Reflective Journals about Methodology

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Abstract

This is a collection of five reflective journals about methodology. Each has one methodological issue in it: English for Academic Purpose (EAP), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), reflective pedagogy, (de) suggestopedia and political dimensions of language teaching. It provides reflections on how this methodological knowledge connected with my teaching career and views in a specific context.

Keywords: EAP, SIOP, reflective pedagogy, (de) suggestopedia, political dimensions

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English for Academic Purpose

Though the concept of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) sounds popular and rational, I have had little chances to learn EAP officially since I learned English. As I pointed out that in my previous reflective journal, English education in Korea is college entrance test-oriented and focuses only on reading and listening comprehension for the test. While preparing for applying for CSU, I actually got to know the concept of EAP and self-studied for my academic purpose; not only preparing for iBT TOEFL test, but also referring to sources, writing an essay, proposal, research paper, and avoiding plagiarism. Looking back on my first semester, one of my biggest concerns was derived from lack of EAP. For example, I had to write a research paper on complements for E515 Syntax. I was required to submit a research prospectus for the research in advance to get the professor's permission. Though I had contents for the research in my mind, I did not know how to write a prospectus because I had never written the genre. Thanks to my friend who showed me the sample prospectus, I could write it successfully. I would like to consider EAP in more depth in regards to iBT TOEFL, Korean English education and suggestions from the point of international student's view.

First, certified English proficiency test needs to be revised in terms of EAP. To be specific, iBT TOEFL test is the most popular English proficiency test for the people who want to study in English speaking countries. The use of the test is to determine that the applicants are ready for academic work at universities in those countries. However, in terms of topic contents, the test is not consistent. The topics about general university life such as getting advice from a professor, checking out books at the library or registering for courses are authentic. However, the specific subject-related topics such as geology, physics or biology, etc. make the people who

have no topical knowledge about them very puzzled. For instance, while taking a reading test based on the passages about a supernova I had little previous knowledge of, I felt as if English were an alien language. While thinking that I would have never encountered that topic in TEFL course, I wished the administrator of TOEFL could make a different set of tests for the people's different academic purpose. They might separate the test into at least two major areas: hard science and humanities.

Second, EAP has not been dealt with within public education system in Korea, though a few school open extra classes for iBT TOEFL or IELTS. Therefore, the majority of people who want to learn EAP should rely on private institutes to learn it. The problem is that the instruction of the institutes focuses on improving test takers' score, so they don't care about curriculums or material. All they do is provide answering templates for expected tasks. In short, they teach students how to get a better score based on the conventional writing and speaking templates, which might be regarded as well-organized discourse superficially.

Besides, though I know about plagiarism, it is hard to avoid the trap of plagiarism in a real academic work due to different conventions of citation. For instance, during my first semester, I had difficulty avoiding plagiarism in a research paper though I never intended. Due to lack of EAP, I would sometimes feel as if I were dumb. Lack of EAP played as an unexpected barrier to my academic work: I had something to express in my mind, but I didn't know how to say or write it as the academic community I belong to wanted.

Finally, I'd like to propose to CSU international admission administrators that they should include EAP course for international students as a compulsory subject in their first semester or they should at least include the basic course of EAP in the orientation for the new international students.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model was totally new to me, and, to be honest, I have heard the model for the first time in E 526. At first, I did not know how to pronounce it, [siɔp] or [saiɔp]. While looking at the components of the SIOP model such as lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies or interactions, etc., I felt as if it were a good collection of each methodology I've known, In other words, the SIOP model seems to have picked out the necessary items from each methodology and it looks as if it were the Bible of ESL teaching. The concept of each component is not new, but it is assumed that the integrated concepts create the maximum synergy effect for ESL learners' successful learning. In addition, it looks rational to me that we have to teach academic contents through English, and make comprehensible input to English language learners.

In the early current administration in Korea, the government showed a strong will to reform public English education in Korea focusing on communicative competence. One of the government policies was immersion English teaching, which might have similarities with the SIOP model a little in that the government drove teachers to teach other subjects such as science and math as well as English in English. However, it was thwarted by fierce public opposition. Some conservative figures criticized the government for trying to get rid of Korean identity through English education. Though the SIOP has many advantages, I thought it is too early to adopt the model into Korean English education, where English is taught as EFL. It is assumed to be rather perfect for ESL teaching. Therefore, I will analyze the SIOP model confined to my teaching English experience in Korea focusing on Comprehensible Input, which might be regarded as one of the most important components of the model.

The main point of comprehensible input is that teachers try to give students

understandable information in a variety of ways. First, teachers need to use speech that is appropriate for students' language proficiency. Though I knew that my speech was a little speedy from the students' feedback, what I only had in mind was that I had to finish the planned lesson within the given time according to the syllabus. Strictly speaking, I thought my role was to complete the planned lesson within the limited teaching time regardless of students' understanding. In addition, I have little monitored of vocabulary or structure I used sincerely. To be honest, I sometimes intentionally used to use difficult vocabulary or sentences with high complexity such as relative clauses. I might have tried to distinguish myself from students in order for students to listen to me, by showing that I have better English knowledge than you, and I am superior to. How silly I was! Though I thought I had to teach students in a student-centered way, I did not pay regards to their comprehensible input at all in realty.

Second, I often used PPT slides with pictures and movie clips in them, which were regarded as fancy tools for comprehensible input. Whenever I made PPT slides for each lesson, I thought I made them for my students. While reading an article on comprehensible input and its checklists, however, I realized that PPT slides were aids for me in that it primarily substituted for my writing on the board. I had never thought about students' understanding sincerely. What I did was click a mouse to the following page, saying "Do you understand?" conventionally.

The SIOP model is valuable to me because it gives me a chance to look back on my teaching and to reflect on myself. It guides me on how to improve my teaching for students 'comprehensible input and monitors my teaching techniques and philosophy. I pledge my best efforts to try to make input more comprehensible for students in the future remembering that students might not understand what I am saying and teaching as much as I expected.

Reflective Pedagogy

While reading an article on reflective pedagogy by Kathleen Bailey, I took the time to look back and reflect on myself as a teacher. I keep asking myself, "Are you an open-minded person?" "Are you responsible?" and "Are you wholehearted?" Though I think I might say "yes" to all the questions, I wonder whether students would think the same as I do. Isn't it a disaster that there is a discrepancy between me and my students? At the same time, reflective teaching reminds me of the teacher evaluation system in Korea.

The Korean government has implemented the teacher evaluation system since 2011 to encourage teachers to develop teachers' abilities and teaching skills as well as to provide quality education with students. Each end of the semester, we get feedbacks from co teachers, parents and students based on observation class, survey, and lesson plan, etc. After getting an evaluation report, we have to submit a plan how to use the result to improve our lesson. I found out that the whole process of a teacher evaluation from collecting data to using the data for critical thinking has the same components of reflective teaching as I read from the article.

Traditionally, Korean classroom was teacher-dominated, so teachers' authority was very strong. Nobody imagined that students and parents could evaluate teachers just a decade ago. Therefore, many teachers were uncomfortable with being evaluated by students, parents and co teachers and opposed to implementing the evaluation system at first. They concerned that the evaluation system might bring about disadvantages such as the collapse of teacher's authority and a competitive mood. However, they didn't have a choice but to accept it.

The evaluation affects teachers tremendously. Experienced teachers as well as novice teachers strive to survive in school. To be specific, I had to demonstrate our lessons at least three times each semester to co teachers and parents while being recorded, observe other teachers' lessons and listen to parents and students with more care than ever before. I didn't want to get a

paper of a low grade and negative feedback. I spent more time on planning and elaborating a lesson plan than ever before. Though it may sound funny, I was sometimes wondering what to wear to catch students' eyes and what joke to tell in class to amuse them, aside from concentrating on teaching. Looking back on my experience, reflective teaching includes everything about teaching; teaching method, material, test, interaction with students, teacher's personality and attitude, and even teacher's hairstyle, clothes or personal habits.

Whenever I opened the evaluation report card, my heart beat so fast. The most interesting part was students' evaluation since their responses were very honest while feedback from co teachers and parents was relatively too plain and generous. Students' positive feedback made me dance and gain more confidence in teaching and interacting with students. In contrast, some negative feedback on my work used to hurt me emotionally. Few negative comments stuck into my head for a few days despite many good comments.

Definitely, the reflection based on the evaluation made me develop myself. I got to know through collected data that I sometimes didn't mention the learning objectives and my speech speed was a little too fast for students. Not only complimentary remarks but also blunt comments were beneficial to me. However, I was sorry that I couldn't hear an honest and down-to-earth review about my teaching from co teachers. Though they are teaching experts, they seemed to be uncomfortable and burdened to judge and evaluate another teacher objectively.

Back to the first paragraph, I ask myself again: Am I open-minded, responsible and wholehearted? I'm still trying to be that kind of a teacher through continuous reflection on me and my teaching until I say "Yes" strongly confidently.

(De) Suggetopedia

Desuggestopedia by originated by Georgi Lozanov which was used to call as

Suggestopedia is a very fascinating method in that it focuses on language usages rather than language form and on learner's affective factors by overcoming learner's psychological obstacles to learning. When I learned Desuggestopedia first, it sounded like a therapeutic way using music rather than a well formed methodology. Furthermore, it seemed unrealistic and impractical to apply to Korean English classroom, because the class was teacher-dominated and the curriculum was for college entrance exam-oriented. Despite such concerns, Desuggestopedia was new and interesting enough for me to catch my eyes and apply into my class. Because I was enchanted by Desuggestopedia, I wrote an article on teaching methods using music for an IATEFL in 1998.

First, I tried to make a classroom bright and relaxing. I decorated the classroom with pictures and maps such as landscapes, smiling children, the Statue of Liberty, and world maps. I displayed students' work in the classroom and also hung quotations such as "I'm seeing great students in front of me" or "You have a bright future ahead of you". In addition, I arranged students' desks in a group facing each other. The arrangement was efficient for pair and group activities though they got a little distracted and made more noises than they sat in a row. Students were exposed to relaxing and English learning environment continuously and unconsciously. So, I assumed this environment functioned as peripheral learning despite a few demerits.

Second, I took full advantage of music and dramatization which are two of the most prominent characteristics of Desuggestopedia. However, I didn't read the texts while keeping rhythm with the music as Desuggestopedia suggested. I picked out the necessary items from Desuggestopedia principles and put it to practical classroom use in my own way. To be specific, I used to play "Pachelbel's Canon" while students were reading and fun English pop songs, such as "As long as you love me" or "MMMBob", while practicing a role play to encourage their activities. Just to play background music made students more comfortable, relaxed and confident

and led them to less fear of learning English. Furthermore, I tried to let them do role-plays or play a skit based on the text they read. I used lots of props, such as a wig, a hat, a mustache and a ribbon for dramatic effect, which were usually purchased using the school budget. While seeing friends with a wig or a mustache, students got motivated and regarded learning English as fun and enjoyable.

Desuggestopedia has many advantages in that it creates comfortable learning atmosphere and good relationships between a teacher and students, which might lead to successful learning focusing on language usages rather than language form. However, it has some difficulties to apply to real classroom, when we consider the Korean education situation in which it has large and multi-level classes, and college entrance exam curriculum. Besides, I'm afraid that some senior students might feel that teaching using music or dramatization is too distracted or childish.

Desuggestopedia is not a panacea teaching method though it has many beneficial characteristics in that it emphasizes students' affective factors leading to successful English learning. Using eclectic methods from various teaching methods rather than depending on only one method seems more effective and reasonable. Teachers should select the best aspects of other methods and use them appropriately according to the learning objectives, learning skills, students' profiles and learning environment. Finally, Desuggestopedia must be a good supplementary method to any other methods to gain expected learning results in that it can make a comfortable learning environment.

Political Dimensions of Language Teaching

While reading an article on the political dimensions of language teaching, I thought about the hidden complex power of language learning. Knowing English doesn't mean that we know English literally any more, rather it means that we have power in areas where English is

not a native language. For example, we have a fever for learning English in Korea, because knowing English guarantees more chances to get a better job and to get a better education. To be specific, we need a certified English proficiency such as TOEFL or IELTS in order to apply for big companies, to get a promotion at work, or to enter a good university. The problem is that they require us English who don't use English for our major or jobs. That's why the majority of people spend their time, money and energy on learning English regardless of age, gender, or job. Furthermore, a chance to learn English is heavily dependent on a gap between rich and poor, so learning English should be considered with inequality viewpoint, too. Plus, there are a few more aspects we need to think about when we mention learning English.

First, American English is a kind of World English. Unfortunately, it has been believed that only American English is authentic in Korean society. As for cultures from the majority of textbooks published in Korea when I was a student, they were concentrated on American cultures. Unconsciously, I thought English was the language of America. When I saw foreigners speaking English on the streets, I always used to say to my friend, "I saw an American." However, the world is getting globalized and English is just used as a Lingua Franca between people around the world. That is to say, English does not belong to any specific countries anymore and American English is one of World Englishes. The good news is, at least there is much change in the perception of English in Korea. So, the textbooks and audio materials are trying to treat English as World English. For example, we can see cultures from various countries in the textbook and we can listen to World English from the textbook audio CD, which is not limited to American English.

Second, we need to change the perceptions about non-native English teachers like me. To be honest, I was a little lacking confidence as an English teacher, since I knew that I have a

Korean accent and I don't have English proficiency like native speakers. However, non-native English teachers are at least bilingual people, who can speak English as well as their native language. For me, I can speak not only English but also Korean, so there might be many advantages when I teach English in Korea, compared to native-speaker teachers. More specifically, since I experienced similar kinds of difficulties while learning English, I easily know what difficulties they have and how to teach it in an appropriate way. In addition, we have the same cultural background, so we can consider their affective factors more efficiently. In the case of non-native teachers in an English speaking country, there are more complicated factors to consider. Though it is the era of World English, the majority of students who are learning English in an English speaking country seem to still prefer native speaker. As a result, it is assumed that it might be a little hard for international students to have an internship at AEP.

We are living in the globalized world using World English, which is not possessed by native speakers. English is just a medium for people with different native languages. English has been used to understand cultures of English speaking countries, however, we let students learn how to introduce their own culture and how to understand different cultures from various countries in English. When I come back to Korea, I will teach students with more confidence while thinking I am a bilingual teacher. Lastly, I am proud about my Korean accent and I'd like for students to express themselves without getting cold feet in front of native speakers.