

Mattheus Wessels.

Teaching & Training Portfolio

English Language Teaching / ESL/EFL

Humanities & Social Studies



IN THE CLASSROOM / SOUTH KOREA

Classroom roots. International perspective.

Primary & secondary teaching opportunities in Vietnam and Thailand

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A teacher, first.

I am a South African English-language educator with more than thirteen years of teaching and education experience in South Korea, Georgia and South Africa. I have taught children, teenagers, university students and adults, from early primary literacy through to secondary English, humanities and adult Business English. My teaching has included English communication, reading, writing, literature, Social Studies, Cultural Studies, Geography, History and media literacy.



I began in classrooms and gradually took on curriculum, teacher-development and programme responsibilities. Even as my work expanded into academic coordination and people leadership, I kept teaching. That matters to me. It has kept my decisions connected to what learners and teachers actually experience: whether instructions are clear, whether a task is achievable, whether students feel safe enough to try, and whether a plan works in a real classroom.

I bring energy to a class, and I know that the way I enter a room affects the mood of the learners. I use expression, voice, gesture, storytelling and a little acting to bring language and ideas to life. I do not use performance for its own sake. It is a way to make meaning clearer, invite attention and help students remember what they have practised. The energy sits within a calm, respectful classroom where routines are clear and students know what is expected of them.

“Even as my work expanded into academic coordination and people leadership, I kept teaching.”

Clear purpose. Curious minds.

My aim is for students to leave a lesson having understood something, practised it and gained a little more confidence using it. I explain and model new language or ideas before asking learners to work independently. I build in guided practice, conversation and tasks that give students a reason to use what they have learned. Depending on the class, that might mean a short discussion, a role-play, a reading response, a debate, a project or a practical exchange based on everyday situations.

I adjust the level of support to the learners in front of me. Students do not arrive with the same age, confidence, vocabulary or experience, even when they sit in the same class. I use examples, questions, visual cues, pair work and step-by-step instructions to make the work accessible while keeping it worthwhile. I watch and listen as students work, check their understanding, and use their responses to decide whether to revisit, extend or explain something differently.

Respect is part of the method, not an add-on. I set clear expectations, speak to learners with care and make room for participation without putting anyone on the spot unnecessarily. In international classrooms, I have learned to pay attention to local context and to build relationships with students, parents and colleagues before assuming that one approach will work everywhere. I want a classroom to feel lively and welcoming, while remaining organised and focused on learning.



“Respect is part of the method, not an add-on.”

IN THIS PORTFOLIO

Teaching & education experience	04–06
Development & learning design	07
Communication & teaching areas	08
Education & team strengths	09

Teaching through leadership.

Senior Manager: Global People and Organisational Development, with interim Vice-Principal assignment

Son's Edu and BeTop Kids • Daegu and Seoul, South Korea • January 2022 to October 2024

My senior role involved staff development and organisational work, but teaching remained part of my week. During the Seoul transition after Son's Edu acquired the Pots and Pans Kindergarten franchise in January 2024, I spent ten months supporting the development of the new BeTop Kids and elementary programmes. I led elementary communication and critical-thinking classes, helped shape the curriculum, and recruited a Head Teacher to lead the kindergarten English teachers and curriculum. The Head Foreign Teacher and Korean homeroom teachers reported to me during my interim Vice-Principal assignment.

I also led small-group classes at OrangeCat Education Centers for children aged five to eight. The sessions used learning through play and practical, real-life interactions in English. I worked with parents and a Korean-language facilitator on feedback conversations and progress reports. This work taught me to make learning visible to families: what a student can do now, what they are practising, and what the next step will be. Across the wider role, I supported academic quality and curriculum implementation across multiple campuses.

Team Manager and Education Programme Coordinator

Son's Edu • Daegu, South Korea • November 2016 to January 2022

I coordinated elementary and middle-school programmes across four branches while continuing to teach Advanced Elementary and Middle School Integrated Communication. Those classes brought reading, speaking and listening together. I prepared learners for the English demands they would meet in IB and American curriculum studies, and taught English for SAT to non-native English speakers planning to study in the United States. I introduced "Beyond the Book", a critical-thinking and debating programme that asked students to support their ideas, listen carefully and respond to one another.

From November 2016 to November 2018, I also co-led the elementary department at Sangin Junior. I taught Reading and Speaking, coordinated special events and advanced programmes, and helped colleagues keep teaching consistent across classes. My programme work was strongest when it connected a clear academic purpose with lessons teachers could actually deliver and students could understand.

When COVID-19 closures required a rapid shift to online learning, I helped coordinate the move of more than 1,000 students and 40 educators within 72 hours. I supported teachers as they adapted humanities and literacy materials for online instruction. The urgency was real, but so was the need to keep the learning understandable and the communication steady for students, families and staff.

Language meets inquiry.

Head Teacher and Talent Development Lead

Son's Edu • Daegu, South Korea • November 2013 to November 2016

I taught Social Studies, Cultural Studies, Geography, Advanced Literature, English communication, reading comprehension and writing to upper-elementary, middle-school and high-school learners. I designed interdisciplinary, project-based lessons that linked humanities content with communication and literacy. I adapted materials to students' age and English proficiency, and used discussion, structured tasks and technology-supported activities to keep learners involved in the work.

Alongside teaching, I observed classes and mentored teachers in lesson planning, classroom management and student engagement. I focused feedback on practical changes a teacher could try, then followed up on what happened in the classroom. Curriculum and instructional development during this period was associated with a reported 30% increase in student satisfaction and a 25% improvement in teacher performance scores. These were programme-level results, not outcomes attributable to my work alone, and the source records do not specify the measurement method or baseline.

EFL Teacher

E. Bo Young's Talking Club • Daegu, South Korea • September 2012 to September 2013

I taught learners aged six to sixteen across English communication, reading, literature, writing, cultural studies and media literacy. Students came with different levels of confidence and English ability, so I adapted explanations and materials rather than expecting one lesson format to fit everyone. I developed seasonal intensive programmes and also taught Business English seminars to adults, which gave me experience shifting my examples, pace and classroom relationship for a different audience.

Learning across borders.

Volunteer English Teacher

Teach and Learn with Georgia • Tsalenjikha, Georgia • October 2011 to July 2012

English was introduced into the school curriculum in the year I began teaching there. I taught mixed-level Grades 1 to 6, following the British curriculum, with a focus on literacy, speaking and cultural studies. I also ran after-school English Communication and Culture Studies classes for high-school students and taught adults, including local teachers and healthcare professionals.

The work called for flexibility. Learners had different starting points, and the school was building experience with English as a new subject. I adapted lessons to the group, helped organise school cultural events and supported English-language performances. Those events gave students another setting in which to use English and take part in school life.

Research Assistant Lecturer, History

Stellenbosch University • Stellenbosch, South Africa • January 2010 to July 2011

At Stellenbosch University I delivered lectures and tutorials in History and Curriculum Studies, including History for students preparing to become educators. I developed curriculum and assessment materials for programmes serving more than 300 undergraduate students and supported learners with academic research and writing. This early university role strengthened my interest in how content is selected, explained and assessed, and in the different kinds of support students need to work independently.

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Supporting learners. Supporting teachers.

Teacher development and learning design

Teacher development has run alongside my classroom work for much of my career. I have recruited and trained educators, observed classes, modelled planning and given practical feedback. I have helped teachers work through classroom-management questions, strengthen engagement and adapt materials to learners' needs. At Son's Edu, I supported three Head Teachers as they moved into Foreign Teacher Manager roles in 2018, and later helped develop teachers and campus leaders across a growing, multi-campus organisation.

My approach to adult learning is much like my approach to teaching students: make the goal clear, connect the learning to a real situation, give people a chance to practise, and leave them with a next step they can use. I try to make feedback specific and respectful. People are more likely to act on feedback when they understand what is working, what needs attention and what they can try next.

I have also developed curriculum and learning materials across different ages and subjects. My project-based lessons linked humanities content with reading, writing and communication. I introduced critical-thinking and debating classes, designed seasonal intensive programmes, and developed elementary material during the Seoul transition. In each case, I aimed to give students a clear purpose for using English rather than treating language as a set of disconnected exercises.

Digital and blended learning

The COVID-19 transition tested whether learning could continue when classrooms suddenly closed. I helped coordinate the move online for more than 1,000 students and 40 educators in 72 hours, and supported teachers in adapting humanities and literacy material for remote lessons. The work depended on quick coordination, clear instructions and practical decisions about what could be taught effectively online.

After leaving Son's Edu, I led academic development for EngFlip's four-book flipped-learning English programme. The series covered reading comprehension, literature, cultural studies and progressive language development. I coordinated content development, editing, review and production so that the materials formed a coherent learning sequence. This work extended my classroom experience into the design of resources students could use beyond a live lesson.

Connection with a purpose.

Coaching and communication

In my current work with Talent Atlas, I coach job-seekers and professionals on career direction, applications, CV writing, interviews and workplace communication. This is not a school teaching role, but it draws on the same habits that matter in teaching and training: listening carefully, asking useful questions, noticing where someone is stuck, explaining options clearly and helping them turn a broad goal into manageable next steps. I also create tailored learning and career resources to support that process.

Across my teaching roles, communication has meant more than giving instructions. It has meant building rapport with learners, discussing progress with parents, working with Korean colleagues and explaining learning goals across cultural and language differences. I try to be clear without being abrupt, encouraging without making promises I cannot keep, and consistent enough that people know they can rely on me.

Teaching areas and learners

Learners: primary, upper-elementary, middle-school, high-school, university and adult learners. My early-years small-group teaching is part of my experience, though my current preference is for primary, secondary or adult roles rather than kindergarten or preschool positions.

English: communication, speaking, listening, reading, literacy, writing, literature, media literacy, Business English and SAT English for non-native speakers.

Humanities: History, Social Studies, Cultural Studies and Geography.

Approaches: clear modelling, guided practice, differentiated instruction, project-based learning, discussion, critical thinking, debate, storytelling, role-play and learning through play where appropriate.

Curriculum exposure: British curriculum teaching in Georgia, and preparation for the English demands of IB and American curriculum studies in South Korea. This describes teaching experience and preparation, not formal curriculum accreditation.

Always learning.

Education and professional development

Master's in International Human Resources Management, Rome Business School and International University of Valencia, 2020 to 2021.

Honours BA in History, Stellenbosch University, 2010 to 2011.

BA in International Studies, Stellenbosch University, 2007 to 2009.

TESOL Certification, Arizona State University, in progress.

Teaching Techniques: Project-Based Learning, Daegu Metropolitan Office of Education.

Uncommon Sense Teaching, Deep Teaching Solutions.

Languages

English, native. Afrikaans, native. German, intermediate.

What I bring to a teaching team

I bring first-hand classroom experience across age groups, subjects and countries, along with the perspective of someone who has helped develop programmes and support teachers. I enjoy the human side of teaching: getting to know how students learn, finding a way to make a difficult idea clearer, and seeing a learner become more willing to speak or take part. I bring energy, but I pair it with preparation, routines and respect. My aim is for students to feel that the class is active, that the teacher is present, and that their effort is leading somewhere.

 LET'S START A CONVERSATION

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