"Speaking back" from the English periphery:
Art-work in a South Korean high school English classroom

MARTIN CRAIG
Seokyeong University, Korea

CURT PORTER
Indiana University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

ABSTRACT: South Korean English language teaching (ELT) has typically been represented as an arena dominated by excessive competition, test preparation, and the mastery of linguistic forms (Choi & Park, 2013; Park, 2009). These notions have been compounded by stereotypical depictions of Korean students as passive learners incapable of critical thinking (Shin & Crookes, 2005). While research suggests that top-down reform policies have failed to impact the culture of Korean English education (McGuire, 2007; Shin, 2012), the possibility of a relevant arts-based language and literacy curriculum in Korean ELT has not been explored. This paper reports on a classroom inquiry project designed to engage counter-literacies (Pennycook, 2010) and transgressive expression (Duncum, 2009) through an arts-based English curriculum in an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood on the outskirts of Seoul.

This project came about in response to a school mandate to use an English medium newspaper as the centrepiece of a literacy curriculum for Korean high-school students with low to intermediate English proficiency. We drew inspiration from the Front Page project in which visual artist Nancy Chunn wrote and painted across The New York Times *front pages every day for one year. She described these actions as a "speaking back" to the voices of power heard in authoritative media outlets. With the hopes of encouraging literacy practices that move beyond decoding and comprehension, we asked students to "tag up" newspapers by writing or drawing across their front pages. Drawings, graffiti-like slogans, and other multimodal representations suggest nuanced understandings of how participants felt positioned as consumers of media texts largely absent from the texts themselves. The opportunity to "tag up" these newspapers in a classroom environment evoked complex responses to editorial, economic, and political power in ways typically excluded from a more formal language and literacy curriculum. We argue that this dialogic, irreverent, and colourful exercise provided a medium through which learners positioned at the periphery of Korean education could respond to authority through a variety of artistic forms. This short unit offers a starting point for the implementation of an arts-based approach to multimodal and multilingual literacies. In particular, we suggest that counter-literacies in an arts-based language and literacy curriculum offer avenues for marginalised students to develop unique political voices in classroom spaces and beyond.*

KEYWORDS: English language teaching, arts-based pedagogy, language and locality.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in a Korean high school is challenging work. On top of the stresses that come with any teaching position, our experiences entailed a need to understand our roles as cultural and ethnic outsiders. This meant constantly trying to decipher unfamiliar administrative, curricular, and social customs and discerning the needs and wants of our school community. To add to these challenges, we came to this setting with the belief that language and literacy education are about more than comprehending and encoding texts. We believe that schooling is an inherently political (as well as aesthetic, economic, biological, architectural, rhythmic, chemical, and ecological) process, that our work is about more than teaching grammar and stock phrases from England and the U.S., and that Korean students are more than capable of complex and critical engagement in the classroom (Shin & Crookes, 2005). Further, we acknowledge the important role teachers play in any project of educational change (Shin, 2012). This classroom research project was born out of the anxieties that came with trying to bring some of these values into English classrooms in South Korean public schools.

The site of this research project was a high school on the outskirts of Seoul. At the time, the school was ranked near the bottom of the 150 schools in the province. The student body consisted almost exclusively of individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged local neighbourhoods, which not only impacted their schooling experiences but also influenced their English proficiency, as they were much less likely to have had the resources to study in Korea's extensive range of private English-language academies (see Dawson, 2010). As a result students in this school were generally regarded as beginner to low-intermediate users of English. Many of these individuals had been studying English for their whole school lives in state education, but the vast majority only used English in the classroom. The commonly held opinion was that English was a subject to be studied and had limited, if any, use outside of school.

As part of the school's English curriculum, the politically centre-right English-language daily, *The Korea Herald*, became required weekly reading for the students. This decision appeared ill-received, with the class time allotted for reading being spent in begrudging scanning and with a minimum of displayed enthusiasm. At the same time there developed a disciplinary issue with a small number of students, disaffected and unidentified, channelling the energies they weren't spending on reading the English newspaper towards scribbling on the textbooks and desks with doodling and transgressive (or simply naughty) Korean slogans. Over time the defacing became a regular occurrence and resulted in a slightly demoralising cleaning routine for this English teacher. These tiny acts of rebellion would have remained at the level of distraction, as they are in classrooms the world over, but for the discovery one day that the graffiti-like comments left after one particular class *were in English*. So a connection was made between the dissatisfaction with the mandated newspaper time and students' desires to express themselves so strongly that they would transgress classroom rules to be heard. We thought it opportune to utilise this perceived teenage resistance as the motor of an English-language project of relevance to their lived-experiences—we decided to make art.

ART IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Recent years have seen a surge in the use of various art forms in formal educational settings (Dai, 2010; Hanauer, 2011; Murphy, 2013; Robinson, 2011; Rothwell, 2011). There seems to be increasing agreement that the use of artistic expression can help reduce learner anxiety (Kennedy, 2008; Piazzoli, 2011; Spina, 2006), engage critical thinking (Dai, 2010), introduce opportunities for meaningful expression and personal discovery (Gamwell, 2005; Hanauer, 2011), and even facilitate language proficiency (Dai, 2010; Murphy, 2013). Robinson (2011) sums up this optimism with his declaration that arts-integrated curricula are conducive to greater student success. In short, artistic expression is often cast as a means of providing a more engaging (read "fun") way to increase educational outcomes (see Dai, 2010).

While encouraging, there is a need to develop broader perspectives on English language learning in public school settings (Gunderson, 2008). In particular, English teachers working in international settings who wish to explore arts-based pedagogies would do well to carefully consider the political dimensions of their work, especially in light of historical connections between colonialism and language spread (Phillipson, 1992), the place of English in the spread of neoliberalism (Song, 2011) and the complex roles English plays in international politics (Flores, 2013). While we don't want to downplay the importance of increased English proficiency as traditionally defined, we feel that the use of art in the language-learning classroom does more than simply offer new avenues towards old curricular goals. If richer questions are going to be asked regarding the political salience of arts-based pedagogies, it is crucial that English language instructors working in the English "periphery" develop a sensitivity to how we define success and how that definition enacts potentially liberating and subjugating potentials intertwined with the spread of English.

Swann and Maybin (2007) distinguish between two strands in the research on creativity and language. The first views language use as a production of novel phrases that are continually recontextualised and recreated in particular contexts—thus all language use would be understood as creative. The second strand concerns aesthetic rather than solely communicative uses of language. In this case, creativity would involve more specifically aesthetic activities that move beyond simply conveying messages. In this project we are using this second, more limited, definition of creativity, as we wish to move towards richer understandings of how these overtly creative and/or artistic practices can inform language pedagogy. More specifically, we are concerned with ways that artistic practices can transform the significance of authoritative texts (Juffermans, 2012), and thus, how we can use art to pursue politically engaged work in our classrooms.

Though transgressive acts can be understood as more than a vague refusal to work (Duncum, 2009), their pedagogical value in the language classroom is largely unexplored. Much of the research that addresses art in language learning settings connects artistic activity to language use and development. The problem is that the primary focus in the literature is more a matter of justifying the use of art because it leads to authorised and more or less predictable outcomes. For example, Rieg and Paquette (2009) suggest that drama and movement help learners develop traditional

literacy skills such as decoding texts and building vocabulary. Others have found that various artistic expressions in the classroom even lead to a level of success within a standardised curriculum (Bongiorno, 2001; Wollon & Otto, 2014). Given the complexity of contemporary English spread, we wish to grapple with different questions. Specifically, we would like to explore how arts-based pedagogies alter what is to be learned and what it means to learn. Put another way, we would like to consider how arts and aesthetics might engage with the politics of language use in local settings.

LITERACY AND THE LOCAL

The pursuit of a politically engaged arts-based English language curriculum requires us to consider relationships between language and locality in an era of globalisation. As ELT has matured as a field, various theoretical models have addressed the question, *what is English doing here?* Early critical views linked the spread of English to a larger project of imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). The presence of English in Korean schools, for example, would be linked to the presence of U.S. military and political influence along with the influx of American cultural icons throughout the peninsula (Shin, 2004). More recent work of this sort has suggested that English education solidifies hierarchical power relations and actually decreases social and economic mobility throughout South Korea (Song, 2011). Indeed, classic imperialist views place the entire realm of research and practice in English language instruction into a framework of political, cultural, economic, and linguistic domination.

As white, male, native English speakers teaching in South Korea, we recognize the importance of acknowledging connections between language and power. However, imperialist perspectives leave us little room to negotiate a productive curriculum—as they risk reducing our presence to a capacity to proliferate global capitalism and economic inequality. Further, we feel that positioning Korean English language learners as complicit with, or duped by, "Western" interests overlooks important historical facts (Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 1998) as well as the complexity of our students' personal and interpersonal lives. Imperialist models have been challenged by a range of more balanced approaches that acknowledge the complicated nature of English spread in both historical and contemporary contexts (e.g. Nelson, 2011; Seargeant, 2012). Pennycook (2010) expands such views by challenging our tendency to reduce local settings to their relationship with global perspectives. The slogan "Think globally, act locally" would be an example of such a reduction. Such a statement urges individuals to act within their own local contexts while understanding that actions are a part of a larger whole—a global economy. While this makes for a lovely bumper sticker or t-shirt, it unfortunately risks overlooking the singularity and the significance of local spaces by situating them within a larger and less accessible whole.

By reducing "the local always to the small and the overlooked, the micro and the contextual, we run the risk of constraining the potential of the local at the same time that we explore it" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 54). For Pennycook (2010; 2012), language is always already local and local practices are in no way synonymous with the micro or small-scale. He uses the metaphor of a stone falling into a pond. Ripples spread, not the stone—and the movements that flow throughout the pond consist of water that

is already present and the capacity of that water to carry and transform energy (Pennycook, 2010). In other words, what we call "local" refers to a coming together of discrete and often surprising elements and outcomes. A locally engaged pedagogy is one that brings these singularly unique attributes to the heart of classroom practice. Likewise, language spread in an era of globalisation might enable powerful forces, but the movements that emerge in any given locality are charged with intensities and forces that were already possible.

Far from a naïve romanticism, this presents a challenge to pursue pedagogies that affirm novel and unforeseen encounters that may be in conflict with expectations about what literacy practices are supposed to look like. Such activities explore "local understandings of locality" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 54). In this vein, it is not the English language itself or the mere presence of certain types of English artefacts or speakers that is at issue. Rather, what is at issue is the danger of reducing local practices to generalisable constructs—the standardisation of activity, the narrowing of educational objectives, the reduction of *what*, *why*, and *how* one learns to that which is comparable or reducible across global models. This is extremely problematic given the tendency towards standardisation of assessments and outcomes in neoliberal models of schooling (Bates, 2008). Affirming the singularity of local spaces may be incommensurable with global models of language education predicated on best practices and a scientifically managed curriculum (Shannon, 1990). In response, we view local practices as irreducible to large-scale political and educational objectives, whether those objectives are utilitarian or emancipatory in nature. Our challenge then, is in envisioning a politically engaged arts-based curriculum that embraces and extends local readings and local uses of texts.

LOCAL LANGUAGING AS ART-WORK: "TAGGING UP" IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers who take these notions of locality seriously not only embrace unpredictability and spontaneity, but must make them an integral part of classroom practice. Beyond simply affirming unanticipated responses, this means building a pedagogy that actively engages the question, *What does it mean for us to encounter this particular text in this particular setting?* We assume that as schools privilege certain kinds of literacy practices, they limit the ways learners can engage with texts (Gee, 2003; Wollon & Otto, 2014). Thus, we agree that increasing the modes through which learners interact encourages a greater range of voices and possible outcomes (Spina, 2006).

As Holloway (2012) has suggested, multimodal texts can provoke new relationships between learners and their contexts. These various modes do more than simply engage learners with a target language. They introduce broader ranges of perspectives and meanings that can be valued and explored, or put another way, may increase individuals' and texts' capacity to affect and be affected (Zepke, 2005). Juffermans (2012) suggests the term *local languaging* to describe the "little bits and pieces of language" (p. 278) available to and utilised by individuals in different situations (also see Jorgenson, 2008). Canagarajah (2013) similarly emphasises the variety of semiotic resources language-users are always adopting and adapting. As such, we view language, and therefore language learning, as a process of adopting any range of

meaningful symbols and practices to affect an immediate space of action. Languages and signs become weapons that transform texts at the same time they transform the rituals that specify their relevance in particular spaces.

This opens possibilities for language learning as an aesthetic practice that utilises a wide range of semiotic resources to accomplish what we might call "the relocalisation of others' expressions" (Pennycook, 2010, p. 34). Unanticipated and irreverent responses do not necessarily mean that a student is disengaged, apathetic, or unmotivated. Such responses may suggest the creation of new forms of life/practice that are incompatible with the goals of global learning objectives. Guattari (1992; Guattari & Rolnik, 2008; Zepke, 2011) refers to this as *art-work*, "a process in which a sensation produces new forms of life before being subsumed by capitalism" (Zepke, 2011, p. 206). In the case of English language classes, art-work affirms the uniqueness of local spaces in ways that resist the hegemony of standardised notions of linguistic competence and literacy skills. Art-work references something unpredictable and unforeseen; it carries a potential to recreate the schooling process itself. Though we fully understand that schooling always involves a "regulated struggle" (Emirbayer & Schneiderhan, 2013, p. 148), we remain open to the possibility that these counter-literacies might transform the limits of what can be said or done in a given space (Pennycook, 2010). Our objective is not simply to invoke new interpretations of texts but to instigate new ways of dealing with these texts in a classroom environment. For literacy pedagogy is never simply a matter of discovering how a learner feels or interprets a text, but is also a matter of creating/producing the possibility of new readings and new practices that surround and produce classroom texts.

Figure 1

Instead of decoding, interpreting, and summarising the newspapers required in our classes, we sought new ways that learners might interact with these texts. We took our cue from visual artist Nancy Chunn's 1996 "Front Pages" project. (See Figure 1 above.) This bright and transgressive work consisted of her "tagging up" the front pages of the New York Times every day for one year. She used markers and rubber stamps to create a kaleidoscope of colour and icons, text and images, arranged in multi-modal responses to the stories of the day, their coverage and their positioning. In effect, Chunn re-editorialised these texts, effectively transforming the newspaper's formal and staid authority into a colourful and irreverent multi-modal "speaking back" to power—transforming the nature of writer-reader interaction from a

monologue to a dialogue. "This is what I was doing, I was talking back to power" (Chunn & Indiana, 1997, p. 7). We decided to explore how this activity could inspire new practices and new ways of reading and "speaking back" to authoritative texts in classroom settings.

Class activities

As an initial activity, we asked students to scan copies of the mandated issues of *The Korea Herald* for stories in which they felt their lives or interests were represented. This proved a challenge for many, for the express reason that the real lives of the working class seem to be under-represented in newspapers owned and operated by the rich. Next, we provided an oppositional reading handout (see Appendix A) which aimed to help learners question the newspaper's emphasis on certain stories and certain types of people. We posed questions about whose world-views were represented and we discussed the significance of certain editorial decisions. After this discussion, we provided photos removed from the front pages of previous editions of the newspaper and asked participants to predict the accompanying story to each photo. Shorn of their authoritative textual support, these orphaned photos were more readily subject to student questions of their perceived importance and relevance to their own lives (see Appendix B).

With an increased sensitivity to the distance between their lived experiences and the "important life" as depicted on the front page, further questions were posed which more explicitly addressed the ideological nature of the issues deemed to be of concern to the newspaper, again leading with a visual image taken out of its front-page context. The perception of the very real socio-economic distance between themselves and those depicted as important (or at least worthy of front-page attention) created a space within which more nuanced readings of the images and texts could begin to emerge.

It was at this point that we shared the work of Nancy Chunn with students. We displayed a number of her pieces to the class and discussed how her drawings and graffiti-like exclamations reframed and acted as a sort of "speaking back" to the editorial authority of the texts and images. After consideration of her work, the students were furnished with recent copies of *The Korea Herald* front pages and felt-tipped pens in an array of colours. They were told that they had an opportunity to make art, that if they felt the urge they could speak back, and that any response was valid: disrespect, profanity, grotesquery, resistance manifesting as sleep—whatever they felt in response to whatever they took from the front-page stories before them. The only instructions were that they were free to interact with the newspapers in any way they saw fit, including non-compliance. In a break with normal classroom ritual, names would not be required.

LEARNERS' ART-WORK

The work that participants produced was analysed and grouped thematically into three different categories, following Ajayi (2008), depending on the modalities chosen by the individual.

- First, textual responses consisting of slogans and informal statements scrawled across the presented texts.
- Second, visual responses—cogent statements made without written English through the use of image, colour, and positioning.
- Third, in many examples, students almost instinctually created multimodal texts – an expression of meaning which integrates both visual and verbal modes, much as the Nancy Chunn front-page responses we shared with the students did.

In her work she used no more than eight words to respond to any of the stories or images displayed, and yet the simple iconography and sloganeering left no doubt as to how she had chosen to relate to the texts. Using short, succinct, and relatively simple language, she demonstrated to our students that they did not need to possess high-level English abilities to make profound political observations about the distribution of power. For learners with limited English proficiency, the ability to complete a classroom task using a simplified English grammar and limited vocabulary whilst still expressing distaste for political and economic leaders seemed to offer rich opportunities for cogent and personal responses to power.

Figure 2

In Figure two, for example, one participant uses only two words as a headline, positioned to demand attention, yet slightly covering the heads of the "Rich Men" in a decision which seems to suggest they are offering less respect to these nine giants of the financial industry than the newspaper might take for granted. This is underscored by the rudimentary, blue faces each man is given, drawn over his own. We would contend that this is a comment on the anonymity of power; as far as being involved in the lives of the students is concerned, these bankers might as well be wearing masks. That there is more meaning expressed here than a cursory disrespect is evidenced by the following interaction from the post-project interviews:

> Student A: This newspaper has no consideration of me.
> Student B: Because you are not rich.
> Student A: Yes. My life is... not important! (Laughs).

Figure 3

Bypassing the need for any written English at all, another student simply uses the foregrounding effect of colour to express their opinions on what they took from the image in Figure two. In the photo, recently vanquished presidential candidate Moon Jaein, surrounded by reporters, was subject to a damaging partisan investigation by the public prosecutor's office of the new president. An analysis of this image suggests a much greater depth than a simple dismissive colouring of his face yellow, the associative colour of the opposition political party he leads. We contend that the foregrounding of him alone through the use of colour not only suggests a sense of being marked and different to the others in the image in that politically he stands alone, but it also explicitly suggests the government's motivation for the investigation.
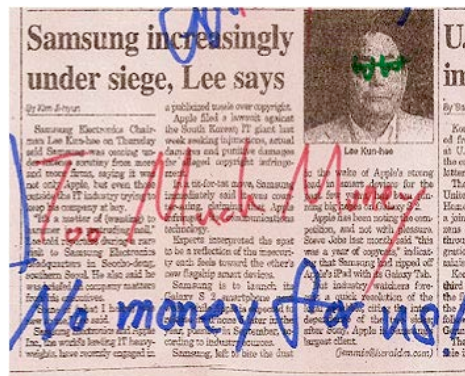
Figure 4

In Figure four it is our contention that with their writing and drawing Korean currency signs on the eyes of the Samsung chairman and Korea's richest man, Lee Geon-hee, the students perform a critique of capitalist excesses, and exhibit both an awareness of zero-sum economics and how their social class marginalises their voices. And they do all of that in just seven words: "Too Much Money No money for us!"

In Figure five, the student has responded to the story on underpaid migrant workers in Korea by integrating visual and verbal modes in creating a multi-modal text. The comment "unfair discrimination" is foregrounded and given extra impact through typography – the vibrancy of the colour red, and the angle of orientation across the body of the text. Further, the drawing of "zero-dollar" bills is an eye-catching,

immediate, and imaginative conveying of an awareness that foreign workers are being poorly treated.

Figure 5

Figure 6

In Figure six it is the perceived distance between the student and the people depicted in newspapers which is the focus, with the phrase, "What [is the] KOSPSI?" acting as the "new" in response to the "given" photo in which people are not only aware of what the KOSPI is, but appear to be happy about the fact it is going up. (The KOSPI is the Korean stock market index.) To accentuate the point, the student re-draws the movement of the markets but communicates that they are unaware as to its importance in his life. Despite working alone, this student uses the first person plural, suggesting he is just one member of a community of individuals for whom such financial information is an abstraction. Again the post-project interviews clarify that this expression was more a critique than a confession: Student C: "I don't know it. KOSPI goes up, KOSPI goes down, my life is the same."

Naturally, when considering our positions as cultural and ethnic outsiders, caution needs to be exercised when claiming insight into a local understanding of these texts. However the simple clarity of the messages, when coupled with post-project interviews does allow for a level of confidence in the analysis of student intention.

DISCUSSION

Through the production of a combination of written texts and visual images, or simply visual images, participants were able to convey messages of greater personal and social relevance than through English alone, and the recognition of this as a valued form of expression changed the shape of the learning in the classroom. Different rituals allowed for the exercise of different strengths, which in turn produced different results. It allowed many of those who had struggled in the ELL classroom, within a framework which practises a more linear view of literacy, to bring to voice their understandings. This openness allowed a noticeable change in what classroom work was produced, how it was produced, and most importantly of all, who it was produced by. The voices which were most commonly heard were those which for much of the time were on the periphery of the ELL classroom. That a transformation in the way texts were treated allowed other voices to be heard finds support in the words of O'Brien (2001), who wrote, "the study of visual symbols can reach those students who have been burned by print" (p. 224).

We feel that participants' work offers evidence of locally situated practices that we could not have anticipated prior to the project. When we accept that locally relevant readings may not conform to our own preconceptions about what "relevant" looks like, we begin to sense that these learners are capable of thoughtful and complex interactions with these texts. A critical literacy is one in which these interactions challenge omnipresent and unstated social agendas of power – one in which language is imbued with politicised ideologies (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). It is our contention that our students were capable of using a variety of semiotic and multimodal resources to convey their subjectivity in novel meaning-making events (Ajayi, 2009). Our analysis of their work indicated that, regardless of the limitations of their English, they were very much able to participate in such critical literacies.

We would not be so bold as to claim that we have access to local understandings of these texts. Yet if we borrow from Pennycook's (2010; 2012) notion of the local, then we, as teachers are a part of this eclectic mix of texts, languages, histories, and practices that make up any local classroom setting. What we found was that learners made complex expressions with the *Korea Herald* newspapers when given the opportunity to engage with them in new ways. This art project can thus be understood as an inquiry/exploration of how various elements come together in a local setting while still allowing for interpretations that fall into more traditional iterations of critical literacies. A politically charged or transgressive arts-based English language pedagogy can move beyond the need to tap into critiques lying latent in learners. It would also be a matter of creating conditions that provoke new kinds of textual and interactive practices and experiences. Linguistic goals fixated on linguistic competence concede to a tension between eliciting critical readings of texts and instigating local languaging practices.

While there are numerous instances when participants made novel meanings and critiqued some of the hegemonic ideals inscribed in these papers, a more subtle kind of tension emerged. Participants' art-work resisted the formalist inclinations that assume underlying design of visual texts seen in much of the work in multimodal literacies (Kress & Selander; 2011). While they seemed to be expressing informed and intentional critiques, we can also think of this work as a sort of "playing" that

functioned in this way, because of the "non-school-like" nature of the project. Irreverent works of graffiti/art must be understood in relation to their function as a potentially transgressive activity—a response to a set of local conditions inscribed in social space (Pennycook, 2010). Thus, more traditional notions of critique and their emphasis on intentionality and design may require richer theories of how such things become possible in particular spaces.

The concept of *art-work* may be especially useful here. This notion of art-work is that of a disruption that resists appropriation to our meaning-making habits and our tendency to generalise and even commodify activities and expressions—even for the purpose of subversion. These activities disrupted typical classroom rituals that remain "graphocentric"—or fixed solely on written texts (de Souza, 2005) and which typically maintain the authority of curricular materials. This disruption paved the way for unforeseen challenges to the contents of newspapers and the larger political, economic, and cultural spheres inscribed within them. We might then suggest that this concept of art-work invoked a sort of Spinozan ethics, according to which, it is a mistake to believe in the primacy of harmony and order (Zepke, 2005). We affirm that transgressive practices acted as a speaking back to power in surprising, creative and cogent ways. In response to claims that Korean learners do not routinely engage in critical thinking (McGuire, 2007), we suggest that the richness (or lack thereof) of students' work is a response to the limitations and potentials that activities and modalities invoke. Students' expressions would thus be a response to the kinds of literacy practices valued. The goal of politically engaged arts-based pedagogies would be to utilise the capacity of art-work to transform our typical understandings and meaning-making rituals in the classroom setting—to interrogate and expand the notion of what is possible in a particular space.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We found that the situation in the Korean high school education system to be very much as claimed by Dyson (2003), namely that "literacy development seldom includes any substantive consideration of multimodal practices" (p. 330). It was a desire to push this limitation that drove us to consider the potential of art-work. What we found led us to conclude that far from being limited to decoding and comprehension, literacy in the Korean, high-school context can be expanded beyond normal school-sanctioned practices to include multimodal, critical, and (whisper it) *enjoyable* literacy practices (Lesley, 2008). Further, these practices, with their different sensations and different opportunities, produced unforeseen results. Much of the most insightful work in these lessons was produced by students, who had previously and since struggled to satisfactorily perform in the literacy modes most preferred by school structures. We were delighted to re-discover some of our students' social worlds and find that even those with more basic levels of English proficiency were capable of producing nuanced and politically salient opinions of power structures, of seeing themselves as subjects within them, and of engaging in artistic practices that made their resistance to such positions a visible and viable part of classroom literacies.

In our pursuit of an arts-based language pedagogy that acknowledges and engages with local politics, we found that we did not need to limit our goals to *using arts to*

learn language. On the contrary, we found that an arts-based language pedagogy can actively transform what it means to use language by expanding the range of form, expressions, and purposes of literacy practices. In other words, art-work in the English language classroom can act as an interrogation of both languages and classrooms. Further, borrowing from a graffiti motif, we understand that much of what is called "graffiti" is typically not intended to be understood by outsiders or by a general audience (Pennycook, 2010). A locally based English language pedagogy may similarly resist general notions of comprehensibility and competence and instead emphasise creating novel expressions that speak directly to the momentary "coming together" that constitutes any local space.

Materials from a diverse range of texts can excite learners when textual experiences relate to their own experiences outside of the classroom (Ajayi, 2009). We would contend that our project goes even further as the students were themselves the creators of such texts—and were not simply presented with them. The class thus "helps leaners transform themselves from objects to subjects, from being passive to being active, from recipient to participant, and from consumer to producer" (Falihi & Wason Ellam, 2009, p. 451). Further, if "political engagement in the 21st Century may be more a matter of creative and productive expression than reflective critique" (Porter, 2013, p. 132), then personal expression, interpretation, and critique will have to be understood as a consequence of practices that emerge in unforeseen ways in local spaces. Practices such as those described in this study may offer pathways towards local languaging events that expand and transform the possible ways we engage with texts (Juffermans, 2012). These may be important skills in our increasingly information-saturated and globalised societies.

The work collected very much seemed to suggest that using the front pages of a national newspaper could function extremely effectively in fostering critical literacy practices. It offers English language learners the opportunity to openly challenge and subvert discursive practices that they feel marginalised by and illustrates to ELT professionals that Korean students do "get it"—that they can speak back when challenged to express a critique as long as the project is relevant and the modes of acceptable expression are not limited to textual responses alone. Even within the profound structural constraints of the Korean high-school situation, a locally engaged pedagogy can manifest relevant, dialogical and fruitful classroom practices.

REFERENCES

Ajayi, L. (2008). Meaning-making, multi-modal representation, and transformative pedagogy: An exploration of meaning construction instructional practices in an ESL high school classroom. *Journal of Language, Identity, & Education*, *7*(3-4), 206-229.

Ajayi, L. (2009). English as a second language learners' exploration of multimodal texts in a junior high school. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(7), 585-595.

Bates, R. (2008). Teacher education in a global context: Towards a defensible theory of teacher education. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 34*(4), 277-293.

Bongiorno, C. (2001). Dance: An inspiration for language in the ESL classroom. *Journal of the Imagination in Language Learning and Teaching, 6*. Retrieved on May 13, 2014 from http://www.njcu.edu/cill/vol6/bongiorno.html

Canagarajah, S. A. (2005). *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Canagarajah, S. A. (2013). Negotiating translingual literacy: An enactment. *Research in the Teaching of English, 48*(1), 40-67.

Choi, H. J., & Park, J. H. (2013). Historical analysis of the policy on the college entrance system in South Korea. *International Education Studies, 6*(11), 106-121.

Chunn, N., & Indiana, D. (1997). *Front pages*. New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications Inc.

Dai, F. (2010). English-language creative writing in mainland China. *World Englishes, 29*(4), 546-556.

Dawson, W. (2010). Private tutoring and mass schooling in East Asia: Reflections of inequality in Japan, South Korea, and Cambodia. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 11*, 14-24.

de Souza, L. M. T. M. (2005). The ecology of writing among the Kashinawa: Indigenous multimodality in Brazil. In A. S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp. 73-95). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Duncum, P. (2009). Toward a playful pedagogy: Popular culture and the pleasures of transgression. *Studies in Art Education, 50*(3), 232-244.

Dyson, A. H. (2003). "Welcome to the jam": Popular culture, school literacy, and the making of childhoods. *Harvard Education Review, 73*(3), 328-361.

Emirbayer, M., & Schneiderham, E. (2013). In P. S. Gorski (Ed.), *Bourdieu and historical analysis* (pp. 131-157). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Falihi, A., & Wason-Ellam, L. (2009). Critical visuality: On the development of critical visual literacy for learners' empowerment. *The International Journal of Learning, 16*(3), 409-417.

Flores, N. (2013). The unexamined relationship between neoliberalism and plurilingulaism: A cautionary tale. *TESOL Quarterly, 47*(3), 500-520.

Gamwell, P. (2005). Intermediate students' experiences with an arts-based unit: An action research. *Canadian Journal of Education, 28*(3), 359-383.

Gee, J. P. (2003). Opportunity to learn: A language-based perspective on assessment. *Assessment in Education, 10*(1), 27-46.

Guattari, F. (1992). *Chaosmosis: An ethico-aesthetic paradigm*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Guattari, F., & Rolnik, S. (2008). *Molecular revolution in Brazil* (K. Clapshow & B. Holmes, Trans.). New York, NY: Semiotext(e).

Gunderson, L. (2008). The state of the art of secondary ESL teaching and learning. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 52*(3), 184-188.

Hanauer, D. I. (2011). Meaningful literacy: Writing poetry in the language classroom. *Language Teaching, 45*(1), 105-115.

Holloway, S. M. (2012). Visual literacies and multiliteracies: As ecology arts-based pedagogical model. *Language and Literacy, 14*(3), 150-168.

Jorgenson, J. N. (2008). Urban wall languaging. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 5*(3), 237-252.

Juffermans, K. (2012). Multimodality and audiences: Local languaging in the Gambian linguistic landscape. *Sociolinguistic Studies, 6*(2), 259-284.

Kennedy, R. (2008). Music therapy as a supplemental teaching strategy for kindergarten ESL students. *Music Therapy Perspectives, 26*(2), 97-101.

Kress, G., & Selander, S. (2011). Multimodal design, learning and cultures of recognition. *Internet and Higher Education, 15,* 265-268.

Lankshear, C., & McLaren, P. (1993). *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis, and the postmodern*. New York, NY: SUNY Press.

Lesley, M. (2008). Access and resistance to dominant forms of discourse: Critical literacy and "at risk" high school students. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 47*(3), 174-194

McGuire, J. M. (2007). Why as the critical thinking movement not come to Korea? *Asia Pacific Educational Review, 8*(2), 224-232.

Murphy, A. F. (2013). Integrating aesthetics into professional development for teachers of English learners. *TESOL Journal, 5*(1), 82-104.

Nelson, C. (2011). *Intelligibility in world Englishes*. New York, NY: Routledge

O'Brien, D. (2001). "At risk" adolescents: Redefining competence through the multiliteracies of intermediality, visual arts, and representation. *Reading Online, 4*(11). Retrieved from http://readingonline.org/newliteracies/lit_index.asp?HREF=/newliteracies/obrien/index.html

Park, J. S. Y. (2009). *The local construction of a global language: Ideologies of English in South Korea*. New York, NY: Mouton de Gruyter.

Pennycook, A. (1998). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London, England: Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as a local practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (2012). *Language and mobility: Unexpected places*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Piazzoli, E. (2011). Process drama: The use of affective space to reduce language anxiety in the additional language learning classroom. *Research in Drama Education, 16*(4), 557-573.

Porter, C. (2013). Political expression in a digital landscape: Exploring aesthetic foundations for critical literacy practices. *Multimedia-Assisted Language Learning, 16*(2), 117-137.

Rieg, S. A., & Paquette, K. R. (2009). Using drama and movement to enhance English language learners' literacy development. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 36*(2), 148-154.

Robinson, A. H. (2011). Research review of the effects of arts integrated curriculum on student success. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences, 4*(11), 289-303.

Rothwell, J. (2011). Bodies and language: Process drama and intercultural language learning in a beginner language classroom. *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance, 16*(4), 575-594.

Seargeant, P. (2012). *Exploring world Englishes: Language in a global context.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Shannon, P. (1990). *The struggle to continue: Progressive reading instruction in the United States*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishers.

Shin, J. K. (2004). The use of Freirian pedagogy in teaching English as an international language: Raising the critical consciousness of EFL teachers in Korea. *LLC Review, 4*(1), 64-82.

Shin, S. K. (2012). "It cannot be done alone": The socialization of novice English teachers in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly, 46*(3), 542-564.

Shin, H., & Crookes, G. (2005). Indigenous critical traditions for TEFL? A historical and comparative perspective in the case of South Korea. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies, 2*(2), 95-112.

Song, J. J. (2011). English as an official language in South Korea: Global English or social malady? *Language Problems & Language Planning, 35*(1), 35-55.

Spina, S. U. (2006). Worlds together…words apart: An assessment of the effectiveness of arts-based curriculum for second language learners. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 5*(2), 99-122.

Swann, J., & Maybin, J. (2007). Language creativity in everyday contexts. *Applied Linguistics, 28*(4), 491-496.

Wollon, S., & Otto, S. (2014). Intended consequences: Challenging white teachers' habitus and its influence in urban schools implementing an arts-based educational reform. *Urban Rev, 46*, 86-111.

Zepke, S. (2005). *Art as abstract machine: Ontology and aesthetics in Deleuze and Guattari*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Zepke, S. (2011). From aesthetic autonomy to autonomist aesthetics: Art and life in Guattari. In E. Alliez & A. Goffey (Eds.), *The Guattari effect* (pp. 205-219). New York, NY: Continuum.

APPENDIX A

Appendix B

The Korea Herald - Front Page Photos

9 - What are the people in the photo doing?

_____

10 - Have you ever done that? Why or why not?

_____

_____

11 - What do you think the newspaper is telling us about how we *should* feel?

_____

_____

12 - Why do you think the newspaper is telling us that?

_____

_____

13 - When you read the news, which section is most important to you? Why?

    (A)   International news   (B)   Local news   (C)   Entertainment news

    (D)   Sports news   (E)   Financial news   (F)   The weather

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

1 – Textual Responses

2 – Visual Responses

3 – Multimodal Responses