

The Postmodern Language Teacher: The Future of Task-based Teaching

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I. Introduction

Whatever one thinks of contemporary art, architecture, economics, education, literature, media, medicine, philosophy, politics, and science, with their postmodern characteristics of border-crossing, de-colonization, decentralization, deconstruction, eclecticism, pastiche, relativism, self-contradiction, self-reference and self-reflexiveness, there can be little disagreement about the accelerating rate of change in these disciplines. This change has become symptomatic of life in the 21st century:

We are living in a time of rapid social change. ... such change will inevitably affect the nature of those disciplines that both reflect our society and help to shape it. (Hutcheon 1989: vii)

Rogers spells out the implications of this situation for education:

We live in an environment that is continually changing. It seems that rapid change is our only constant. We are faced with an entirely new situation in which the goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of change and learning. (Rogers 1969: 151-152)

Expanding this theme, Edwards and Usher state that "education is itself going through profound change in terms of purposes, content and methods" (Edwards & Usher 1994: 3). Identifying education as "both a symptom of and a contributor to the socio-cultural condition of postmodernity" (1994: 3), these authors point to postmodern features of current educational practices and use these to suggest "a way of looking at education differently" (1994: 1). Accordingly, this paper examines contemporary Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) theory and practice, and relates the postmodern features of these to parallel developments in other fields, showing that they are representative of trends in postmodern thinking. In particular, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is recommended as a suitable alternative to pedagogic "modes and categories inherited from the past [which] no longer seem to fit the reality experienced by a new generation" (Hutcheon 1989: vii).

In view of the lack of sources dealing with postmodernism and TEFL, it has not been possible to perform a review of literature, though there are a number of related texts (e.g. Pennycook 1998) that could be described as postmodern. A further difficulty is that when the word "postmodern" does appear in articles and books (e.g. Mockler 2004: 2), the authors assume that the reader is already well-informed, even though very little debate on postmodernism and TEFL appears to have taken place. This paper therefore examines postmodernism *per se*, before discussing its implications for the TEFL profession.

II. Changing Definitions

In contrast to its 'modern' precursor, postmodernism (in a characteristically self-referential manner) appears not only to defy definition, but to include this ambiguity as part of its makeup. ('Definition' is itself a concept based on Enlightenment ideals of logic and reason.) Hence, O'Farrell complains that proponents of postmodernism rarely agree over what the term 'postmodern' actually means: "Indeed, many would argue that this very lack of agreement is in itself one of the distinguishing features of the 'postmodern'" (O'Farrell 1999: 11). Hutcheon confirms that "Postmodernism is a phenomenon whose mode is resolutely contradictory as well as unavoidably political" (1989: 1), and Ward embraces the "sense of fluidity and open-endedness" which "resists being conveniently summarized in easy 'soundbites' and refuses to lend itself to any single cut and dried definition" (Ward 2003: 1).

The extreme flexibility of postmodernism is not, however, a reason for not attempting to identify its characteristics (though evasion of definite statements can also be seen as a characteristic of postmodernism). Hutcheon therefore perseveres with her attempt to say what postmodernism is and is not:

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to say that the postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, and liberal humanism), are in fact 'cultural' – made by us, not given to us. Even nature, postmodernism might point out, doesn't grow on trees. (Hutcheon 1989: 1-2)

Ward further suggests that postmodernism is a set of concepts and debates about what it means to live in our present times. These debates have a number of common themes:

- 1.They propose that society, culture and lifestyle are significantly different from what they were 100, 50 or even 30 years ago.
- 2.They are concerned with concrete subjects like the developments in mass media, the consumer society and information technology.
- 3.They suggest that these developments have an impact on our understanding of more abstract matters, like meaning, identity and even reality.
4. They claim that old styles of analysis are no longer useful, and that new approaches and new vocabularies need to be created in order to understand the present. (Ward 2003: 6)

Postmodern concepts have been adopted and adapted by diverse disciplines (Hutcheon focuses on architecture, literature, photography, films and feminism; Ward ranges from philosophy to cultural studies, geography and history), and it has been said that "there are really several postmodernisms in existence, or at least many variations" (Ward: 5). Because of this, meanings and definitions tend to be ungeneralizable. However, a number of broad approaches can be identified (Table 1), and these are used later in this paper to discuss contemporary TEFL theory:

TABLE 1: Characteristics of postmodernism

Characteristic	Description
1. Border-crossing	breaking down of barriers
2. De-colonization	diversification and regionalism
3. Decentralization	lateral, rather than hierarchical decision-making
4. Deconstruction	questioning traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, truth
5. Eclecticism	mixing features from different systems and fields
6. Pastiche	imitating and satirizing the works of others
7. Relativism	time, space, truth and moral values are not absolute but are relative to the people holding them
8. Self-contradiction	duplicity; the making of self-undermining statements
9. Self-reference and self-reflexiveness	use of meta-language and self-constructing forms

III. Changing Sciences

The 'modern' Age of Reason subscribed to a number of 'metanarratives' (Lyotard 1984), which influenced all Western thought. These

metanarratives included i) progress; ii) optimism; iii) rationality; iv) the search for absolute knowledge in science, technology, society and politics; and v) the idea that gaining knowledge of the true self was the only foundation for all other knowledge (Ward 2003: 9). Science (which replaced religion in the 'modern' era as the subject of unquestioning faith) was seen from this standpoint as: i) progressive (moving towards a state of 'complete knowledge'); ii) unified (all sub-disciplines shared the same goal); iii) universal (aiming at total truths which would benefit all of human life); and iv) self-justifying (since it was intent on the betterment of the 'human race').

Such 'common sense' notions (the common sense of Newtonian Mechanics and the Industrial Revolution) received a number of theoretical setbacks in the 20th century, however. Einstein developed a physics of relativity (Hofstadter 1999: 10); G?del showed that every mathematical and scientific system was incomplete and contained its own contradictions (Hofstadter 1999: 1); and Heisenberg proposed his "uncertainty principle" along with quantum mechanics (Hofstadter 1985: 45). These were stunning blows to the modernist ideal, since they not only questioned the Enlightenment's ideals of 'absolute knowledge' and 'absolute truth,' but they refuted even the possibility of their existence. Finally, the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1967), added further nails to the 'rational thought' coffin, when he showed that there is no system, no theory, and no science or political system which rests on entirely rational foundations.

These theoretical warnings about the end of the modern project became reality when the concept of benign, philanthropic scientific inquiry proved to be inadequate (or even inaccurate) for the needs of contemporary society. This collapse of faith can be traced to a number of causes:

- 1.the contribution of science to ecological disasters (e.g. pollution, greenhouse gases, acid rain) and mass killing (nuclear, chemical and biological weapons);
- 2.the commercialization of science (e.g. the withholding of permission by pharmaceutical corporations in the US to make cheaper, generic versions of their life-saving drugs in under-developed countries [World Trade Organisation 2001]);
- 3.the loss of faith in the ability to measure reality (due to findings in complexity theory, relativity theory, quantum mechanics, etc.); and
- 4.the division of science into a mass of specialisms (diverse disciplines

and sub-disciplines now follow their own paths and speak their own languages).

In the light of this ethical and pedagogical confusion, it is not surprising that 'the masses' have become skeptical about the notion of a unified, 'objective' science, searching for the answer to life (satirized by Adams 1995). Instead, they see politicians (and their hired scientists) ignoring vital issues (acid rain, chemical waste landfills, global warming, etc.), defending unethical and destructive developments ('the bomb,' napalm, anthrax, 'collateral damage,' 'friendly fire,' preemptive invasions, etc.), and misleading citizens with inaccurate information (e.g. mythical weapons of mass destruction). This cold reality has left voters doubting the link between impersonal, unaccountable, commercialized sciences and 'progress' (cf. Kuhn 1960). As O'Farrell asks:

Was a devastated natural environment the only outcome of the scientific search to improve our physical living conditions? Clearly there was something very wrong indeed with the whole idea that unaided Reason and Rationality could save us. (O'Farrell 1999: 14)

This loss of faith in experimental science prompted Lyotard to define postmodernism as an attitude of 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard 1984: 105), and inspired others to identify the 'deaths' or 'ends' of social norms that were previously taken for granted. These deaths included:

- 1.the end of history – skepticism about the idea of progress, and the way in which histories are written (e.g.. the re-presentation of the Second World War in Japanese school textbooks);
- 2.the end of 'man' – 'mankind' was now seen as a social and historical invention; and
- 3.the death of the real – reality had become increasingly constructed by signs: "the image bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 1988: 170).

These 'deaths,' and the consequent postmodern preoccupation with exhaustion, pessimism, irrationality and disillusionment, express the confusion of a world which has lost faith in 'modern' 'scientific' metanarratives.

IV. Changing Worlds

The loss of the cornerstones of 'absolute knowledge' 'absolute truth' and 'objective inquiry' did not cause scientists to give up their studies, however. On the contrary, new postmodern branches of science appeared (e.g. chaos theory, complexity theory, game theory, model theory, quantum physics, systems theory, and string theory) and the applied technology that came from them resulted in enhanced communication, facilitating the spread of mass media, satellite communications, and computer networks, (the Internet). Such unconstrained interaction between members of different nations, cultures, and hierarchies quickly enabled (and highlighted) a number of social upheavals, as evidenced by:

1. an erosion of conventional distinctions between high and low culture;
2. fascination with how our lives seem increasingly dominated by visual media;
3. a questioning of ideas about meaning and communication, and about how signs refer to the world; and
4. a sense that definitions of human identity are changing, or ought to change. (Ward 2003: 11)

In addition to these perceptual changes, the unimpeded crossing of previously well-defined and monitored borders led to a reappraisal of physical and political geography. Soja (1989) argued that the primary characteristic of postmodernism is its replacement of historical with spatial concepts. He also identified the 'non-spaces' (airports, motorway resting places, shopping malls, the Internet, chatrooms, etc.) of postmodernism. These 'non-spaces' share a number of characteristics: i) they tend to be independent of their geographical (national) location; ii) they mix universal and regional influences (global music, fashion, technology, etc. alongside local products and variants); and iii) they highlight a postmodern tension between sameness and difference (cf. Deleuze 1994). Such geographies create new, symbolic boundaries, while eroding the three main concepts of 'modern' politics: i) nation; ii) class; and iii) belief in the wholesale transformation of the world (Ward 2003: 173).

V. Changing Educations

Mass education was also part of the 'modern' plan for the betterment of

mankind, and set out to deliver progress, development and security, through an educated workforce. However, as O'Farrell observes:

A schooling system which promised social equality and enlightenment for all has done little more than reinforce social division and entrench new forms of conformity, ignorance and exclusion. Was this the happiness and social harmony promised by the Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and 19th century economist Karl Marx? (O'Farrell 1999: 13)

Education has been notable for its resistance to postmodern ideas, since schools and universities have traditionally been prime agents of Enlightenment ideals: "The project of liberal mass schooling and higher education in the late twentieth century is built around the intellectual authority inherited from the Enlightenment" (Peters 1995: xxx). It follows, therefore, that "postmodernism's emphasis on the decentred subject constructed by language, discourses, desire and the unconscious, seems to contradict the very purpose of education and the basis of educational activity" (Edwards & Usher 1994: 2).

The role and nature of education has further been complicated by its social purpose – helping individuals to become fit for society (cf. the concept of 'Hongik-Ingan' ["Contributing to the overall benefit of humankind" – Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation 2005: p. 5] which is at the heart of education policy in Korea). This goal has involved the imposition and acceptance of "well-regulated liberty" (Donald 1992: 12), with the pedagogues exerting their authority 'in the best interests' of the students: "The strict application of nurturing and protective attitudes toward children has created a paradoxical situation in which protection has come to mean excluding the young from meaningful involvement in their own communities" (Postman 1995: 102). This is the paradox of a system which attempts to prepare individuals for a democratic society and does so through the autocratic, teacher-centered, compulsory classroom, thus denying any opportunities to act democratically (cf. Chomsky 2005).

Another postmodern aspect of contemporary education is its commercialization. Hutcheon situates the postmodern "squarely within both economic capitalism and cultural humanism – two of the major dominants of much of the western world" (1989: 13), and education in the postmodern world has accordingly been made accountable to capitalist market forces. This need to show a measurable result in return for the money invested, has been termed "the discourse of instrumentalism" (Mockler 2004: 3), and was demonstrated by the U.S. presidential

candidate G. W. Bush in the 2000 pre-election debate: "You must have mandatory testing. You must say that if you receive money, you must show us whether or not children are learning to read and write and add and subtract" (*New York Times* 2000, cited in Mockler 2004: 3). Consequently, the state, students, parents, schools and universities are no longer concerned with intrinsic knowledge, but rather with its empirical 'usefulness' in terms of getting a job, obtaining scholarships and grants, or holding on to state funding:

In short, knowledge is no longer assessed in terms of its truth or falsity or its promotion of justice, but in terms of its efficiency at making money. (Lyotard 1984: 51)

In the Korean context, the excessive attention paid to high-stakes testing has produced a particular variant of this phenomenon. Rather than asking the extrinsic "Will this lesson help me to learn English for use in the global village?", or the reflexive "Will this lesson help me learn how to learn English?", or the intrinsic "Will this lesson help me to maximize my love of language and show me the beauty inherent in language learning and cultural exchange?", high school students in Korea typically ask (and are supported by their parents in doing so) "Will this information be on the CSAT?" If the answer is "No," then students turn their attention to more obviously instrumental learning texts, such as those issued by the Educational Broadcasting Service (EBS).

A further example of the commercialization of education in Korea can be found in the proliferation of private language institutes. These institutes exist to help students pass the CSAT, TOEFL, TOEIC, TEPS and even high-school-entrance tests, though they also teach conversational (and business-oriented) use-of-English. In the words of Kim See-bong, the owner of such an institute:

Children from nursery school to high school go to five or six hagwons (private institutions) a week. Some take in as many as nine. When they come back home, they still have to prepare for the schoolwork." (Kim 2005)

The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), has reported that "seven out of 10 students are receiving tutoring, with private education expenses taking up an average of 12.7 percent of the household expenditure" (Soh 2004). The 'grand postmodern metanarrative' in this

situation is the urge to make money and obtain secure employment, whatever the sacrifice incurred in terms of Hongik-Ingan.

It is evident that education in the postmodern era can no longer see itself as independent of historical, economic and cultural factors, and schools must come to terms with the demands of a postmodern society. In this context, Edwards and Usher (1994) offer some suggestions for shaping an appropriate postmodern education system:

1. Education should be more diverse in terms of goals and processes and consequently in terms of organisational structures, curricula, methods and participants.
2. Education should no longer function as a means of reproducing society or as an instrument in large-scale social engineering. It [should] become limitless both in time and space.
3. There should be no attempt to place education into a straitjacket of uniform provision, standardised curricula, technicized teaching methods, and universal 'messages' of rationality or morality.
4. Education in the postmodern world must enable greater participation in a diversity of ways by culturally diverse learners.
5. Education in the postmodern world is likely to be marked both by a general decentring and a general loosening of boundaries. (Adapted from Edwards & Usher 1994: 211-212)

Postman, in a postmodern postscript to these suggestions, notes that "among the 'new' ideas now current in several places is the organization of schooling around themes. This is a progressive idea, pointing as it does to the need for providing meaning in education" (Postman 1995: 101). This 'theme-based' approach appears in English Language Teaching (ELT) as project-based teaching (Legutke & Thomas 1991), an extension of TBLT, and provides a suitable introduction to a discussion of postmodernism in ELT and TEFL in particular.

VI. Changing Englishes

6.1 Postmodernism in ELT

Hutcheon speaks of the attempt by postmodernism to "'de-doxify' our cultural representations and their undeniable political import" (1989: 3). This de-politicization has important implications for TEFL, which has been a means of spreading cultural, economic and religious values (e.g.

evangelical English teaching in Korea) under the assumption of universal "correctness," described by Phillipson as "English linguistic hegemony" (Phillipson 1992: 73). The imposition of such external values has led Bock to call for the "re-introduction of philosophical, rational discussion of values and politics into social theory and the social sciences" (Bock 1986: 123). Benson and Voller point to "a growing recognition of the political nature of language learning" (Benson & Voller 1997: 6) and note that terms such as 'ideology' and 'empowerment' have entered the vocabulary of language education, mirroring a growing concern with the social implications of language learning and the culturally invasive nature of much language education (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1998).

A postmodern approach to language learning therefore challenges previous linguistic and cultural representations and their political associations. Many 'modern' metanarratives normally taken for granted by teachers and implicit in their practices (e.g. teacher-direction, teacher control, textbooks, standardized tests, experimental research, and 'standard' pronunciation), are in fact cultural and man-made, with various 'hidden agendas' deriving from an Enlightenment view of reality.

Harrison warns that "What we do in the language classroom is affected by who we are, the views we hold, and the societies we are part of" (Harrison 1990: 1), and Holly adds that English "can also act as a means of politico-cultural colonization of the spirit, serving the interests of the most powerful concentrations of economic power the world has ever known" (Holly 1990: 18). Phillipson therefore calls for a "macro-societal theoretical perspective" (Phillipson 1992: 2) of language pedagogy, and calls attention to Stern's comment that "Social scientists ... have hardly recognized the importance of theories and descriptions of society and culture for language teaching" (Stern 1983: 282).

The success of European colonization, and in particular the scope and breadth of the British Empire (on which the sun never set), meant that Western religions, mores and cultural norms were disseminated throughout the 'civilized' world. The parallel process of linguistic colonization which accompanied this 'civilization' has been documented by authors such as Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1998) and Canagarajah (1999), while the postcolonial rejection of 'linguistic imperialism' has found expression through the current interest in World Englishes (Kachru & Nelson 2001).

The 'linguistic imperialism' debate highlights postmodern, postcolonial attempts to diversify English language learning, and to make a decentralized 'Lingua Franca,' free of totalizing cultural and intellectual

agendas. This is one of the many inter-linked facets of postmodern language teaching and learning, as itemized in Table 2.

TABLE 2: A comparison of modern and postmodern ELT metanarratives

Modern ELT metanarratives	Postmodern ELT metanarratives
High-stakes, standardized testing Normative, summative measurement 'One-off' mid-term and 'final' tests. Focus on the product of learning Centralization, Totalization	Classroom-Based Performance Assessment Absolute, formative measurement Continuous assessment Portfolios, journals, self/peer-assessment Focus on the learning process. Deconstruction of standardized testing
Competition Aggression, Division Individualization, 'winner-takes-all' Mutually Exclusive Goals Attainment (MEGA) (Kohn, 1992)	Collaboration Inter-personal and intra-personal responsibility in group work Social learning, teamwork Decentralization
Studying English through its 'highest achievements' - English literature Strict boundaries Restrictions of genre	Learning English through pop-culture, comics, cartoons, movies, the Internet, etc. Plurality of genres Boundary-crossing Eclecticism
Structural, propositional syllabi Totalization	Process, task-based/project-based syllabi Deconstruction of traditional language learning concepts
Behaviorism Language learning as predictable and independent of emotions	Recognition of affective and social filters Language learning as social, cultural, emotional and unpredictable
Linear, sequential learning Language as code Structural syllabi 'Absolute', grammatical 'truths'	Cyclic, contextual learning Meta-language and learning strategies Complex, dynamic, cyclic learning Self-reflexiveness, Self-reference
Linguistic and cultural imperialism Standardized, Western English The 'native-speaker' of English Studying and imposing the culture of the target language Centralization, Colonialism Totalization	Postcolonialism, De-colonialism Regional Englishes, dialects and pronunciations (e.g. 'Konglish') express local cultures. Death of the 'native speaker' Studying regional and global cultures through the target language Regionalism, Globalism, Diversification
Quantitative, experimental, 'objective' research Statistical measurement of rigorously isolated and independently observed 'truths' 'Absolute' 'scientific' 'truth'	Qualitative, subjective, action research Recognition that beliefs and perceptions control learning Systems analysis of the whole learning environment. Triangulation Subjective, individual, personal truths Psychological Relativism
Teacher-centered learning Teacher-controlled learning Autocratic instruction	Student-centered learning Involving students in their learning Recognizing individual differences in learning

Teaching the same thing to everyone at the same time	needs, learning styles, learning preferences, proficiency levels, etc.
Teacher as fount of knowledge	Teacher as facilitator of learning
Transfer of knowledge to the 'empty vessels' of the students	Facilitation of the appropriate learning experience for the appropriate student at the appropriate time
Grammar–translation	Task–Based and Project–Based learning
Totalization, Centralization	Decentralization, Empowerment

Unfortunately, there is no space in this paper to discuss all the factors in Table 2. However, it is noticeable that the educational theories and practices outlined in the right–hand column of Table 2 have arisen as a result of professional inquiry, and that the postmodernism perspective provides a means of bringing them all together under the pluralist umbrellas of border–crossing, deconstruction, decentralization, post–colonialism, regionalism, relativism and self–reflexiveness.

The multiplicity of factors and influences in TEFL is itself a manifestation of the postmodern sciences of systems theory and complexity theory. According to these, a system (such as a language learner) will interact with other systems at the same level, or at higher and lower levels (e.g. parents, classmates, friends, TV, computer games, internet sites, movies, and religion), and will develop and change through these complex, dynamic interactions. This will lead to the emergence of a unique collection of needs, intelligences, learning preferences, learning styles, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes, which are not simply the sum of their constituent parts (Finch 2004b: 29). This scenario can be applied to hierarchies of systems, from the learner (him/herself a collection of subsystems) to the learning environment, the teacher, the school, the education system, researchers, authors of academic texts, and the TEFL profession itself.

In like manner, TEFL pedagogy has 'emerged'(Finch 2004b: 32) in its current form as a result of the complex and dynamic interactions between approaches, authors, teachers, researchers, students, learning communities, cultures, and innumerable other factors.

6.2 Tasks: a postmodern teaching paradigm

The product/process paradigm shift described by Breen (1987) occurred in response to the inadequacy of a pre–existing metanarrative (the propositional syllabus) and led to the emergence of the 'task' as a unit of

analysis (rather than grammar, situation, topic, or lexis) and as "a central pedagogical tool for the language teacher as well as a basic unit for language syllabus design and research" (Williams & Burden 1997: 168). Leaver and Willis point out that TBLT satisfies US governmental accountability requirements (cf. the discourse of instrumentalism):

It is a tribute to the efficacy of task-based instruction (TBI) that this method has become the one of choice in the best government programs. Since the 1980s, nearly all government institutions have used TBI in their foreign language programs. (Leaver & Willis 2004: 47)

Ellis also suggests that "tasks can be seen as tools for constructing collaborative acts" (2003: 178) and that they can cater for learning by providing opportunities for learners:

1. to use new language structures and items through collaboration with others;
2. to subsequently engage in more independent use of the structures they have internalized in relatively undemanding tasks;
3. to finally use the structures in cognitively more complex tasks. (Ellis 2003: 178)

A task-based approach combines and promotes many postmodern features of TEFL theory and practice: collaboration (border-crossing), autonomy (de-colonization), student-centeredness (decentralization), and negotiation of meaning (deconstruction). In addition, tasks involve the students in their learning (self-referencing), and in doing so, promote decision-making, problem-solving, critical thinking, and responsibility for learning (decentralization). Furthermore, TBLT has become associated with the development of learning strategies, which are an essential part of autonomous learning. Formative self-assessment thus requires learners to set goals, assess their achievements, and reflect on their needs (self-reflexiveness). Finally, TBLT enables form and performance to be combined (border-crossing) in a Form-Focused Interaction (FFI) approach (Finch 2006), in which students learn the grammar by using it meaningfully in the classroom.

A major field of research in TBLT has been concerned with the categorization of tasks and the construction of valid sequences of tasks according to linguistic, affective, and cognitive goals (Candlin 1987; Skehan 1998; Willis 1996). Table 3 presents a classification of

language-learning tasks according to communicative complexity (one-way vs two-way) and task types. When constructing a sequence of tasks to fit a given teaching aim, it can be effective to follow this table, progressing from static, one-way, Discovery Tasks (Table 3, top left corner) to complex, dynamic, two-way Individual Tasks (bottom right corner). This progression allows students to acquire new language through static, experiential tasks (controlled language), and gradually introduces them to more challenging, complex, autonomous tasks (unpredictable language).

TABLE 3: A classification of task-types (Finch 2004c: 97-98)

Task Types	Static (one-way)	Dynamic (two-way)
Discovery Tasks	word searches internet-based language puzzles matching activities	interactive dictionary activities (pairs, groups) language trivia games/puzzles group matching games
Experience Tasks	memory games review activities (one-way) simple lexis activities (grammar, vocabulary) questionnaires (one-way)	brainstorming review activities (two-way) basic interviews questionnaires (two-way) storytelling
Guided Tasks	classroom English structural activities (drills) comprehension activities dictation activities	discovery activities group project-work dramas role-play
Shared Tasks	pair-work (information gap, information transfer) group-work (information gap, information transfer) tasks about class members simple dialogs language games	pair-work (e.g. interviews) group-work (problem-solving, opinion-gap activities) jigsaw activities pyramid activities role-plays & simulations error-correction peer-assessment discussions, surveys
Independent Tasks	homework self-study (books, internet) self-assessment	independent projects writing to an email pal web-quests

When this approach is extended by letting tasks grow into projects (Legutke & Thomas 1991), a form of TEFL emerges which can be said both to be a result of, and to contribute to, effective and meaningful language education in the postmodern era. Rather than expecting everyone to acquire the same language at the same time and at the same rate, and then giving everyone the same test (totalization), a project approach

recognizes the diversity of learning needs, learning styles, language proficiencies, beliefs, attitudes and levels, that exist in the typical EFL multilevel class, and allows students to satisfy their learning needs, in the manner that is best for them. By putting students 'in the driving seat' (decentralization), the project syllabus fosters active communication skills (cooperation, discussion, negotiation, etc.) as well as problem-identification, goal setting, self-assessment and reflection (Legutke & Thomas 1991: 160). The role of the teacher in this new situation is to facilitate learning by being a language resource and providing guidance (linguistic, emotional, cognitive and social) where appropriate.

Such an approach is influenced by and demonstrates the postmodern sciences of Chaos and Complexity: "It is useful to regard the classroom as a complex adaptive system" (Van Lier 1996: 38) in which "languages go through periods of chaos and order as do other living systems. Furthermore, their creative growth occurs at the border between these two" (Larsen-Freeman 1997: 158). This borderline between order and chaos describes the capacity for learning that complex adaptive systems have when they are neither settled nor chaotic – a concept with various implications for the language classroom:

The educational context, with the classroom at its center, is viewed as a complex system in which events do not occur in linear causal fashion, but in which a multitude of forces interact in complex, self-organizing ways, and create changes and patterns that are part predictable, part unpredictable. (Van Lier 1996: 148)

Task-Based and project-based teaching thus offer a postmodern approach to the postmodern situation in which teachers and students now find themselves. In this situation, a number of issues come to the fore:

1. Knowledge is now less important than the ability to access and use that knowledge.
2. One skill is no longer sufficient for a lifetime. Instead, educators must develop in their students the ability to re-skill many times.
3. Language is no longer a means of imposing Western cultural, economic and philosophical systems and concepts. Instead, Regional Englishes offer students a means of using 'English' to express their own cultural, religious and personal truths.

4. Memory and other (easy to test) low-order thinking skills have become redundant, due to the ability of computers to store (and retrieve) facts more efficiently than humans.
5. High-order thinking skills (problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, inferencing, deducing, etc.) are vital for survival and development in a continually changing world.
6. Language learning is no longer separate from its social context. Language learners and teachers must be aware of global issues (pollution, global warming, over-population, etc.) caused by thoughtless consumerism and colonialism.
7. "One size" does not "fit all." Students cannot learn (and do not need) the entire English language. Instead, they need the ability to acquire many specific types of English (Academic English, Business English, Computer English, Engineering English, Media English, Medical English, Tourism English, etc.).

A task-based/project-based approach to language learning offers a well-researched and pedagogically sound means of addressing these issues. In addition, it is interesting to note that this approach focuses on holistic learning (education of the whole person), and develops individual (intrapersonal) and group (interpersonal) responsibility, while promoting critical, informed problem-solving and accountability – goals that the propositional paradigm and the 'modern' education movement ostensibly aimed at but subverted through autocratic centralization and totalization.

VII. Conclusion

Postmodern TEFL theory presents English as a lingua franca with regional variations – a global language in which there are no native speakers, no standard pronunciations or grammars, and no target culture (de-colonization, diversification, and regionalization). Western-oriented practices (and politics) of language teaching are being reinterpreted in the light of indigenous learning needs and sociopolitical factors, and the MEGA ethic of classroom competition and high-stakes testing (totalization) is being replaced by more effective and socially desirable collaborative studying models (decentralization). 'Learning to learn' is seen as a lifelong process, in which language is used as a means of learning language (self-reference). Meanwhile, the mass media has successfully

colonized the profession, bringing its global messages of financial accountability, consumerism, and the 'image' as reality.

In this situation, TEFL as a profession cannot make any modernist claims to be progressive, unified or universal in its approaches or practices, though it is a postmodern contradiction and 'doubleness' that various establishments and schools of thought (e.g. the "peace as a global language" movement) continue in this endeavor, and that postmodern approaches include both neo-liberal and neo-conservative views on education reform. Perching on this metaphoric border between order and chaos, the postmodern perspective does, however, hold out hope for the future as well as describing the disillusionment with the past. As O'Farrell concludes:

If education can be a machine for social conformity, it can also be a machine for the investigation of new horizons and new possibilities. The proliferation of 'difference' and uncertainty in the postmodern world, far from being a problem, is a constant invitation to imagine the unimaginable. (O'Farrell 1999: 17)

The postmodern TEFL situation can be seen as heralding a number of ELT deaths: i) the death of the 'native speaker' ii) the death of structuralism; iii) the death of imperialism; and iv) the death of the 'teacher.' Rather than remaining in postmodern despair about the inability of 'modern' concepts to explain postmodern reality, however, it is important that these 'deaths' be also seen as the births of new teaching and learning paradigms: i) the birth of multi-lingual, indigenous ('home-grown'), facilitators of learning; ii) the birth of an integrated, holistic learning approach; iii) the birth of a Korea-specific, regional English; and iv) the birth of student-directed learning, with the 'teacher' as consultant, language resource, and mentor.

This paper therefore embraces, and also goes beyond postmodernism, by suggesting that a TBLT approach to TEFL in Korea represents a viable path for the present and the future. By shifting responsibility for learning and assessment to the learner, by focusing on the acquisition of learning skills and social skills in a group context, and by offering the opportunity to learn in self-directed learning projects, TBLT, and project learning in particular, can provide a feasible approach to language learning in the 21st century "through an awareness of how we use language, how language uses us, and what measures are available to clarify our knowledge of the

world we make (Postman 1995: 87).

VIII. Recommendations

This paper is theoretical, and there is no space to discuss the practicalities and logistics of TBLT, though it is a feature of this approach that these have been well researched, both internationally (Ellis, 2003) and in Korea (Finch 2006). However, it must be recognised that language-learning in Korea is culturally specific, and cannot be described by theories originating in other learning environments (e.g. the ESL environments of the US, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, etc.). Just as regional Englishes offer a means of making English specific to the cultural and personal 'truths' of world citizens, it is important that TBLT be adapted to its Korean context.

It is recommended, therefore, that further research into the use of TBLT be carried out in Korea, and that this research should lead to the construction of a national task-based language curriculum. This curriculum would be appropriate to the learning needs (cognitive, affective, social, economic, and cultural) of the students, and would (at secondary level) mix structural components (grammar) with language performance, in a holistic approach – Form-Focused Interaction. As students progress and become more aware of their learning needs, they would (at tertiary level) move into project-based work, in which they would learn the specific language needed for their careers (Business English, Engineering English, Nursing English, Tourism English, etc.).

Language proficiency in such a Task-Based National Curriculum would be assessed by ongoing, formative, Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) (portfolios, etc.) (Finch & Shin 2005), and performance assessment (projects, presentations, etc.). The CSAT would carry less weight, but (if suitably redesigned) could be a useful means of demonstrating higher-order thinking skills. In this case, CSAT questions would focus on application, rather than memorization of concepts. Grading of the answers would focus on logical thinking and expression of reasoned arguments.

If such a Task-Based National Curriculum were designed, extensive in-service training in TBLT and performance assessment would be needed. It would also be important to ensure that a collaborative, holistic, view of learning should replace the current test-driven classroom. Rather than asking "Is this on the test?" students and teachers should be asking "Will

this lesson help me to become a responsible, honest, diligent, creative, critical-thinking, problem-solving world citizen?"

Finally, Korea is famous for its personal and national commitment to education. Because of this, students in high schools follow study schedules that are unthinkable in the west. At present this learning is competitive and mostly fact-based, and high school graduates possess little ability to apply the concepts they have learned in real life (Gardner, 1993: 3). If a National Task-Based Curriculum were able to produce a society of higher-order thinkers, Korea's work ethic would indeed bear fruit.

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Key words: Postmodern, modern, TEFL, TBLT, complexity

Abstract

EFL teachers are living in a time of rapid social change. This inevitably affects the nature of a profession that both reflects society and helps to shape it. Hierarchical ways of thinking inherited from the students' past, along with sociopolitical preconceptions and metanarratives inherent in the target language are no longer seen as appropriate by new generations of language learners in Asia, and in Korea in particular. This

paper considers the implications of this situation and reviews postmodern trends in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) theory and practice, suggesting ways in which Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) might make foreign language acquisition a personally relevant, socially meaningful, and culturally acceptable process.