times, which advertise regularly for positions requiring English proficiency. Situations can be set up in the writing class where students apply for these positions. I first show the class an advertisement for at least two positions listed. After explaining the proper form and mechanics for this type of letter, I assign one position to half the class and to the other half, the other position. I then ask the students to apply for the positions. I then collect the papers and the next day I "send" a letter to each student. They are now the employer who must respond, positively or negatively, to the prospective employee. I take two approaches to the issue of correcting, depending on what my objectives are, if I am teaching the proper form of a business letter or training my students to communicate in English. Generally I ask my students to keep it neat, try to adhere to the form I have shown them, and ask them to go over the letter with a partner before handing it in. At first I correct only when necessary, when communication is hindered. I continue this type of correspondence throughout the course and concentrate more and more on the mechanics, grammar and form as the students gain more of an appreciation of the process of communication.

Sample Lesson Plan: 90 minutes (Intermediate level)

Objectives; 1) To instill in students an awareness of the writing process. 2) To encourage creativity and present techniques for generating ideas.

Warm-up activity; 30-40 minutes

Prewriting and brainstorming exercises, using "Exploring through Writing". As a class, discuss picture or story in "Exploring through Writing". Teacher then writes all words and phrases that the picture generates on the blackboard.

Controlled free writing; 20-40 minutes

Students write freely and uninhibitedly, writing troublesome phrases and words in Korean. After translating unknown phrases, (Ms. Lee, What does _____ mean in English?, Mr. Yoon, How do I express _____ in English?), students, working in pairs, critique each other's work. Emphasis that this should be concentrated on content and done constructively!!

Structural practice, 10-15 minutes

Teacher assigns an appropriate exercise from the same book. For homework, students complete the writing assignment they worked on in class.

Advanced level

Rationale: These classes consisted mainly of students who had been accepted into graduate programs abroad and more often than not their writing ability was lower than their speaking ability. My main objective was to improve their writing to the level of a college freshman. My rationale and methods are

basically the same as for an intermediate class. I continued using **Exploring Through Writing** to generate ideas and nurture creativity, although the bulk of this was outside writing. I concentrated more on analyzing, and speculating activities as well as using outlines to teach proper form.

Outlines can also be used to provide feedback to the writer. He can get a better view of how the reader sees his writing, whether or not he has gotten his message across or if his supporting sentences actually support the main idea and if there's any irrelevant information in his writing.

Sample Lesson Plan: 90 minutes (High Intermediate-Advanced levels)

Objectives: To develop, and provide practice for, summarizing and paraphrasing skills. 2) Develop college level writing skills by critiquing one another's writings and analyzing readings and short passages.

Summarizing Activities: 10-20 minutes

Students read a short passage, once, and summarize it in one sentence.

Students then read a short newspaper article. Teacher assigns the role of journalist for a local newspaper, but students have only half the space to write a similar article, conveying the same message.

Speculating Activity: 20-30 minutes

Split a newspaper article. Pair students, one with the beginning, the other with the end of the article. Each student then speculates about and writes his missing piece, they then compare with the original version.

Critique session: 30 minutes

Place students in pairs or groups of 3-4.

Students either exchange papers or read papers, (that they have been working on throughout the course), aloud to their group. Students then make an outline of the composition they are reading and return the paper to the writer. Students discuss how the reader sees the paper, concentrating on form, supporting evidence and whether or not all the information is relevant.

Analyzing Activity: remainder of class

Students read a short passage taken from a magazine or reader. Students analyze what the writer has done, by asking questions such as; Which sentences support the main idea, How? How does the writer make his transitions?

VI . CONCLUSION

In this paper I have presented some techniques which reflect my philosophy about teaching writing in Korea. These techniques are focused on overcoming what I see are the major problems that Koreans face while learning to write in English.

The first issue I have addressed is what the purpose of writing is: communication. Once this has been established and meaning is attached to a writing assignment the student has been given a purpose for his writing. The second issue I address is how to instill in my students the idea that writing is also creating, we have a lot to say about subjects that interest us and there are many ways to find out how much we really have to say. This can be achieved by realizing that writing is a continuous process of discovery, creation and evaluation.

Another important area that I have worked on is establishing audience awareness.

Once the writer has recognized this the next step is to consider who it is that the writer wants to convey his message to and how does he make it interesting. Being aware of one's audience covers a wide range of issues; from simple things like a neat paper, proper register and tone, to understanding the relationship between reader and writer. I have found that once the idea of writing as a form of communication has been established and once meaning and purpose have been assigned to a particular writing, the student writer can utilize an underlying reserve that otherwise would have been left untapped.

It was at the lower levels that I experienced my greatest satisfactions. Once the students realized that they could and actually were communicating to me and each other through written English they began to appreciate and actually enjoy writing, something which had been viewed as a monotonous and painful necessity became fun and meaningful. A good portion of this was achieved by the letter writing and other practical writing sessions.

When the writer felt that his ideas and feelings had been adequately expressed, it was then that I began to look at structural and organizational problems, this is when I started to seriously consider correction procedures. Up until that point my feelings about corrections were that they should be made only when communication is obstructed, when a certain function or grammar point is being taught, (the correction should relate to that particular point), or when appropriate to reinforce a function already taught. This is important to remember when the student is still discovering what he wants to say in his writing. Corrections themselves should not hinder communication and should be of the type that the student will learn from and not

frustrate him. Corrections should help to develop not only this particular piece of writing but him as a writer as well.

While Korean students know a great deal about English and English grammar, they have problems expressing their ideas on paper and "creating" writing. This was the most difficult challenge I faced, but once my students realized that they had a lot to say and discovered ways to get their ideas on paper their confidence and enthusiasm increased, as did their creativity. This seemed to be most apparent at the beginner and intermediate levels.

Although some of the advanced students' writings continued to improve it was at this point that progress diminished significantly. This was particularly frustrating since these were the very students who needed to write well, (the majority of them enrolling in American universities sometime in the near future) and for whom many of these techniques were specifically designed. Some progress was made in achieving much needed summarizing and analyzing skills but other problems seemed much more difficult to overcome. Some of these were, writing only relevant information to support a topic sentence, thesis statement etc. and writing enough convincing information to support that topic statement. I had to constantly guide them through the writing process, using outlines, examples of writings; taken from text and their own writings as well as mine. It sometimes seemed that without any guidelines or controls their writing would fall apart and they would revert back to some very elementary structural problems. At this point I would review or reintroduce methods I used in lower level classes such as the controlled writing exercises using **The Composition Book**.

This approach to teaching writing in Korea draws heavily on what works for me when I write, as well as other methods used by myself and my colleagues at the English Training Center, in Seoul. I feel that this approach is particularly suited to address the problems Koreans face while initially learning to write in English and have found the methods presented in this paper to be effective while teaching English writing to Korean EFL students, especially at the lower levels.

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