

Portfolios and Projects: The Understanding Crisis

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Abstract

Educational policy-makers often speak of an altruistic role for education (i.e. producing responsible future citizens with cognitive, affective, creative and ethical learning skills), a concept which all too often gets watered down to the point of nonentity, when it meets the traditional teacher-centered, test-driven classroom, in which exhausted practitioners struggle to manage and "teach" unwilling students. At this level, holistic learning seems a faraway goal, easily subject to uninformed administrations, knowledge-based selection criteria, and summative assessment. The fact that such a system is ineffective in achieving its own goals, in addition to being demotivating for all participants, has given rise to an alternative approach to learning, in which the learner is at the center, directing and reflecting upon his/her learning path. Assessment has generally been slow to follow this shift in emphasis, but is gradually shedding its propositional chains and recognizing the learner as an independent and trustworthy agent of his/her own learning.

This presentation will investigate two modes of student-centered learning: the portfolio and the learning project, attempting to demonstrate that both are valid and effective educational tools, which raise awareness of the learning process. In encouraging students to reflect individually on their learning needs and achievements, and to take responsibility for goal-setting and assessment, portfolios and projects also address social and affective features of learning (classroom roles, peer-pressure, anxiety, fear of failure, fear of success, trust, cheating, unrealistic expectations/perceptions), as students and teachers explore the goals and ethics of freedom and accountability.

1. Introduction

1.1 The understanding crisis.

Applied linguistics has experienced a number of paradigm shifts in its brief lifetime (Legutke & Thomas 1991:4-5), paralleled in the teaching of English as a foreign language

(TEFL) by a corresponding sequence of competing teaching methodologies and approaches (Underhill: 1989:250; Richards & Rodgers 1986:v). From one point of view, this indicates a lively profession actively searching for educational truths and flexible enough to investigate many alternatives; from another point of view the proclivity for change shows a lack of direction, and a resulting dependence on the latest educational fashion. Whatever view one takes, it would be difficult to claim that Applied Linguistics has been successful in finding a successful and reliable language-learning model, or that advances which have been made in second language-acquisition (SLA) theory and methodology have been adopted to a significant extent by educational publishers, administrators, and language teachers (Legutke & Thomas 1991:6). As Gardner (1993) observes, when speaking about high-school education in the US, students are "not mastering what they ought to be learning" (1993:5), and even those labeled as successful according to normal educational criteria (attendance at prestigious schools, high grades, high test scores, excellent references from teachers), "typically do not display an adequate understanding of the materials and concepts with which they have been working" (1993:3). Gardner goes on to propose a single criterion for effective education: "*an education that yields greater understanding in students*"^[1] (1993:145), a definition of effectiveness which provides a useful perspective on language education, where students are all too often unable to apply the linguistic or communicative principles and skills they have "learnt", when faced with real-life situations.

Consideration of why students do not master the disciplines that education strives to communicate to them, and why learners do not learn what teachers teach (Allwright 1984), has led to a shift in educational thinking from a utilitarian view of language education to one which aims to promote the overall development of future citizens (Sano *et al* 1984:170); from teacher-centered classrooms to learning environments which place the learner at the center of the learning process (Tudor 1996); from transmission of knowledge towards transformation of knowledge and to integration of knowledge with existing personal constructs and meanings (Kohonen 1999:280); and from "education of the neck up" (Rogers 1975:40-1) to recognition of affect (anxiety, confidence, motivation, attitudes) and emotion as important factors controlling the learning process. These trends have come from a dissatisfaction with educational institutions which fail to "come up with the goods" as defined by themselves, and with educational approaches which dispense and evaluate in terms of ritualistic memorization and regurgitation of symbol systems, but which cannot guarantee that any genuine understanding has occurred (Gardner 1993:9):

knowledge of the elements of a language in fact counts for nothing unless the

user is able to combine them in new and appropriate ways to meet the linguistic demands of the situation in which he wishes to use the language. (Morrow 1979:145)

Stevick (1976:225) identifies 4 forms of alienation which result from such an approach, and which have resulted in the failure in modern language teaching: i) alienation of the learners from the material; ii) alienation of the learners from themselves; iii) alienation of the learners from the class; and iv) alienation of the learners from the teacher. These alienations are indicative of an impersonal education system which valued intellect (as defined by that system) over emotion, and behavioristic learning over moral responsibility – characteristics that were justified by policy-makers eager for literate factory workers to fuel a growing industrial base for their economy, but which are no longer justifiable in an era of rapidly changing technology, communications and employment. Changes which occurred in the twentieth century in terms of social sciences, psychology, philosophy, and political science, attest to a society in which learning and understanding metaskills (problem-solving, critical thinking, etc.) are more important than knowledge, and in which various kinds of social awareness (minority rights, the status of women, rights of patients) have helped to make "quality of life" the new marker of social progress Holec (1980:1):

From the idea of man 'product of his society', one moves to the idea of man 'producer of his society'. (Janne ND[2], cited in Holec 1980:2)

In second language learning, this humanistic trend (i.e. towards improving the quality of life of the learner) has driven a general educational concern to help students become more independent in how they think, learn and behave (cf. Boud 1988; Hammond & Collins 1991), with knowledge being constructed by individuals rather than transmitted from one person to another, and with learning occurring "within specific contexts, mainly as a result of social interactions" (Williams & Burden, 1997:46). In such an approach, a number of underlying themes concerning human nature and human learning emerge:

1. high-level health and well-being
2. the whole person
3. the human motivation towards self-realization
4. change and development
5. education as a life-long process
6. respect for an individual's subjective experience
7. self-empowerment. (Underhill: 1989:251)

These themes can be found in the humanistic view of learning, propounded half a century ago by Rogers (1951):

1. Learning is the process of changing behavior in a positive direction.
2. Learning is an experience that occurs inside the learner and is activated by the learner.
3. Learning is the discovery of the personal meaning and relevance of ideas.
4. Learning (behavioral change) is a consequence of experience.
5. Learning is a cooperative and collaborative process.
6. Learning is an evolutionary process.
7. Learning is sometimes a painful process.
8. One of the richest resources for learning is the learner himself.
9. The process of learning is emotional as well as intellectual.
10. Learning fuses work and play.
11. Learning is a 'religious' experience.
12. The learner is a free and responsible agent.
13. The processes of problem solving and learning are highly unique and individual.
14. Teaching is learning. (Rogers 1951:115)

1.2 Old ideas in a new bottle?

It is significant to note at this point that, having rejected propositional teaching methodologies as ineffective and unfounded (though teacher-training institutions continue to advocate the "presentation-practice-performance" method, despite its "descredited, meaning-impooverished" status [White 1988]), educational theory is addressing the problems associated with an under-performing education system by revisiting ideas that commentators such as Rogers, Dewey, Bruner, Frière and Vygotsky were expounding even before Applied Linguistics set out on its love affair with behaviorism. Indeed, a holistic view of education, which can be traced back to Aristotle, Plato, and early oriental philosophers, represents a return to basic principles, rather than simply another fashionable trend. In Korea, the ideal of *hongik-ingan* ("contributing to the overall benefit of humankind") has always been at the heart of Korean education, and the well-educated person (the goal of Korean education) defined in official curriculum-policy documents (Korean Ministry of Education website, 2001) in terms of holistic development, creative ability based on knowledge and skills, and ethical contribution to the community. Such an emphasis must surely be given utmost urgency in these times of natural and man-made disasters (in affecting the climate, man is contributing to natural disasters, in addition to

providing his own catastrophes); times in which society, in its deification of monetary gain, has neglected to educate its citizens to be morally responsible; times in which an ethical awareness must extend to every aspect of life.

It is evident that a radical rethinking of education is necessary, since the present model would be unsatisfactory even if it were to suddenly become efficient. Imagine a society full of A+ students as defined by traditional education (in Korean terms, this would correspond to a nation full of Seoul University graduates). Who would drive the trains, clean the streets, grow the food, and deliver the newspapers? Such roles are integral to society, yet their artisans are seen (and perceive themselves) as unsuccessful products of a system that worships a knowledge-based version of intellectualism. Learners possessing practical skills that their teachers could not dream of are forced to attend institutions that tell them they are inept, and finally find themselves in "technical colleges", learning skills that are the lifeblood of the community, but which are not taught in "high-level" institutions. This is not to say that such learners should not receive education, but rather that the system itself needs to adapt by respecting the skills and abilities of all its participants.

Language education is not exempt from this need to adapt, since it is typically utilitarian in its role, and also typically unsuccessful in producing learners who can be termed successful, even within the narrow criterion of linguistic proficiency. The question "How can language be taught effectively?" must be exchanged for "How can the language classroom become an instrument of positive attitude change?", given that education of the whole learner will develop learning skills and ethical qualities, and that effective language learning will occur as a result of increased social and personal awareness. In other words, how can language classrooms mirror changes in social development, and produce future citizens equipped to take on the challenges of a century in which the only constant will be change? Legutke & Thomas (1991:7-10) pose a number of questions that are relevant at this point, some of which are quoted here in full:

Question 1: Is it possible and feasible to turn learners' classrooms into whole-person events, where body and soul, intellect and feeling, head, hand and heart converge in action?

Question 2: Can second-language (L2) learning be a satisfying activity in itself, in the here and now of the classroom? What do we need to do to exploit the psycho-social reality of the L2 classroom and its immediate significance for both teacher and learner? What adventures and challenges are possible under the very conditions of L2 learning?"

Question 3: What needs to be done to regain some of this creative potential in the L2 classroom? Can we assume a similar potential for adult learners? Do we have to consider individual and cultural differences?

Question 4: What needs to be done to create situations and scenarios where communication in the target language could be more meaningful? What are the roles of teacher, learners, topic and input in such scenarios? Could even inter- and intra-student discourse be carried out in the target language?"

Question 5: What needs to be done to develop in learners such a capacity for critique? How can they become co-managers of their learning and participate in their own teaching? How do we create the learning space so that learners can take initiatives to pursue their own learning for their own benefit, and to discover their own learning styles? (Legutke & Thomas 1991:7-10)

These partly rhetorical questions highlight both the problem and a means of addressing it. It is no longer defensible to use discrete-item testing of dubious constructs or to sample performance as a means of inferring underlying competence or abilities. Instead, the need to understand performance itself and the processing (and affective) factors which influence it, suggest reflective forms of assessment in instructionally-relevant classroom activities (communicative performance assessment, language portfolios and self-assessment), which focus on integration of instruction and assessment. In this two-way process, "the essentially interactive nature of learning is extended to the process of assessment" (Williams & Burden 1997:42), examining what learners can do with their language, through real-life language use tasks (cf. Weir 1998:9). In this light, Galyean (1977) suggests that the alienations identified by Stevick (above) can be reduced if classroom events include: i) learning in the here and now; ii) student-offered material as the basis for learning and practising language structures; iii) interpersonal sharing; and iv) self-awareness and realization (Galyean 1977), and Williams & Burden (1997) propose ten basic propositions "crucial for language teachers":

1. There is a difference between learning and education.
2. Learners learn what is meaningful to them.
3. Learners learn in ways that are meaningful to them.
4. Learners learn better if they feel in control of what they are learning.
5. Learning is closely linked to how people feel about themselves.
6. Learning takes place in a social context through interactions with other people.
7. What teachers do in the classroom will reflect their own beliefs and attitudes.
8. There is a significant role for the teacher as mediator in the language

classroom.

9. Learning tasks represent an interface between teachers and learners.
10. Learning is influenced by the situation in which it occurs. (Williams & Burden 1997:204)

2. Portfolios

If language teachers are to seriously "take on board" the evidence that is all around them, then their classes must reflect the considerations detailed so far, and the learning environments over which they preside must be embodiments of the ten propositions offered by Williams and Burden (above). When reflecting on their day, teachers need to consider to what extent their lessons enabled and promoted holistic learning and consequent positive attitude change. A useful inclusion in a teaching journal might thus be a table containing a number of line continuums (table 1):

Table 1: humanistic criteria for teacher-reflection

My lessons today promoted:

education		learning
meaning		form
self-direction		teacher autocracy
self-respect		low self-esteem
interaction		teacher-talk
self-assessment		fear of assessment
cooperation		competition
creativity		plagiarism
motivation		indifference
mediation		instruction
process		product

Given the qualities in the left column of table 1, however, the teacher is left with the question of how to identify and encourage these in the classroom, since traditional teaching and assessment practices have not been successful in this field. Portfolios (and associated

project work) offer a response to this question, via a practical approach to assembling student work, interpreting evidence of student performance, and assessing student performance relative to instructional objectives. If we revisit Rogers' description of learning (section 1.1), we find that portfolios can indeed act as agents of behavioral change (cf. items 1 & 4), they are concerned with personal meanings and ideas (items 2, 3 & 8), they can be cooperative and collaborative experiences (item 5), they grow over time and reflect the personal nature of learning (items 6, 7 & 11), and they allow the learner to present his/her own formative learning experiences (items 12 & 13). There is both process and product in this exploration of learning and assessment, and consequently infinite scope for development of ideas in the direction of self-directed project work. By containing examples of work in progress, formal products, and "ratings or other evidence of student knowledge relative to specific objectives or purposes" (Valencia, 1990), portfolios can reflect the current status of the learner's educational journey.

There are various models that portfolios can subscribe to (Grosvenor 1993:14-15), and various published rationales (Calfee *et al.* 1998; Gottlieb 1995; Moya *et al.* 1994; Polakowski 1993; Wolf 1989) claiming that when implemented well, portfolios can ensure that the focus and content of assessment are aligned with important learning goals. DeFina (1992) lists the following assumptions about portfolio assessment:

- portfolios are systematic, purposeful, and meaningful collections of students' works in one or more subject areas.
- students of any age or grade level can learn not only to select pieces to be placed into their portfolios but can also learn to establish criteria for their selections.
- portfolio collections may include input by teachers, parents, peers, and school administrators.
- in all cases, portfolios should reflect the actual day-to-day learning activities of students.
- portfolios should be ongoing so that they show the students' efforts, progress, and achievements over a period of time.
- portfolios may contain several compartments, or subfolders.
- selected works in portfolios may be in a variety of media and may be multidimensional. (DeFina 1992:13-16)

Portfolio-related issues have been investigated by a number of authors, and readers are referred to the wealth of literature that is available, for comprehensive consideration of the issues involved (cf. Jongsma 1989; Pikulski 1989; Simmons 1990; Valencia 1990; Wolf

1989). For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to note that i) portfolios have the potential to provide teachers and students with a rich source of information about the development and progress of students; ii) they allow for reporting in a holistic and valid way; iii) the information they contain is taken from actual student work; iv) portfolio assessment focuses on what students learn, rather than on isolated facts and figures; and v) both formal and informal data can be included in a portfolio, evaluating student learning in a comprehensive and authentic manner.

2.1. Portfolios in practice

SNUTLC uses a portfolio assessment model similar to that described by Moya & O'Malley (1994):

Identify purpose and focus of portfolio

1. Establish a portfolio committee.
2. Focus the portfolio.

Plan portfolio contents

3. Select assessment procedures.
4. Specify portfolio contents.
5. Determine frequency of assessment.

Design portfolio analysis

6. Set standards and criteria.
7. Determine procedure to integrate information.
8. Schedule staff responsibilities for analysis.

Prepare for instruction

9. Plan instructional use.
10. Plan feedback to students and parents.

Plan verification of procedures

11. Establish a system to check reliability.
12. Establish a system to validate decisions

Implement the model. (Moya & O'Malley 1994:19)

Portfolio management has been made more transparent and student-centered in SNUTLC by making all information and requirements available (in English and Korean) on the SNUTLC website. This makes for ease of access and comprehension, and gives teachers and students a means of investigating and discussing the portfolio schedule. Portfolio tasks are classified in three sections (Part A, B, C), the first of which (PartA, appendix B) contains five "must-do" tasks, designed to introduce students to the concept of portfolio

work, and to the requirements that they will need to fulfill during the semester. The first task in Part A is to complete the "portfolio questionnaire" and to put the completed version in the portfolio. This questionnaire asks questions about the procedure that students will be following, and ensures that they have accessed the necessary information. Part B (appendix B) consists of a collection of "continuous tasks", from which students must choose 10, and submit (put in the portfolio) one task per week. These tasks are based largely on the accompanying textbook (Finch & Hyun 2000a), but an element of choice is provided by the 32 possible selections, the final two of which can be defined by the students themselves. Part C (appendix C) continues the process of gradually passing the decision-making over to the students, and invites them either to choose a project from 12 suggestions, or to negotiate with the teacher a project topic of their own design. Assessment of the projects occurs weekly, in class time, as the teacher checks off the tasks on an assessment sheet (appendix B) and makes comments. In this setting, the portfolio is essentially an infrastructure which is designed to start students on the path of self-directed learning and assessment. Classroom time is therefore an opportunity for students to come together, discuss (and work on) portfolio tasks, and access the teacher as a learning resource.

At this point in the presentation/workshop, samples of portfolios from the Language Center of Seoul National University of Technology were presented, and management/evaluation methods discussed. Conclusions from this "show and tell" session were:

1. portfolios can be used in tertiary education in Korea (whatever the curriculum);
2. learners can range from beginners to advanced students;
3. portfolios are seen as meaningful by teachers and students;
4. portfolios promote language-learning awareness;
5. portfolios promote self-assessment and accountability;
6. portfolios provide the teacher with opportunities to discuss (on a one-to-one basis) under-achievement and unrealistic expectations on the part of students;
7. portfolios allow students to present their best work, and in doing so, encourage them to self-assess and to take pride in their work;
8. portfolios can include learning diaries and extra-curricular work;
9. student-initiated assignments can lead to self-directed project work on topics of interest and relevance to the students;
10. teachers need to refocus their efforts rather than increase the amount of time spent on assessment.

3. Projects

While teachers might agree with the analysis of the "understanding crisis" as outlined earlier, they will often find themselves unable to act in terms of making radical changes to their classroom syllabi or teaching method. As Gardner notes, however: "it is up to the ingenious educator to exploit constraints as well as to seek to circumvent them" (1993:8). The tenet of this paper is that portfolios represent a bridge between formal and informal learning situations, with traditional classroom practices on the one hand, and the project syllabus on the other. The "ingenious educator" can therefore use portfolios in a traditional situation, and still promote personal and academic awareness. For those who have a greater amount of freedom in what and how they teach (and we need to consider to what extent our restrictions are self-made), portfolios present a means of growth towards the project syllabus, itself a means of applying humanistic and holistic principles in the classroom. Again (c.f. section 1.2), projects are not simply a new educational fashion. Dewey and Kilpatrick, writing in the first half of the 20th century, laid the theoretical and practical foundations of learning by and through experience, seeing the educational project as a "whole-hearted purposeful activity" (Kilpatrick 1918), taking place in a social environment upon which it has a significant impact. Their work had considerable influence on and was paralleled by the educational reform movements in Germany after the first World War, and Soviet educationalists also took up project learning during the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period (cf. Frey 1982). Project learning became a central issue in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of a radical critique of institutionalised schooling (Illich 1970; Graubard 1972; Reimer 1970) and became linked with the idea of a more "convivial society" (Illich 1970) and the democratisation of learning through the introduction of the comprehensive school. Since then project activities in various fields of education have abounded (Frey 1982), and the term "project" has become blurred, often being used to mean an activity which "is in some kind of opposition to whatever is considered mainstream educational practice" (Legutke & Thomas 1991:158), with "overgeneralised connotations of freedom as opposed to constraint, and, unfortunately, fun as opposed to serious and responsible work" (Legutke & Thomas 1991:158).

Project-based syllabi exemplify process and task-based ideas by being "collaborative, avoiding competition, and lending themselves to analysis of global goals into sub-components which are then delegated to sub-groups, who take responsibility for completing them" (Skehan 1998:273). They have a strong process dimension, but they are also notable for the product which emerges from the process (e.g. oral presentation, drama,

written report). This product is seen as part of the process continuum (a means rather than an end), useful for the feedback (and therefore opportunities for assessment) which it gives to the learners concerning their progress, as well as functioning as a "sort of public record of the project, of which the participants have ownership, and which will give the project some durability" (Skehan 1998:273, cf. Willis 1996). Fried-Booth (1986) suggests a sequence for involving students in project work, in which learners take progressively greater responsibility (cf. The "Introduction" section in "The Way Ahead", Finch & Hyun 2000b). The teacher decides on introductory and bridging topics, but once the introductory stages are over, learners are ready for full-scale projects in which they take wider responsibility for topic choice as well as topic execution. This approach can provide a useful introduction (for teachers and students) to process syllabus ideas, as the teacher gradually hands over control of the learning situation to the students, though Legutke & Thomas (1991:204) emphasise that this should not be viewed as a simple linear process.

3.1. Projects in practice

At this point in the presentation/workshop, samples of projects from the Language Center of Seoul National University of Technology (SNUTLC) were presented, and workshop participants were invited to engage in a mini-project. Subsequent reflection on this mini-project and on the results from SNUTLC indicated that:

1. project syllabi are feasible in tertiary education in Korea;
2. projects encourage students to take responsibility for learning;
3. projects allow students to choose their own learning path (e.g. to learn how to give a presentation in English about an aspect of their major);
4. projects promote holistic learning, in that students are at the center of the learning process and are accountable for their achievements;
5. the teacher is freed from the role of language model, and becomes a learning resource and counselor;
6. assessment is by self- and peer-evaluation, which itself is a consciousness-raising experience, and which tends to be more meaningful and reliable than teacher-based assessment;
7. projects allow for process and product;
8. proficiency level is not a problem (beginners employ the L1 to a greater extent than advanced students);
9. projects allow students to learn whatever is relevant to them (the appropriate thing at the appropriate time for the appropriate student).

4. Conclusion

It is vitally important that educators seriously address the "understanding crisis" and reinvestigate the purpose of education, the role of the teacher, and the expectations of society. In an era in which unlimited information is publicly available on the Internet, and in which rapid advances in technology make the conventional teacher's learning irrelevant, we must look at the assumptions that underlie our educational practices and ask the question "Why?":

- Why are we content to blame external factors for the unmotivated students in our classes?
- Why do we force students to come to school so that we can label them as unsuccessful learners?
- Why do we impose old ideas on students who are much more adept than their teachers in terms of new concepts?
- Why are we afraid of a learning environment in which the learner learns what he/she wants to learn?
- Why do we cling to the authoritarian view of the teacher?

Portfolios and projects offer a response to these questions, and this response satisfies humanistic and holistic goals which have been at the core of education since ancient times, and which are supported by the Korean Ministry of education. It is therefore up to us as caring educators to seize the moment, and to incorporate socially aware practices into our classrooms:

The more the teacher humanizes his teaching, the more teaching humanizes him.
The more the teacher cares for his students, the more they will care for him. The more the teacher frees his students to grow, the more he frees himself to grow.
(Pine & Boy 1977:237).

5. Socratic Dialogue

Given the various references in this presentation to a rediscovery of educational values (Candlin 1989; Kohonen 1989), the presenters engaged at this point in a dialogue, which they hoped would further amplify the ideas contained in the presentation/workshop. The dialogue is reproduced below:

Socratic dialogue: "Education: What, why, and how"

This conversation takes place on a mountainside somewhere in Korea, between the Tiger and the Bear. The Bear is new to language teaching and is frankly confused. The Tiger has seen ideas come and go, and has evolved her own ideas from experience.

Bear: What is education, and why is it so desirable?

Tiger: If we go back to the Plato and Aristotle, we find philosophers and educationalists talking about the human condition. Education for them was a means of producing and preserving a caring society in which its members had the ability to work with and for that society. This included being able to question it at every point. More recently, Fabians such as H. G. Wells have seen education as being the only thing that can prevent the self-destruction of the human species.

Bear: What has this all got to do with me? I'm just a language teacher. My job is to teach language.

Tiger: An interesting observation. But even if it were true, the problem is that pedagogical literature has been telling us for a very long time that students do not *learn* what they are *taught* (excuse the verbal italics here, but both terms are rather ambiguous). Hence it is more than paradoxical that *teachers* persist in what they rationally know does not work. It has become perverse. The database for content and information has exploded and the same old equivocal results remain the norm. More has not made anything better. Students exit the classroom at the end of the semester with pretty much the same level of skills they had on the first day of the semester. Everyone (including you) is frustrated and disappointed.

Bear: So what is learning? What is teaching?

Tiger: The fact that you ask me these questions indicates that you believe that learning and teaching can be simply defined and then objectively tested. Let me ask you a question in reply. How is it that the mass education that has been going on since the industrial revolution is perceived by administrators, politicians, employers, parents and students, as a failure? Philosophers see the lack of social responsibility in school leavers, administrators see the lack of academic success, employers see the lack of applied critical thinking skills, parents see the lack of human values, and students see the lack of meaning in the things they have been taught. Even those who are successful in terms of passing through the academic hoops can often do nothing more than that, and are typically unable to apply their knowledge in real life. As Rogers said in the 1950's, education from the neck up has produced terrible results. It is time to educate the emotions and the feelings.

Bear: What do you mean?

Tiger: The real values of education are expressed as the individually mediated increments towards *self-determination*. In the hierarchical schemata of knowledge the details of any syntax of mental representation are only expressed by one person at one time. This is the floating chimera of the classroom practice. The brain-dead lockstep of everybody on the same page is just not on. The magic, as it were, is that the best harmonies are generated in the classroom ecology where the conductor has the most delicate hand, where the infinite variety and elegance of one mind in the complexity of interaction with others is a proposed value rather than an unacknowledged element of happenstance. Not something to be predicted or standardized in conventional evaluations, instruments essentially designed to tell us what we do not know on one side of the coin; and cause for smug satisfaction on the obverse side.

Bear: Come on, Tiger. We've got to have testing. We have to know what has been learned, so that we can predict future learning, and recommend students for universities and jobs.

Tiger: You have many interesting observations today, Bear. Unfortunately, if you check the literature, you will find that test-preparation is only 10% successful as a predictor of academic success in universities. Not a very efficient result really. I imagine that almost any other indicator (e.g. what time the student gets up in the morning) would produce better results. We must face facts. Our "testing culture" and the bloody-mindedness of competition for the currency of grades has borne bitter fruit. An academic environment focused on preparing for specific institutional tests is obscenely abstracted from the real world needs of students. The very clear message from testing culture is that if you perform on a handful of ordained dates all will be well in your world. Not a very productive representation to take into one's professional or personal life.

Bear: Now I know you're joking. Look at all the recent fuss about communicative teaching. The results are just the same as they have always been.

Tiger: Well done. I think you're beginning to wake up, Bear. The response to my observations a generation back resulted in 'learner-centered' practices. Very bold initiatives were outlined and tremendous thought and effort were dedicated to this brave new world of happy productive classrooms. So where are the results? The truth is that all the wonders of task-based learning and learner independence were just crammed into conventional teacher-controlled practices. The old, dusty dispensations obtain.

Bear: You paint a dreary picture, Tiger. But what is to be done? Should teachers and students all continue pushing the big, rough rock of Sisyphus semester after semester?

Tiger: This certainly has the appeal of the familiar, but really it is better that we consider the fire first and see what rises from the ashes. It was hoped that Applied Linguistics

would provide the insights to construct meaningful classroom practices. Let's hope no one was holding their breath. Essentially, the SLA experts have told us that acquiring a second language is probably the most complex cognitive act we perform as adults. They have also told us that traditional teacher-controlled methods have no justification in theory or in practice.

Bear: So how does all this fit into my classroom practice in Korea?

Tiger: Check out the website of the Ministry of Education. I'll give you the address: <http://english.moe.go.kr/> You will find the policy makers are in fact advocating education of the whole person, rather than the exam-driven hell that teachers and students are complaining about. Here is a quote from that site:

Korean education has established humanization, refinement, informativeness, human welfare and open-mindedness as its ultimate goals. Various efforts are being made to raise a self-reliant individual equipped with a distinct sense of independence, a creative individual with a sense of originality, and an ethical individual with some sound morality and democratic ideology.

Bear: Well, if we want top-down support for holistic educational practices, I suppose we couldn't ask for much more than that.

Tiger: Exactly. The word at the top is that they know the time-worn practices have not produced results, and they are looking for educated individuals to take Korea into the 21st Century, not people who regurgitate facts without understanding them. Look at your lessons, and see how much they promote independence, originality, ethics, morality and democracy.

Bear: The problem is, Tiger, that I have to teach *Interchange* every day. There's no way I can take this on.

Tiger: Don't worry, Bear. This is something we all have to come up against. Yes, the minutiae of educational administration have every appearance of a conspiracy to reduce meaningful interactions about the real substance of education. The formats of mass industrial training inform a rigid bias to prediction, the false verities of statistics, and the zero-sum competition for grades. However, we have to look at the big picture. If we simply conform and prepare students for tests that no-one believes in, we must take responsibility for our non-action. There are more urgent issues for us to think about. As I've already mentioned, the official policy is for holistic learning, even if it isn't the classroom actuality. Social commentators such as H.G. Wells tell us that "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe". These are messages we cannot ignore.

Bear: This is all very well, Tiger, but I'd lose my job if I tried to do what you are saying.

Tiger: Don't be so pessimistic, Bear. You would be surprised how many educators are

asking the same questions as us. You don't have to wear a red headband and set fire to yourself. Just take a look at your lessons and ask yourself some questions.

Bear: Such as?

Tiger: Such as "How can I promote self-confidence, motivation and independence?" "What is the purpose of assessment?" "What does it mean to educate the whole person?" "How can the students take over responsibility for their learning?" "Why do we need teachers?" These questions will help you re-evaluate your perspective and think about the meaning of education. Do your students know about their learning styles, learning preferences, learning needs, long term goals? Do they know how to reflect on their learning and how to assess their progress? Do they know how to set learning goals and then how to evaluate achievement? These are all doors that you can open for your students to walk through, and they will foster a love of learning that will facilitate motivated and informed study. Students who understand why they are learning will tell you what they need in the classroom, and your job will be transformed into facilitator of learning, language resource, "knower", guide, mentor. You'll be amazed.

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[1] Italics in original text.

[2] ND = "No Date"