

CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what you know and deepen their understanding of issues of interest in the ESL field.

Using Korean in the English Classroom

Sandra Lee McKay
San Francisco State University

Presently there is much support in Korea for teaching English through English. Whereas it is extremely important to use as much English as possible in the English classroom, what should be the role of Korean in the English classroom?

To gain insight into this question, I asked primary teachers enrolled in a CAPE online course to do the following

Make a list of when you believe the use of Korean in an English classroom of young language learners is justified. Be certain to provide a rationale of why you believe the use of Korean in the contexts you list is justified.

The following are some of their comments.

Teacher A

In my English class, I try to use English as much as I can and my students think I can speak English very well. But from time to time Korean comes out of my mouth while I'm teaching in English and I often feel some anxiety about my English ability. Maybe it is natural since both my L1 and my students' L1 is Korean.

I believe TETE is effective when it is used according to students' English proficiency. It helps their listening, learning vocabulary, and speaking development. But I also believe that sometimes the use of Korean is more efficient in an English classroom. Here are the times when I justify using Korean in English class.

1. *To manage students' behavior*

When my students are loud and show bad manners, I ask them to behave themselves in Korean. Saying it in Korean, I can give them clear message and warning. They can't pretend they don't understand.

2. *To explain difficult vocabulary*

Concrete words can be explained in English using pictures and realia. But it is not easy for some abstract words to be explained only in English for young students. For example, freedom, peace, and spirit are better explained in Korean.

3. To explain difficult grammar

Probably the pattern of regular conjugations in the past tense can be explained in English by showing several examples. However, the explaining of the irregular conjugations in English might be very difficult and should be explained in Korean.

4. To make clear rules and procedures

When students are confused playing some games or other activities, even though I show them how to do it, I'll explain the rules in Korean.

5. To explain to lower level students

If there is a lower level student in class who can't participate in activities because the student doesn't understand English, I would explain the rules in Korean so the student can participate in the activity.

6. To make up for my poor English

When I just can't explain something in English because of my poor English, I'll use Korean.

Teacher B

I think with young students, sometimes it can help to use Korean in the classroom. Young students are very active and have a hard time paying attention. Also, sometimes they misbehave. So we should use Korean to discipline them if there are any problems. Students also may have difficulties with some complicated directions and procedures. If we want to make a special project or plan an activity, it can be hard for them to understand when everything is in English. They may be very confused. So I think in that case we should use Korean so they can understand what to do.

Also, when students are learning about grammar or special English rules, they may be confused because the system is very different. We need to explain to them how the structure works. And if we explain it in English, it can be very difficult for them to understand. I think that in that case, we should use Korean to make it easier for them.

But it's also important that we use English as much as possible so they can learn English. There must be a balance.

Teacher C

*First when teachers use English for teaching through English in the classroom we need to consider the proficiency of students. If students totally can't understand, we can't use only English. But I think even with young learners who can't speak English well, the teacher can speak English if teachers try to keep rule: **KISS** (keeps it simple and short).*

However I think there are some exceptions when we can use Korean in an English classroom of young language learners instead of English.

***First, to deliver some important information.** We can provide an overview of the lesson in Korean when we start a new lesson, confirm the objective of the lesson, and explain some.*

***Second, to teach abstract vocabulary and grammar.** When we teach new vocabulary we can show pictures connected to words. But it's difficult to introduce some abstract concepts to students like honest, efforts, guide, and role and so on. It's better to translate. Furthermore I don't think teachers can explain grammar in English to elementary students. We can show many examples like past tense or the third person singular verbs. But it is possible students will still be confused; in that case we need to help them figure it out using Korean.*

***Third, to deliver background information about different cultures.** It's very important to understand other cultures in comparison to our own culture. In that case we can try to explain in English simple concepts but there will be some complex things we need to help students understand.*

***Fourth, to manage classroom.** There will always unexpected happenings in classrooms. For example, students may have some trouble with other students. We need to encourage students who are low level to participate and use humor for attention and motivation.*

From the comments shown above, it is clear that teachers see a need for the use of Korean in English classrooms, particularly for lower level students. The challenge for teachers is to keep a balance between both languages in their English classrooms.

*Contributor: Dr. Sandra McKay, Professor of English, San Francisco State University
Jai-Ho Yoo, CAPE President*

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