

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 they know and deepen their understanding of issues and interest in the ESL field.

Aloha from CAPE!

It seems that I have been receiving a lot of ESL related mail the past few weeks. I am a member of the national TESOL organization and appreciate the various newsletters I receive that give me insights into the joys and challenges experienced by other professionals as well as critical perspectives that would help me enrich my own teaching. Many of the articles reflect some unique situations that arise out of the linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms of the United States, but others (such as one I will share with you in this newsletter) have a more widespread appeal. In addition to newsletters, I have also received an unusually high number of materials and publications catalogues. Flipping through the materials catalogs and pondering the issues brought up in the newsletters has made me wonder how the two really relate. The catalogs always showcase “new” materials, but too often I recognize them as old materials wrapped up in a newer, more modern package (this is not necessarily bad, but I feel it is always good to recognize this fact). Therefore, I have chosen to structure part of this newsletter around the question: Do materials accurately represent students’ needs?

Classroom Speech

In the last edition of Teacher Talk, we reviewed some examples of how to separate students into groups or pairs. But what about after the class is divided? This week, we will have some suggestions about giving directions to groups.

To give initial directions:

In your	pairs groups	practice that dialogue ask and answer these questions about yourselves write a short paragraph about do exercise # on page #
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To tell who should do which task:

All those Those of you Students	on the left, on the right, on this side,	you	ask the questions. give the answers are group leader. You lead the discussion. write what your group members say/decide.
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To tell who should play a certain role in a dialogue:

Students	on the right, on the left, closest to the door,	you are	“Jennifer”. “Peter”. Person “A”.	You take	“Jennifer’s” “Peter’s” Person “A’s”.	part role
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To tell students to trade off parts:

When you’ve finished Then	change switch	so that you	each have a turn take the other part.
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To end the activity:

OK. Stop now! Times up!	That was good. Not bad! Good work!	Quiet please! That’s enough! Let’s come together	Let’s hear	what some of you have done. this pair. this group. about what you came up with.
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Remember, there are many ways to say the same thing in the classroom. These are just a few suggestions, you come up with the rest.

Thoughts to Consider

In the August 2001 edition of the English as a Foreign Language Newsletter, a study was published that explored “Who decides what young EFL learners learn? Misty Adoniou compared the self-generated vocabulary of 7 year olds who drew pictures and wrote stories to accompany them, a vocabulary course book and the Cambridge Young Learner examination. Here is what she found:

Questions	Answers	Conclusions	Implications
1. What is the correlation between the vocabulary a 7 year old chooses to learn (list A), and the vocabulary a course book teaches (list B).	1. Less than 5%.	1. Course book language does not reflect a young EFL learner's reality.	1. Course books may demotivate learners and alienate them from EFL learning.
2. Are there differences in the grammar a seven year old wants to learn and a course book teaches.	2. Yes. Most particularly the past forms of verbs (including irregular verbs) and future tense structures.	2. 7 year olds have control over past and future concepts in their L1. They wish to use this knowledge in the L2.	2. The rigid limits placed on the young EFL learner's free expression promote the perception that English is neither a useful tool nor a means of communication.
3. What is the correlation between what a seven year old chooses to learn (list A) and what a Cambridge examination may test (list C).	3. Quite high, around 75% of words in the seven year olds self selected vocabulary list A were also found in the Cambridge Young Learner examinations vocabulary list C. However, there are also many words in List C (a larger list) that were not in List A.	3. A young learner's EFL self-selected vocabulary has a significant degree of universality. However, there also seems to be a number of vocabulary items that fall outside a learner's natural interests which are nonetheless deemed necessary vocabulary.	3. Allowing young EFL learners to self-select their own vocabulary is a valid teaching strategy. It may need to be supplemented with some teacher-directed vocabulary expansion. It would appear that the Cambridge Young Learner tests may provide a valid measurement tool for future exploration of these research questions.

I found these results very interesting. I was not surprised that the course book vocabulary differed from student generated vocabulary, but I was surprised by the high correlation between the learner's own vocabulary and the Cambridge Young Learner Exam. Clearly more work should be done.

Teaching Tip: Action Research

The above article stressed the need to use self-generated language to motivate students and convince them that English can actually be “a useful tool” and “a means for communication”.

With that in mind, this week's teaching tip is really a call for you to research what your students want to learn and see if it correlates with *your* textbook.

Young Learners:

1. Have your students draw a picture and write a 1-2 line story in Korean. (They probably already do this, so you could take an old one).
2. Translate their story into English. Hang pictures on wall or pass back to students.
3. Note any "new" vocabulary they generate.
4. See if you have time to do a one-day "Picture Vocabulary Unit"
5. Did you find anything interesting? You may want to contact the author of the article: misty@hol.gr .

Older Learners:

1. Do steps 1-3 above. If drawing a picture is not appropriate, have them bring in a magazine picture.
2. See if you can take time to do a one-day "Magazine Picture Vocabulary Unit". Even though there are more exam pressures in the upper grades, taking time out to do an activity to increase learner motivation and improve attitudes can help test scores as well.
3. If you find anything interesting, contact the author of the study (see above).

Well, that's all for this week. I'd like to take a moment and thank everyone who has written to CAPE about the newsletter. We have gotten many fantastic responses. Many of you wrote that you were interested in pragmatics and Dr. Eun-Ye Cheong asked me for the article I referred to in the first newsletter. Unfortunately, I only attended the conference presentation and have not read the full study. In addition, I am in the process of moving, so my conference notes are sealed in a box for the next several weeks. When I get settled in, I'll dig them out and give you as much information as I can about it. If others are interested, you can contact us (cape@flex.com) and perhaps we can revisit the subject of pragmatics in the future.

Mahalo and have a great week,

Please take the time to give us the addresses of anyone else you think might be interested in receiving this newsletter of the CAPE Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk. And don't forget to write us with any comments you might have.

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