

## **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.*

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### **A Reservoir of English**

**Nahm-Sheik Park  
President, International Graduate School of English**

Absorbing contextually-enriched incoming messages while exposed to a language seems to seed and germinate the language. Thus apparently begins the process of language acquisition, which gradually segues from this reception phase to a (reception cum) production phase. An extended period of saturated reception always precedes the onset and growth of production in native-language acquisition. Also, reception figures far more prominently, albeit mostly in submerged form, than does production in all normal native-language use. The same evidently applies to all natural foreign-language acquisition and use as well.

Reception of the sort referred to here arguably helps build an internalized reservoir of, say, English, one from which to draw for the productive acts of speaking and writing. This receptive reservoir is a constantly rechargeable battery of sorts actionable for productive purposes. It apparently harbors a production-ready English latency waiting to be triggered and channeled into free-flowing streams of the language. Through much of the language acquisition process, especially in the earlier stages thereof, the focus seems to be on constructing this reservoir and keeping it filled up. Ideally, the reservoir here should continually get replenished if our speaking (as well as writing) of the language in question is to get adequately “irrigated.”

Introducing production before reception reaches a critical mass thus seems to have the logic backward. It apparently is not too much to say that plunging into production without sufficient receptive gestation/incubation is a recipe for disaster. That said, we may need to think twice about the practice of paying far more attention to production than to reception, which pretty much defines the thrust of our current policy in English-language teaching (or ELT for short). Let it be noted here that putting equal and simultaneous emphasis on reception and production won't quite cut it, either. It also flies in the face of the empirical primacy of reception over production observed in all natural language acquisition and use.

ELT, as it is typically practiced in Korea today, does not quite accord reception the kind of respect that it obviously deserves. Which is apparently one reason ELT in Korea today is stuck in such a feckless stasis. If it is to ever pull itself out of this chronic rut and get up to speed, Korean ELT must assign way more priority or precedence to reception than it does to production.

Under no circumstances does production seem to be self-contained; it may only grow and thrive on a solid foundation of reception. “Hear and read tons of English” should probably be our constant mantra well into the advanced stages of our encounter with English, not just in the beginning and intermediate stages thereof. Only at our own risk can we turn a deaf ear to this mantra. Without a good reservoir of English a bumper crop of the language is simply out of the question.

*Contributor: Dr. Nahm-Sheik Park, President, International Graduate School of English, Seoul, Korea  
Jai-Ho Yoo, CAPE President*

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