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**The teaching and learning of English at secondary school  
level in South Korea: The curriculum and its  
implementation**

**A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements of the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
at  
The University of Waikato**

**by  
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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the professional attitudes and practices of a sample of teachers of English in South Korean secondary schools in the context of a focus point-based analysis of the South Korean national curriculum and a sample of widely used textbooks.

There has been widespread criticism of the teaching of English in South Korea since the curriculum reforms that were first manifested in the 6<sup>th</sup> national curriculum. That curriculum, later superseded by the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum and a number of curriculum amendments, was the first major attempt to respond on a national level to the impact of globalisation and, in particular, to the rapidly increasing use throughout the world of English as a lingua franca.

At the core of the research reported here is language teacher cognition. The backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes and professional practices of a sample of Korean teachers of English in secondary schools are explored using a mixed methods approach that combines questionnaire-based surveys and semi-structured interviews with classroom observation. Surrounding and contextualising this aspect of the research is analysis of the 7<sup>th</sup> South Korean national curriculum as it relates to English and a sample of English language textbooks used in South Korean secondary schools.

Problems associated with the teaching and learning of English in South Korean schools have been widely attributed to three main factors - teachers' lack of an adequate level of oral proficiency in English, the fact that the national examination system is inconsistent with the general direction of teaching reforms, and student resistance to communicatively-orientated teaching. The findings of this research project suggest that although these issues are very real ones, there are other issues which are of equal or greater significance but which have been the subject of very little criticism. The first of these is the nature of the national curriculum itself. Close analysis of the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum documentation uncovered a number of critical issues associated with the authors' interpretation of some of the literature in the area of communicatively-orientated language teaching

along with a number of internal inconsistencies. These things, taken together, were found to result in an overall lack of transparency and coherence. The second problem identified relates to the nature of the textbooks which are made available to teachers. The authors of the textbooks analysed as part of this research project had clearly attempted to be as faithful as possible to the curriculum, selecting much of their content directly from lists of decontextualised phrases and sentences that appear in appendices to the curriculum document and providing, in teachers' guides, actual lesson scripts in English which are, in some cases, accompanied by anticipated student utterances (which are uncannily correct and/ or appropriate).

In view of all of this, it was not surprising to find that many of the teachers who took part in this research project indicated that they were struggling to cope with what they believed was expected of them. What *was* surprising was the nature of the language lessons that were analysed. It is widely claimed that grammar translation is still practised in parts of Asia, including South Korea. However, grammar translation was not in evidence in these lessons. Nor were audio-lingual methodology or any of the various manifestations of communicative language teaching. Although each of the lessons was very different, what they shared was a sense of theatre in which the teachers, generally occupying centre stage, seemed concerned, above all, to demonstrate their own oral proficiency in English.

The South Korean government has spent a vast amount of money in an attempt to resolve problems associated with the teaching and learning of English. Much of that money has been spent on providing in-service teacher training opportunities. However, unless the problems relating to the nature of the curriculum documentation itself are resolved, it seems unlikely that any of that expenditure will result in a significant change for the better.

**Key words:** English language teaching in South Korean secondary schools; language teacher cognition; lesson observation; questionnaire-based surveys; semi-structured interviews; textbook analysis; South Korean English language textbooks; the South Korean national curriculum for English; the teaching and learning of English in South Korea

## **Dedication**

This thesis is gratefully dedicated to my late loving father, Heungyoon Oh. He taught me and my siblings how we should live by showing us his attitude to the life. He was always upright and honest and also always had faith in human nature. He taught us the importance of communication and logic in overcoming complications. He gave me many opportunities to improve myself and was always unstinting in his support and praise. During his last month, in spite of his illness, he always had in mind the exact date I would visit him. His endless love will be felt forever.

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I owe a very significant debt of gratitude to Gwangju Educational Office in Korea for allowing me to take study leave and to all of those teachers of English in Korea who have participated in the research by taking time out of their busy schedules to complete questionnaires, take part in interviews and provide me with recorded lessons. Without their cooperation, this research project would have been impossible. Many thanks are also due to friends and former colleagues who have supported me in so many ways – by distributing questionnaires, seeking out lesson recordings for me to analyse and providing me with textbooks and teachers' guides that were otherwise not available to me.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction to the research**

### **1.1 Introduction to English and English language education in South Korea**

As is the case in many other parts of the world, globalisation and, with it, the widespread use of English as a common language have had a profound impact on South Korean society, with English being used increasingly in many areas of public life, including television and radio programmes, commercial advertisements and popular music (see, for example, discussion in J. S. Lee, 2004). In fact, English/ Korean code mixing and code switching are becoming increasingly commonplace (Shim, 1994). English is now taught from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in elementary schools and is a required subject in university entrance examinations. English language proficiency has become a key component of the job market. What we are experiencing in South Korea has been described as ‘English fever’ (Krashen, 2003). English language kindergartens are increasingly popular in spite of high tuition fees; many school students (both junior and senior) attend English camps run by native speakers; thousands of children are sent overseas to study English every year and there has been a huge increase in the number of ‘split families’ in which one parent stays in Korea while the other lives with the children in a predominantly English speaking country in order to secure an English medium education for them (J. Lee, 2010). In addition, the vast majority of school-aged students are enrolled in *hagwon* (private educational institutes)<sup>1</sup>, one of the main aims being to improve their English language proficiency. It remains the case, however, that some young people have little or no access to English language learning outside of school.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Statistics Korea, 81.7% of students aged 9-11 and 79.2% of students aged 12-17 enrolled in English hagwon in 2013.

The official Korean response to the increasing influence of English world-wide has been multi-faceted. There has, for example, been a plan to create three ‘special economic zones’ in the west of Seoul with English as the official language and it has been suggested that English should become the official language in certain special economic zones (Shin, 2007). In 2008, the Presidential Transition Committee for Lee’s administration put forward a proposal (the English Education Roadmap) that all public schools should move to English immersion education within the next five years (at an estimated cost of 4.25 billion dollars), in order, in part, to reduce household expenditure on private English language education. This proposal was withdrawn within five days as a result of vigorous public opposition on the grounds that it was unrealistic (Lee, 2010). Also withdrawn has been a plan to replace by 2016 the very traditional English section of the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) by a National English Ability Test (NEAT) which would have had a strong focus on speaking and writing. This withdrawal followed years of development at a cost of approximately 42.5 billion won (US \$41 million). Among the reasons given for the failure to go ahead with the implementation of the NEAT was the fact that teachers were not ready to teach speaking and writing skills adequately and the fact that the new test could lead to a rise in private tuition costs as parents/caregivers sought to prepare their children for the new test. However, concerns were also raised about the validity and reliability of the test instrument (Questions remain over billions blown on NEAT: *Korea Times*, May 21 2014).

A further response has been the production of the sixth and seventh South Korean National Curriculum Revisions (Ministry of Education (Korea), 1992 & 1997) which encapsulated a fundamental change in attitude to the teaching and learning of English. That change has been widely characterised as involving a shift away from a behaviourist-orientated, grammar-centred and teacher-dominated approach characterised by grammar translation towards a rationalist-based, communicatively-orientated and learner-centred approach characterised by what is generally referred to as ‘communicative language teaching’ (see, for example, the discussion in B. M. Chang, 2009). The seventh curriculum revision document has remained largely in place, providing the framework and fundamental content

in relation to which subsequent amendments (also referred to, however, as ‘curriculum revisions’) are located.<sup>2</sup>

It is now almost two decades since the sixth curriculum revision was produced and there has been time for those involved in English language education in South Korea to begin to come to terms with the fundamental changes that that curriculum revision signalled. Even so, many of the problems that emerged in the very early stages of the attempt to implement the curriculum recommendations have persisted in spite of the very considerable efforts made by the Ministry of Education to provide an adequate level of support<sup>3</sup>. In fact, there are some indications that teacher support for a communicatively-orientated approach may be reducing rather than increasing (Jeon, 2009). It may even be that the seventh national curriculum document and amendments to it will eventually be withdrawn or replaced in much the same way as have a range of other initiatives relating to English.

## **1.2 Personal motivation for the research**

English was not available as a regular course in primary schools when I was of primary school age and my only real exposure to the language was through my older sisters’ English textbooks. Looking over their shoulders as they studied these books, I became fascinated with this curious language but there were few opportunities to learn English in private institutions in those days and so there was nothing I could do except wait until I was old enough to go to middle school and begin my English language education.

So far as I remember, almost all of the English classes I attended were taught according to the grammar-translation or audio-lingual approaches or some combination of the two. Using textbooks authorised by the Ministry of Education was mandatory. The teacher read from the textbook, translating into Korean sentence by sentence. The students read after the teacher (or, sometimes, after listening to an audio tape). There were frequent vocabulary tests. To be

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<sup>2</sup> There were Curriculum Revisions in 2007 and 2009, and another is expected in the near future (in 2015).

<sup>3</sup> References are made to some of these initiatives in *Chapter 4* following.

acknowledged as a student who was good at English, you had to understand English grammar and score well on English exams.

Later, after graduating from the English education department of an education college at a university and taking the Teacher Recruitment Examination, I became an English teacher myself. I was surprised to discover that very little had changed. Certainly, the textbooks looked more appealing. They had many colourful illustrations and were divided into skills-based sections (reading; writing; listening; speaking). Certainly, there was a growing emphasis on listening and speaking skills, with advances in technology allowing for the use of CD or computer files instead of audio tapes. However, the fundamental approach was the same as it had been when I was a student at secondary school.

I was not satisfied with the situation. I wanted to teach more than the content of textbooks and I wanted to teach differently. Consequently, when I had had five years of teaching experience, I decided to undertake further study and enrolled for a Master's degree in the area of British and American Literature. Why I chose to do that rather than to undertake study that related directly to language teaching I cannot now be sure. It certainly had something to do with the fact that I did not, at that stage, make any clear distinction between proficiency and pedagogy. I believed that if I developed my English language proficiency further, effective pedagogy would somehow follow. This was not, of course, the case. However, secondary schools in South Korea had begun to appoint native speakers of English as teaching assistants. In spite of the fact that most of them had no teaching qualifications, their approach to teaching, possibly reflecting the way in which they themselves had been taught, was very different from what I had experienced before. There were no training programmes that encouraged Korean teachers to work collaboratively with these assistant teachers but, even so, I watched and began to learn that a totally different approach from the one with which I was familiar was possible.

In spite of the fact that I was beginning to understand that it was possible to adopt a different approach to teaching English, I continued to do much the same as I had

done in the past. Public school teachers transferred from one school to another every four years and, to make the transition less problematic, it was easier to stick to the textbook, set traditional-style examination questions and try to keep on top of the endless paper work.

There have been endless, highly vocal complaints from almost every section of Korean society about the fact that young people learn English at school for more than ten years and still lack fluency in the language. It is English language teachers who are generally blamed for this and yet it seemed to me that the entire system was conspiring against them. In general, all of them, like me, were trying to do a good job but they were being pulled in different directions. Parents and caregivers wanted their children to be fluent in English but they also wanted them to do well in national examinations and these examinations prioritised grammatical understanding. Throughout many parts of the world, education was becoming increasingly learner-centred but the English language education that Korean teachers had experienced themselves was teacher-dominated and the pre-service teacher training they had experienced was often theoretically rather than practically orientated. When English teachers had meetings, these meetings were generally dominated by day-to-day concerns, such as setting exams, arranging school functions, or allocating times for demonstration lessons.

The national curriculum seemed perfectly sensible to me and the textbooks seemed fine too. Even so, I was making little progress in my attempt to improve my teaching. In spite of my best efforts, it seemed to me that I was part of the problem about which there had been so much public agonising. In this context, I decided that the best I could do was to attend as many in-service teacher training sessions, those run by the local education and those run by the English teachers' association, as I possibly could. In spite of this, all I really gained was some ideas for introducing a few tasks into my teaching repertoire.

Since nothing I had done seemed to be making any real difference, I decided to enrol to do PhD research in a country where English was the dominant language and in an institution where there were opportunities to attend language teacher

training sessions. The research itself, it seemed to me, needed to be as wide-ranging as possible. I wanted to be open to different perspectives and, above all, I wanted to listen to the voices of English teachers themselves. There had been many attempts in the past to identify and remedy whatever the problem was in relation to the teaching and learning of English in South Korea but these had often been top-down, narrowly focused or both.

### **1.3 Research aims and research questions**

The purpose of the research project reported here was to explore actual and potential barriers to effective curriculum design and implementation in the case of the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in South Korea by analysing, in terms of their overall positioning in relation to second language acquisition research, each of the following:

- a) the national curriculum for English in schools;
- b) the content of a range of widely used textbooks;
- c) the background and training of a sample of teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea in relation to their beliefs about language learning, and the interaction between these beliefs and their actual teaching practices.

The research was underpinned by three key research questions, each of which had several related parts:

1. What recommendations are made in the national curriculum for the teaching of English in schools in South Korea in relation to (1) syllabus content, and (2) teaching approach and methodologies, how consistent are these recommendations when the document as a whole is taken into account and what assumptions (about teachers, teacher training and language teaching and learning) underpin these recommendations?
2. To what extent are the contents of a sample of textbooks designed for the teaching of English in secondary schools in South Korea and approved by the Korean Ministry of Education are consistent with the national

curriculum and the recommendations and assumptions made in it and what impact is this consistency, or lack of it, likely to have on teachers and learners of English?

3. What are the professional backgrounds, beliefs and practices of a sample of teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea and how consistent are their backgrounds, beliefs and practices with the recommendations and assumptions made in the national curriculum and the theoretical positioning of its authors?

#### **1.4 Overview of the thesis**

Following the current chapter, which provides an overview of the research, is a critical review of selected literature on language teacher cognition with particular reference to the teaching and learning of English in South Korea, the main emphasis being on pre-service and in-service training, methodological priorities and preferences, use of the target language as the language of instruction, attitudes towards textbooks and the impact of culture on teaching and learning and teaching and learning resources (*Chapter 2*). The next chapter (*Chapter 3*) provides a brief introduction to the research methodology and the research methods and instruments used, more specific details of the application of particular research methods being provided in the introductory sections of the relevant chapters.

*Chapters 4 through 8* deal directly with the research conducted. The first of these chapters reports on an analysis of the South Korean national curriculum which centres on a number of focus points: proficiency targets and achievement objectives; teaching/ learning content; teaching approaches/ methods; medium of instruction; approaches to assessment; and cultural content. Each of the focus point-based analysis sections is preceded by a background section in which literature relevant to the focus point in question is introduced (*Chapter 4*).

Following this is a chapter that reports on the first of two questionnaire-based surveys of a sample of teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea. This one focused on the teachers' professional backgrounds, their knowledge,

attitudes and opinions in relation to a range of language educational policies and practices, and their assessment of their own proficiency in English (*Chapter 5*). The next chapter reports on the second questionnaire-based survey, one that focused on pre-service and in-service training, and on semi-structured interviews which also focused on pre-service and in-service training (*Chapter 6*).

The two chapters that report on the findings of questionnaire-based surveys and semi-structured interviews are followed by a chapter which reports on the focus point-based analysis of a sample of textbooks approved by the Korean Ministry of Education that are widely used in South Korean secondary schools. Here, the focus points are: language content and presentation; tasks and activities; medium of instruction; approaches to teaching and learning; and cultural content (*Chapter 7*).

The next chapter reports on the focus point-based analysis of a sample of English lessons taught in South Korean secondary schools, the emphasis being on language content and presentation; tasks and activities; medium of instruction; and approach to teaching and learning (*Chapter 8*).

The final chapter provides an overview of the findings of the research project as a whole in relation, in particular, to the ways in which these findings relate to aspects of research reported in the literature review. There is, in addition, a discussion of the limitations of the research as well as its potential significance. Recommendations based on the research findings are made and possible directions for future research are proposed (*Chapter 9*).

## **Chapter 2**

# **Critical review of selected literature on language teacher cognition with particular reference to the teaching and learning of English in South Korea**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a critical review of selected literature on language teacher cognition (LTC) with particular reference to the South Korean context. In order to provide context necessary for what follows, the chapter begins with a brief introduction to the South Korean national curriculum for English (2.2). This is followed by a section outlining what is involved in LTC research (2.3). The next section introduces and discusses a range of publications that focus on the teaching and learning of English in South Korea. Although the majority of these publications are LTC-based, a few do not relate directly to LTC but provide context for the discussion of LTC-based publications (2.4). The main focus points are pre-service and in-service training (2.4.1), methodological priorities and preferences (2.4.2), use of the target language as the language of instruction (2.4.3), attitudes towards textbooks (2.4.4), and culture in the context of English language teaching (2.4.5). The chapter ends with some final comments (2.5).

### **2.2 Introducing the South Korean national curriculum for English**

There has been widespread approval of the South Korean national curriculum as it relates to English. Thus, for example, writing in the mid-1990s with reference to the 6<sup>th</sup> national curriculum (the version that preceded the current one), I-D. Kim (1994) noted that it was innovative in the sense that it placed comprehension before production, strengthened vocabulary and suggested examples for communicative functions, removing previously included grammatical structures (p. 4). He maintained that this was positive in the sense that it could “strengthen understanding of communicative functions and lead to inductive learning of grammar”. B. M. Chang (2009) agrees with the general direction of Kim’s positioning, noting with reference to the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> national curricula, that “the policies of English education in Korea have developed in the direction of

cultivating the communicative competence of Korean learners” (p. 83). He refers to the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum as introducing a ‘proficiency- based system’ in which, at elementary school, “students are taught in the same class or grade, but are divided into an intensive or supplementary group according to their achievement levels” (pp. 88-89). He also notes that, whereas “English as a required subject applies from the third grade of elementary school through to the first grade of high school”, “English as an elective subject applies in the case of the second and third grades of high school [only]” (p. 88). In his view, the curriculum is intended “to foster accuracy and fluency by presenting communicative functions and example sentences” (p. 89). In addition, he notes that the English section of the 1993 College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) involved “a historic decision because . . . it was the first time for the listening comprehension test to be administered in the national college entrance examination” (p. 93).

Whereas both I-D. Kim (1994) and B. M. Chang (2009) express very positive views about the nature, intent and impact of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> national curricula as they relate to the teaching of English, others are more sceptical, their reasons including lack of a Korean perspective, absence of theoretical underpinning and limited functional exponents.

Li’s (1998) reservations about the curriculum relate to the lack of a Korean perspective. He notes that “[despite] the widespread adoption of communicative language teaching (CLT) in ESL countries, research suggests that curricular innovations prompted by the adoption of CLT in EFL countries have generally been difficult” (p. 677). He has argued that the difficulties experienced in attempting to adopt a communicative approach relate largely to differences between the underlying pedagogic perspectives of Asian and Western teachers, an argument that has been forwarded by a number of scholars and refuted by a number of others (see 2.4.3 and 2.4.4 below). For Kwon (1995) also, a critical issue is the lack of any real attempt to Koreanise (‘한국화’) the proposals, with the work of local researchers appearing to have been disregarded. He also noted the absence of reference to any empirical research to support the curriculum’s

theoretical positioning (p. 125). Chang's (2003) reservations relate specifically to the nature of the curriculum's functional orientation. Chang administered a number of discourse completion tasks which were randomly selected from middle school English textbooks to 50 South Korean middle school students and 50 South Korean university students. She found that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of the expressions used for thanking, apologising, requesting and offering, the language used being 'very limited' compared with "that which has been suggested by Aijmer" in relation to these functions (p. 40). Furthermore, the frequency order for expressions was similar to that found in the analysis of six middle school English textbooks produced on the basis of the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum. Chang concluded that "it is not sufficient to present the list of communicative functions and expressions which have been presented since the 6<sup>th</sup> national curriculum" (p. 41). Instead, she argues that what is needed is the development of a more multi-layered syllabus than is evident, she believes, in the case of the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum.

Also sceptical about curriculum and curriculum-related developments is Li (1998) who notes that "[despite] the widespread adoption of communicative language teaching (CLT) in ESL countries, research suggests that curricular innovations prompted by the adoption of CLT in EFL countries have generally been difficult" (p. 677). On the basis of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 18 South Korean secondary school English language teachers who were participating in a one month training programme, he argued that the difficulties experienced in attempting to adopt a communicative approach relate largely to differences between the underlying pedagogic perspectives of Asian and Western teachers, an argument that has been forwarded by a number of scholars and refuted by a number of others (see 2.4.3 and 2.4.4 below).

For discussion of the content of the 7<sup>th</sup> South Korean national curriculum as it relates to the teaching and learning of English, see *Chapter 3*.

### **2.3 Introducing language teacher cognition research**

Language teacher cognition (LTC) research has been described as research that investigates not only "what language teachers think, know and believe", but also the relationship between their knowledge, thoughts and beliefs and their

classroom practices (Borg, 2006, p. 1). It focuses on the interaction between mental and observable aspects of behaviour (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 258) with a view to “understanding teachers’ professional actions, not what or how they think in isolation from what they do” (Borg, 2003, p. 105). Language teaching cognition research may, for example, focus on methodology, teacher training, culture or textbooks.

In the area of **methodology**, Kervas-Doukas (1996) and Sato and Kleinsasser (1999; 2004) have noted that teachers’ beliefs about methodology can differ significantly from their actual classroom practices. Thus, for example, with reference to a survey of sixteen Greek teachers of English, Kervas-Doukas (1996) concluded that “most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, [when] in practice they are following more traditional approaches” (p. 187). Sato and Kleinsasser (1999), in a study of 10 teachers of Japanese in Australian high schools, observed that, for these teachers, CLT was seen, even as late as the very end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as involving listening and speaking, with reading and writing playing a very secondary role, and as including little or no focus on grammar. They also noted that although these teachers claimed to do some things in their classrooms that are consistent with CLT (e.g. role playing), they did not believe that CLT could actually be implemented in language classes because of the preparation time and individual attention that it required. In fact, in a study of English lessons taught in schools in Taiwan, Wang (2008) found that even where explicit grammatical instruction was avoided, the lessons were generally not communicatively orientated.

In LTC studies based in Japan, Brown and Wada (1998) noted the negative impact of entrance examinations on methodology in the teaching of English, while Gorsuch (2000 & 2001), Sakui (2004), Taguchi (2005) and O’Donnell (2005) noted the persistence in Japan, in spite of a communicatively-orientated curriculum, of teacher-centred, grammar translation-based lessons. Nishino & Watanabe (2008, p. 135) identified five main contextual factors that acted as barriers to the implementation of communicatively-orientated teaching in Japan, including large class sizes, learners’ expectations and out-of-class experiences,

and the limited availability of native English speaking teaching assistants. Nishino (2008 & 2011), on the other hand, identified entrance examinations and classroom conditions as the two main inhibiting factors, while Rapley (2009) identified the extent of extra-school activities as playing a significant inhibiting role. So far as Kanda & Beglar (2004), Butler and Iino (2005) and Nishimuro and Borg (2013) are concerned, however, teachers' resistance to change and their own preference for a decontextualized, form-focused approach play a critical role in inhibiting change in the direction of communicative orientation. This finding in relation to teachers' methodological preferences was echoed by a study conducted by Chia (2003) in Singapore, where the 96 primary school teachers involved preferred explicit grammar teaching and drilling even though most were well aware of alternatives. As Phipps and Borg (2009) have noted, day-to-day classroom experiences may have more impact on decision making than beliefs about effective teaching and learning formed as a result of training.

So far as **teacher training programmes** are concerned, opinion is divided in terms of their effectiveness. Some have maintained that they may have a significant impact (e.g. Sariscany & Pettigrew, 1997); others that it may have little or no impact (e.g. Richardson, 1996). There are also those who have observed that the effect of training, even of the same training programmes, can be very different in the case of different participants (e.g. Borg, 2003) and/or that the impact of training may be delayed (Fullan, 1991 & 2001). One factor that is clearly of significance is the quality of the training programme itself. As Wang (2008) notes with reference to the Taiwanese situation, some training programmes represent an inadequate reflection of curriculum requirements. Another factor that may have an effect on the impact of training is the presence or absence of prior teaching experience (Richards, Tung & Ng, 1992).

Language teachers have often reported that their training programmes have been of little practical benefit to them (e.g. Spada & Massey, 1992; Wang, 2008). In connection with this, a number of researchers have noted the importance in teacher training of the inclusion of a practicum (e.g. Urmston, 2003). However, the fact that a practicum may be ineffective has also been noted (e.g. Kizuka,

2006; Smagorinsky, Cook & Johnson, 2003; Wang, 2008), as has the fact that the impact of training, including practical aspects of training, may be significantly reduced over time (e.g. Watzke, 2007). Also significant may be the impact of prior experiences (e.g. Crandall, 2000; Riley, 2009). Even where beliefs emerging out of prior experiences are patently inadequate, they may still have a significant negative impact on the extent to which the content of training programmes affects teacher behaviours (Borg, 2003).

In the area of **culture**, the focus of LTC studies has been on the impact of culture on teaching approaches and methods. Thus, for example, Takanashi (2004) has observed that the Japanese respect for harmony and face-saving creates difficulties in relation to implementing a communicatively-orientated approach that inevitably involves risk taking, while Harumi (2011) notes that the traditional Japanese respect for silence in potentially divisive situations can have a similar effect.

There is widespread disagreement about the nature of language textbooks and the nature of their impact on language teaching (see, for example, Cathcart, 1989). Kobayakawa (2011a & b) found that widely used English language textbooks intended for Japanese high school students focused, in the area of writing, on translation and controlled writing tasks, largely neglecting freer writing tasks and, therefore, being inconsistent with the actual emphasis in the Japanese curriculum. Furthermore, Yamamori, Fujita, Takechi, Hata, and Ito (2003) found that the Japanese textbooks they examined focused largely on dialogues (of a very limited type) and that there was a limited number of discourse patterns in evidence. Focusing on the activities included in Japanese senior high school oral communication textbooks, Ogura (2008) noted that almost none of them were communicatively orientated. As Sato and Kleinsasser (2004, p. 13) note, some teachers may rely heavily on textbooks, in part, because of a desire to avoid communicatively orientated activities. Even so, J. F. Chang (2007), in a study conducted in Taiwan, found that although almost all of the 256 participants in the study used textbooks, less than half of them believed that these textbooks represented a valuable teaching resource.

It is almost a decade since Borg (2006, p.1) noted that there had been a surge of interest in LTC research as it related to the teaching of English over the preceding fifteen years. Since then, research activity in the area has increased rapidly (see, for example, Barnard & Burns, 2012; NeSmith, 2012; Wang, 2008).

The focus of this review is not on LTC research in general, but on LTC research that relates directly to the teaching of English in the South Korean context. Occasionally, in order to provide a context for the discussion of LTC-based research, research that is not itself LTC-based is included.

## **2.4 The teaching of English in South Korea: Language teacher cognition-based research**

### **2.4.1 Pre-service and in-service training**

As it relates to the teaching of English, pre-service and in-service training in South Korea has been the subject of negative criticism, relating, in particular, to variability of quality and coverage and failure to meet trainee needs. Thus, for example, writing at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>. century, H. S. Kim (2000) notes that although “[h]igh quality pre-service training . . . is the starting point for enhancing a high quality teaching force” and although “the Korean government has launched an annual and periodic . . . system . . . to evaluate the quality of . . . teacher education institutions”, “achieving high quality . . . teacher training is still a goal, rather than an accomplishment” (p. 55). This is also in spite of the fact that “opportunities for in-service training [have] been increased according to an ‘accumulated credit system’” in which credits gained are relevant to promotion and compensation (p. 65). Kim identified each of the following as problematic with reference to implementation of the current South Korean national curriculum as it related to the teaching and learning of English:

- teachers were not yet prepared for teaching students on the basis of the students’ capabilities;
- the areas covered in teacher training courses depended on the expertise of faculty members and so courses could be selective and very narrow;

- conditions in teacher training institutions were poor, as was the quality of teaching staff;
- average class sizes were high, as were administrative requirements, creating a difficult situation for teachers.

Among the attempts to improve language teacher training (both pre-service and in-service) in South Korea, has been the implementation of a Cyber Teacher Training Center (CTTC) involving a software platform for managing online in-service teacher training. However, on the basis of informal interviews with several online in-service providers and the views of learners, Jung (2001) concluded that there were a number of problems associated with the training, including a lack of interaction between instructors and teachers (p. 9). This was due in part, he argued, to the other duties of the instructors and, in part, to the fact that many of the instructors lacked the necessary skills to facilitate participants' online interaction (pp. 8 – 9). Once again, then, the issue of trainer skills has been highlighted.

While there have been a number of important developments in Korea in the area of teacher education, H. S. Kim (2000), S-D. Kim (2008) and Jung (2001) have observed that there have been problems associated with these developments. With reference to a study conducted in 2000 by the Korean Institute for Curriculum Evaluation which involved questionnaires completed by 48 trainee middle school teachers, S-D. Kim (2008) notes that the teachers had judged the training to be ‘average’ overall and had noted that there was a need for:

- more practically orientated training programmes and materials;<sup>4</sup>
- instructors with more expertise in issues relating directly to schools and classrooms;<sup>5</sup> and
- more open discussion and more feedback.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Translation of: 현장에서 실제적으로 활용 가능한 프로그램과 자료

<sup>5</sup> Translation of: 교육과정 및 교육평가 전문가와 실질적인 학교 현장의 전문가

<sup>6</sup> Translation of: 자유로운 토론의 장을 마련하여 활발한 질의응답, 피드백 제시

This issue of trainee expertise has featured in all of the research referred to thus far. Also relevant to the issue of instructor expertise is the issue of the extent to which instructors are aware of and responsive to trainee concerns. There has, in fact, been research that has focused on a lack of fit between trainees' perceptions of their needs and those of their trainers. Thus, Chon (2012) conducted a research project involving fifty-two informants who were taking part in training relating to teaching English in Korea (26 secondary school teachers; 12 middle school teachers; and 14 high school teachers). The overall aim of that project was to determine how these teachers assessed their own proficiency in English and how these assessments related to the assessments of their training providers. Most of the informants in Chon's (2012) study believed that their grammatical competence was 'good', but that their speaking and listening skills were less than 'good'. However, when asked to identify their trainees' weaknesses in a number of areas (speaking; listening; pronunciation; grammar; and vocabulary), their native English speaking instructors identified only one of the trainees as having a weakness in the area of speaking and five as having a weakness in the area of listening. The numbers identified by the instructors as having weaknesses in each of the other areas were: pronunciation (3); grammar (10); and vocabulary (7). According to Chon, the instructors were failing to attend to those issues that were of particular concern to the teachers, while focusing largely on "trivial grammatical errors" (p. 141) and "mispronunciations that are relatively minor" (p. 129). This may have been, in part at least, the reason for the marked difference between the students' self-assessed proficiency levels and the proficiency levels that their trainers assigned to them. Thus, for example, of the twenty-six informants who assessed their own oral proficiency on a four point scale (beginner; elementary; intermediate; advanced), 24 (92%) located themselves in the bottom two categories, whereas their instructors considered the overall proficiency of all of them to be in the top two categories. It would appear, according to Chon, that the instructors' estimates of their students' overall proficiency were a response, largely, to surface fluency whereas the students themselves were more aware of the need for accuracy.

The South Korean national curriculum for English recommends that the teaching of English is conducted, as much as possible, through the medium of English (see *Chapter 4*). If, however, English teachers in South Korea are not being encouraged during their training to attend to their own accuracy, it is likely that they will be providing their students with faulty models, possibly leading to a situation in which fluency is seen as a substitute for accuracy rather than as an important accompaniment of it. In fact, in a study conducted by Li (1998), South Korean teacher participants identified as one of the difficulties of implementing communicatively-orientated teaching of English, the fact that there was a widespread misconception that CLT totally neglects accuracy in favour of fluency.

One of the most important programmes so far as the teaching of English in South Korea is concerned is the Intensive English language Training Program (IETP). While Min and Park (2013) note that this programme has been judged by a number of researchers to have had a positive impact on teachers' professional development, they also note that there has been a failure to address a number of problems associated with it that have been repeatedly raised. These include the need for a more practical course orientation; and for instructors with more appropriate backgrounds and experiences.

A further issue raised by Min and Park is the need for ongoing support for teachers following their involvement in professional development courses.

Research on South Korean-based training programmes designed to prepare trainees to teach English has identified a number of problems, most of which can be related, directly or indirectly, to trainer competencies.

#### **2.4.2 Methodological priorities and preferences**

The fact that the curriculum appears to favour a communicatively orientated approach has been the subject of much discussion. Thus, for example, Dusheimer and Gillett (2013) have claimed that in spite of the fact that curriculum documentation now recommends a communicatively orientated approach, “[the] Grammar-Translation Method has been, and continues to be, the preferred method

of instruction in Korean schools” (p.9). If this *is* the case, one of the reasons may be that the emphasis in teacher training programmes may continue to be on the development of English language proficiency (rather than language teaching skills) as it was, according to Im (1998), in the late 1990s.

An issue that has been raised in connection with the national curriculum is whether it takes account of the specific South Korean context in which the teaching of English takes place. This is an issue which inevitably has a bearing on the curriculum’s communicative orientation. As indicated above (see section 2.3), Kwon (1995) expressed the view that there has been a failure to Koreanise (“한국화”) proposals promoting communicatively-based approaches to the teaching of English. This raises issues associated with the ways in which CLT is interpreted in different contexts and the reasons for these differences.

One example of differences in the way in which CLT is interpreted has been provided by Mitchell and Lee (2003) who have reported on two case studies of mainstream beginner-level foreign language (FL) instruction, using observational and interview data gathered in schools in Seoul (South Korea) and in Southern England. In Southern England, the research participants were members of a group of 27 students aged between 11 and 12 who were learning French. In South Korea, the participants were members of a group of 40 students aged between 10 and 11 who were learning English. In each case, 20 lessons were recorded and analysed and this, together with interviews involving the teachers (both female and both experienced), was supplemented by a range of back-up documentation.

Although both of the teachers involved claimed allegiance to communicative language teaching (CLT), there were some major differences in how they interpreted it which led to differences in the nature of the classroom discourse and the language learning opportunities available to students. Thus, for example:

- although the English teacher of French attempted to make sure that each student had an opportunity to speak individually, the Korean teacher of

- English focused on groups rather than individuals, the groups being expected to participate collectively in teacher–student interactions;
- although both teachers code switched, the English teacher of French used French for approximately 95% of her utterances and expected the students to reply to questions in French, whereas the Korean teacher of English used Korean for classroom management, feedback to the students, and disciplinary purposes and did not expect the students to reply to questions in English.

A major difference was detected in the location of responsibility for learning. In the French class taught by the English teacher, individual students were expected to take responsibility for their own learning; in the English class taught by the Korean teacher, students were expected to share responsibility for the learning of their group “[through] an ongoing system of competition for merit points”, “group leaders were nominated, from among the most active and highest achieving students” and “often responded on behalf of their group” (Mitchell & Lee, p. 54).

Overall, Mitchell and Lee concluded that in neither case were all of the principles of CLT in action. Nevertheless, in both cases material was chosen for its functional usefulness, there was a focus on oral language and some group work was included. However:

Whether it reflects a ‘collectivist’ Asian ethos, or more local and pragmatic management decisions by a teacher faced with a large class, this model of differentiated student roles and group responsibility [found in the case of the Korean students] is very different from the ‘equal treatment’ seen in the Anglo classroom, yet it also functioned constructively to ensure inclusion and activity (p. 59).

Overall, “[despite] the widespread adoption of communicative language teaching (CLT) in ESL countries, research suggests that curricular innovations prompted by the adoption of CLT . . . have generally been difficult” (Li, 1998. p. 677). Li (1998) carried out a study involving eighteen South Korean secondary school EFL

teachers studying in the Korean Teacher Education Programme. All of these teachers completed a questionnaire and ten of them took part in semi-structured interviews. In the view of many of these teachers, communicative language teaching (CLT) was difficult to apply for a number of reasons, including (pp. 686 – 695):

1. problems relating to teachers' proficiency and/ or confidence;
2. problems relating to teachers' sociolinguistic or strategic competencies;
3. teachers' fear of losing face if unable to respond appropriately to student questions;
4. lack of systematic training and, consequently, sketchy understanding of what is involved in CLT, with widespread misconceptions, including the belief that CLT does not teach form at all and totally neglects accuracy in favour of fluency;
5. low levels of student proficiency;
6. large class sizes (often 48-50 students);
7. lack of student enthusiasm for CLT and resistance to it;
8. lack of effective communication-based examination strategies and systems, with largely grammar-based examinations (even with recent inclusion of some oral components).

Li (1998, p. 677) concluded that “the difficulties [reported] have their source in the differences between the underlying educational theories of South Korea and those of Western countries” (p. 677), adding that “EFL countries [such as South Korea] should establish their own contingent of language researchers in order to develop English teaching theories more suitable for their EFL contexts” (p. 677). Close examination of the reasons provided by the teachers for problems associated with the implementation of CLT does not, however, necessarily provide support for this conclusion. Of the eight reasons listed above:

- the first two relate to teacher competencies;
- the fourth relates to teacher training;

- the sixth relates to the physical and economic context in which teaching takes place;
- the eighth relates to a failure on the part of educational authorities to follow through on the implications of policy decisions; and
- the fifth is more likely to be a consequence of problems involved in implementing CLT rather than a cause of it.

This leaves only the third and seventh reasons (teachers' fear of losing face; and students' lack of enthusiasm for CLT and resistance to it). While both of these reasons might appear, at first sight, to be specific to certain Asian cultures as many have argued, often with particular reference to Confucian heritage (see, for example, Peng, 2007), this is not necessarily the case. What may be in operation here is a particularly prevalent form of stereotyping. As Cheng (2000) has argued, although “[cultural] attributes of Asian societies are often cited as the main causes for such alleged behaviour of reticence and passivity”, this “is a dangerous over-generalisation” (p. 435). Cheng posted on an English language teaching Internet site the view that Asian students are reticent and passive. Eighty per cent of the responses he received expressed disagreed. Cheng's general conclusion was that when Asian students appear unresponsive in class “the causes are situation specific” (p. 442). As Kumaravadivelu (2003) has observed, the attempt to separate culture out as a variable and “investigate its causal connection to classroom behaviour”, can “result in nothing but a one-dimensional caricature of . . . learners” (p. 714).

The conclusion reached by Cheng (2000), that is, that problems in implementing communicatively orientated teaching of English in South Korea are not necessarily primarily related to issues associated with Korean culture, is reinforced by a study conducted by McGrath (2001). That study, like the study conducted by Li (1998), focused on problems associated with the attempted reorientation of English teaching in South Korea towards a more communicative orientation. The study was conducted during the summer and fall of 1999. It involved two groups of participants who were attending courses at Kyungpook National University. The first group was made up of slightly more than 100

Korean English teachers from middle schools and high schools in South Gyeongsang province. The second group was made up of 100 graduate and undergraduate students. The participants were asked to discuss, in small groups, a number of questions commonly asked about English teaching and learning in Korean schools. At that point in time, approximately six years after the introduction of a more communicatively orientated curriculum, the consensus was that the new curriculum had not led to any significant change in approach to teaching, with grammar translation still being dominant (although more use was, apparently, being made of audio-visual equipment). The reasons forwarded were:

- the fact that teachers saw their primary duty as being to prepare their students for examinations;
- teachers' lack of confidence in their ability to speak English and to encourage their students to do so;
- students' resistance to CLT and lack of motivation to speak English outside of class;
- the general assumption that oral tests were too subjective; and
- the fact that few teachers had been trained in CLT and most had little understanding of it.

Reinforcing some of the issues listed above are comments by two Korean teachers who took part in a study by Butler (2005) in which elementary school teachers from South Korea, Japan and Taiwan were asked to comment on clips from videotaped lessons. The first comment below was made by a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (p. 435); the second by a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (p. 436):

We are not living in an English-speaking world. I hesitate to create an open-ended situation. To be honest with you, I often do not know how to say things correctly in English when I am asked by my students!

English class has lots of games but is not serious business and . . . this can eventually demotivate students.

While some of the studies already referred to have suggested that Korean teachers of English typically have a sketchy understanding of what is involved in CLT, a study by Jeon and Hahn (2006) involving 228 teachers at 38 different middle and high schools in Korea, found that the overall level of understanding of task-based CLT was relatively high. However, views about implementing task-based CLT were often negative and its use was often avoided, this avoidance being related in particular, according to the teachers, to the difficulties involved in (a) assessing learners' task-based performance, and (b) managing large classes in the context of task-based work. The fact, however, that a task-based version of CLT has been associated with specific implementation-related problems, does not mean that communicatively orientated programmes that are task-supported rather than task-based are subject to the same types of problem. Even so, the research of Jeon (2009) suggests that resistance to CLT in general is actually increasing.

Jeon (2009) conducted a study which aimed to determine the impact on Korean schools of the application of a communicative approach shortly after its initial introduction (in 1996) and again twelve years later (in 2008). She used a two-round Delphi technique involving 34 English teachers enrolled in a graduate seminar course. In the first round, the teachers were asked to identify issues they believed to be significant in relation to establishing a communicative approach in the Korean context. In the second round, the issues that had been identified were analysed and classified, with 17 remaining after those identified by fewer than five participants had been removed. The participants were then asked to rate these issues on a scale of 1 (unimportant) to 10 (most important), adding any further issues they wished. One further issue was added at this stage.

The five issues that were ranked highest on both occasions (1996 and 2008) were:

- having appropriate class sizes;
- providing opportunities for systematic in-service teacher training;
- improving pre-service teacher training programs;
- developing supplemental materials; and
- developing practical and interesting materials.

In connection with the issues listed above, it is relevant to note that:

- although average class sizes were reduced from 45-50 in 1996 to 30 – 37 in 2008, class size was rated the most significant issue on both occasions;
- it was noted on both occasions (1996 and 2008) that training was focused on English literature, linguistics, and non-practical accounts of methods;
- the topics covered and the textbooks available were felt on both occasions (1996 and 2008) to be neither practical nor interesting.

There were two major changes in responses in the 1996 and 2008 administrations. The first issue below was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in 1996 and 6<sup>th</sup> in 2008; the second issue below was rated 16<sup>th</sup> in 1996 and 9<sup>th</sup> in 2008:

- changing from education centred on passing a university entrance exam;
- promoting learner motivation and participation.

Interestingly, the extent of support for a communicative approach was lower in 2008. While 49% gave it the highest support rating in 1996, only 17.4 % did so in 2008. This suggests that while teachers may have been prepared to accept when it was initially promoted that problems associated with the implementation of CLT would disappear over time, they were less prepared to do so more than ten years later. Although participants' support for CLT was lower in 2008 than it was in 1996, their rating of their own oral proficiency increased significantly in the second administration, as did their degree of satisfaction with their teaching position.

Among the conclusions Jeon reached in relation to the implementation of CLT in South Korea on the basis of the study reported above were the following:

- there is a need for further public education about the value of the communicative approach;

- in spite of significant efforts to improve training programmes, the need for improvement and redirection remains;
- programmes need to be improved and redirected;
- the lack of fit between communicative goals and assessment methods (which do not focus on real world tasks) remains a serious problem.

Finally, Jeon notes that no single method is appropriate for all, adding that “[it] is time for Korean policy makers and practitioners to seek a Korean way to develop communicative competence in English”, a view also expressed by Kwon (1995) five years later (see section 2.3 above).

In view of the widespread belief that CLT (of whatever variety) is not being implemented effectively in South Korean schools, it would be interesting to know whether it is being implemented successfully in English villages in South Korea, that is, in village-style communities established in South Korea in order that South Korean citizens should be able to experience the English language and the cultures of English-speaking countries. In such communities, it would seem that there is a particularly strong likelihood of being able to establish effective communicatively-orientated English language teaching.

B. Lee (2009) conducted research in 1995 involving four classes in the Gyeonggi Ansan English Village that were part of a five day English programme intended for middle school students. Four lessons were selected for analysis – two involving cooking and broadcasting and two involving globalism and science. In all cases, the students were involved in practical group-based activities. What Lee found was that although the class sizes were small and although English was used exclusively as the medium of instruction, “the classes . . . were not communicative enough to bring meaningful and authentic interaction”, the students being “mostly situated in a passive mode where they had scarce opportunities to participate in the class” (p. 199). In fact, the utterances produced by the students in the four classes were either ultra-minimal or minimal, consisting of only one or two words or formulated sentences repeating the teacher’s utterances. In fact, it was found that the students just listened to the

instructors or joined in the activities passively (학생들은 수동적으로 강사의 말을 듣거나 활동에 참여했다).

What all of the research reported in this section suggests is that, whatever the conditions, English is generally not taught communicatively in South Korea. One of the likely reasons for this that has emerged is the nature of the teacher training provided and, underlying that training, the way in which CLT is interpreted by the trainers.

#### **2.4.3 Use of the target language as the language of instruction**

The national curriculum expresses the expectation that teachers will, wherever possible, use English as the medium of instruction in English classes. This is an issue that has been the subject of much discussion and debate among English teachers and one about which views vary considerably.

Some idea of the way in which the policy of teaching English through the medium of English is now interpreted in Korea can be gained from the following two extracts (translated by me) from the report of a study conducted by Chang, Kim and Choi (2012). The first translated extract below is from the journal of a Korean novice teacher; the second is from the views expressed at a committee meeting by a very experienced teacher involved in mentoring novice teachers (p. 33):

I ran my class more than 80 percent in English at the beginning. And at some point, I found students didn't understand. Then, I started to use English less and less and I think I'm using more Korean than English in the classroom. . . . I knew this was not desirable, so felt nervous when there was a lesson observation. . . . When I saw the recording of my class later . . . I thought it was not what I should have done.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This is a translation of: 처음에는 의욕을 가지고 약 80퍼센트 이상을 영어로 진행하였다. 그런데 언제부턴가 아이들이 잘못 알아듣기 시작하는 것을 느끼기 시작했다. 그런 생각이 들자 점점 영어 사용 양이 줄어들기 시작하더니 이제는 한국어 사용 분량이 더 많아졌다. 모국어 사용이 편안하다 보니 점점 목표어인 영어 사용량이 줄어들기 시작했다. . . . 한편으로는 이것이 바람직하지 않은 것을 잘 알기 때문에 수업 촬영 때 매우 긴장을 하고 불편했다. . . . 이후 내 수업을 보는데 . . . 정말 이것은 아니다 싶었다.

As Korea is in the context of EFL where you rarely have the opportunity to use English in practical life, English input from a teacher can be a very important resource in students' English learning. Also, teachers are English learners simultaneously when we are teachers of English, and we must use English in the classroom as much as we can in order to keep and improve our English proficiency. . . . I also had a time that I felt uncomfortable with English and comfortable with my mother tongue but I suppose it was the crisis which I overcame and students also felt natural with the situation afterwards.<sup>8</sup>

The study conducted by Chang, Kim and Choi (2012) involved five highly competent and experienced Korean teachers, a Korean language teacher trainer and two specialists from Australia (a language teacher trainer and a lecturer in the area of curriculum) who acted as mentors for three newly-appointed Korean teachers. Data were collected from video-taped lessons, observations, interviews, and research journals. One of the things that the researchers observed was that there was a major difference between the Korean and the Australian mentors in relation to attitudes towards use of English as the sole means of instruction in English classes. Whereas the Korean mentors stressed the importance of using only English as the medium of instruction, something that goes beyond what is recommended in the curriculum, the views of the Australian mentors were different and much less unyielding. One of them made a point of stressing that teachers should use English or Korean in class depending on the purpose of teaching and learning at particular lesson stages.

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<sup>8</sup> This is a translation of: 한국 상황이 영어를 실생활에서 사용할 기회가 거의 없는 EFL 상황이므로 교사의 영어 입력은 아이들의 영어 학습에 매우 중요한 입력 자원이 된다. 또한 우리 교사도 가르치면서 동시에 성인 영어 학습자이므로 우리 자신의 영어 능력을 유지하고 발달시키기 위해서는 교실에서의 영어 사용은 가능한 많이 이루어져야 한다. . . . 나도 처음에는 어색하기도 하였고 우리말이 편안하기도 하였지만 그때가 고비였던 것 같다. 그 고비만 넘기면 아이들도 자연스럽게 여기게 된다.

In the initial stages of the implementation of the policy relating to the use of English as the medium of instruction as much as possible in class, S-Y. Kim (2002) administered questionnaires to fifty-three English teachers, of whom fourteen were teaching in elementary schools, five in middle schools and thirty-four in high schools. He found that while the elementary school teachers and the middle school teachers had, overall, a generally positive attitude towards teaching English through the medium of English, the high school teachers were less positive, with several noting that there were difficulties in implementing the policy that related, in part, to large class sizes, the nature of college entrance examinations and the low level of English language proficiency of many of the students. In the same year, Y-M Kim (2002), published an article based on the distribution in 2001 of an open-ended questionnaire by email to seventeen Korean teachers of English. Eleven of these teachers claimed to prefer to use only English as the medium of instruction in class, three claimed to prefer to use a mixture of English and Korean, and three claimed to prefer to use Korean. However, when asked specifically about the percentage of time they used English in class, only two claimed to use it one hundred per cent of the time, something that suggests that there may be a difference between what teachers believe they should do and what they actually do.

The national curriculum recommends that English should be used as the language of instruction in English classes as much as possible. What the research of S-Y. Kim (2002) and Y-M. Kim (2002) suggests, however, is that teachers of English in South Korea tend to interpret that recommendation as an instruction to use English as the sole, or major language of instruction in English classes. It may be largely for this reason that high school teachers, who are necessarily more concerned with external examinations, are more resistant to the notion of using English as the medium of instruction than elementary and middle school teachers. It may also be largely for this reason that there appears to be a gap between what teachers believe they should do in terms of use of English as the medium of instruction in class and what they actually do.,

One important issue in relation to the use of English as a medium of instruction in English classes is that of teacher proficiency in English. Another is teachers' ability to adjust the English they use to the needs of their students.

A number of different studies have indicated that many South Korean teachers of English regard their own level of proficiency in English as being a barrier to using English as the medium of instruction in English classes. J-H. Lee (1999) analysed the English language errors found in one hundred and twenty-two lesson plans prepared by in-service teachers (67 lesson plans) and pre-service teachers (55 lesson plans). The most frequent category of error was grammatical, followed, in order, by lexico-semantic errors, phonological errors and orthographic errors. Lee noted that “[since] teachers’ classroom English has a great effect on students’ English input, teachers should use accurate English” (p. 368) and concluded that, particularly in a context where English is intended to be the language of instruction for all, or part of the time, teacher training courses should offer subject areas such as pedagogical English grammar, contrastive analysis of English and Korean, and practice in English phonetics and pronunciation “so as to prevent or minimise teachers’ errors” (p. 353). In fact, however, since communicatively orientated classes are not teacher-centred and since, therefore, it is the students who are encouraged to do much of the talking, the real issue may relate more to whether teachers are trained to use English effectively for certain purposes (e.g. instruction) in certain contexts (e.g. with beginner level students) than it is to do with the overall English language proficiency of teachers.

In his 1999 study, J. H. Lee (1999) did not question the notion of teaching as much as possible through the medium of English or suggest that it might be advisable to reduce the amount of teacher talk. However, in a later study (J. H. Lee, 2007) he noted that one of the problems associated with discussion of teaching English through English has been the fact that it has focused “mostly on the amount of teachers’ English use rather than its effectiveness on learners’ English acquisition” (p. 336) even though many studies (e.g. Schmidt, 1990; Tomlin & Villa, 1994) have indicated that “it is not the mere amount of input

given to learners, but the quality of input . . . that is, meaningful and noticeable input [the language to which learners are exposed] that really matters in L2 acquisition” (p.337).<sup>9</sup> J. H. Lee adds that “[researchers] have begun to recognize pedagogical as well as psychological benefits of using the L1 for instruction” (see, for example, Auerbach, 1993; Lucas & Karz, 1994; Ogane, 1997; Wigglesworth, 2002). Thus, J.H. Lee concludes (p.336):

On top of teachers’ English ability much to be desired, what makes TETE [teaching English through English] even more overwhelming, if not daunting, is the assumption that teachers have to teach the whole class exclusively in English all at once. This interpretation of TETE [teaching English through English] as English-only instruction often discourages teachers from trying TETE in their classes. A more constructive approach to TETE would be to set goals which are more attainable and manageable on the part of teachers.

The conclusion above was based on a study involving one hundred and fifty-two Korean teachers of English and two hundred and fifty students (mostly high school students) who were asked to assess, on a five point scale, the effectiveness of teachers’ use of English for each of 33 tasks that teachers typically perform in secondary school English classes. Overall, the teachers were largely positive about using English in class, partly, according to Lee, because they were asked not about what they could or could not do but about what would be likely to benefit their students. Both the high school and middle school English teachers involved in the study believed that it was especially beneficial for the students to carry out each of the following in English: *complimenting, checking listening and reading comprehension, greeting, and small talk for empathy/ solidarity*. Also perceived as being effective was using English to: *give quizzes/ tests, review the previous class, answer students’ questions, and sum up pair/ group activities*.

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<sup>9</sup> Reference is made in this study to the distinction made by Macaro (2001) between different positions on using English as the medium of instruction: *the virtual position* (total exclusion of the L1); *the maximal position* (teachers will need to resort to using the L1 although there is no value in doing so), and *the optimal position* (some aspects of learning may be enhanced by using the L1). Macaro noted that the literature did seem to suggest that “the virtual position was unattainable and that the maximal position led to feelings of guilt and inadequacy among teachers” (p. 535).

However, neither middle nor high school teachers saw much value in using English to *explain grammar and pronunciation, correct errors, deal with students' misbehaviour, troubleshoot, or tell jokes*. Interestingly, the students identified fewer tasks as being particularly effective when carried out in English than did the teachers, something that Lee believes “implies that teachers’ use of English for these tasks needs to be adjusted to students’ proficiency or comprehension level” (p.349).

Student and teacher perceptions appear to differ not only in relation to the effectiveness of teachers’ using English for certain purposes in class but also in relation to identification of the characteristics of an effective English teacher. Overall, for the one hundred and sixty-nine high school teachers who took part in a questionnaire-based study conducted by Park and Lee (2006), the most important characteristic of an effective teacher of English was English language proficiency. However, overall, for the three hundred and thirty-nine high school students who took part in the study, the most important characteristic was pedagogical knowledge. This may reflect a fundamental difference between the ways in which teachers experience English language classes and the ways in which students do. It may, in particular, reflect differences in teacher and student perceptions of the comprehensibility and function of teacher talk in English.

S. Lee (2005) compared the English used by a native speaker of English in a primary school 4<sup>th</sup> grade class in New Zealand with the English used by two Korean teachers teaching English in 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes in Korea. He found that there were major differences, with, for example, the Korean teachers, especially the one with a lower level of proficiency, using far more yes/no questions than the native speaker. In addition, the Korean teachers were much more likely to ask students whether they had understood (rather than using more effective questions to check on understanding) than the native speaker and were also much more predisposed to using compliments (e.g. Good! Wow! Wonderful!) (p. 173). The conclusion reached by S. Lee was that, when compared with teacher talk in English by the native speaker of English, the teacher talk in English by Korean teachers “play[ed] a limited role in effectively encouraging and maintaining . . .

interaction with . . . students” (p. 161). This, in common with the other research projects reported in this section, raises issues in relation to the recommendation in the current Korean national curriculum for English that English should be used as much as possible as the language of instruction in English classes.

An important aspect of understanding how Korean teachers use Korean and English in teaching English is observing the ways in which they typically use code switching. Liu, Ahn, Baek and Han (2004) explored code switching in demonstration lessons taught by thirteen high school teachers of English in three different cities in South Korea. What they found was that:

- the teachers were more likely to use Korean than English when explaining vocabulary and grammar and providing background information;
- they often switched from English to Korean when their students appeared to be having difficulty understanding them;
- they often switched from English to Korean to say something very simple, which they could have said easily and time cost-effectively in English;
- they frequently translated into Korean what they had just said in English;
- some of them used Korean to reprimand students or to manage students’ behaviour, especially when using L2 appeared to have failed in these functions.

What all of this suggests is that the teachers who were observed felt more comfortable using Korean in certain circumstances and, in addition, switched to Korean in other circumstances when they lacked the confidence and/or the capacity to use English effectively. Even so, the researchers also found that the students tended to respond in the language used by the teacher.

Asked how much they believed English should be used in class, both the teachers and the students in the study by Liu, Ahn, Baek and Han opted for between fifty and sixty per cent of the time. Asked when they believed it was most effective to use English, the teachers opted for *greetings*, *giving directions*, and *teaching listening and speaking*. Asked when they were most likely to use Korean, the

most common response from teachers was for *teaching grammar*. In view of this, it appears that the teachers involved may have associated the use of Korean with more traditionally orientated teaching (e.g. the explicit teaching of grammar) and the use of English with teaching that is more in line with a communicative orientation.

The lessons observed by Liu, Ahn, Baek and Han were demonstration ones and the teachers noted that they used English more often as the language of instruction in these lessons (60% of the time on average) than they did in other lessons (32% of the time on average). As the researchers observed (p. 615):

The fact that the teachers tried to use more English to show they were following the new curriculum guidelines would suggest that such guidelines might have had some impact on teachers' language use, but if, as the self-reports indicate, most teachers use very little English in their usual teaching (32%), other factors such as teachers' beliefs and the teaching context might have mitigated the new curriculum's impact.

One aspect of the drive to move towards using English increasingly as the medium of instruction in English classes in South Korea has been the recruitment of teaching assistants who are native speakers of English. Since the mid-1990s, with the official launch of the Ministry of Education's Korea English Teacher Training Assistant (KORETTA) program (later renamed the English Program in Korea (EPIK)), many native speakers of English, mainly young graduates from North America, the UK and the Antipodes, have operated as assistant English teachers in Korean classrooms. Many of them, however, lack any background in language teaching (Dustheimer & Gillett, 1999), something that must have a significant impact on the nature of the contributions they make.

Jeon and Lee (2006), while acknowledging that appointing some untrained native speakers of English is unavoidable in view of the numbers involved, recommend establishing a training programme for them in Korea. In the absence of this, it seems likely that the contribution made by these assistant teachers will be, at best,

less effective than could be the case and, at worst, counter-productive in view of the fact that the following duties are expected of them:

- conducting English conversation classes for Korean teachers and students;
- preparing teaching materials for English language education;
- assisting in developing teaching materials;
- assisting with activities related to English language education and other extracurricular activities;
- assisting Korean teachers with English classes and/ or jointly conducting English classes; and
- performing other duties as specified by the host Provincial Office of Education.

In the absence of an effective training programme for assistant teachers who are native speakers of English, South Korean teachers are having to find ways of negotiating their interactions with these assistant teachers. M. Kim (2010) explored, through the analysis of reflective journals and interviews, the progress of such negotiation as it involved a Korean teacher with eleven years of teaching experience and an assistant teacher with no previous teaching experience. As the Korean teacher pointed out, although co-teaching with her teaching assistant could be counter-productive, with students often failing to engage with the classes, where students used English to complete communicative tasks, the situation was much more positive and productive.

Shin (2007) has observed that what she refers to as Korea's 'English-only' educational policy "perpetuates the notion of the Native Speaker (NS) as an ideal language teacher" (p. 75).<sup>10</sup> She conducted a study involving questionnaires and interviews in which Korean teachers and students participated (38 teachers of English; 30 teachers of other subjects; and 98 students). On the basis of that study, she made the following observations about the views of the Korean teachers

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, however, although Shin maintains that the curriculum requires that English be taught without LI support in certain school grades, the curriculum documentation simply recommends that English is used as much as possible as the language of instruction in English classes. Even so, there does appear to be a widespread belief in Korea that the use of Korean is proscribed.

represented in the study:

- In general, they resisted the notion that oral proficiency was the most important qualification for a good English teacher, believing that professional consciousness, pedagogic expertise and local knowledge were of the highest importance;
- While almost half acknowledged the need for increased use of English in classrooms, the vast majority did not believe that it was best to use English as the sole means of instruction (81%);

The following two extracts, both involving quotations from Korean teachers (recorded in 2001), indicate two very different reactions to the recommendation that English should be used as much as possible in class (pp. 81 & 82):

I don't think I am less qualified compared to a NS teacher [although my English ability may not be as good as theirs]. I know the Korean educational system, how to prepare students for the entrance exam, and how to make things meaningful for the students. . . . It's often more than teaching English and they [NS teachers] don't understand this.

The students' expectations [about the quality of the English education] are too high these days. When the expectation was low, it was OK, but the teaching methods I am familiar with don't work anymore. I feel that I'm losing confidence drastically for last couple of years as a teacher. Particularly in this year, I often feel that there is no reason I have to stay here. . . . My identity as a teacher is in crisis.

Tellingly, one of the other participants made the following observation (p. 82):

I don't care about the policy—they [the policy makers] don't know how things are in the real classrooms.

Jeon (2009), who conducted a series of interviews with assistant teachers of English in Korea who were native speakers of English, reported that one had pointed out that the English classes they taught were not regarded as ‘real classes’ because what was taught was not included in tests (p. 239). As Jeon (P. 240) concludes:

Dichotomizing native speakers of English as superior teachers and non-native speakers of English as inferior teachers is too simplistic to explain the real-life experiences of EPIK teachers, local Korean teachers, and Korean students.

So far as native speakers of English in South Korean classrooms are concerned, Park (2012) has claimed that many of them “complain about the difficulties in making Korean students, who have been accustomed to the traditional classroom style, participate in class activities” (p.6). It may be, however, that this is not because of the impact of Confucian ideology, as he believes, but because many of these native speakers of English lack training in language teaching. In addition, as Robertson (2012) notes in his account of attempts to apply CLT in a classroom in a rural school in Korea, employing native speakers of English may be counter-productive when these people begin to acquire communicative competence in the Korean language. In fact, in the Korean classroom observed by Robertson, communication with the native speaker of English in class took place through the medium of Korean.

Use of English as a medium of instruction in English classes in South Korea is a topic that has led to much discussion and debate. The curriculum’s recommendation that English should be used as the medium of instruction as much as possible appears to have been widely interpreted as an instruction that English should be the sole or main language of instruction. This, in turn, appears to have led to some resistance, with various different reasons (e.g. large class sizes; low levels of student proficiency; and limitations on teachers’ proficiency) being given as reasons for that resistance. In addition, it is acknowledged that native English speaking teaching assistants may lack the skills necessary to help students to improve their English language proficiency. In view of all of this,

there is a need for some clarity around what is actually intended by the recommendation that English should be used as much as possible in class and for some link to be made between this recommendation and the expectation that English classes should be communicatively orientated.

#### **2.4.4 Attitudes towards textbooks**

Textbooks provide many language teachers with an important resource. How useful that resource is depends, however, on a number of factors, including the extent to which they are consistent with whatever curriculum is in place.

Park and Suh (2003) asked forty-five English teachers from Busan high schools to evaluate five textbooks designed for grade ten students in line with the requirements of the 7<sup>th</sup> South Korean national curriculum. What they found, overall, was that these textbooks, compared to those available in relation to the 6<sup>th</sup> national curriculum, were judged by the teachers to:

- contain a wider variety of activities (including pair work), most of which were learner-centred tasks conducted in meaningful situations and/ or which fostered communication skills;
- include topics that were age-appropriate and interesting; and
- be accompanied by CD-ROMS were judged to contain useful and motivating audio and visual material and teachers' guides that were considered to be useful in terms of taking teachers through all the steps of lesson preparation and in relation to provision of guidance for task-orientated activities.

On the other hand, a number of weaknesses were identified. These included:

- lack of authenticity;
- overly complex classroom activities; and
- a paucity of purposeful reading materials.

Overall, there was nothing in the study by Park and Suh (2003) to suggest that the textbooks they considered were not in line with the requirements of the national curriculum. The same is true of a study conducted more recently by Lim (2014).

Lim's (2014) study involved one hundred and three (103) teachers of English to 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in Gyeongnam province. The focus was on English textbooks produced by five different publishers in line with the curriculum guidelines. The teachers were asked to evaluate the textbooks in terms of each of the following: *appropriacy to the curriculum; language contents; language materials; learning activities; and practicality*. All of the teacher participants considered all of the textbooks to be appropriate in terms of the curriculum requirements/ expectations and most considered four of the textbooks to be acceptable in terms of practicality. However, overall, the teachers believed that the textbooks attempted to cover too much language in the time available, that the material in the textbooks lacked intrinsic interest so far as the students were concerned, and that there was an insufficient number and variety of learning activities. So far as the teachers' guides accompanying the textbooks were concerned, none of them was considered to be satisfactory in relation to the provision of guidance concerning the approach to teaching the materials included in the textbooks.

The study conducted by Park and Suh in 2003 and the one conducted by Lim in 2014 focused on textbooks produced for different ages of students. Neither considered the textbooks they examined to be out of line with the requirements of the national curriculum. This did not mean, however, that they found these textbooks to be adequate in all respects. Clearly, therefore, consistency with the national curriculum guidelines should not necessarily be interpreted as being consistent with overall adequacy.

#### **2.4.5 Culture in the context of English language teaching**

The teaching of language necessarily goes hand in hand with the teaching of culture. Even so, Ide (1982) argued that social and cultural aspects of the English language had been neglected by English teachers in Korea. In particular, he noted that idiomatic and metaphoric expressions needed to be situationally linked. On the other hand, Ko (2011), writing around two decades later, argued that the

increasing pace of globalisation and, with it, the increasing spread of the use of English throughout the world, had led to a situation in which students needed to be taught how to use English to express their own culture. In similar vein, Nault (2006) argued that English teaching professionals should (a) discard the notion that the US and Great Britain represent the sole ‘target cultures’ of the English language; (b) rethink the goals of culture and language education to better meet their students’ diverse needs; and (c) do more to design and/ or select teaching materials that are international and inclusive in scope. What is needed, he argued, is “a truly global approach” that “challenge[s] the myth that native speakers, particularly those from Great Britain and the United States, are the sole purveyors of ‘English culture’” (p. 317).

While Korean students clearly do need to be able to use English in ways appropriate to their own culture/s, they are likely also to benefit from some understanding of other cultures. Thus, for example, Y. Kim (2006), who conducted a survey involving one hundred Korean students attending high schools in Southern California found that these students believed that the courses they had attended in Korea had not prepared them adequately in terms of the values, thought patterns and cultural connotations of words they encountered in the USA.

So far as textbooks are concerned, what is necessary is some sort of cultural balance. However, such balance may be difficult to achieve. B. Lee (2009) analysed of eleven EFL conversation textbooks used in high schools in South Korea in terms of their treatment of culture, finding that “[there] was a strong sense of a hierarchical representation of the Anglophone world in which the US culture served as the supreme source” (p.76). Furthermore, in all of the textbooks, there was an emphasis in the illustrations of people of European ethnicity. Most of the drawings were of European people communicating in English with the same ethnic groups or with young Koreans. In one of the textbooks, representations of other cultures were sometimes characterised by negative stereotyping (e.g. tasteless English foods). On the other hand, Ryu (2013), who analysed five textbooks used in high schools in Korea in terms of their cultural content, found that while all nineteen of the topics listed in the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum were

addressed, ‘universal culture’ (i.e. norms not specific to any particular culture) was dominant, occupying more than half of all of the cultural space in the textbooks.

South Korea has undergone rapid change in the past few decades. Thus, for example, Korean phonology has acquired new phonemes and phonological rules associated with the pronunciation of English loanwords and English/ Korean code-mixing and switching are commonplace. Changes such as these are, according to Shim (1994), “reflections of the increased importance and utility of English in Korea, more favorable attitudes of Koreans toward the use of English, and above all, an increase in the number of Korean-English bilinguals in Korea” (p. 225). In fact, as Song (2011) has noted, “South Koreans have also gone so far as to debate whether to adopt English as an official language of South Korea” (p. 35).

In connection with this situation, J. S. Lee (2004) has argued that the mixing of Korean and English that occurs in Korean popular music (K-Pop) represents the assertion of young people’s sense of identity and a challenge to dominant representations of authority. A discourse of resistance that challenges the conservatism of the older generation, the mixing of Korean and English language codes epitomises the tension between global and local dialogues that underpins the cultural struggle of young Koreans to find and assert their identity in an increasingly globalised world.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Butler (2011) has observed that there have been challenges across Asia in implementing CLT and task-based language teaching (TBLT), the constraints being of three main types: *conceptual* (e.g. conflicts with local values and misconceptions); *classroom-centred* (e.g. classroom management practices and resource availability); and *social/ institutional* (e.g. examination systems). She notes, in particular, that “[without] receiving sufficient training, it was not uncommon to find Asian English teachers who believed that CLT focused only on oral language, ignoring grammar instruction and the accuracy of language use” (p. 36). She recommends:

- employing more contextually feasible and flexible interpretations of CLT and TBLT;
- implementing decentralized or innovative language-in-education policies; and
- creating communities of learning outside of the classroom as well as in the classroom.

However, she also notes the often profound nature of the mismatch of cultural values involved in attempting to implement CLT in a number of Asian countries and the fact that, although communicative assessment is an important aspect of CLT, changing attitudes towards assessment are “unlikely to happen easily because the exam culture is so deeply rooted in sociocultural history in Asia” (p. 46). She adds that, though some Asian countries have incorporated some aspects of oral assessment into national examinations, changing the nature of assessment “is much more complicated than it may at first seem” (p. 46). In view of this, it may be that it is by no means simply adapting CLT and/ or TBLT to local environments that is required. After all, it is not only in Asian countries that there is evidence of problems relating to the implementation of CLT and, in particular, of TBLT. Thus, for example, Fester (2014), who analysed widely-used English language textbooks designed largely for adults and produced in the UK and USA, made the following observation (p. 138):

While there has been considerable emphasis in the literature on language teaching on task-based syllabuses, the writers of general English language textbooks produced by major publishing houses have shown little enthusiasm for task-based syllabus design.

Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that communicative competence can be achieved only through CLT. As Widdowson (1998, p. 331) has observed:

Learners of a foreign language should be made aware of . . . cultural conditions on real communication. . . . But the explicit teaching of

communicative abilities which measure up to those of the communities whose language they are learning is quite a different matter. . . . I believe that an attempt to do so is to set an impossible and pointless goal whose only outcome is likely to be frustration. . . . It is the business of pedagogy to decide on what can be feasibly and effectively taught . . . so as to activate a learning investment for future use. Talk of real world communication is all too often a distraction.

As Canagarajah (2005) has maintained - “the way knowledge is spread . . . [displays] a one-sided imposition of homogeneous discourses and intellectual traditions by a few dominant communities” and, in this context, “there is an emerging consensus that we need to relate to language norms differently” (p. xiv). As Canagarajah (2006) has also said: “[W]e now have a plethora of theoretical positions and philosophical assumptions” (p. 28) and although “[scholars] may sometimes have fun with this plurality of assumptions and practices . . . teachers . . . want to know what options these new trends suggest for teaching on Monday morning” (p. 29).

In an article written over a decade ago, Nunan (2003) concluded, with reference to the Asia-Pacific region,<sup>11</sup> that there were issues relating to “inadequately trained and skilled teachers, and a disjunction between curriculum rhetoric and pedagogical reality” (p. 589). In particular, with reference to Korea, he has concluded that:

- . . . most teachers do not have the English language proficiency or methodological skills to implement the policy [i.e. teaching in a communicatively-orientated way] and there has not been a great deal of change from the grammar-translation approach.

In view of all of this, and in view of the fact that the research outlined above has repeatedly highlighted problems relating to the implementation of CLT in South Korea, the question arises as to whether CLT should, as some have suggested, be

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<sup>11</sup> The policies he investigated were: China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Koreanised, or whether it should, perhaps, be abandoned in favour of a different approach altogether, one that is more appropriate in relation to the context in which the learning takes place. In order to address this issue, it is important to begin by carefully re-examining all aspects of the teaching and learning of English in South Korea. The research project reported here is intended to contribute to that re-examination. It starts by exploring, with particular reference to the teaching and learning of English in South Korean secondary schools, some of the claims and assumptions that have been repeatedly made with reference to the teaching and learning of English in South Korea, starting with the assumption that what is advocated in the seventh national curriculum is, in fact, some version of communicative language teaching.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Introducing the research methodology and research methods employed**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The research project reported here was underpinned methodologically by language teacher cognition (LTC), that is, by the exploration of teachers' knowledge and beliefs and the relationship between these and teachers' educational practices (see *Chapter 2*). It involved a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative aspects, including two questionnaire-based surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus point-based analysis of a sample of textbooks and of language lessons. A general introduction to the research methodology and the research methods employed throughout the research project is provided below. More detail and discussion of the research methods, techniques and instruments used in connection with surveys, interviews and textbook and lesson analysis are discussed in detail in the relevant chapters (*Chapters 5 – 8*), as is the manner in which these methods, techniques and instruments are employed.

#### **3.2 The core of the research project: Language teacher cognition**

As indicated in *Chapter 2*, LTC research investigates “what language teachers think, know and believe – and . . . its relationship to teachers’ classroom practices” (Borg, 2006, p. 1). I have, however, made no attempt to differentiate clearly here between knowledge and beliefs, preferring the approach of Woods (1996) who refers to a single integrated concept that includes beliefs, assumptions and knowledge (BAK). In the penultimate decade of the last century, Calderhead (1988, p. 52) observed that LTC promised to be of value in informing policy and practice relating, in particular, to teacher education. In the middle of the first decade of this century, Johnson (2006, p. 235) noted that nothing was proving more significant in relation to growth in understanding of the ways in which language teachers function than LTC-based research.

Language teacher cognition research necessarily involves a ‘myriad of variables’, that is, all those things that impact on teachers’ beliefs and practices (Freeman, 1989, p. 36). It includes not only what teachers know and believe, but also what they do. Thus, those aspects of the current research project that relate directly to LTC include not only the collection and analysis of questionnaire-based and interview-based data but also the collection and analysis of classroom-based data.

Two questionnaire-based surveys were carried out, supplemented by semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires were designed for teachers of English in Korean middle schools and high schools. Both were adapted from questionnaires developed by Wang (2008) for use in the Taiwanese context. The first questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the backgrounds and training of the participants and to investigate their BAK in relation, in particular, to issues relating to the South Korean national curriculum and its implementation. The second questionnaire focused on participants’ BAK in relation to any language teacher training experiences they had had. Details of these questionnaires, including their overall aims and content, the target population for which they were intended, their drafting and trialling, the distribution method employed, the number of participants involved and the identification and treatment of ethical issues are discussed in detail in *Chapters 5 and 6*. The coding used in analysing the data collected is indicated in the sub-headings of those sections of *Chapters 5 and 6* in which the data are reported and discussed.

The advantages associated with questionnaire-based surveys include the fact that a large amount of data can be recorded and analysed easily so long as all, or most of the questions are closed ones, involving yes/no questions or scale point selection point (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, pp. 377-408). In this case, because participants were invited to add any comments they chose at the end of the questionnaires, some of the advantages of more qualitatively-based research were also available. Even so, it was considered advisable to include interviews as part of the research programme in order to collect as much qualitative data as possible. The interviews were of the 'standardized open ended' type (Patton, 1980,

p. 206) often referred to as being 'semi-structured'. These interviews, conducted in Korean, were recorded and then transcribed. The transcripts are included in the appendices to this thesis. As is commonly the case in interviews that are semi-structured, although some questions were determined in advance, others were not. Depending on the responses of the interviewees, supplementary follow-up questions could be asked and the anticipated ordering of questions could be altered. Details of the interviews are provided in *Chapter 6*, where the coding used is indicated in the sub-headings of the sections in which the data collected are discussed. The core interview questions are provided in an appendix to the thesis.

Also of direct relevance so far as the LTC component of this research project is concerned is the observation and analysis of a number of lessons taught in South Korean middle schools and high schools. As none of the questionnaire or interview respondents would agree to having me observe and record a lesson as it took place, pre-recorded lessons were analysed. Of these, four were demonstration lessons, taught in the presence of Ministry of Education officials and senior members of staff of the schools in which the teachers worked and recorded on videotape. One was a lesson pre-recorded for the purposes of this research project. I transcribed these lessons and refer throughout only to the written transcripts (included as an appendix) in order to avoid the possibility of the participants being identified. Details relating to the lessons and the analysis of them are provided in *Chapter 8*. These include information about the location and type of school in which they were taught, some background information about the teachers and teaching assistants involved, the coding used in the transcripts and the analytical focus points.

### **3.3 Contextualising language teacher cognition: The analysis of the curriculum and of a sample of textbooks**

Providing context for those aspects of the project that relate directly to LTC are two areas of research that are also of significance in their own right in relation to the project as a whole. These involved the analysis of the Korean national

curriculum as it relates to the teaching of English and the analysis of a sample of widely used textbooks.

The analysis of the curriculum involved something akin to content analysis, defined as follows by Bryman (2001, p. 177):

Content analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts . . . that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner.

There are many different approaches to content analysis depending on the nature of the material to be analysed (see, for example, uy7Porter, 2002). In this case, the approach adopted was similar to the approach adopted in content analysis but different to the extent that the emphasis was not on quantification as such. This was a conscious decision, taken in light of the fact that content analysis, in the way in which it is characteristically practiced, has been criticized on the basis that “measurement can easily and unwittingly result in an accent being placed on what is measurable rather than what is theoretically significant or important” (Bryman, 2001, p. 191).

The initial stage of the process involved conducting a search for published material that was intended to provide, in whole or in part, an overview of changes/proposals/developments in language teaching and learning that could impact on the curriculum. The works identified are included in the background sections of *Chapter 4*. When these materials had been identified and collected, a review of their each of their content lists, indices, headings and sub-headings was conducted, each being cross-referenced against the others. The aim here was to identify words (or cognates of these words) that defined the themes that were discussed in these works. The keywords identified were listed and then divided into five sections, each one under a major theme (*approach; syllabus; method(ology) and assessment; movements; and general concepts*). Thus, for example, *grammar translation* was listed under *approach*; *structural* under *syllabus*; *audio-lingual* under *method(ology) and assessment*; *reform* under

*movements and achievement objective under general concepts.* The next stage was to check for occurrences of the keywords or (or cognates of them) in the curriculum documentation. The way/s in which these keywords were used in the curriculum documentation was then noted and compared with the ways in which they were used in the source literature, the aim being to determine whether the way/s in which they were used in the curriculum documentation were (a) internally consistent, and (b) consistent with the usages found in the source literature.

A further aspect of the contextualization of the LTC component of the research project was the focus-point based analysis of a sample of textbooks. Three textbook series, along with accompanying resources, were analysed, two used in middle schools and one in high schools. All three are approved by the Ministry of Education. A discussion of the textbooks selected and the reasons for their selection is included in *Chapter 7*, as are an outline of the focus points around which the analysis was conducted. As in the case of the lesson analysis, these focus points were selected because they could be related back to the analysis of the national curriculum documentation.

### **3.4 Mixed methods and triangulation**

As indicated above, a mixed methods approach involving multiple data sources was employed in conducting the research. This was necessary because of the range of phenomena that were considered to be of relevance, that is, (a) the nature of the national curriculum and of the textbooks used by teachers, (b) the nature of the lessons taught by teachers, and (c) the beliefs of teachers in relation to a range of matters relating to the teaching of English in Korean schools, including their beliefs concerning the national curriculum, the textbooks available to them, and what was expected of them. In some cases, data from different sources (questionnaires and interviews) could be directly compared, providing more detailed and nuanced information. In other cases, data from one source (curriculum analysis) threw light on the nature of data collected from another source (textbook analysis) and the two together helped explain some of the data collected from a third source (e.g. lesson analysis). Taken together, all of the

different data sources combined to throw light on the core issue the research sought to examine, that is, barriers to effective curriculum design and implementation in the case of the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in South Korea. From this perspective, the mixed methods approach adopted can be seen to have involved a type of methods triangulation and to have resulted in a richer and more comprehensive account.

### **3.5 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations are necessarily fundamental to research that involves, as in this case, human participants. As Bryman (2000, p. 479) observes, discussions about ethical principles in social research tend to revolve around four central issues: deception; lack of informed consent; invasion of privacy and causing harm to participants. Almost all aspects of the research project reported here presented ethical dilemmas. In most cases, these could be overcome by ensuring that research participants were made fully aware of the aims of the research, were advised of the fact that they need participate only to the extent they wished (or not at all), had their identities protected and were as fully and accurately represented as possible. With the last of these in mind, a decision was made not only to include full transcripts of lessons and interviews as appendices to the thesis (which has the additional advantage of providing other researchers with a potentially useful resource), but also to quote extensively, thus allowing participant voices to be heard directly and also providing material on the basis of which readers could reinterpret the data for themselves if they chose to do so. So far as the lesson analysis is concerned, a decision was made to focus on the overall approach/es adopted and the extent to which it/they were in accord with the national curriculum recommendations rather than on some sort of evaluation of individual teachers who were clearly, in any case, as other aspects of the research project indicated, subject to a wide range of constraints.

Some of the strategies used to attempt to ensure that the research was conducted and reported as ethically as possible are reported in *Chapters 5 – 8*.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Introducing the South Korean national curriculum for English**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter, which introduces the South Korean national curriculum for English in schools, begins with a discussion of some of the ways in which the term ‘curriculum’ has been used in literature on language teaching (4.2), outlines, discusses and critiques the content of the curriculum document (4.3) and ends with some final comments (4.4). Each of the sub-sections under 3.3.1. deals with one aspect of what can be included in language curriculum design. In each case, an introduction that provides some information about developments in the area is included in order to provide a context for the discussion of the South Korean national curriculum (focusing largely on secondary schooling) that follows. Each section dealing with the South Korean national curriculum ends with a brief summary/ overview in italic print.

#### **4.2 Various uses of the term ‘curriculum’**

As Finney (2001, p. 70) observes:

The term *curriculum* is open to a wide variety of definitions; in its narrowest sense it is synonymous with the term syllabus, as in the specification of the content and ordering of *what* is to be taught; in the wider sense it refers to all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of an educational program, the *why, how* and *how well* together with the *what* of the teaching-learning process.

The term ‘curriculum’ is used most frequently used within the context of language teaching and learning to refer to all of the various components of a learning programme, including, for example, aims and objectives, teaching approach and methods, assessment and evaluation, teaching materials and the content of learning (Kelly, 2009, p.13; Wiles, 2008, p. 2). According to Richards (2001), a curriculum may include reference to all of the following: contextual factors (e.g.

institutional characteristics), learning outcomes, teaching methods, syllabus and course plans (which may be based on some combination of needs analysis and situational analysis), teaching resources and materials, and evaluation procedures. Sometimes, however, the content of learning, often referred to as a 'syllabus', is referred to, on its own, as a curriculum.

The term 'syllabus', whether or not it is considered to be part of the wider curriculum, has been variously defined. Breen (1987a, p.82) has defined it as "a plan of *what is to be achieved through teaching and learning*", noting that it is unclear whether that plan should be "limited to a delineation of objectives or . . . also serve as a means towards the objectives". Both Wilkins (1976) and Long and Crookes (1993) have distinguished between types of syllabus on the basis of whether they present language as segments which learners need to learn to contextualize and synthesize (e.g. the structural syllabus) or, alternatively, present language in context with a primary focus on meaning/ function (e.g. the notional-functional syllabus). For Breen (1987a & b), however, these two types of syllabus are similar but different from syllabuses that focus on tasks or the processes of learning themselves. For Nunan (1988), all syllabuses that focus on language itself are similar in that they are product-orientated. Similarly, White (1988) makes a distinction between 'Type A' syllabuses (which he sees as focusing on what is to be learned) and 'Type B' syllabuses (which he sees as focusing on how learning is to take place), something that some would consider to come within the domain of methodology. To complicate matters further, Olshtain (1989) has identified five different syllabus types: *content-based*; *process-based*; *product-based*, *context-based* and *learner-based*. The last of these involves negotiation with the learner. Presumably, therefore, depending on the nature of that negotiation, the syllabus itself would need to be reclassified in terms of one of the other categories. As Fester (2014, p.12) observes:

Irrespective of the precise nature of the categorization employed, there are two things about which many of those involved in the area would be likely to agree. The first is that there is a major difference between syllabus types in terms of whether their focus is on language itself, however categorized

and organized (e.g. structural syllabuses), on something other than language (e.g. task-based syllabuses), or on some combination of the two (e.g. proportional syllabuses). . . .

Since there are widely varying definitions of ‘curriculum’ and ‘syllabus’, it is impossible to determine in advance what a national language curriculum will contain or how it will be organised. In addition, it is important to bear in mind that there may be a considerable difference between what might be referred to as an ‘official’ curriculum and what actually happens in classrooms, since the latter is inevitably impacted on by a wide range of factors (Kelly, 2009).

#### **4.3 Introducing the South Korean national curriculum for English in schools**

The South Korean National Curriculum has been revised several times. In the discussion of the English component of that curriculum below, reference is made to the version produced in 2008 for implementation between 2009 and 2011. The only significant changes to that version were made in a 2009 revision. These were:

- whereas every grade of middle school had had its own achievement standards, there was only one set of achievement standards for first through third grades;
- two statements were added indicating that the study of English should (a) develop students aesthetic sensibilities, creativity and imagination through exposure to literature and the arts, and (b) develop students’ knowledge in Humanities, Arts and Social and Natural Sciences;
- The appendix to the curriculum document headed Examples and Functions of Communication was altered (see *Appendix 12: Revised version (2009) of Examples and Functions of Communication*).

In the introductory section of the curriculum for English (pp. 41 – 43), it is noted that:

For elementary and secondary school students who must live in the future, the ability to communicate in English is an essential skill that they must learn at school (p.41).

In the case of *both* elementary and secondary schooling, it is considered important to help students to:

- develop the ability to communicate in English and a ‘proper’ understanding of foreign cultures; and
- cultivate sound morality and independent spirit of citizenship and a cooperative spirit as a cosmopolitan citizen (pp. 41-42).

It is also considered important to focus on ‘basic English used in everyday life’ (p. 41) and to:

- take account of the different learning ability of individual students; and
- conduct in-class activities that enable students to carry out self-initiated study (p.42).

In the case of elementary students, specific reference is made to using “real life activities” and “interesting educational media”; in the case of secondary students, however, it is simply noted that “teaching and learning methods that stress the acquisition of language should be applied” (p.42).

Overall, the introductory section of the South Korean national curriculum for English is worded in such a way as to suggest a broadly communicative orientation.

### **4.3.1 Proficiency targets and achievement objectives**

#### **4.3.1.1 Some relevant background**

Achievement objectives are often stated within the context of languages curricula in terms of (a) proficiency descriptors, (b) ‘can do’ statements or (c) some

combination of the two (see, for example, Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2001).

Language proficiency has been defined by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages as involving “a hierarchy of *global* characterisations of integrated performance” (Sil International, 1999). Currently, proficiency tends to be defined in a way that is consistent with the development of a focus on communicative competence and communicative language teaching (see 3.3 below) and in line with the proficiency scales and descriptors developed within the context of the Council of Europe and specified in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) where there are six common reference levels (CRLs)<sup>12</sup>/ proficiency bands specified in terms of “a broad level of general language proficiency” (global descriptors)<sup>13</sup> or a “specific constellation of activities, skills and competences” (p. 179)<sup>14</sup>.

The CEFR encourages users to express achievement objectives in terms of ‘can do’ statements (relating to what learners can do using the target language) and it is now common practice for curriculum designers to list a small number of achievement objectives at each curriculum level. Thus, for example, two of the achievement objectives associated with a number of different languages at the first of eight levels of the New Zealand curriculum framework are:

- greet, farewell and thank people and respond to greetings and thanks;
- understand, express and enquire about location.

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<sup>12</sup> These are: A1 (Breakthrough); A2 (Waystage); B1 (Threshold); B2 (Vantage); C1 (Effective-proficiency); and C2 (Mastery).

<sup>13</sup> Example of a CEFR global descriptor (**B2**): Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive device (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24).

<sup>14</sup> Example of a more specific CEFR descriptor (**‘sustained monologue’ at A1**): A1: Can describe him/herself, what he/she does and where he/she lives (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 59).

Once achievement objectives such as these have been introduced at any particular level, they are recycled at higher curriculum levels where they are “associated with a different range of suggested language from that used when they were first introduced” (Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2001, p. 27).

#### **4.3.1.2 Proficiency targets, achievement objectives and the South Korean national curriculum**

There are no proficiency targets in the South Korean national curriculum for English. Furthermore, that section of the curriculum that is headed *Goals* (pp. 43-44) does not add anything of substance to the information included in the introductory section (see above). However, the section headed *Achievement Standards* (pp. 46-58) provides, under skills sub-headings (listening, speaking, reading and writing), lists indicating what students are expected to achieve at each grade (grade 3 through grade 10). These lists, including approximately 20 items associated with each grade, are made up of a curious mixture of expectations that are very general (see the first example below) and expectations that are considerably more specific (see the second example below):

- understand basic conversations about personal daily life (grade 3, p. 46);
- write the alphabet in capital and small letters (grade 3, p. 47).

Frequently, in attempting to differentiate among expectations relating to different grades, the writers place heavy reliance on qualifiers (e.g. ‘basic’, ‘simple’, ‘easy’) that are not, in fact, specific as discriminators:

- understand basic conversations about personal daily life (grade 3, p. 46);
- understand simple conversations about daily life (grade 4, p. 47).

Sometimes, specifications linked to particular grades could be applied with equal relevance to almost any other grade:

- write a sentence using correct spelling and punctuation (grade 7, p. 52)

Sometimes, almost identical specifications appear at different grades. For example:

- carry on a simple telephone conversation (grade 5) (p. 49);
- carry out a simple telephone conversation (grade 6) (p.50)

In many cases, specifications relate not to the capacity to use English accurately and/ or appropriately at different grades, but to teaching/ learning strategies:

- listen to one or two sentences and choose the appropriate picture (grade 3, p. 46);
- participate in simple games (grade 3, p.47);
- read a short story, and rewrite it by changing the protagonist or tense of the story (grade 8, p. 54);
- listen to a part of a speech or conversation on a general topic, and guess the situation (grade 9, p. 55);

In many cases these strategies would appear *not* to be consistent with CLT. For example:

- copy the dictation of a studied sentence (grade 7, p. 52);
- complete a sentence by inserting a word or phrase (grade 7, p. 52);
- use given words to complete a sentence (grade 8, p. 54);
- following a studied dialogue, perform a role play [according to the dialogue] (grade 9, p. 55);

Occasionally, direct or indirect references to teaching strategies that are included in the achievement standards lists are potentially consistent with CLT (depending on how they are carried out):

- in order to solve simple tasks, exchange information with others (grade 7, p. 52);
- carry out a simple task through interaction (grade 9, p. 55)

The achievement standards statements are sometimes expressed in ways that have very general structural or lexical implications (e.g. use of past tense) and/ or implications about discourse structuring (e.g. inclusion of chronological signalling) (emphasis added):

- listen to and understand simple speeches about *the past* (grade 3, p. 47);
- listen to a simple speech or dialogue and understand *the order of events* (grade 5, p. 48);
- listen to *what will happen* and understand it (grade 6, p. 50);
- understand simple conversations in which the speakers ask for *reasons* and reply (grade 6, p. 50);
- understand simple speeches or conversations about *contrasting objects* (grade 6, p. 50);
- listen to simple speeches or conversations, and understand *the order of the events* (grade 7, p. 51);
- read a short story about daily life, and talk about *the cause and result* (grade 7, p. 52);
- read a story about *different opinions*, and understand *the differences* (grade 8, p. 53);
- read a story about *different opinions* and *compare and contrast* them (grade 8, p. 54)
- read a story about a general topic, and understand *the rhetorical organization* (grade 9., p. 56);
- write information necessary in *daily routines* (grade 10, p. 58);
- write about one's *future plans* (grade 10, p. 58).

With reference to those statements listed immediately above and others of a similar type, it is important to note that they make up, in total, what appears to be an idiosyncratic, unmotivated selection from the possible options (omitting, for example, references to modal meanings).

Occasionally, the achievement standards are expressed in ways that are characterised by tautology or include contextually inappropriate vocabulary:

- write a sentence about a daily life story with words and phrases (grade 6, p. 51);
- understand the speakers' feelings and emotions by listening to the accents<sup>15</sup> and intonation.

If ‘communicate about . . .’ or, for example, ‘communicate (in speech and writing) about . . .’ were used in cases such as those immediately above, it would become evident that there are, in fact, considerably fewer achievement standards than appears at first sight to be the case.

It is difficult to appreciate in what sense most of the statements included under the heading of ‘achievement standards’ are, in fact, achievement standards. With very few exceptions (e.g. ‘write the alphabet in capital and small letters’), statements such as these cannot be linked in any meaningful way to assessment (and, therefore, cannot be said to be meaningful achievement standards) unless they are associated with language indicators. Thus, for example, there is little point in referring to notional categories such as ‘past’ at one point in the curriculum documentation<sup>16</sup>. Such categories need to be recycled and associated at different grades with different linguistic indicators (e.g. past simple tense; perfective aspect).

*Overall, therefore, the conclusion must be that the South Korean national curriculum for English includes no proficiency targets and no meaningful achievement objectives. In addition, many of the statements referred to as ‘achievement standards’ make reference to teaching strategies of a type that are wholly inconsistent with the communicative orientation that appears to be signalled in the introductory section of the curriculum documentation.*

### 3.3.2 Teaching/ learning content

#### 3.3.2.1 Some relevant background

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<sup>15</sup> This may be intended to be a reference to tone of voice.

<sup>16</sup> Where the same or similar statements are associated with different school grades, this would seem to be an error rather than an intentional recycling strategy in that it is not done in any systematic way and is not explained.

Irrespective of whether the content of learning is referred to as a syllabus, as a curriculum in its own right or as part of a broader curriculum, it is generally conceived of as being some sort of "plan of what is to be achieved through teaching and learning" (Breen, 1987a, p.82). This does not mean, however, that all language professionals agree on the way in which this content should be specified. For some, content specification may be very general, being, for example, made up of nothing more than some broadly stated objectives; for others, it will be very specific. Furthermore, even for those who believe that language programme content should be specified in a very specific way, the nature of that specification may vary.

In the mid-1900s, inspired by linguistic structuralism, designers of syllabuses for the teaching of additional languages generally adopted a *structural approach to syllabus design*, one that is based on "a theory of language that assumes that the grammatical or structural aspects of language form are the most basic or useful" (Krahnke, 1987, p.15) and one in which "structures [are used] as the pre-eminent form of sequencing" (Long & Crookes, 1993, p. 20). However, shortly after the mid-point of the century, alternatives to the structural syllabus had been developed or were in the process of development. These included *situational and topic-based syllabuses*, in which situations and/ or topics provided the organising principle, with lexical and grammatical aspects of the language being introduced where it was felt that they were likely to occur in the context of particular topics and/ or situations that were in focus (Ur, 2000, p. 178). By the 1970s, the *notional-functional syllabus*, developed under the auspices of the Council of Europe, was gaining widespread popularity. This syllabus type included, as outlined by Wilkins (1976), notional meanings (i.e. meanings that "can be expressed through grammatical systems in different languages" (p. 21), modal meanings (e.g. probability, possibility, affirmation, intention and obligation), and functions (i.e. "what the speaker intends to achieve through the use of language" (p. 43)), such as suggesting, warning or greeting). Another syllabus type developed around the same time was the *lexical syllabus* proposed by Sinclair and Renouf (1988) and developed by Willis (1990). That syllabus type is based on the belief that "lexis is complexly and systematically structured and . . . grammar is

an outcome of this lexical structure” (Hoey, 2005, p. 1). The primary focus is on vocabulary that has been shown in corpus-based studies to occur frequently with particular meanings in particular contexts. Another syllabus type, initially proposed by Prabhu (1987), was the *procedural syllabus*, later developed by a number of others and subsequently referred to as the *task-based syllabus*, in which course content is made up of tasks graded in various ways (see, for example, Breen (1987b); Robinson, Ting, & Urwin (1996) and Foster & Skehan (1996)).

In addition to the syllabus types summarised above, there have been proposals relating to skills-based syllabuses, including, for example, writing syllabuses that focus on the processes involved in writing (see, for example, Emig, 1971), or, more recently, genre-based writing syllabuses that focus primarily on the rhetorical structuring of texts of different types (see, for example, Swales (1990)). Such syllabus types are often integrated with other syllabus types.

In view of all of these developments, it is not surprising to find that there have been many attempts to reach a compromise that involves some combination of the various approaches that are available. One of these is the *core and spiral syllabus* proposed by Brumfit (1980) in which the grammatical system forms the backbone of the syllabus, with notions, functions and situations relating to that grammatical backbone moving into and out of focus at various points in language programmes. Another compromise syllabus type is the *proportional syllabus* proposed by Yalden (1983) in which there are a number of phases, including an initial structural phase, a later communicative phase (that focuses on, for example, functions and/ or rhetorical structuring) and a final specialised phase.

Whatever underlying approach the designers of syllabuses for additional languages take, it will always be the case, as Brumfit (1980) argues, that there will be items “which will not fit neatly into the system”. Nevertheless, as he also argues, there must be some sort of system since “[everything] we know about human learning suggests that it is crucially dependent on our ability . . . to systematize” (p.3). Thus, to claim that a syllabus is ‘eclectic’ (drawing upon a

range of different types and resources) can never, in itself, be adequate. What matters is the rationale which guides the selections made.

### **3.3.2.2 Teaching/ learning content and the South Korean national curriculum**

So far as the content of teaching and learning is concerned, the South Korean national curriculum has little to say in the main body of the document. Under the heading of *Content Structure*, there are three sub-headings: *Language functions*, *Communication activities* and *Language materials* (p.44).

The entry included under the first sub-heading (*Language functions*) is made up of two lines of text in which reference is made to “gradually foster[ing] the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing)” and “build[ing] the ability to integrate them” (p. 44). This is followed by a chart which classifies what are referred to as ‘language functions’ into two general categories (comprehension and expression) and places listening and speaking (referred to as ‘phonetic language’) under the heading of comprehension and reading and writing under the heading of written language. Clearly, therefore, the term ‘language functions’ is not being used at this point in the curriculum to refer to illocutionary forces such as, for example, warning or threatening (as it is in, for example, the notional-functional syllabus as outlined by Wilkins (1976)). This sub-section is not, therefore, in anything other than the broadest sense, concerned with the actual content of teaching and learning.

Under the second sub-heading (*Communication activities*), it is noted that communication activities “are comprised of phonetic and written language” (p. 44) and readers are referred to two appendices (Appendix 2 (*Examples and functions of communication*) and Appendix 4 (*Language forms necessary for communication*) (p. 45), neither of which includes useful examples of language teaching/ learning activities (see discussion in 3.3.3 below).

Under the third heading (*Language materials*), it is noted that “[for] natural language functions” reference should be made “to the content, language, vocabulary, and length of a single sentence below” (p. 45). Below there is the chart/ table (pp. 45 & 46) reproduced as *Table 4.1* below.

**Table 4.1:** Table included under the heading of 'Language materials' in the South Korean national curriculum for English

Domain	Contents
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to 'Materials' in [Appendix 1], and use the appropriate one.</li> <li>Materials which induce learning motivation, considering the student's interests, needs, and intellectual ability.</li> <li>Materials based on topics, circumstances, and lessons.</li> <li>Appropriate for achieving objectives.</li> <li>Appropriate for interaction.</li> <li>Appropriate for understanding English-speaking and non-English-speaking cultures.</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Language which induces natural language acquisition and practical communication</li> <li>Language often used in daily life.</li> <li>Language which considers levels of knowledge.</li> <li>Language conducive to relations between sounds and letters, distinguishing between sounds and meanings, connecting of words, phonetic changes depending on the speed of speech and/or other circumstances, and natural speech.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<p>The number of new words each grade may use is the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grade Three: within<sup>17</sup> 120 words</li> <li>Grade Four: within 120 words</li> <li>Grade Five: within 140 words</li> <li>Grade Six: within 140 words (Sum: within 520 words)</li> <li>Grade Seven: within 170 words</li> <li>Grade Eight: within 280 words</li> <li>Grade Nine: within 390 words</li> <li>Grade 10: within 450 words (Sum: within 1,290 words) (Total: within 1,790 words)</li> </ul>

<sup>17</sup> 'Within' would appear to be equivalent to 'approximately' in this context.

<b>Length of a Single sentence (words)</b>	Grades Three and Four: within seven  Grades Five and Six: within nine (except 'and', 'but', and 'or')
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The entries under the heading of *Materials* in the table above are discussed in the next section. Of immediate relevance here are the entries under the three other headings.

The first point to note is that, with the exception of this table and some references to language in the achievement standards section (discussed above), there are no other references to language in the main body of the curriculum document. Thus, apart from specifications relating to the number of words to be included at each grade and (oddly) the number of words in sentences from grades four to six, readers are given very little indication of the language content of programmes in the main body of the document. They are, however, referred to the document's appendices. There are four of these headed as follows:

Appendix 1: Subject matter;

Appendix 2: Examples and Functions of Communication<sup>18</sup>;

Appendix 3: Guide to Basic Vocabulary and Basic Vocabulary List;

Appendix 4: Linguistic Form Needed for Communication

*The first appendix* is very short, including only 19 entries all of which are concerned with topic types. Only the first seven of these relate to the day-to-day experiences of learners (e.g. personal, family and school life; habits, health and hobbies; animals, plants and weather). The others are subject-related (relating to politics, economics, history etc.) or relate to emotional and intellectual development, culture and customs (own and those of others), morality and patriotism, democracy and individual well-being, environmental conservation and

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<sup>18</sup> This appendix was replaced in the 2009 curriculum revision (see *Appendix 12: Revised version (2009) of examples and functions of communication*). However, because the changes made are not of any significance in relation to the discussion here, reference is made in that discussion to the original version of the second appendix.

aesthetic appreciation. All of them are sufficiently broadly articulated to provide contexts in which language specifics can be learned and practiced.

In the introduction to *the second appendix*, it is noted that examples and functions other than those listed may be included in teaching programmes and that those that are recommended for elementary grades are signalled by the inclusion of a triangle ( $\Delta$ ). That appendix contains lists of decontextualised phrases and sentences under forty-seven main headings (e.g. greetings, introducing) although functions are, with the exception of highly formulaic ones, determined on the basis of the interaction between linguistic content and context. It is, no doubt, for this reason that many of the examples provided are, in fact, highly formulaic and/or idiomatic (e.g. greeting expressed by *Hello!*). Where they are not, there are a number of potential problems associated with this type of presentation. For example:

- While some of the entries occur under more than one heading, they could equally well be included under other headings. Thus, for example, *Why don't you . . .* is listed under the headings *Making an appointment* (sub-heading: *Suggesting an appointment*) and under the heading *Proposing and inviting*. It could, depending on what follows, have been included also under any of the following headings: *Offering Food; Expressing discontent; Persuading; Advising; and Ordering*. In fact, in the absence of contextualisation, it could be associated with almost any function.
- Semantico-structural categories (e.g. the semi-modal auxiliary 'BE going to' for future plans) which can provide students with very useful and productive ways of systematising learning are frequently replaced by functional specifications (e.g. *Expressing imagination*) that are, at best, approximate. In fact, *I met . . . yesterday* is included under the heading of *Reporting*, something that suggests that there is a determined avoidance of any reference to grammatical categories such as past simple tense.
- Communicative function (e.g. requesting information) and context are sometimes confused, as in the case of, for example, *Who's calling, please?* being listed under the heading *Calling and Answering on the Telephone*.

- The core meanings of lexical items are sometimes confused with functions, with, for example, *What a surprise!* being, somewhat redundantly, listed under the heading *Expressing Surprise*.
- While a few binary semantic relational categories (e.g. *comparing*; *expressing cause and effect*) are included, the vast majority (e.g. *means-purpose*; *grounds-conclusion*; *contrastive alternation*) are omitted.
- There are several cases where it is evident that the examples provided are wholly inappropriate, as in the case of the inclusion of *Cheer up* and *Look on the bright side* being listed under the heading of *Consoling a grieving person*.

It is difficult to imagine why an appendix such as this one has been included. After all, it has been understood for a very long time that this sort of specification of functions in terms of decontextualised phrases and sentences is, at best, problematic. As Crombie (1988, p. 284) noted in the 1980s:

Almost any utterance can have almost any illocutionary force depending on the context in which it is used. . . . It is precisely because this is the case that a list of function labels (e.g. ‘suggestion’, ‘threat’, ‘warning’ ‘insult’, ‘compliment etc.) can be of little use to a course writer.

In connection with this, it is relevant to note that Skehan (1998) makes reference to the dangers associated with placing over-reliance on pre-digested chunks of language and, in doing so, in prioritising a memory-based system over a rule-based one. The effect of encouraging teachers and textbook designers to associate particular decontextualised phrases and sentences with particular functions is, furthermore, likely to be to encourage a type of phrasebook approach to teaching and learning.<sup>19</sup>

The introductory section of *the third appendix*:

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<sup>19</sup> This is precisely what we find in the case of the first lesson analysed in *Chapter 8* following where the main focus is on two of the expressions listed in this appendix.

- repeats the information relating to vocabulary in *Table 4.1* above;
- indicates that of the 500 words recommended for grades three through six, more than 375 should be selected from the ‘elementary recommended words’ (those that are preceded by an asterisk in the basic vocabulary list);
- notes that 75% of the words studied in grades seven through ten should be selected from those included in the basic vocabulary list;
- observes that, except in the case of ‘widely used’ derivatives (e.g. *writes*, *wrote*, *written*, *writing*; *am*, *are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, *been*, *being*; *teach*, *teacher*), ‘derivatives and inflectional words’ are not included in the basic vocabulary list;
- notes (oddly) that, where identical words are different in meaning, they are treated as a single word;
- notes that proper nouns and borrowed words “are not treated as new words”.

The basic vocabulary list itself is made up of 2,315 words, of which 736 are signalled as being recommended for elementary school lessons. No rationale for the selection of any of these words is included. The list is arranged alphabetically and no definitions or references to the senses of the words included are provided.

It is noted at the beginning of *the fourth appendix* that “[the] linguistic forms below should be used together with the communication examples in Appendix 2” (p. 119). The appendix itself (Appendix 4) is made up of a curious list of decontextualised sentences in thirty-six groups. Although none of the thirty-six groups is labelled, it is generally possible to detect at least part of the rationale that underpins the grouping. Thus, in the first example below, the emphasis is clearly intended to be on the contrast between present, past and future time reference:

1. He **takes** a walk every day.  
He **went** on a picnic yesterday.  
She **is going** (to **go**) abroad next year.

The next test **will** probably **be** a little more difficult.

The inclusion of the adverb ‘probably’ in the fourth sentence is no doubt intended to indicate that the modal auxiliary (‘will’) can be used in the context of uncertainty. The rationale for including modification of the adjective (‘difficult’) in this example is more difficult to guess. Also difficult to guess, because the emphasis in this group appears to be on time rather than habit/ routine, is the rationale for including a sentence in which use of the present simple tense is associated with habits or routines rather than (or in addition to) one that is associated with, for example, a characteristic (e.g. *She likes honey*) or present truth (e.g. *He lives in Korea*). It may be, however, that this relates to the possibility of including an adverbial (‘every day’) that could be contrasted with the adverbials in the second and third examples (‘yesterday’ and ‘next year’). However, if the intention was to clarify temporal reference, it would have been possible also to include an adverbial in the fourth sentence (e.g. ‘next time’). Also, it is difficult to see why a sentence that includes a nominalisation (‘a walk’) has been selected rather than a simpler example (e.g. *He exercises/cycles . . .*).

Even looking at one single grouping of examples, it becomes clear that employing this type of listing and grouping as a way of specifying teaching/ learning content (which may have been intended as a substitute for linking structures explicitly to structure-related meanings) is problematic. Apart from the type of problem signalled above, there are others. For example:

- In the absence of proficiency-based descriptors and of achievement objectives that clearly indicate the types of things that students are expected to be able to do through the use of the target language at different stages, decisions about what types of example to include and what types to omit will necessarily be based on little other than intuition. Thus, for example, although singular deictics (‘this’ and ‘that’) are included, plural ones are not.

- The examples that are included are of no help to textbook writers or teachers who need to make decisions about what to include and what to omit *at particular stages* of learning.

The last of the thirty-six groups is the only one that is accompanied by some type of linguistic specification. Why this should be the case is not possible to determine. What is, however, possible to determine is the fact that adjective complementation (e.g. *He is happy*) is omitted:

36.     The baby cried. [SV]  
 She stayed in bed. [SVA]  
 He is an English teacher. [SVC]  
 I like gimbap. [SVO]  
 You can put the dish on the table. [SVOA]  
 He gave me a present. [SVOO]  
 Why did they elect him chairman? [SVOC]

*The way in which the language content that is included in this curriculum document is dealt with is problematic, being likely to encourage a sort of ‘pick and mix’ phrasebook-style approach. Also of concern is what is omitted. For example, although what are referred to as ‘achievement standards’ make occasional reference to discourse features and discourse structuring (e.g. read a story about a general topic, and understand the rhetorical organization (p. 56)), no attempt is made to deal with discourse features or, indeed, with the skills involved in reading and writing. Overall, then, there is little in this curriculum document that is likely to be of any genuine use to teachers or textbook writers who are seeking some guidance in relation to what to include at particular stages of language programmes and, equally important, why certain things should be included or omitted.*

### **4.3.3 Teaching approaches/ methods**

#### **4.3.3.1 Some relevant background**

The earliest recorded textbooks designed for learners of foreign languages were bilingual and sometimes trilingual (including Latin as well as first and target languages) and generally took the form of short mini-dialogues designed to be used in specific circumstances (Howatt, 1984, pp. 17-31). Often, first and target languages were printed side by side (Kelly, 1976, p. 104). However, after Latin ceased to be used widely as a *lingua franca* in Europe (at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century), approaches to the teaching and learning of languages began to change as Latin came to be increasingly seen as providing access to classical texts and to systems of grammatical modelling. Throughout the Renaissance, translation involving classical languages and the meticulous parsing of sentences accompanied by memorisation became a standard part of advanced education (pp. 7, 172 & 173). It was not, however, until much later that grammar translation (often now referred to as ‘the grammar translation method’ (GTM)) as we recognise it now began to emerge in high schools in Europe (Howatt, 1984, p.131). As exemplified in the works of Meidinger, published in Germany at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, grammar translation involved “a series of separate lesson units each with a few grammatical rules and paradigms, plus vocabulary lists for use with exercises in the form of sentences to translate into the foreign language” (Howatt, 2009, p. 472).

Although grammar translation is still in evidence today (Liu, 2007, pp. 13-41), partly, perhaps, because it makes so few demands on teachers (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 6), it had begun to be challenged as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by members of what has come to be referred to as a ‘Reform Movement’ who were attempting to develop an approach to the teaching of languages that prioritised oral interaction and was relevant to the needs and interests of learners (Howatt, 1984, p. 169). It was not, however, until the mid-20th century that the general approach advocated by adherents of the Reform Movement began to develop and became associated with a particular methodology. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, while structural approaches to linguistics, which focused on rule-based systems, were contributing to the development of the structural syllabus, behaviourist approaches to psychology, which saw learning in terms of conditioning and reinforcement, were contributing to the development of an

audio-lingual methodology,<sup>20</sup> which prioritised imitation, practice (in the form of repetitive drilling), feedback and habit formation (see, for example, Chastain, 1976, pp. 102-127; Richards & Rodgers, 2001, pp. 58-65; and Larsen-Freeman, 2000, pp. 35-42). Audio-lingual methodology ultimately failed to deliver results in terms of the high expectations that many had of it (Decke-Cornill & Küster, 2010, p. 84). The dialogues selected for practice were increasingly seen as being meaningless and banal and the pattern drills it focused on as being monotonous and boring. The scene was therefore set for the next major development, that is, communicative language teaching (CLT).

By the 1970s, linguists had become increasingly aware that there was much more to linguistic communication than vocabulary and grammatical rules. Pragmatics and discourse analysis were developing rapidly and concepts of communicative competence/communicative competences that included contextual appropriateness as well as formal accuracy were beginning to be developed (see, for example, Hymes, 1972). Out of these developments, communicative language teaching (CLT) grew, initially in a ‘strong’ form that involved an almost total neglect of linguistic structure and later in a ‘weaker’ version that generally involved the inductive teaching of grammatical rules (Howatt, 1984, p. 279).

Littlewood (1981, pp. 6, 77 & 78) has defined communicative language teaching (CLT) as involving both principles and skills. The three general principles are: *the meaningfulness principle* (the learning process is supported where language is used meaningfully), *the communication principle* (activities involve genuine communication promote learning); and *the task principle* (language is used to carry out meaningful tasks). The four broad skill areas are: *manipulation of the language system; ability to relate form and communicative function; understanding of the social meanings of linguistic forms; and strategic control in the use of language to communicate effectively in specific situations*. As defined by Nunan (1991, pp. 279-295), CLT involves:

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<sup>20</sup> Later, audio-visual methodologies, which placed emphasis on the interaction between sight and sound, were developed.

- emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language;
- introduction of authentic texts;<sup>21</sup>
- opportunities for learners to focus on the learning process itself;
- drawing upon the learner's own personal experiences; and
- attempting to link language learning inside the classroom with language activities outside the classroom.

Tasks and activities are fundamental to communicative language teaching (CLT). Within that context, students are encouraged to be involved in 'communicative activities', that is, in activities that involve genuine communication rather than communication whose only function is language learning.<sup>22</sup>

There are many different types of activity, such as activities involving an information gap that can be described as being communicative in the sense outlined above. However, there are also many types of activity that cannot, including, for example, the repetitive gap filling type of activity that is typically associated with audio-lingual methodology. Littlewood (2004, p. 322) has provided a useful classification of activity types:

- *Non-communicative*: activities that focus wholly on the structure of language;
- *Pre-communicative*: activities that pay some attention to meaning but do not involve the exchange of new messages;
- *Communicative*: activities that involve practicing language in a context where new information is exchanged.

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<sup>21</sup> Widdowson (1983, p. 30) notes that the concept of authenticity should not be confused with that of genuineness in that materials may be regarded as authentic so long as they are appropriate and accessible.

<sup>22</sup> In addition to communicative tasks/ activities, reference is often also made to metacognitive activities/ tasks, that is, to activities/ tasks that focus on the process of learning itself (Breen, 1987b, p.161).

*Communicative activities* may involve *structured communication* or *authentic communication*.

- *Structured communication activities* (including structured role plays): involve the use of situations to elicit pre-taught language;
- *Authentic communication activities* (including creative role-plays and complex problem solving) involve situations in which meanings are unpredictable.

Communicative approaches to language teaching may be described as being either ‘task-based’ or ‘task-supported’. There is a major difference between the two. In ‘a task-based’ approach, the content of language courses is specified in terms of tasks, that is, the syllabus is itself made up of tasks. In a task-supported approach, tasks are used to reinforce the learning of the syllabus content (Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993, pp. 154-156).

#### **4.3.3.2 Teaching approaches/ methods in the South Korean national curriculum**

It was noted earlier that readers were referred to two appendices of the curriculum (Appendix 2 and Appendix 4), for further detail on what were referred to as ‘communication activities’. Examination of these appendices (3.3.2.2 above), combined with examination of the nature of some of what were referred to as ‘achievement standards’ (3.3.1.2 above), suggests that the way in which the authors of the curriculum document conceive of ‘communication activities’ is very different from the way in which proponents of CLT conceive of them. Examination of the ‘materials’ section of *Table 4.1* (above) reinforces this impression, the only wording that might potentially be linked to CLT being ‘appropriate for interaction’. However, the section headed *Teaching and Learning Methods* (pp. 58 – 61) remains to be explored. That section is divided into two sub-sections, the first referring to elementary schooling, the second to secondary schooling.

So far as *elementary schooling* is concerned, it is recommended that teaching and learning methods should include games, chants and songs and should make use of multimedia materials in order to motivate students and promote a sense of achievement. Reference is also made to the desirability of attending to students' 'levels' through "individual and cooperative education", and ensuring that students "have confidence to participate actively" (p.59). All of this is consistent with CLT. Also consistent with CLT is the following instruction (p.58):

- Organize learning groups according to activities in order to achieve student-centred classes

With reference to *secondary schooling*, there are also some entries that are consistent with CLT:

- Plan a student-centered class, where students can actively participate, and teachers can cooperate with them.
- Develop a variety of activities in order to achieve lively interaction between teacher and students, and among students.
- Use various appropriate strategies to enable students to effectively communicate.
- Speaking education should focus on communication activities to enhance fluency and precision, and guidance should increase language ability to be applied in real circumstances.
- Various multimedia materials and ICTs should be harnessed to motivate students to get involved in learning activities to promote a great sense of achievement.
- According to students' abilities, interests, and knowledge, use various methods to induce motivation and allow for a student-centered class.

Overall, the section headed *Teaching and Learning Methods* includes much that is consistent with CLT. However, it is also noted that:

- When developing teaching and learning materials, language functions, vocabulary, language form, etc. should be reorganized to match the students' levels. Correspondingly, teaching methods should also be diversified based on the performance standards (proficiency criteria).

In view of the nature of the performance standards statements, which are now glossed as ‘proficiency criteria’ (see 3.3.1.2 above) and the problems associated with the specification of ‘language functions, vocabulary, and language form’ (see 3.3.2.2 above), there are reasons why readers may have little confidence in the appearance of communicative orientation in this section of the curriculum document and in its introduction (see 3.3 above). Unlike, for example, a number of languages curriculum documents produced under the auspices of New Zealand’s Ministry of Education (see, for example, Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2001), there are, in this document, no examples of learning and assessment activities (other than those, generally very traditional in type, that are treated as if they were achievement standards (see 3.3.1.2 above)).

*Overall, although much that is included in the curriculum document under the heading of Teaching and Learning Methods is, in common with the introductory section of the document, consistent with CLT, this seems to be largely rhetorical as there is nothing in the rest of the documentation that supports this orientation and much that runs counter to it.*

#### **4.3.4 Medium of instruction**

##### **4.3.4.1 Some relevant background**

Another important aspect of language programmes that may be specified in curriculum documents is the medium of instruction. The concept of teaching languages through the medium of the target language emerged as part of what has come to be known as ‘the Reform Movement’ in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when many people began to feel that foreign languages were not being taught in a way that was useful in terms of the emerging industrialization of societies in which travel across national boundaries was becoming increasingly possible (Howatt, 1984, p. 169). Those who contributed to this movement envisaged an approach to teaching

(a ‘direct’ or ‘natural’ approach) in which spoken interaction was given priority. However, only some of the proponents of this approach advocated using the target language as the language of instruction (*Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, pp. 187-209*). A similar situation obtains in the case of CLT. While proponents of CLT reject what is generally referred to as the ‘bilingual method’ advocated by Dodson (1972), which involved/ involves conveying meanings bilingually as utterance equivalents, not all of them believe that there is no place at all for students’ native languages in the language classroom. There are, indeed, those who believe that it is often unrealistic to attempt to use the target language as the only language of instruction (see, for example, Antón & DiCamilla (1999) and Belz (2003)). Among those who believe this, there is, however, some disagreement about when, and how, the target language should be used in the classroom context. Thus, for example, although Polio and Duff (1994) have argued that the target language should be used to give directions and instructions and check word meanings, Cook (2001) has argued that the students’ native language should be used for these purposes.

#### **4.3.4.2 Medium of instruction and the South Korean national curriculum**

Reference to the medium of instruction is made twice in the curriculum document. On both occasions these references, with the same wording, occur in the section headed Teaching and Learning Methods - once with reference to elementary school education, once with reference to secondary school education. The wording is as follows (pp. 59 & 60):

Wherever possible, classes should be carried out in English.

Thus, although here is a clear preference that instruction should be carried out through the medium of English, there is no requirement that this should be the case.

#### **4.3.5 Approaches to assessment**

##### **4.3.5.1 Some background information**

As Elder and Wigglesworth (1996, p.1) have observed:

The assessment of second language learners raises complex issues about the nature of language proficiency, the validity of assessment instruments, the reliability of scores, and the manner in which the whole process may influence the curriculum.

Assessment of learning may be formative or summative, with summative assessment, in the case of language learning, being either proficiency-based or based on the extent of mastery of specific aspects of language use. In the former case, assessment may be related directly to general proficiency-based achievement objectives; in the latter case, it may be related to more specific achievement objectives and the ways in which they may be realised linguistically at different achievement levels. As Johnson (2000, p. 269) argues:

One measure of the effectiveness of a national awards system that relates to the assessment of international languages in school contexts is . . . the extent to which it reflects the way or ways in which the relevant curriculum objectives are conceived and articulated.

Where, therefore, achievement objectives are expressed in terms of communicative competences and where a communicative approach to teaching is recommended, the expectation must be that assessment is “based on activities which measure skills in communicative contexts” (Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 1995, p. 17<sup>23</sup>).

#### **4.3.5.2 Approaches to assessment and the South Korean national curriculum**

As indicated above, teaching and assessment should be in line with one another. Thus, a communicative approach to teaching should be matched by a communicative approach to assessment.

Under the main heading of *Assessment*, there are two sub-headings: *Assessment Guidelines* and *Matters to be Attended to in Assessment* (p. 61). Under the first of

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<sup>23</sup> The New Zealand reference is included here to illustrate what is generally involved in communicative testing.

these sub-headings, it is noted that assessment should be in line with the performance standards for each educational stage. However, as has been indicated (see 3.3.1.2 above), the ways in which the performance standards are articulated is sometimes very general and never takes any account of different levels of achievement as indicated by linguistic competences. It is, therefore, simply impossible to devise approaches to assessment that are based on these performance standards.

Reference is made to the need to ensure that progress is assessed ‘analytically and holistically’ (p. 61). However, holistic assessment in the case of languages requires proficiency benchmarks and there are no proficiency benchmarks in the curriculum document.

With reference to the assessment of speaking, it is noted that ‘performative testing’ should be carried out “if possible” (p. 61), leaving open, surprisingly, the issue of what is to be done if performative testing is not possible.

Under the heading of *Matters to be Attended to in Assessment*, it is noted that at elementary school levels, assessment and teaching methods should be related (p.62). This suggests, if we are to assume that CLT is being recommended, that assessment should be communicatively orientated. However, as indicated above, it is far from clear that what is actually being recommended is CLT. In any case, this advice is not repeated with reference to secondary school levels. It is also noted with reference to elementary school levels that the emphasis should be on “the linguistic functions in the textbooks”, which suggests, in view of what has been indicated above with reference to the approach to linguistic functions in the curriculum document, that any assessment that is carried out is likely to be formulaic in focus.

So far as secondary schooling is concerned, it is recommended that the achievement of the learning objectives should be frequently examined (p. 62), that various “tasks and levels of questions” should be included, and that “integrated assessment” should also be carried out. This suggests that there should be a form

of assessment that attends to the specifics of what students are able to do using the target language and a form of assessment that is directed more towards assessing overall proficiency. It also suggests that assessment should be more task-based than discrete-point centred. However, the word ‘suggest’ has been chosen here very carefully. The fact is that the instructions are too general to be of any real value. Once again, there are no examples of assessment activities. This means that there remains considerable uncertainty about what types of assessment are considered acceptable.

### **4.3.6 Cultural content**

#### **4.3.6.1 Some background information**

Concepts of culture have changed fundamentally with the rapidly increasing pace of globalisation and the emergence of notions of cultural hybridity (Hermans & Kempen, 1998) and cross-cultural competencies (Lusting & Koester, 1993). Increasing knowledge and understanding of the cultures of others is likely to have made cultural stereotyping in the context of language teaching and learning far less common than it was in the past. This, combined with the spread of English throughout the world and, consequently, its widespread use in a very wide variety of cultural contexts, has had a major impact on the teaching and learning of English as witnessed in, for example, the cultural content of textbooks.

#### **4.3.6.2 Cultural content and the South Korean national curriculum**

There is little in the curriculum document that relates directly to the cultural content of English language programmes. The only references to culture, apart from those in the introductory section, are in the section headed *Teaching and Learning Methods* where it is noted that:

- Along with language education, English-speaking and non-English-speaking cultures should be appropriately introduced so they can be naturally understood (elementary schooling, p.59).
- Increase the appreciation of foreign cultures and cultivate an understanding perspective of them by introducing various English-speaking and non-English-speaking cultures (secondary schooling, p. 60).

There is nothing here, other than, perhaps, the reference to the inclusion of non-English speaking cultures, to suggest that it is recognised that teaching that makes reference to culture should avoid cultural stereotyping or the increasing significance of cultural hybridity.

#### **4.4 Overview and conclusion**

Overall, analysis of the South Korean national curriculum for English in schools indicates that there is a disconnection between the introductory section and some parts of the section dealing with methodology (which suggest an orientation towards CLT) and other parts of the document (with the possible exception of one of the appendices). The achievement standards are expressed in a variety of different ways, almost none of which is susceptible to the development of valid and reliable assessment tools. No rationale is provided for the vocabulary introduced in the third appendix, or for decisions relating to which lexical items are considered appropriate for elementary as opposed to secondary school students. What are referred to as ‘communication functions’ in the second appendix are simply decontextualised lists of phrases and sentences which generally could be assigned (except for some idiomatic expressions), given the absence of context, to almost any functional category or, in some cases, to none at all. As in the case of the second appendix, the fourth one, headed *Linguistic Forms Needed for Communication*, is made up of lists of decontextualised sentences. These sentences are grouped in ways that are, presumably, intended to be indicative/ suggestive of some type of linguistic and/ or semantic categorisation. However, any direct form of syntactic or semantic classification seems to have been intentionally avoided (echoing, perhaps, the more extreme form of CLT that was sometimes in evidence in the early stages of its development). Selecting examples from these lists in the context of some of the topics suggested in the first appendix (headed *Subject Matter*) could result in materials that resemble those included in topic-based phrasebooks, particularly so in view of the paucity of references in the curriculum documentation to aspects of discourse construction.

While there are some (problematic) ‘achievement standards’, there is, apart from some restrictions relating to vocabulary, no indication of how these should be linked to language specifics. This is particularly odd at a time when so much effort is going into the development of reference level descriptions (RLDs), that is, specification of linguistic aspects of course content in relation to the CEFR’s descriptors (*English Profile* (n.d.). As Takarua and Whaanga (2009, p. 24) note with respect to the teaching of Māori:

Leaving such decisions [decisions about the nature of various aspects of the curriculum] to individual teachers may be consistent with their need to be responsive to the needs of particular learners and groups of learners. However, making decisions of this type is a complex matter. Furthermore, unless there is some consistency in the decision-making, learners who, for example, move from one school to another will be likely to experience difficulties. In addition, the decisions that teachers make at lower levels will inevitably have an impact at higher levels when students take national examinations, examinations that are necessarily predicated on general expectations about proficiency achievements and more specific expectations about the types of language with which students will be familiar.

In view of the actual nature and content of the South Korean national curriculum for English in schools, it would not be surprising if teachers and textbook writers were uncertain of what is expected of them and/ or interpreted what is expected of them in a range of very different ways.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Reporting on a questionnaire-based survey of teachers of English to young learners in Korea**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports on one of two main parts of a questionnaire-based survey of a sample of English language teachers in middle schools and high schools in South Korea. The second part, focusing on teacher training, is reported in *Chapter 5*. Following an outline of the aims (5.2) and approach (5.3) of the survey and a discussion of ethical issues addressed (5.4), there are sections dealing with the target population (5.5), the production (5.6) and piloting (5.7) of the draft questionnaire, and the distribution and collection of the final version (5.8). The data collected are then presented, analysed and discussed (5.9) and the chapter ends with an overview and some final comments (5.10).

#### **5.2 Overall aims of the part of the survey reported in this chapter**

The overall aims of the part of the survey reported in this chapter were to determine, with reference to the participants:

- their background, training, experience, qualifications and training aspirations;
- their knowledge, attitudes and opinions in relation to relevant educational policies, course design, language teaching approaches and methodologies, and textbook use;
- their assessment of their own proficiency in English.

All of the questions included in the questionnaire were related, directly or indirectly, to the nature of the national curriculum and/or to curriculum implementation.

### **5.3 Determination of the survey approach to be adopted**

It was decided to develop and distribute a questionnaire and to ask a selection of the participants to take part in a semi-structured interview.

As indicated by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 404), the main *advantage* of using self-administered questionnaires without the presence of the researcher is efficiency (the ability to collect data on a number of different topics from as large a sample of participants as possible without researcher intervention at the point of completion and without major outlay in terms of energy, time and cost) and more anonymity (which can render the data more honest when it comes to sensitive matters). The main *disadvantage* is its inevitable lack of flexibility and the possibility that the respondents will misinterpret the questions.

The decision to conduct a range of follow-up semi-structured interviews was intended to counter-balance the disadvantages of using a self-completion questionnaire, allowing for more in-depth responses.

### **5.4 Ethical considerations**

The University of Waikato insists that all research is conducted in an ethical manner. This involves ensuring that potential participants are made aware of:

- the aims of the research and the identity of the researcher and his or her research supervisor/s;
- their right to not to participate;
- their right, should they choose to participate, not to respond to all of the questions;
- their right not to provide their name or contact details with their responses (in the case of questionnaires) and, should they choose to do so (in order to be contacted at a later point), their right not to be identified in any way in the reporting of the research.

Prior to the design and conduct of the survey, an application for ethical approval was submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee<sup>24</sup> of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato. That approval was granted.

All potential participants were provided with a letter that clearly outlined the nature of the research, indicated how further information about it could be obtained and listed the ways in which their interests would be protected (see *Appendix 2*)

### **5.5 Determining the target population**

The target population was teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea. As many as possible of these teachers were identified by:

- conducting a search of databases relating to South Korean government English teacher training centres;
- conducting a search of databases relating to local and national English teacher communities;

Because of considerations relating to the rights of individuals, the training centres and teacher community networks contacted would not agree to distribute questionnaires officially during in-service programmes. Nevertheless, it was possible to ask an acquaintance to distribute and collect them during break time at one training centre and during a meeting of one community network group. Other questionnaires were distributed by acquaintances to colleagues in Seoul, Gwangju and Gyeonggi-do (Gyeonggi province).

### **5.6 Production of the draft questionnaires**

A draft of the questionnaire was developed, a number of the questions being drawn or adapted from questions included by Wang in a study of Taiwanese teachers of English (Wang, 2008). The questionnaire was in two parts: the first part (reported on in this chapter) was more general than the second, which focused

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<sup>24</sup> The Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations was guided in the “University of Waikato Postgraduate Studies Office Higher Degrees Handbook” as well as searched on the website of the University of Waikato, <http://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/archive/2011/assessment/ethicalConduct.html>.

on teacher training (reported in *Chapter 5*). The questionnaire was produced in the Korean language (for teachers whose first language was Korean) and English (for teachers whose first language was English). It was accompanied by a letter clearly outlining the nature of the research and the rights of participants (see *Appendix 2*).

To allow for speed of completion and ease of data entry, most of the questions were closed ones. However, in line with the advice of Oppenheim (1992, p.115), space was provided after most of these questions so that respondents could add any remarks, qualifications and explanations they wished. This was intended to compensate, in some measure, for the inevitable limitations of closed questions (including possible bias), particularly dichotomous ones (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 377).

### **5.7 Piloting and revision of the draft questionnaire**

Ten English language teachers in South Korea were selected as a trial group. These people were chosen simply because they were known to the researcher and had expressed willingness to assist. They were each sent a copy of the draft questionnaire in PDF format and asked to attempt to complete it, taking notes on the time taken and on any aspects of the questions or the overall questionnaires that they considered to be in need of revision.

The most important feedback related to the nature of the Korean language in the Korean version. This was considered by a number of members of the trial group to be ambiguous in places and also somewhat artificial (probably a reflection of the fact that the English version had been created first and then translated into Korean).

The following comments were made:

- reference to “your latest qualification” was too general and might not be interpreted as relating specifically to English and/or English language education;

- reference to “local policy” was also too general and might not be interpreted as relating specifically to policies of the city or provincial education bureaux;
- some terminology relating to methodological approaches was potentially confusing and required modification and/or further explanation;
- in the case of several open questions (e.g. a request for participants’ opinions about possible ways of improving the teaching of English in secondary schools in South Korea), it was felt that examples would be helpful;
- in the case of some questions, specific advice on improving the wording was provided.

## **5.8 Participant selection and distribution and collection of the questionnaires**

I decided to travel to South Korea so as to be personally available during the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. On arrival in South Korea, I arranged for printing of the questionnaire (see *Appendix 5 and 6*). In advance of that travel, and in order to make the best use of my time in South Korea, I contacted a number of people by email and telephone in order to schedule the questionnaire distribution. Nevertheless, several plans and schedules had to be revised or abandoned. For example, although there had been initial agreement for questionnaires to be distributed and collected during break time, the Director of one of the training centres which was to have been involved, withdrew permission. Even so, in addition to distributing and/or arranging for the distribution of questionnaires to individual teachers in Seoul, Gwangju and Gyeonggi province and one training centre (in Cheongwon in Chungcheong province), I was fortunate to be able to secure respondents from throughout the country by virtue of the fact one of the English communities involved was in the process of holding training programmes for teachers of English from all parts of South Korea. In all, 400 questionnaires were distributed.

## **5.9 Part 1 (general) of the questionnaire: Outline and discussion of the responses**

One hundred and eighty of the four hundred questionnaires distributed were returned, that is, a response rate of 45%. Of these, ninety-seven (54%) completed all parts of the questionnaire (including the part relating specifically to teacher training). Most of the respondents (178/98%) were Korean even though each school in most of the major cities has one native speaker of English employed as an English teacher on a contract basis. Of those who completed both parts of the questionnaire, twelve provided names and contact details (in connection with a request to do so if they wished to participate in further aspects of the research).

### **5.9.1 Background information and teaching context**

The following information relating to the background of the participants (Questions 1 – 11) was collected (see *Tables 5.1 & 5.2*):

**Table 5.1: Participants' background information**

		No. of responses	% of total cohort	Further specification
Gender	<b>Male</b>	33/180	18%	
	<b>Female</b>	147/180	82%	
	<b>NR</b>	0	0%	
Mother tongue	<b>Mother tongue: Korean</b>	178/180	98%	
	<b>Mother tongue: English</b>	2/180	2%	
	<b>NR</b>	0	0%	
Teacher qual.	<b>Qualified to become a teacher of English in South Korea<sup>25</sup></b>	171/179	95%	<b>B.Ed 31</b> <b>B.A. Eng. Lit 31</b> <b>Graduate degree 45</b>
	<b>Studied English language, English language education or literature abroad<sup>26</sup></b>	10/179	6%	<b>BA 6</b> <b>Graduate degree 4</b> <b>Unspecified 1</b>
	<b>Master's degree abroad not related to English</b>	1/179	0.6%	
	<b>NR</b>	1	0.6%	
	<b>1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Certificate in secondary teaching</b>	64/99	36%	

<sup>25</sup> This involves graduating from a College of Education or having completed a teaching qualification in another college plus, in the case of public schools, passing a recruitment examination.

<sup>26</sup> These respondents are assumed also to have a Bachelor's degree from a Korean university (unless they are native speakers of English who are contract teachers).

<b>Most recent qual.</b>	<b>Master's degree or PhD in English education</b>	3/99	2%	
	<b>Master's degree in TESOL</b>	1/99	1%	
	<b>Specific qual. in TESOL</b>	20/99	11%	
	<b>NR</b>	81	45%	
<b>Most recent qual.: Date</b>	<b>1985-2000</b>	16/77	9%	
	<b>2001-2005</b>	13/77	7%	
	<b>2006-2011</b>	48/77	27%	
	<b>NR</b>	103	57%	

A considerable majority of the questionnaire participants were female (82%), with all except two being first language speakers of Korean. Only 10 (5%) had studied English language or a subject related to English language abroad. While 64 (35.5%) of the total cohort of 180 had a certificate in secondary teaching (which is unlikely to have included many aspects of the teaching of English), only 20 (11% of the total cohort) indicated that they had a qualification specific to TESOL, something that is likely to have a significant impact on knowledge and understanding of language teaching.

**Table 5.2 (Part A): Participants' teaching contexts**

		<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of total cohort</b>	<b>% of those who responded</b>
<b>Teaching context</b>	<b>Public or National school</b>	139/180	77%	77%
	<b>Private school</b>	40/180	22%	22%
	<b>Other<sup>27</sup></b>	1/180	1%	1%
	<b>NR</b>	0	0%	
	<b>Middle school</b>	109/180	61%	61%
	<b>High school</b>	70/180	39%	39%
	<b>Other</b>	1/180	1%	1%
	<b>NR</b>	0	0%	
<b>Classes per week</b>	<b>12-15</b>	7/180	4%	4%
	<b>16-20</b>	151/180	84%	84%
	<b>21-25</b>	22/180	12%	12%
	<b>NR</b>	0	0%	
	<b>One level<sup>28</sup></b>	86/179	47.8%	48%

<sup>27</sup> Alternative school offering both middle school and high school curriculum.

<sup>28</sup> Either different levels in the same class or one 'level' (e.g. intermediate) in which the students

<b>Levels taught</b>	<b>Two levels</b>	69/179	38.3%	39%
	<b>Three levels</b>	17/179	9.4%	9%
	<b>Four levels</b>	7/179	3.9%	4%
	<b>NR</b>	1	0.6%	

**Table 5.2 (Part B): Participants' teaching contexts**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
<b>Average no. of students in classes</b>	<b>5-20</b>	18/179	10%	10%
	<b>21-30</b>	65/179	36%	36%
	<b>31-40</b>	96/179	53%	54%
	<b>NR</b>	1	1%	
<b>Teaching more than one grade (?)</b>	<b>Middle school teachers</b>	45/96	25%	47%
	<b>High school teachers</b>	16/60	9%	27%
	<b>NR</b>	24	13%	
<b>Differentiated or integrated classes by level</b>	<b>Different levels in the same class</b>	39/179	21.7%	22%
	<b>Different levels in different classes</b>	140/179	77.8%	78%
	<b>NR</b>	1	0.5%	
<b>Positions of responsibility</b>	<b>Yes</b>	173/177	96%	98%
	<b>No</b>	4/177	2%	2%
	<b>NR</b>	3	2%	
	<b>Special responsibility for teacher training</b>	5/173 <sup>29</sup>	3%	3%
	<b>Special responsibility for assessment</b>	25/173	14%	14%
	<b>Special responsibility within English department (curriculum etc.)</b>	34/173	19%	20%

A considerable majority of the questionnaire participants (139/77%) indicated that they taught in public schools, with the vast majority indicating that they taught

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are not, in fact, genuinely all of a similar level.

<sup>29</sup> Refers to the 173 who responded 'yes'

between 16 and 25 classes each week (96%), with an average of between 21 and 30 students in each class (89%) and spanning more than one level (93/52%). Of these, 39 (22%) indicated that they taught students of different levels in the same class. Bearing all of this in mind, the amount of preparation and marking time required would appear to be substantial.

### **5.9.2 Issues relating to English language education policy**

*Questions 12 – 16 related to English language education policy. The responses are outlined in Table 5.3 and Figure 5.1 below.*

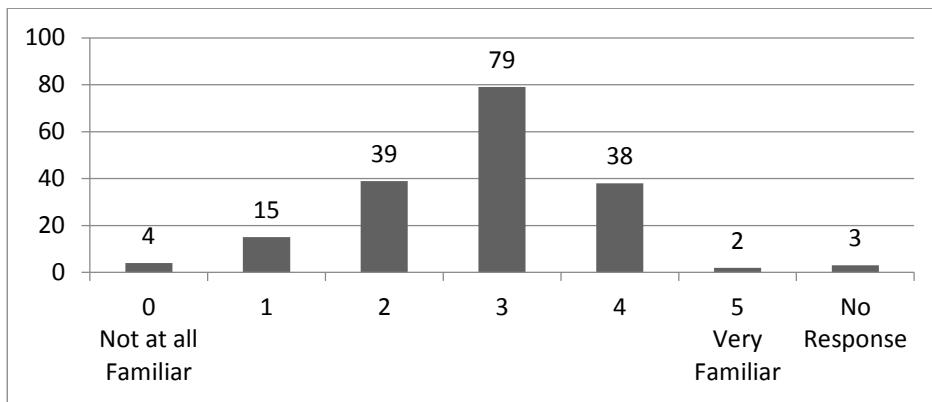
**Table 5.3: Degree of familiarity with the latest national English education policies**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
<b>Consulted about latest English education policies</b>	<b>Yes</b>	13/176	7%	7%
	<b>No</b>	96/176	53%	55%
	<b>Don't know</b>	67/176	37%	38%
	<b>NR</b>	4	2%	
<b>Comments (translated from Korean):</b>				
- <i>My opinion is not reflected in the documentation; - When the policies were released, I was not involved in teaching.</i>				
<b>Given documents about latest <u>national</u> English education policies</b>	<b>Yes</b>	114/177	63%	64%
	<b>No</b>	46/177	26%	26%
	<b>Don't know</b>	17/177	9%	10%
	<b>NR</b>	3	2%	
<b>Comments (translated from Korean):</b>				
- <i>One copy of the school curriculum for each school; - A leaflet; - There is too much change: I doubt if education is a plan which spans a hundred years; - English education policy is published in the media or in formal documents but teachers find it difficult to get relevant information. There is a need to explain these things to teachers directly.</i>				
<b>Given documents about latest <u>local / regional</u> English education policies</b>	<b>Yes</b>	99/177	55%	56%
	<b>No</b>	51/177	28%	29%
	<b>Don't know</b>	27/177	15%	15%
	<b>NR</b>	3	2%	
<b>Comments (translated from Korean):</b>				
- <i>I was given it during my teacher training.</i>				
<b>Consulted about latest English education policies at <u>your own school</u></b>	<b>Yes</b>	86/178	48%	48%
	<b>No</b>	53/178	29%	30%
	<b>Don't know</b>	39/178	22%	22%
	<b>NR</b>	2	1%	

**Comments (translated from Korean):**

- Because this was my first year of teaching in a new school, I was not consulted about policy. After the first year, I believe that teachers can have a slight impact on policy implementation.

In the following figure, 0 = not at all familiar and 5 = very familiar.



**Figure 5.1:** Self-assessed degree of familiarity with local/ regional policy on teaching English (3 No responses)

As indicated in *Table 5.3* above, while the vast majority of the participants indicated that they had been given documentation relating to the latest *national* education policies (114, 63% of the total cohort), a considerable number did not respond or claimed that they had not or did not know whether they had or not (66/ 37%). Furthermore, only 13 of the participants (7%) claimed to have been *consulted about* the latest national English education policies. So far as *local/ regional* policies about the teaching/learning of English are concerned, a slightly lower number (99/ 55% of the total cohort) claimed to have been given relevant documentation. However, almost half (86/ 48%) claimed to have been consulted. Overall (see *Figure 5.1* above), however, the vast majority of the survey participants claimed to have only a moderate degree of familiarity with local/ regional policies (with 137/ 76%) selecting categories 0 – 3. Perhaps most surprising, only 86 (48%) claimed to have been consulted about their own school's latest policies on English education.

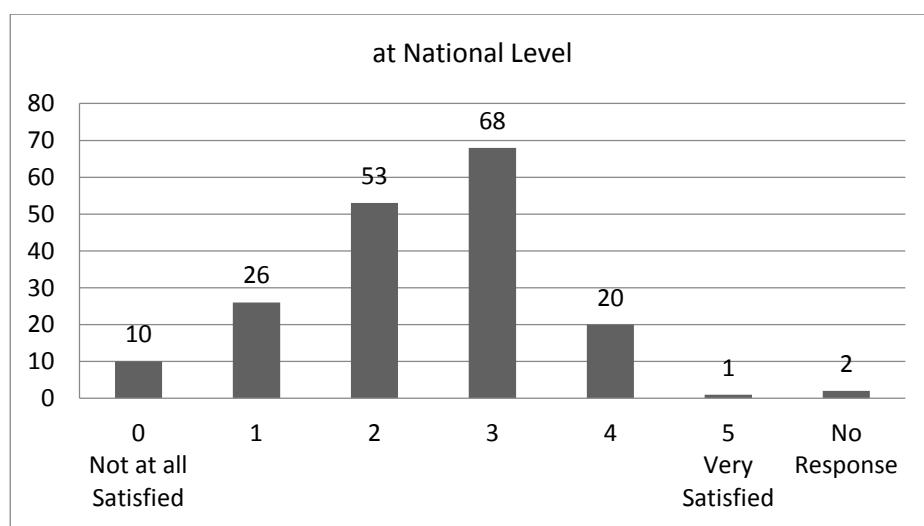
In relation to the issues above, one respondent made the following comment (translated from Korean):

*There is a big gap among low-level students that should be measured. Some students just move up into a higher form without basic competence.*

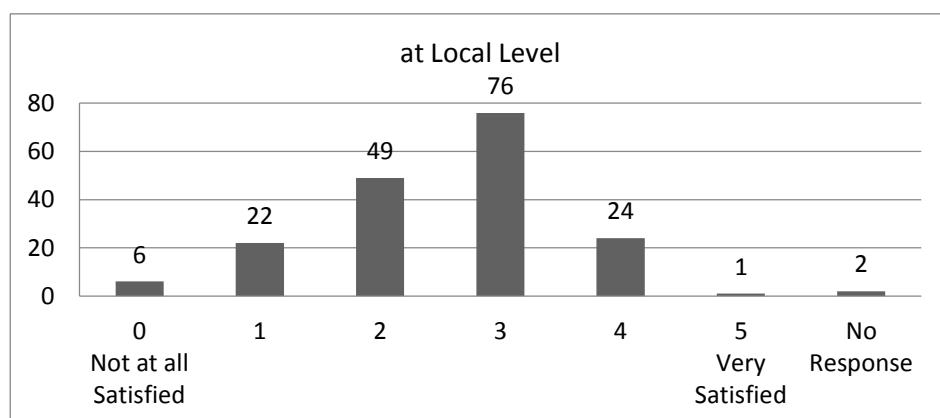
### 5.9.3 Level of satisfaction with current implementation of education policies

Figures 5.2 – 5.4 provide an overview of respondents' reporting of the extent to which they were satisfied with the current implementation of English education policies at national, local and school levels.

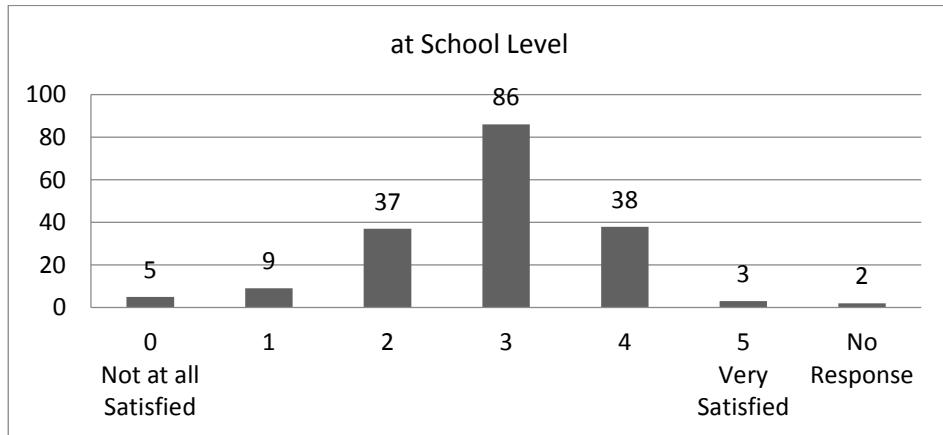
In the following figures, 0 = not satisfied at all and 5 = very satisfied.



**Figure 5.2:** Extent of satisfaction with implementation of English education policies at national level (2 No responses)

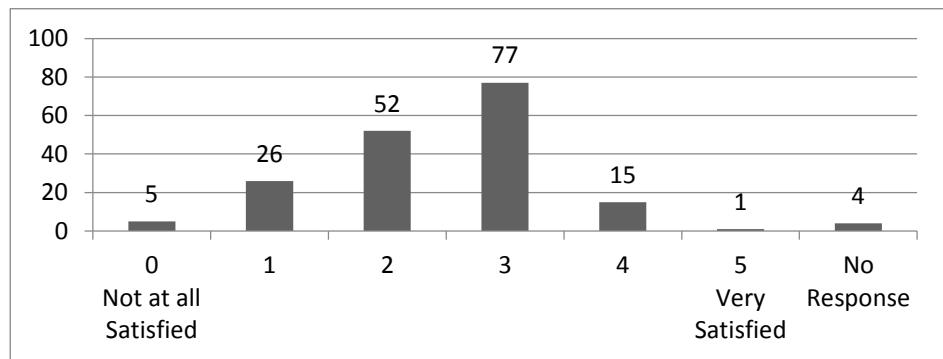


**Figure 5.3:** Extent of satisfaction with implementation of English education policies at local/ regional level (2 No responses)



**Figure 5.4:** Extent of satisfaction with implementation of English education policies at school level (2 No responses)

Figure 5.5 provides an overview of respondents' reporting of the extent to which they were satisfied with the latest English education policies. In the table, 0 = not satisfied at all and 5 = very satisfied.



**Figure 5.5:** Extent of satisfaction with the latest English education policies (4 non-responses)

The following comments (all except one translated into English from Korean by the researcher) were provided:

- I feel communication between education offices nationwide is lacking. Policies are not being carried out uniformly across the country.<sup>30</sup>
- Educational circumstances depend on each school's condition. What happens in English classrooms is not decided wholly by the teacher.

<sup>30</sup> This comment was provided in English.

- I mostly agree with current education policy but more class hours are needed for applying this policy to this school system.
- More professional education is needed through recruiting more teachers.
- Education is being treated as a mere formality with events like 365<sup>31</sup> assessments, writing an essay and speaking contests.
- Substituting NEAT<sup>32</sup> for the English section of the College Scholastic Aptitude Test seemed to be desirable except for the difficulty of securing grader reliability.
- I'm not quite sure exactly what you are looking for in this question.

As indicated in the figures above, views on the success of *implementation* of English language education policies at *national, local and school-based* levels are very similar, with only a few respondents selecting categories 5 (very satisfied) or 4 in each case. Only 21 respondents chose one of these two categories in the case of implementation of policies at a national level (12% of the total cohort), only 25 at the local/ regional level (14%). At the school level, the number was slightly higher at 40 (22%). The numbers selecting categories 0 (not at all satisfied) and 1 were: *national level* (36/ 20%); *local/ regional level* (28/ 15.5%); *school level* (14/ 8%). Overall, therefore, these survey participants appeared not to feel particularly strongly about policy implementation.

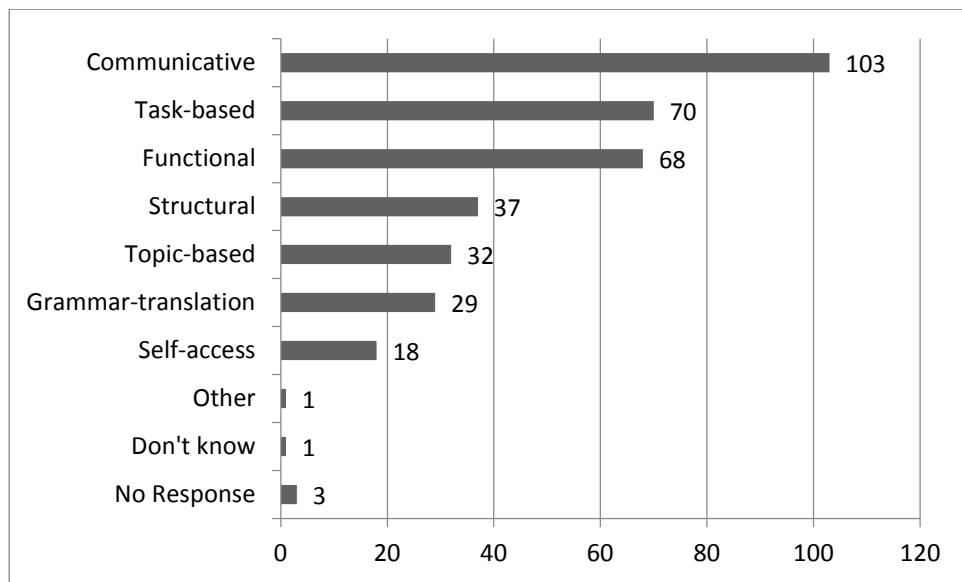
#### **5.9.4 Methodological issues**

Participants were asked to select from a list of eight (including ‘other’) which ‘methodological approaches’ they preferred. There were one hundred and seventy-seven (177) responses, with a total of three hundred and fifty-nine (359) selections (see *Figure 5.6*). The one who selected ‘other’ specified eclecticism.

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<sup>31</sup> *Everyday English 365* is an activity promoted by a local education office in Korea (Gwangju Education Office). It involves the expectation that all schools will encourage their students to be involved in English language activities of various kinds (e.g. competitions), including learning at least one new English sentence or dialogue every day. (Using a book which has one new English sentence or dialogue for every day in, published by the education office.)

<sup>32</sup> NEAT: National English Ability Test. The State English Aptitude Test which the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE) developed for balanced evaluation of the four functions. This test was planned to be introduced in 2012.



**Figure 5.6: Participants' methodological preferences**

As noted by McGrath (2001), communicative language teaching (CLT) has been mandated in public schools since 1992 by the Ministry of Education (renamed Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2008), something that represented a major departure from the combination of audio-lingualism and grammar translation that characterized earlier curricula (Li, 1998, p. 682). As S. M. Park (2012) observes with reference to Kwon (2000), “[one] of the most significant education policy changes in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> National English Curricula of Korea is the adoption of communicative English teaching in English language education” (¶, 1). In spite of this, of the 117 participants who responded to a question asking about their methodological preferences, 14 (12% of 117) did not select ‘communicative’. In addition, 29 of the 117 (25%) selected ‘grammar translation’, a selection which should have been inconsistent with the selection of ‘communicative’.

Five comments relating to this question were provided (see translations below).

- *I think a learner-centred approach where students participate in tasks is the most efficient.*
- *My lessons are largely structural because I focus on patterns for the Scholastic Aptitude Test and my major was Syntax.*

- *Syntax and grammar may be overlooked when communicative skills are focused on.*
- *It depends on the level.*
- *School lessons should be taught using the grammar translation method under the system of the College Scholastic Aptitude Test. We can't expect any changes about English teaching methods while the Test exists.*

The last of the comments above clearly indicates one of the major barriers to implementation of CLT at school level, that is, that the College Scholastic Aptitude Test is predicated on a very different approach.

The one hundred and three respondents who selected ‘communicative approach’ were funnelled to another question which asked them to list what they considered to be the three most important characteristics of a communicative approach (open question type). Sixty-nine responded (that is, 38% of the total questionnaire cohort), each providing one or more characteristic/s which were then classified into one of five categories.

**Table 5.4 (Part A): Identify three characteristics of communicative teaching: Overview of responses**

<b>Specific responses judged to be appropriate</b>	
(Emphasis on) speaking and listening (x7) in day-to-day communicative contexts (x7) and focusing on own experiences (x5)	19
Involves real-life English	11
Involves all four skills but with focus on day-to-day communication	5
Students given opportunity to speak	5
Includes student-student interaction	5
Encourages fluency in speaking and pronunciation	4
Includes task-based activities	3
Encourages students to express opinions	2
Focuses on communication	2
Focuses on both fluency and accuracy	1
Allowing students to communicate considered more important than error correction	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>

**Table 5.4 (Part B): Identify three characteristics of communicative teaching: Overview of responses**

<b>Very general responses judged to be equally true of other approaches</b>	
Emphasis on speaking, listening & writing	4
Teacher uses classroom English (i.e. uses English as the medium of instruction)	4
Emphasis on vocabulary and structure	4
Focus on (authentic) vocabulary	2
Includes debates and presentations	3
Involves interesting classes	3
Emphasis on speaking, reading and writing	2
Involves expressing opinions in writing	2
Treats cultural background in context	1
Involves role play	1
Pronunciation, vocabulary and basic sentence structure	1
Involves building confidence	1
Is topic centred	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>

**Table 5.4 (Part C): Identify three characteristics of communicative teaching: Overview of responses**

<b>Responses judged to be wrong (but sometimes expressing common misconceptions about CLT), common to many different approaches, and/or incomprehensible</b>	
Use of multi-media resources	4
Use of substitution drills for basic communication	3
Non-linguistic factors	2
Focuses on fluency <i>rather than</i> accuracy	1
Main focus is on form	1
Communication with native speakers	1
Co-teaching with native speaking teacher	1
Using PowerPoint to teach through images	1
Reconstructing dialogues in own way	1
Using visual aids	1
Focus on business English	1
Memorizing and using minimum basic grammar rules	1
Students should speak loudly and behave well when presenting	1
Language type	1
English should be an optional subject	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>

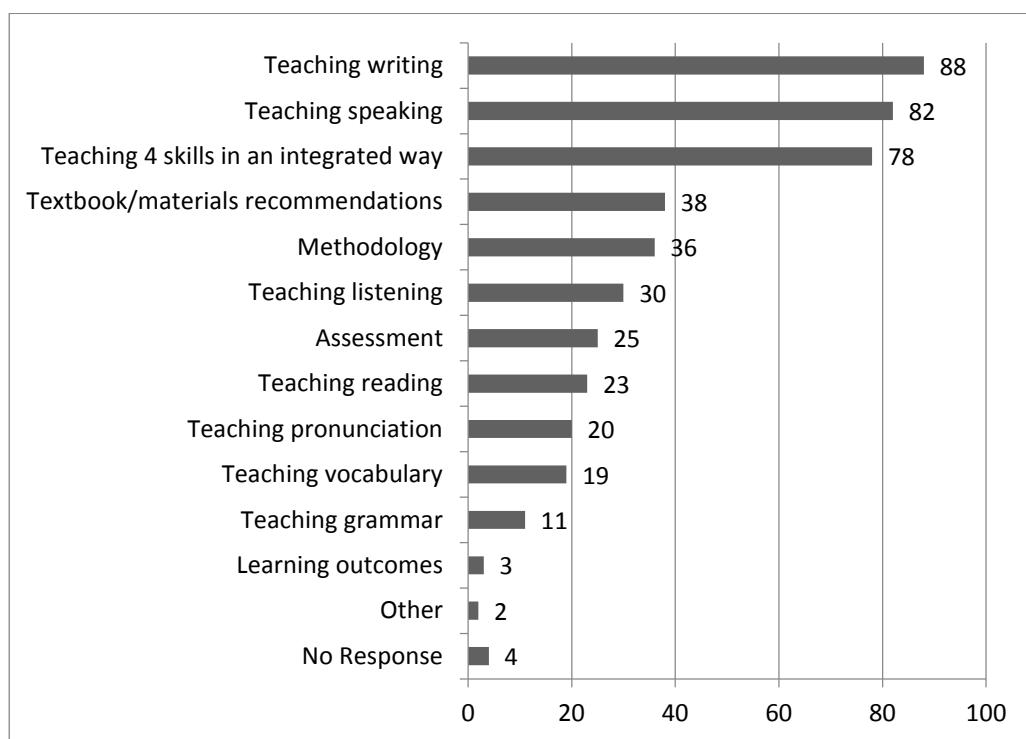
**Table 5.4 (Part D):** Identify three characteristics of communicative teaching:  
Overview of responses

<b>Responses that relate to barriers to using a communicative approach</b>	
Testing (SAT, entrance exam) is not communicative	3
Teachers need to improve their speaking ability	2
Too many students in classes	1
CLT doesn't meet student needs or parental expectations	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>A response that comments on communicative approaches</b>	
To make students communicate, teachers should prepare their material well	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>No response</b>	
<b>Number</b>	<b>111</b>

The first point to note in relation to the question asking participants to list what they considered to be three characteristics of CLT is that fact that only sixty-nine (69) responded (that is, 38% of the total questionnaire cohort) in spite of the fact that 103 (57%) had indicated that CLT was a preferred approach. Each of the respondents provided one or more characteristic/s which were then classified into one of five categories (see *Figure 5.7*). Of the one hundred and sixteen (116) entries, fifty-eight (58/50%) were judged to be appropriate as specifications of characteristics of a communicative approach (see *Table 5.4* below). However, this is likely to be an over-estimation of the number of responses that were appropriate. This is because some of the entries were difficult to interpret. For example, respondents who simply listed speaking and listening were treated as having supplied an appropriate response although this relies on the assumption that their intention was to indicate that the emphasis is on speaking and listening rather than that, for example, reading and writing are not included. Irrespective of this particular issue, it remains the case that only approximately half of the responses at best could be regarded as being appropriate, something that suggests that the overall level of understanding of what is involved in CLT is lower than might be expected in view of the actual nature of the curriculum documentation. Of particular interest are some of the responses that were considered to be too general, irrelevant, based on misconceptions or, simply, wrong. These included, for example, "Use of substitution drills for basic communication". Although there

are many possible reasons for the fact that understanding of CLT seemed to be limited, lack of specific training and/or participation in training programmes that do not fully address national expectations seems likely to have been a major factor.

Participants were asked to select one or more areas they felt they needed to know more about (from a list of 13, including ‘Other’). There were one hundred and seventy-six (176) responses, including four hundred and fifty-four (454) selections (see *Figure 5.7*).



**Figure 5.7: Areas respondents wished to know more about**

Under the heading of ‘other’ reference was made to (a) a corpus-based approach and (b) philosophy of language education.

In response to the question about areas they believed they needed to know more about (see *Figure 5.7* above), there was not a single area listed that was selected by more than half of the respondents. Furthermore, leaving aside the ‘Other’ category, the average number of ticks each of the twelve items received was 38 (21.5% of respondents), with some categories receiving very low responses – e.g.

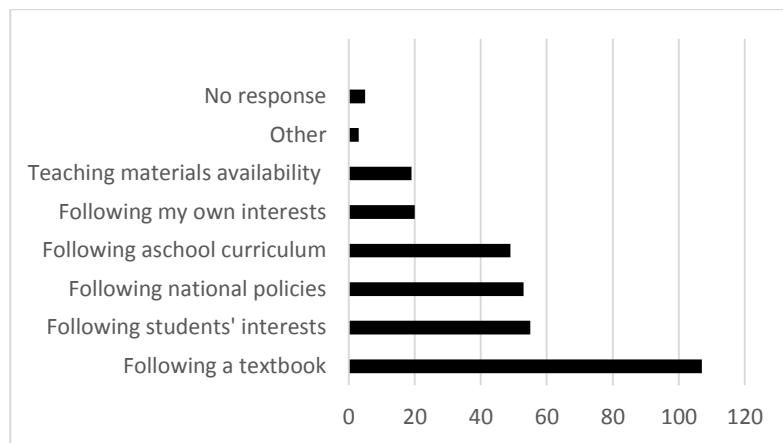
3 for learning outcomes, 19 for teaching vocabulary and 25 for assessment. Of the 176 respondents, only 36 (20% of the 176) selected methodology, in spite of the fact that responses to earlier questions indicated that only just over half considered ‘communicative’, the approach apparently recommended in the national curriculum, to be a preferred approach and also in spite of the fact that knowledge of what are generally now considered to be characteristics of CLT seemed limited.

Two comments (translated) were provided:

- *Communication among teachers is more important than study since there is always a gap between reality and ideals.*
- *I wonder if we need to teach speaking even though we have a native speaking teacher.*

What the first of these comments suggests is that at least one of the survey participants believes that the training they received did not adequately reflect the day-to-day needs/ realities of teachers of English. The second comment suggests that the teacher concerned regards the teaching of speaking as being largely the responsibility of native speaker teachers/ teacher aids. It seems very unlikely that these views are not shared by others.

Participants were asked how they decided what to teach, selecting one or more from a list of possibilities, including ‘other’. There were one hundred and seventy-five (175) responses, including three hundred and six (306) selections (see *Figure 5.8*).



**Figure 5.8: How respondents decided on the content of their courses**

Two (2) respondents ticked ‘other’ and one added the following comment:

- *It depends on the level of the students.*

A review of *Figure 5.8* indicates that a considerable majority of respondents (107 out of 175 = 61%) indicated that textbooks played a role (possibly, in some case, the major role or the only role) in determining what they taught. Added to this is the fact that 19 respondents (11% of the 175) selected *according to the availability of materials*. Only 55 and 53 respectively indicated that their decision-making in relation to course content related to national or school-based curricula. Finally, while 55 (31% of 175) indicated that their decisions related to student interest, as many as 20 (11%) indicated that they were guided by their own interests. In connection with all of this, it is relevant to bear in mind that approved textbooks are expected to reflect the national curriculum and so it is likely that teachers whose content decisions are based on textbooks believe that this is consistent with following national curriculum guidelines. It is important therefore to determine the extent to which these textbooks do actually reflect the national curriculum guidelines (see *Chapter 6*). However, even if they do, allowing textbooks to dictate rather than support course content (if this is what actually happens) is potentially problematic in a number of respects.

### 5.9.5 Textbook as teaching resources

*Question 23* asked whether or not the participants used a textbook or textbooks as a teaching resource. Of the one hundred and seventy-eight (178) respondents, one hundred and fifty-five (155/ 87%) answered in the affirmative.

**Table 5.5: Participants' use of textbook/s**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
Textbook use	Yes	155/178	86.1%	87%
	No	23/178	12.8%	13%
	NR	2	1.1%	

There were three comments added relating to this question (see translations below):

- EBS<sup>33</sup> workbook for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students
- EBS workbook for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students in a high school
- Students require some preparation of SAT and TEPS for entrance exams.

The first two comments above refer to broadcasts on television, radio and mobile devices by the Educational Broadcasting System. These are generally regarded as contributing to lifetime learning and as being supplementary to school-based education. In relation to this, it is relevant to note that, according to a 2011 press release,<sup>34</sup> of the one thousand eight hundred and sixty-six (1,866) schools surveyed in fifteen cities and provinces in South Korea, approximately 50% were using Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) workbooks in regular classes of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students.

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<sup>33</sup> This is the abbreviation for Educational Broadcasting System which is the name of educational broadcasting company with the network of the TV, the Radio and nowadays for the mobile in South Korea. It usually supplements school education and also contributes to lifelong public education.

<sup>34</sup> A member of the National Assembly in Korea reported “A Study on the Use of EBS Workbooks in Regular Classes of the High Schools throughout the Country” on 25 Sep in 2011.

The respondents who reported that they used a textbook or textbooks were funnelled to *Question 24*, asking the name of the textbook publisher and class the textbook was used with. Of the one hundred and eighty participants, one hundred and thirty-eight (77%) responded to this question (see *Tables 5.6 – 5.11*<sup>35</sup>).

Teachers can select, according to criteria decided on by schools, from a range of textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education. At the time of writing (2012), the authorised textbooks were:

***Middle school***

- 25 (1<sup>st</sup> grade);
- 19 (2<sup>nd</sup> grade);
- 15 (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

***High School***

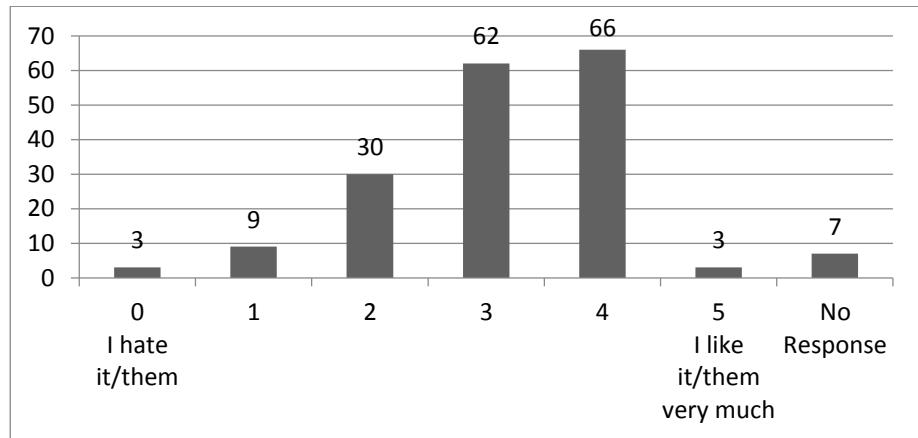
- 17 English;
- 10 English I;
- 10 English II;
- 4 Practical English Conversation;
- 4 Advanced Practical English Conversation;
- 4 English Reading and Writing;
- 3 Advanced English Reading and Writing

Some of the publishers, such as Chunjae, Neungyule and Doosan, have several textbooks by different authors under the same title (e.g. *English 1*). This created a problem in terms of questionnaire responses in that many respondents indicated the name of a publisher at particular levels rather than indicating the authors and, therefore, did not allow for the actual textbook used to be identified. This may have been because the teachers were unaware that some publishers produced different textbooks by different authors under the same general heading. The textbooks they listed and the years with which they were associated are outlined in *Appendix 8*.

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<sup>35</sup> Only main author was displayed in the tables for convenience while all textbooks authorised have more than five co-authors.

*Question 25* asked respondents to express the extent of their satisfaction with the textbook/s they used on a scale from zero (wholly unsatisfied) to five (very satisfied).



**Figure 5.9:** Extent of satisfaction with the textbook/s  
Three comments (translated) were received:

- *CD is easy to use since it is well made.*
- *Not imaginative, very boring. Almost always extra materials are needed.*
- *Context is not connected well but additional materials are good.*

As indicated in *Figure 5.9*, only 3 of the 173 participants who responded to the question asking them to rate their satisfaction with the textbooks they used, indicated that they liked them very much (category 5). On the other hand, only 3 indicated that they disliked them (category 0) and only 42 (24% of respondents) selected categories 0, 1 or 2, suggesting that there was an overall general sense of satisfaction with the textbooks used, something that needs to be re-examined in light of the textbook analysis reported in *Chapter 7*.

### 5.9.6 Philosophy of teaching and learning English

*Question 26* asked participants to indicate which of two statements best reflected their philosophy of teaching and learning English. One hundred and seventy-eight participants responded to this question.

**Table 5.6: Philosophy of teaching and learning English**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
<b>Philosophy of teaching and learning English</b>	<b>Students having lots of fun</b>	128/178	71.1%	87%
	<b>Students taking lessons seriously</b>	50/178	27.8%	13%
	<b>NR</b>	2	1.1%	
<b>Comments (translated from Korean):</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Taking lessons seriously is suitable for students who are eager to learn.</i></li> <li>- <i>If students' level is low, they need to have lots of fun and a slow pace in class because their concentration span is short.</i></li> <li>- <i>The school curriculum is too tight for students to learn this foreign language easily. Learning cannot be just fun and the curriculum needs to be taught at an appropriate speed.</i></li> <li>- <i>Students will be satisfied if they have a feeling of fulfilment.</i></li> </ul>				

*Although I now believe that Question 26 was unsatisfactory, asking participants to choose between two possibilities which were not mutually exclusive, it nevertheless served a useful purpose, the responses indicating that the vast majority of the respondents believed that it was important that students should have fun while learning.*

Question 27 asked participants about the introduction of new language (see Table 5.7 below), asking them to select from one of two options. Two (2) comments (translated) were provided.

**Table 5.7: Approach to language teaching**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
<b>How new language is introduced</b>	<b>Important to teach systematically, in a controlled way</b>	92/176	51%	52%
	<b>The order doesn't matter so long as the materials are interesting</b>	84/176	47%	48%

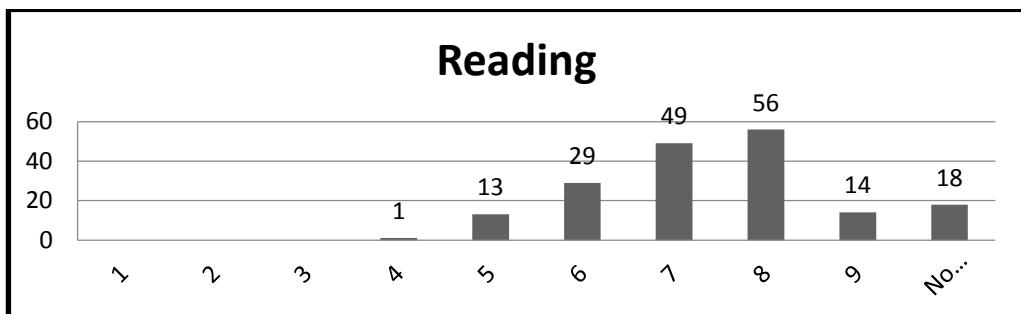
NR	4	2%	
<b>Comments (translated from Korean):</b>			

- I can't understand why I should choose one of these since I think it is better to teach systematically in a controlled and interesting way.
- Teaching is art and science.

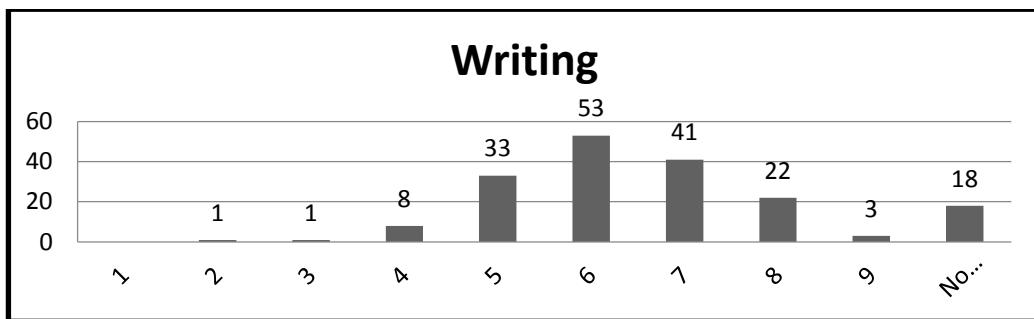
At first sight, this question (*Question 27*) may appear simplistic, which is what one of the comments indicates. However, the intention was to find out the extent to which participants had been affected by the arguments forwarded by some of the adherents of process-orientated syllabuses focusing on learning experiences (Nunan, 1988), arguments that centre on the proposition that the language introduced need not necessarily be carefully graded or controlled (Prabhu, 1987; Robinson, Ting & Urwin, 1996; Foster & Skehan, 1996). In the event, the responses were almost equally divided between the two options, indicating that almost half of the respondents had been influenced, either directly or indirectly, by the general move away from the systematicity advocated by adherents of structural syllabuses and audio-lingual methodology in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.9.7 Self-assessment of participants' own proficiency in English

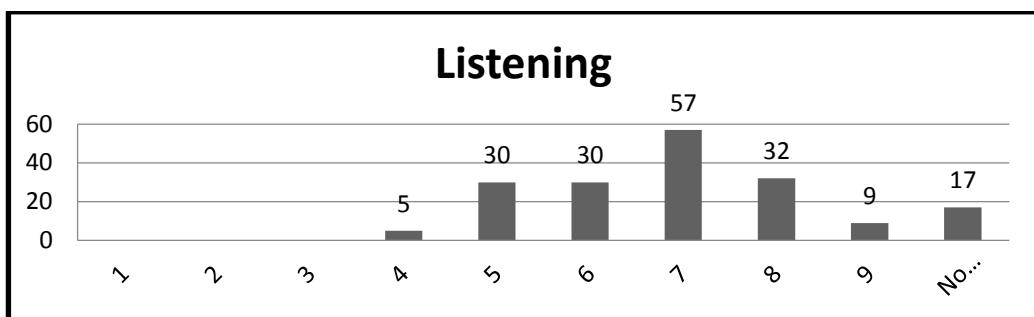
*Question 28* asked participants to assess their own proficiency in English, based on descriptors for each category attached to the questionnaire as an appendix (where 1 = non-user and 9 = expert user). There were one hundred and sixty-two responses for the Reading, Writing and Speaking categories, and one hundred and sixty-three (163) responses for the Listening category (see *Figures* below).



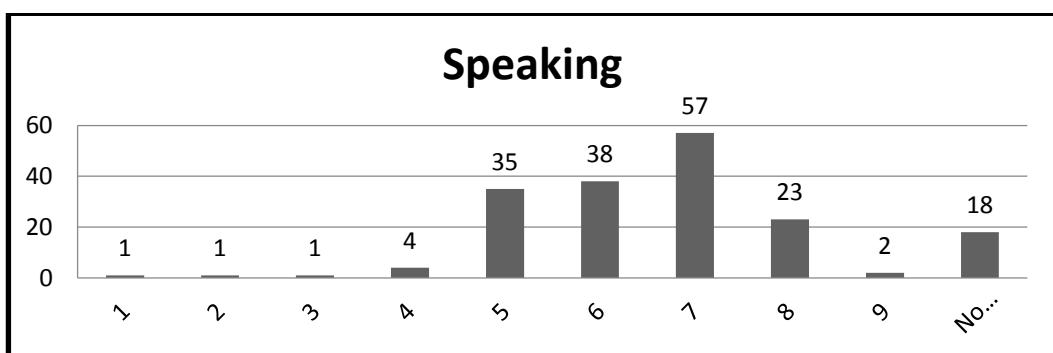
**Figure 5.10:** Self-assessment of own proficiency in reading



**Figure 5.11:** Self-assessment of own proficiency in writing



**Figure 5.12:** Self-assessment of own proficiency in listening



**Figure 5.13:** Self-assessment of own proficiency in speaking

One of the respondents indicated that s/he was a native speaker of English, which would account for one of the scores of 9 in all four areas. However, even after one of the scores in the 9 category is removed in the case of all four skills, it remains the case that 13 of the *remaining respondents* placed themselves at level 9 for *reading*, 8 at level 9 for *listening*, 2 at level 9 for *writing* and 1 at level 9 for *speaking* (i.e. 8%; 5%; 1% and 0.5% for reading, listening, writing and speaking respectively). Furthermore, few considered themselves to be at level 5 or lower in any of the four skills: 14 in the case of *reading*; 35 in the case of *listening*; 42 in the case of *speaking*; 43 in the case of *writing* (i.e. 9%; 22%; 26%; 27%

respectively – again removing the native speaker of English). These ratings, while being very likely to be inflated, are nevertheless largely consistent with the generally high self-assessed proficiency ratings of 204 Korean teachers of English who participated in a study conducted by Butler (2004) in which English teachers from Japan and Taiwan also participated. In that study, however, 91% of the Korean teachers indicated that they considered their own proficiency level in English to be lower than that required for successful teaching of English in elementary schools.

### **5.9.8 Comments relating to perceived ways of improving the teaching of English**

*Question 29* asked the participants what they believed might improve the teaching of English in secondary schools in South Korea. Of the one hundred and eighty (180) participants, one hundred and twenty-seven (71%) responded to this question, involving one hundred and ninety-two entries. They are classified under nine headings in *Table 5.8* below. For details of the comments made, see the translations in *Appendix 7*.

**Table 5.8: Comments relating to Question 29**

<b>Reduce the number of students in classes</b> (84 responses; approx. 66% of respondents; approx. 47% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Education policies need to be changed</b> (27 responses; approx. 21% of respondents; approx. 15% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Teacher training needs to be compulsory and/ or improved</b> (26 responses; approx. 20% of respondents; approx. 14% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>The nature of college entrance exams causes problems in relation to teaching</b> (15 responses; approx. 12% of respondents; approx. 8% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Private education is having a detrimental effect on public education</b> (13 responses; approx. 10% of respondents; approx. 7% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Needed level differentiated classes</b> (9 responses; approx. 7% of respondents; approx. 5% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Teaching materials need to be better/ more appropriate than those in the available textbooks</b> (8 responses; approx. 6% of respondents; approx. 4% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Teachers' workloads need to be reduced</b> (6 responses; approx. 5% of respondents; approx. 32% of all questionnaire participants)
<b>Other comments</b> (4 responses; approx. 7% of respondents; approx. 2% of all questionnaire

participants)	
Students don't have an interest in or desire for study.	1
Students seem to have a lot of knowledge but still don't understand.	1
Teaching methods need to be improved.	1
Teachers need to upgrade their ability in English.	1

Of the 127 survey participants who responded to this question, well over half (66%) made reference to the need for smaller classes and almost one quarter to a need to change educational policies (21%) and/ or to change teacher training or make it compulsory (20%). However, less than 15% of the respondents commented on problems caused by the nature of college entrance examinations, the potentially detrimental impact of private education, a need for improved teaching materials or a need to reduce teachers' workloads.

Seven comments (translated) were received in response to *Question 30* (which asked respondents to add any comments they chose):

- If every English teacher nationwide could have the same general principles and methodologies to adhere to, I think the nation's English level as a whole would be stronger.
- There are too many classes each week for teachers to prepare adequately or for him or her to develop their teaching skills. In addition, homeroom teachers are usually over-worked because of all the duties they are required to do in addition to teaching. I believe we can create a happy classroom with positive energy only if teachers are happy. A lot of support is needed to make high quality lessons.
- In cooperative learning, students can participate in lessons by working in teams, playing roles and doing projects.
- A training programme for English teachers should be compulsory every 3 or 4 years.
- English education is a big issue in South Korea, but some policies designed by so-called education experts or officials aren't appropriate in terms of the real circumstances in which we operate. I wish the opinions of teachers in schools could be reflected.

- I think education policy is positive nowadays because teachers are involved in NEAT.
- I wish this questionnaire could have an impact on education policy.

### **5.10 Overview and final comments**

The group of teachers who participated in this survey seems to be broadly representative of teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea, with the majority (82%) being female, all except two being first language speakers of Korean and just over three quarters (77%) teaching in public schools. Only 11% indicated that they had a qualification specific to TESOL and only 35.5% that they had a certificate in secondary teaching. Overall, these teachers claimed to have only a moderate degree of familiarity with local/ regional policies relating to the teaching of English in schools and very few (7%) claimed to have been consulted about national policies on the teaching of English in schools. Very few expressed a high degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with English education policies and they appeared, overall, not to feel particularly strongly about policy implementation. Although a majority indicated that they were in favour of adopting a communicative approach, 25% of those who indicated their methodological preferences selected grammar translation as one of them. Only 38% of the survey participants attempted to list three characteristics of CLT and at least half of the items supplied could not be considered to be genuinely characteristic of CLT. In spite of this, when asked which of a number of areas associated with language teaching they needed to know more about, none of the areas listed was selected by more than half of the respondents, with only 20% selecting methodology. While the vast majority indicated that they used textbooks and well over half that these textbooks played a role in the decisions they made about course content, only 21% indicated that they believed they needed to know more about textbooks/ teaching materials and most indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of the textbooks they used. They also appeared, overall, to be satisfied with their own level of proficiency in English, with few considering themselves to be at level 5 or lower on the 9 band IELTS scale in any of the four skills.

Responses to the second part of the questionnaire, focusing on teacher training, are provided in the next chapter, followed by a report on semi-structured interviews relating to aspects of teacher education (*Chapter 6*).

## **Chapter 6**

### **Teacher training: Reporting on a questionnaire-based survey and semi-structured interviews involving teachers of English to young learners in South Korea**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

A sample of teachers in middle schools and high schools in South Korea completed the second part of the questionnaire referred to in the previous chapter. The focus was on their experiences of pre-service and in-service training. Five of them were then involved in semi-structured interviews designed to explore these experiences in greater depth. This chapter reports on this aspect of the research project. It begins with some information about this part of the research project (6.2) and a report (6.3) and discussion (6.4) of the questionnaire-based survey findings. This is followed by some background information about the interviews (6.5), a report and discussion of the interview data (6.6) and a final overview of the findings as a whole (6.7).

#### **6.2 Background to the survey**

The overall aims of this part of the research project were to determine, with reference to the participants:

- their qualifications and experience of teaching English;
- the type of pre-service and in-service language teacher training, if any, they had received and their attitudes towards it.

Ethical considerations were dealt with in the same way as those relating to the first – general – part of the survey (see *Chapter 5, section 4.4*), one section of the preamble to the questionnaire dealing specifically with this part of the survey (see *Appendix 5*). The target population and response numbers for this part of the questionnaire-based survey (focusing on teacher training) were the same as those for the first part of the survey (the more general part reported in *Chapter 5*).

The teacher training section of the questionnaire was made up of two sections – Section I which included five (5) questions about qualifications and experience, and Section II which included thirty-one (31) questions about aspects of participants' training to be a teacher of English. Two (2) questions in Section II involved eleven (11) and three (3) sub-questions respectively, and the last question (not numbered) asked participants to add any comments they wished to make relating to their training experiences. Most of the questions (42) were closed, with spaces provided for comments in the case of 7 of them. During the trialling of the two parts of the questionnaire, conducted simultaneously, it was noted that some of the questions in the Korean version of the teacher training section lacked naturalness, having been translated from English. This was rectified before the final version of the questionnaire was produced (see *Appendix 6*).

### **6.3 The questionnaire-based findings: The data**

#### **6.3.1 The questionnaire responses**

Ninety-seven (97/400, 24%) completed or partially completed responses to this part of the questionnaire were received out of the four hundred (400) distributed, the response rate (24%) being lower than that for the general section (45%) of the questionnaire.

##### **6.3.1.1 Background information**

*Questions 1, 2 and 5* asked for background information of various types. The responses are summarised in *Table 6.1* below.

**Table 6.1: Background information**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
<b>Teaching qualifications</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> grade licensed secondary school teacher</b>	79/97	81%	81%
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> grade licensed secondary school teacher</b>	17/97	18%	18%
	<b>A specific qualification in teaching English</b>	1/97	1%	1%
	<b>No response</b>	0	0%	
<b>Comment (translated from Korean):</b>				
- Study overseas not related to literature.				
<b>Teaching experience</b>	<b>5 years or less</b>	26/96	27%	27%
	<b>between 5 and 10 years</b>	24/96	25%	25%
	<b>between 11 and 15 years</b>	20/96	21%	21%
	<b>between 16 and 20 years</b>	11/96	11%	11%
	<b>between 21 and 25 years</b>	10/96	10%	10%
	<b>more than 25 years</b>	5/96	5%	5%
	<b>No response</b>	1	1%	
<b>Participants' background in English language</b>	<b>English-based or English-related degree</b>	88/91	91%	97%
	<b>Taken TOEFL, TOEIC, TEPS or IELTS</b>	57/91	59%	63%
	<b>Studied overseas</b>	15/91	15%	16%
	<b>Native speaker of English</b>	1/91	1%	1%
	<b>No response</b>	6	6%	

Out of fifty-seven<sup>36</sup> (57, 59%) respondents who had taken TOEFL, TOEIC, TEPS or IELTS, thirty-seven (37, 38%) provided their score. These are outlined in *Table 6.2* below.

**Table 6.2: TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS and TEPS scores**

	band	No. of the respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
<b>TOEIC</b>	less than 900	4/37	4%	11%
	901-950	13/37	13%	35%
	951-990	11/37	11%	30%
	in the 900 band <sup>37</sup>	2/37	5%	2%
<b>TOEFL</b>	IBT 95	1/37	1%	3%
	IBT 102	1/37	1%	3%
	CBT 250	1/37	1%	3%
	CBT 275	1/37	1%	3%
<b>IELTS</b>	6.5	1/37	1%	35%
<b>TEPS<sup>38</sup></b>	720	1/37	1%	3%
	905	1/37	1%	3%

### 6.3.1.2 In-service training

*Questions 3 and 4* asked about participation in in-service teacher training. Ninety-two (95%) indicated that they had participated in in-service training in teaching English (see *Table 6.3*). However, only forty-one (42%) of these indicated the types of in-service training (57 entries) they had participated in (*Table 6.4*).

<sup>36</sup> Refer to the 57 who responded to ‘Taken TOEFL, TOEIC, TEPS or IELTS’ in *Table 5.1*

<sup>37</sup> One of the respondents provided his/her score as ‘in the 900 band’, and the other, ‘more than 900’.

<sup>38</sup> Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University in Korea

**Table 6.3: Participation in in-service training in English teaching**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
Participation in in-service training in teaching English	Yes	92/97	95%	95%
	No	5/97	5%	5%
	No response	0	0%	

**Table 6.4: The types of in-service training in which participants had participated**

	No.
Intensive English Teacher Training Programme (IETTP) <sup>39</sup>	19
Teaching methods (including teaching methods; Teaching and learning using IT; training in various aspects of teaching; ways of teaching and learning ; how to teach the 4 skills; special integrated teaching ; Fun English ; TEE <sup>40</sup> )	9
Training for better classroom English (including English conversation; improving basic conversation skills; classroom English; improving general English; debate in 50 sentences	7
Assessment (including improving assessment of speaking and writing; testing English writing; producing assessment tools; assessment)	4
Relating to college entrance exam, NEAT (including ; speaking and writing test for NEAT)	3
Education policy (including English education policy at national level; understanding level differentiated classes)	2
Operating programmes (including English immersion camp; English only time)	2
TESOL	1
Types not specified	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>No response</b>	<b>56</b>

<sup>39</sup> It consists of 5 months' training programme in Korea and a month in overseas, and has the main purpose of improving trainees' language proficiency.

<sup>40</sup> Teaching English in English

### 6.3.1.3 Aspects of teaching/ learning included in participants' teacher training programmes

Participants were asked to select from a list those aspects of the teaching/ learning of English that were included in *the pre-service and in-service courses* in which they had participated (see *Tables 6.5 and 6.6 below*).

**Table 6.5:** Aspects of the teaching/ learning of English included in pre-service courses

Aspects	No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
Teaching methodologies	30	31%	34%
How students learn foreign languages	21	22%	24%
Developing your own English proficiency	19	20%	22%
Curriculum and syllabus design	18	19%	21%
Linguistics (analysing English)	17	18%	20%
Literature	17	18%	20%
Designing English teaching materials	12	12%	14%
Cross-cultural understanding	7	7%	8%
No response	10	10%	

**Table 6.6:** Aspects of the teaching/ learning of English included in in-service courses

Components	No. of respondents	% of total cohort	% of those who responded
Teaching methodologies	60	62%	69%
Developing your own English proficiency	60	62%	69%
Designing English teaching materials	37	38%	43%
How students learn foreign languages	27	28%	31%
Curriculum and syllabus design	15	15%	17%
Cross-cultural understanding	13	13%	15%
Linguistics (analysing English)	10	10%	11%
Literature	5	5%	6%
No response	10	10%	

### 6.3.1.4 Teaching practice and teaching observation

Participants were asked whether their *pre-service and/ or in-service training* included an assessed English teaching practice component. Those who replied in the affirmative were asked which aspects of teaching practice (from a supplied list) had been included (see *Tables 6.7 and 6.8*).

**Table 6.7:** Whether assessed English teaching practice was included in training programmes

			No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Assessed English teaching practice included	Pre-service	Yes	56/83	58%	67%
		No	27/83	28%	33%
		NO RESPONSE	14	14%	
	In-service	Yes	29/64	30%	45%
		No	35/64	36%	55%
		NO RESPONSE	33	34%	

**Table 6.8 (Part A):** Which aspects of assessed English teaching practice were included in training

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Teaching a whole class?	Yes	51/55	53%	93%
	No	4/55	4%	7%
	No response	42	43%	
Class teacher was in the room?	Yes	52/55	54%	95%
	No	3/55	3%	5%
	No response	42	43%	
Course tutor was in the room?	Yes	40/52	41%	77%
	No	12/52	12%	23%
	No response	45	46%	
Did you decide what to teach?	Yes	39/55	40%	71%
	No	16/55	16%	29%
	No response	42	43%	

**Table 6.8 (Part B):** Which aspects of assessed English teaching practice were

*included in training*

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Did the class teacher decide what you should teach?	Yes	29/62	30%	47%
	No	33/62	34%	53%
	No response	35	36%	
Did the training course tutor decide what you should teach?	Yes	11/56	11%	20%
	No	45/56	46%	80%
	No response	41	42%	
Were you asked to pay attention to different things (e.g. setting up tasks introducing new language) each time you taught?	Yes	33/61	34%	54%
	No	28/61	29%	46%
	No response	36	37%	
Were you given feedback on your teaching?	Yes	56/61	58%	92%
	No	5/61	5%	8%
	No response	36	37%	
If you were given feedback on your teaching, who gave the feedback?	The class teacher	48/62	49%	77%
	Other teachers	20/62	21%	32%
	The students	5/62	5%	8%
	Your course tutor	21/62	22%	34%
	No response	35	36%	
Was your teaching graded as part of the overall assessment for the course?	Yes	56/60	58%	93%
	No	4/60	4%	7%
	No response	37	38%	
If graded, how did you receive the grade?	As a mark	42/66	43%	64%
	As part of a report that identified strengths and weaknesses	24/66	25%	36%
	No response	31	32%	

Participants were then asked whether their pre-service and/or in-service training had included teaching observation. Those who replied in the affirmative were asked which aspects of teaching observation (from a supplied list) had been included (see *Tables 6.9* and *6.10*).

**Table 6.9:** Whether observation of English lessons was included in training programmes

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Was observation of English lessons taught by other people included?	Pre-service	Yes	38/72	39%
		No	34/72	35%
		No response	25	26%
	In-service	Yes	39/72	40%
		No	33/72	34%
		No response	25	26%

**Table 6.10:** Which aspects of teaching observation were included in training programmes

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Who taught the lessons?	Teachers in local schools	30/59	31%	51%
	My course tutor/s	10/59	10%	17%
	Teachers in local schools and my course tutor/s	18/59	19%	31%
	Other	1 <sup>41</sup> /59	1%	2%
	No response	38	39%	
Were you encouraged to pay particular attention to certain things in the lessons you observed?	Yes	37/60	38%	62%
	No	23/60	24%	38%
	No response	37	38%	
Did tutor/s discuss the lessons you observed with you afterwards?	Yes	48/60	49%	80%
	No	12/60	12%	20%
	No response	37	38%	

<sup>41</sup> ‘Another trainee’ specified.

Participants were also asked whether they had had an opportunity to observe their instructors demonstrating specific aspects of teaching real classes (see *Table 6.11*).

**Table 6.11: Demonstration of teaching in real classes by instructors**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Did the instructors on the course demonstrate the teaching of English in real classes?	Yes	50/84	52%	60%
	No	34/84	35%	40%
	No response	13	13%	

### 6.3.1.5 Coping with mixed level classes and different types of learner

Participants were asked whether they had been advice about various aspects of teaching mixed-level classes and different types of learner. Responses are summarized in *Table 6.12* below.

**Table 6.12: Advice about teaching mixed level classes and different types of learner**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Were you given advice about coping with classes that include learners with different levels of proficiency?	Yes	41/84	42%	49%
	No	43/84	44%	51%
	No response	13	13%	
Were you given advice about making sure that you were responsive to the different learning styles of your students?	Yes	29/86	30%	34%
	No	57/86	59%	66%
	No response	11	11%	

### 6.3.1.6 Concept checking and responding to learner errors

Participants were also asked whether they had been advice about responding to learner errors and concept checking (i.e. checking for or monitoring comprehension). Responses are summarized in *Table 6.13* below.

**Table 6.13: Advice about responding to learner errors and concept checking**

<b>Were you given advice about correcting learner errors?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	54/84	56%	64%
	<b>No</b>	30/84	31%	36%
	<b>No response</b>	13	13%	
<b>Were you given advice about concept checking (i.e. making sure that learners have understood the meaning of new language - vocabulary and grammar)?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	47/85	48%	55%

### 6.3.1.7 Classroom and lesson management

Participants were asked whether they had been given advice about managing various aspects of the language classroom and language lessons (see *Table 6.14* below).

**Table 6.14: Advice about managing various aspects of language lessons**

		<b>No. of respondents</b>	<b>% of total cohort (97)</b>	<b>% of those who responded</b>
<b>Were you given advice about classroom management, that is, how to keep the learners active and on task?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	56/83	58%	67%
	<b>No</b>	27/83	28%	33%
	<b>No response</b>	14	14%	
<b>Were you given advice about the different parts of a language lesson and what order to introduce them in?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	51/86	53%	59%
	<b>No</b>	35/86	36%	41%
	<b>No response</b>	11	11%	
<b>Were you given advice about pace of language lessons?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	41/86	42%	48%
	<b>No</b>	45/86	46%	52%
	<b>No response</b>	11	11%	
<b>Were you given any advice about setting up and timing activities?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	49/84	51%	58%
	<b>No</b>	35/84	36%	42%
	<b>No response</b>	13	13%	
<b>Were you given advice about adapting tasks to suit learners with different</b>	<b>Yes</b>	47/84	48%	56%
	<b>No</b>	37/84	38%	44%

levels of proficiency?	No response	13	13%	
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### 6.3.1.8 Participants' language proficiency and classroom language

Participants were asked whether the training programmes in which they had participated had included improvement of their own language proficiency and/or advice about classroom language. Responses are summarized in *Table 6.15* below.

**Table 6.15:** Language proficiency development and advice about classroom language

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
<b>Including a component whose aim was to further develop your own language proficiency</b>	Yes	55/75	57%	73%
	No	20/75	21%	27%
	No response	22	23%	
<b>Provided with some useful classroom language and given advice about how to introduce it and use it</b>	Yes	53/84	55%	63%
	No	31/84	32%	37%
	No response	13	13%	

### 6.3.1.9 Focus on form, meaning, function, pronunciation and language skills

Participants were asked whether the training programmes in which they had participated had included a focus on various aspects of form, meaning, pronunciation and/ or language skills. Responses are summarized in *Table 5.16* below.

**Table 6.16:** Focus on various aspect of form and meaning

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Was there inclusion of a component helping you to analyse English in terms of meaning and form - working out and explaining the different ways in which, for example, the present simple tense can be used in English?	Yes	46/84	47%	55%
	No	38/84	39%	45%
	No response	13	13%	
Were you taught how to teach the relationship between full forms and contracted forms?	Yes	30/84	31%	36%
	No	54/84	56%	64%
	No response	13	13%	
Were you introduced to ways of teaching the difference in meaning between full and contracted forms?	Yes	36/84	37%	43%
	No	48/84	49%	57%
	No response	13	13%	
Were you taught how to teach the meaning of functions, such as suggestions, warnings etc.?	Yes	51/83	53%	61%
	No	32/83	33%	39%
	No response	14	14%	
Was anything about teaching pronunciation included?	Yes	61/84	63%	73%
	No	23/84	24%	27%
	No response	13	13%	
Was anything about teaching reading and writing included?	Yes	77/84	79%	92%
	No	7/84	7%	8%
	No response	13	13%	
Was anything about teaching the four skills in an integrated way (that is all four skills in the same lesson) included?	Yes	59/84	61%	70%
	No	25/84	26%	30%
	No response	13	13%	

### 6.3.1.10 Assessment

Participants were asked whether assessment had been included in their training programmes. Responses are summarised in *Table 6.17* below.

**Table 6.17: Assessment**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Was anything about assessment and test design included?	Yes	48/85	49%	56%
	No	37/85	38%	44%
	No response	12	12%	

### 6.3.1.11 Textbook selection, evaluation and use

Participants were asked whether textbook selection, evaluation and use had been included in their training programmes. Responses are summarised in *Table 6.18* below.

**Table 6.18: Selecting, evaluating and using textbooks**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Was advice about selecting textbooks included?	Yes	24/84	25%	29%
	No	60/84	62%	71%
	No response	13	13%	
Was advice about evaluating textbooks included?	Yes	38/84	39%	45%
	No	46/84	47%	55%
	No response	13	13%	
Was advice about using textbooks included?	Yes	45/84	46%	54%
	No	39/84	40%	46%
	No response	13	13%	

### 6.3.1.12 Programme follow-up

Participants were asked whether their training instructors maintained contact with them after their training programmes were completed. Responses are summarised in *Table 6.19* below.

**Table 6.19: Training programme follow-up**

		No. of respondents	% of total cohort (97)	% of those who responded
Were arrangements made for the instructors on your course to see how you were getting on after, say, six months?	Yes	18/83	19%	22%
	No	65/83	67%	78%
	No response	14	14%	

### 6.3.1.13 Confidence and problems

Finally, participants were asked whether they felt confident about teaching English when they completed their training programmes and whether there were any particular things that caused them problems in their teaching and that they wished had been included in their training programmes (see *Tables 6.20 and 6.21* below).

**Table 6.20: Confidence following training programmes**

Did you feel confident about teaching English when you finished your training course?	Yes	50/82	52%	61%
	No	32/82	33%	39%
	No response	15	15%	

**Table 6.21: Problems encountered**

Has anything caused you problems in your teaching that was not included in your training programme?	Yes	59/77	61%	77%
	No	18/77	19%	23%
	No response	20	21%	
<b>Comments (translated from Korean)</b>				
I haven't got any practical classroom management skills or ways of dealing with certain issues in teaching even though I had plenty of teacher training. In addition, I have found many teaching methods not to be usable in a real classroom situation.				
I need school guidance about using a mixture of Korean and English in class.				
The most difficult thing is students who are not interested in participating in tasks in class.				
In a real class, there are more students who kid around and joke or put their heads on their desks than ones who are eager to participate. I wish training programmes would deal with this.				
Training programmes should include realistic and practical content that can be applied in class.				
I have tried hard to find and complete good training programmes for teaching English well and in fun ways. Even so, it has always proved difficult to apply the content of these courses in real situations. I have tried in vain repeatedly. All training programmes are useful in some senses – in that they motivate trainees - but the actual application of what is learned is not easy because students in real classes are not highly motivated and class sizes are too big.				
It is difficult to review the content of a training programme after they are finished even though I participated earnestly. My teaching has not improved because I don't have any follow-up.				
I think training programmes should include material on relating teaching and evaluation - evaluation criteria for speaking and writing and advice on useful materials.				
Most training programmes focus on improving teachers' own English proficiency instead of practical teaching methods or principles for designing evaluations. More opportunities to make up				

for trainees' own particular weaknesses should be provided in various kinds of programme. More practical training is needed. We need realistic rather than idealised instruction.

#### **6.4 The questionnaire-based findings: Discussion**

Of the 97 participants in this part of the questionnaire, of whom only just over one quarter (27%) had five years or less of teaching experience, although 99% were first or second grade licensed secondary school teachers, only one indicated that they had a qualification specific to the teaching of English. However, ninety-two (95%) of the participants claimed to have been involved in some form of in-service training in the teaching of English. A review of the types of in-service training in which those who provided specifications (41/ 42%) were involved suggests that at least some of that training is likely to have been specific to particular aspects of language teaching only, such as, for example, assessment. Thus, while in-service provision may have made a difference to the overall understanding and practice of language teaching of some of these teachers, it is unlikely to have done so in all cases.

The *pre-service courses* undertaken by the respondents appear to have been deficient in a number of respects in relation to the teaching of English. Thus, for example:

- Only just over one third of respondents indicated that teaching methodologies had been included in their pre-service training (34%),
- Less than one fifth (19%) indicated that their pre-service training had included curriculum and syllabus design;
- Only 12% indicated that their pre-service training had included materials design.

Bearing in mind the fact that the questions did not specify that training in the areas of teaching methodologies or curriculum and syllabus design should be included only if it were directly related to the teaching of English (rather than more generally applicable), the situation so far as pre-service training is concerned may be even worse than it appears to be at first sight.

As indicated in *Table 6.7* above, only 56 respondents (58% of the total cohort) claimed that their *pre-service training* had included an assessed practicum, while considerably fewer (29 – 30% of the total cohort) claimed that *in-service training* they had received had done so. This is, in itself, of major concern. However, as people's understanding of what constitutes a practicum may vary, it is important to take full account of participants' responses when asked about what was included in what they understood to be a practicum. Some of the responses which seem to be of most potential significance are indicated below:

- Only 51 respondents (53% of the total cohort) claimed to have taught a whole class as part of an assessed practicum and, of these, only 40 indicated that the course tutor was in the room at the time, only 11 (20% of the total cohort) claimed that the course tutor had decided what they should teach, and only 21 (11% of the total cohort) claimed that they had been given feedback on their teaching by their course tutor.
- While 42 (43% of the total cohort) claimed to have been given a mark for their teaching, only 24 (32% of the total cohort) claimed to have received a report identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

It would appear, therefore, that the vast majority of the participants had little or no experience of an assessed practicum in which they were required to teach particular things and in which that teaching was not only graded but also commented on by trainers.

So far as *teaching observation* is concerned, only 38 (39% of the total cohort) claimed that it was included in their pre-service training. Furthermore, even when both pre-service and in-service training are both taken into account, only 18 (19% of the total cohort) indicated that they had observed lessons taught by both local school teachers *and* their course tutor/s. In spite of this, 50 respondents (42%) claimed that the instructors on their courses had demonstrated the teaching of English in real classes. There is no immediately obvious explanation for the apparent contradiction here.

A considerable number of participants appear not to have received any instruction/ advice/ assistance in a number of areas of English language teaching. This includes, for example:

- advice about textbook selection (received by 24 – 25% of the total cohort);
- advice about making sure that they were responsive to the different learning styles of their students (29 – 30% of total cohort);
- advice about teaching the relationship between full and contracted forms (30 – 31% of the total cohort);
- advice about textbook evaluation (38 – 39% of the total cohort);
- advice about coping with classes that include learners with different levels of proficiency (41 – 42% of total cohort);
- assistance in analysing English in terms of meaning and form (46 – 47% of total cohort);
- advice about concept checking (47 – 48% of total cohort);
- advice about adapting tasks to suit learners with different levels of proficiency (47 – 48% of total cohort);
- advice about testing and assessment (48 – 49% of the total cohort);
- advice about classroom management (56 – 58% of total cohort);
- advice about setting up and timing activities (49 – 51% of total cohort);
- assistance in developing and using classroom language activities (53 – 55% of total cohort);
- advice about correcting learner errors (54 – 56% of total cohort).

Only 18 respondents (19% of the total cohort) indicated that arrangements had been made for training instructors to follow-up after they had begun teaching.

What all of this indicates is that, to the extent to which these teachers received any training at all that was directly relevant to the teaching of English in schools in South Korea, that training is likely not to have included some important aspects of language teaching. It is therefore not surprising to find that only 50 respondents (52% of the total cohort) indicated that they felt confident about teaching English when they finished their training and that over half of them (61%) indicated at the

end of the questionnaire that they had experienced a number of problems in their teaching that had not been dealt with in their training programmes.

It seems likely that many of these teachers, in addition to lacking effective training in English language teaching, may have lower levels of proficiency in English than they believe to be the case. It was noted in *Chapter 5* that the self-assessed English language proficiency ratings of those who participated in the first part of the questionnaire were, overall, high. Averaging these ratings over the four skills indicates that over 90% considered themselves to be at band 5 or above on the IELTS scale, with over half considering themselves to be somewhere between bands 7 and 9, that is, somewhere between C1 and C2 on the Council of Europe's common reference levels.<sup>42</sup> However, on the assumption that the proficiency test scores provided by 37 of the participants in the second part of the questionnaire are accurate, the vast majority would be likely to be in the B range (B1 or B2) on the CEFR global scale.<sup>43</sup> This suggests that the self-assessed proficiency ratings of those involved in the first part of the questionnaire are likely to have been significantly inflated.

## **6.5 The semi-structured interviews: Background information**

Twelve of those who took part in the questionnaire-based survey signalled that they would be willing to take part in other aspects of the research, each providing names and contact details. In the event, only five finally agreed to participate in the interviews which were held via telephone on dates and at times suitable to the interviewees within a particular timeframe (September/ October 2012).

It was decided that the interviews should be semi-structured ones so that certain issues, including some that had arisen out of the questionnaire-based survey, could be explored in more depth while the order of questions, the nature of probing and the pursuit of other issues could be varied. The 'core' questions are outlined in *Appendix 4*.

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<sup>42</sup> The general descriptors for the global scale common reference levels can be found at <https://www.eui.eu/Documents/ServicesAdmin/LanguageCentre/CEF.pdf> and in *Appendix 13*.

<sup>43</sup> Reliable comparative scales for CEFR levels and a range of proficiency tests are widely available.

As indicated in the advice provided to potential interviewees (see *Appendix 2*) it was agreed, in accordance with the University of Waikato's research ethics procedures, not only that the interviewees would not be identified in the writing up of the research or in any presentations/ publications based on it, but also that the interviews would be transcribed from audio-recordings and that only the transcriptions, from which any potentially identifying material would be deleted, would be used in the writing up of the thesis and in any publications/ presentations relating to it. In the reporting and discussion of the interview data, the following pseudonyms are used: Interviewee 1 – *Ann*; Interviewee 2 – *Mary*; Interviewee 3 – *Sally*; Interviewee 4 – *Tina*; Interviewee 5 – *Diane*.

Some information about the interviewees, some of it retrieved from questionnaire responses, is provided in *Table 6.22* below.

**Table 6.22: Background information about the interviewees**

Pseudonym	Gender	Type of school	Grade/s taught	Preferred teaching approaches	Characteristics of CLT identified in questionnaire response
<b>Ann</b> (Interviewee 1)	F	Public middle school	Middle school 1 <sup>st</sup> grade D class/ 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade A class <sup>44</sup>	Communicative Functional Structural	Real-life English; Teaching all four skills; Group work
<b>Mary</b> (Interviewee 2)	F	Public high school	High school 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade/ 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Task-based	I did not choose a communicative approach because it's not what is needed in view of the nature of the entrance exam. Also my speaking skills are not sufficient.
<b>Sally</b> (Interviewee 3)	F	Private middle school	Middle school 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade/ 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Communicative Functional	No response
<b>Tina</b> (Interviewee 4)	F	Public middle school	Middle school 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Communicative	Group work; Co-teaching with a native speaker of English;
<b>Diane</b> (Interviewee 5)	F	Public middle school	Middle school 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade, advanced class 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade, intermediate class	Task-based	No response

<sup>44</sup> Ann's D and A classes were the lowest and the highest respectively among four differentiated classes in her school.

## **6.6 Semi-structured interview responses: The data**

Note that although quotation marks are sometimes used, all of the ‘extracts’ from the interviews are, in fact, translations of the original text by the researcher.

Several of the interviewees make reference to the National English Ability Test (NEAT), a test that was being developed to replace existing entrance examinations. The new test was intended to be in line with the recommendations in the national curriculum and, therefore, presumably to be communicatively orientated. Although many teachers, including some of those interviewed, had undertaken training relating to the new test and although there was considerable enthusiasm for it, its implementation was initially delayed and then shelved. At the time of writing (October, 2015), there is no evidence of any genuine intention to introduce it.

### **6.6.1 Training in language teaching and attitudes towards that training**

Asked whether they believed that English teachers should have frequent free courses to maintain their English and develop their teaching skills, *Ann*, *Mary* and *Sally* expressed the view that they should. However, while *Ann* believed that “teachers’ proficiency in English should take precedence over teaching methods”, *Tina* thought the main emphasis should be on teaching skills in general and *Sally* expressed the belief that the greatest need was in the area of the teaching of speaking and writing. *Mary* noted that availability of courses tended to relate to the findings of preference surveys but added that course opportunities were being reduced because “teachers of other subjects considered teachers of English were being given preference”. *Sally* noted, in particular, that “English teachers seem to enjoy their training with native speakers of English”. So far as *Tina* was concerned, there was too much emphasis on online as opposed to face-to-face courses in her region. *Diane* believed that many of the training courses available were not sufficiently practical.

All five of the interviewees had experienced some form of training relevant to the teaching of English and all of them expressed generally positive views of that training, particularly in the case of the six month Intensive English Teacher

Training Programme (IETTP). There were, however, some reservations about the training.

**Ann** had originally had training in teaching English that related specifically to teaching first graders: the mornings involved observing demonstrations of teaching skills by lecturers and teachers and the afternoon involved proficiency development with native English speaking tutors. The previous year, she had taken an Intensive English Teacher Training Programme (IETTP) that lasted for six months (partly during the school holidays) and was staffed by native speakers of English. More recently, she had taken online training specific to the National English Ability Test (NEAT) lasting 60 hours which was taught mainly by practising teachers and included lessons relating to the proposed new exam. As part of that programme participants had been asked to design exam questions for speaking and writing and submit them online.

With reference to the *training specific to teaching first graders*, **Ann** noted that a number of South Korean trainers with excellent teaching records were involved. While she thought that the training was good, she was perplexed by contributions from university lecturers which seemed to be largely irrelevant. The point made by Ann about the involvement of university lecturers in the training is interesting in view of the widespread criticism of training in language teaching provided by university staff. Thus, for example, Umeda (2013) is extremely critical of the role of university lecturers in the pre-service training of language teachers. It would appear, however, that university lecturers may play a less significant role in pre-service language teacher training in South Korea than they do in many other parts of the world.

**Ann** noted that the IETTP programme was taught by native speakers of English who were not specialists in education and had no experience of South Korean schools. The result, she said, was that the advantages of the programme related largely to English language proficiency development.

With reference to *the NEAT programme*, **Ann** made the following observations:

It was very good because it included suitable lessons recorded for the entrance exam and so on and you could get some ideas about things like activities. . . . It showed some real lessons. For example, you might be at a loss as to what to do for middle school students or what to do for high school students to find a way of improving their speaking proficiency. I liked the lessons showing in detail ways in which you could use textbooks or other materials in a real classroom.

Reservations about the NEAT training related to the fact that it was delivered online and so “had all the shortcomings of online training” and the fact that lecturers from universities who were involved were felt to be too theoretically orientated and ‘boring’. This was the second reference by *Ann* to the perceived inadequacy of the contributions of university lecturers to training programmes.

So far as other training is concerned, *Ann* was largely satisfied, noting that training was subsidised by the government and that teachers could select programmes they were interested in.

*Mary* attends a private institute, at a cost of approximately \$130 - \$150 per month, three days a week in order to speak with native speakers of English. She had volunteered to take an in-service training programme for secondary school teachers of English the previous summer. She thought that that programme was ‘very good’, especially when compared to programmes of a similar type that had been run in previous years:

The quality has improved tremendously when I consider ones in the early stage of my 15 year teaching career.

Although she had “learned many practical skills in teaching speaking, listening and so on”, she thought that a session on classroom English was little more than a lecture and lacked practical advice:

I really would have liked to know what English expressions can be used in a real class and how they are used in the context of classroom activities.

She noted that English teachers expect trainers to be native speakers of English and so “the programmes have changed into ones with native speaking trainers for the last eight or nine years”. She also noted that, although she had been satisfied with the training she thought that other English teachers, especially young people, seemed less satisfied.

Two points made by *Mary* are potentially of considerable significance. She noted that, although there were differences from province to province, all English teachers were expected to undergo regular training. She also noted that market research is now conducted in relation to teacher training preferences. These comments, combined with her belief that training has improved, as well as *Ann*’s comments on the involvement of practicing teachers in pre-service training, suggest that the views of language teachers and/or the literature on language teacher training is having a positive impact in South Korea.

*Sally*, like *Mary*, had taken a course entitled *In-Service Training for Secondary School Teachers of English*. In this case, the trainers were “current secondary teachers with lots of teaching and training experience” who understood the Korean secondary school context. She noted:

They taught us many practical things to use in a real class. I received a lot of materials to use in classes. . . . The training was very interesting and I was unaware of the passage of time. . . . [although] it was not relevant to everything you do in class.

Once again, the fact that the training programme undertaken by *Sally* was taught by practicing teachers and included practical sessions suggests that at least some of the training in Korea represents an improvement on the type of university-based training that has been so widely criticized. An interesting point made by

Sally was that although she would have liked to do some of the things demonstrated on the training programme in collaboration with a native-speaking English teacher, she could not because she was “supposed to finish a book in a year”. This suggests that classroom practices lag behind improvements in training, possibly, in part, because school managers are less aware than teachers of changes and developments affecting language teaching.

**Tina** noted that among the training courses she had taken were:

- summer vacation training;
- winter vacation training in the assessment of speaking and writing;
- some training in teaching materials;
- classroom English training;
- English Only Time (EOT) training;
- a three month training course;
- a six month long Intensive English Teacher Training Programme (IETTP).

All of the trainers were native speakers of English. Overall, she found the training to be ‘really good’. However, with reference to the IETTP programme she noted that:

I thought that it would be nice if the materials shown in the course had been more practical for real teaching. They told us they produced their materials for a real situation but I found them actually rather more useful in relation to the improvement of teachers’ speaking proficiency. Some of the materials were changed into more practical ones because we suggested it during the session.

Another issue this interviewee had in relation to training was the fact that some courses were poorly scheduled, overlapping with school terms.

Interestingly, **Tina** made a similar point to one made by *Ann* – the IETTP programme she attended, taught by native speakers of English, was more useful in terms of language proficiency development than in terms of teaching practice.

**Diane** had also taken an IETTP programme. In this case, the programme involved 5 months' training in South Korea and one month in a private educational establishment in Hawai'i. The programme included a three week practicum. All of the trainers were native speakers of English. **Diane** indicated that “the trainers for the 5 months were nice”. She believed that they were people with long term experience of teacher training in the South Korean system who were familiar with the South Korean education system (rather than currently practicing teachers). In the case of the Hawaiian part of the programme, however, the trainers were overseas students studying in Hawai'i or immigrants to Hawai'i. There were several problems with this part of the programme so far as she was concerned:

- It went the way of general ESL classes on the whole, not training for teachers.
- I expected to get a lot of practical ideas from the training, but I found we had only a few things we could put to use in a real class.
- In the case of the 1 month abroad, we had overlapping content with one of the domestic programmes. . . . The instructors had no adequate idea of Korean educational circumstances and the content was more academic.

It is relevant to note here that the **Diane**'s comments about the training offered in Hawai'i may be a reflection of language training generally in that state (see, for example, NeSmith, 2011).

*So far as teacher training is concerned, there was general agreement among the interviewees that there were many in-service training opportunities. While all believed that much of the training they had participated in was useful, there was also a general perception that the quality of such courses was variable. It was felt that there was sometimes much more emphasis on theory and on proficiency development than on pedagogic development, with trainers who were native*

*speakers of English not necessarily understanding the Korean teaching context and university lecturers not necessarily appreciating the need for practical advice.*

## **6.6.2 Policy issues**

### **6.6.2.1 Using English as the medium of instruction**

Asked about whether they believed that it was realistic to expect teachers to use English as the medium of instruction (as the curriculum recommends, there was general agreement among the interviewees that the issue was a problematic one.

*Ann* claimed that she used English as the medium of instruction all of the time in more advanced classes. She noted, however, that this was not possible with lower level classes, adding:

I think we do have a lot of teachers who can use only English in class, but the reason teachers get frustrated is that there are students who can't follow and complain about it. . . . The teachers' ability to speak English is not actually as bad as people think. The media blames the teachers. They claim that classes cannot be run in English because of the teachers' ability in the language but in reality, there are lots of teachers with very fluent English. It's just that the students can't really understand it.

Although she believed that it was good for South Korean teachers to use English as the medium of instruction, this was only “in advanced classes” and “as long as the students can follow it”.

Ann’s views about the use of English as the medium of instruction indicate that she sees the issue as one that relates almost exclusively to teachers’ proficiency in English rather than to their ability to use language that their students, at different stages of their learning, can understand. After all, in a communicative context, one in which it is the students who do most of the talking, the expectation that teachers should use English as the only, or main instructional language is not necessarily particularly onerous even though many researchers, including Antón and

DiCamilla (1999) and Belz (2003) have argued that expecting language teachers to use the target language for all, or most of the time in class is unrealistic. As Richards (1998) has observed, we should not necessarily be considering teachers' target language proficiency in absolute terms. The key issue, in his view, is "what components of language proficiency are most crucial for language teachers, and how language proficiency interacts with other aspects of teaching skill" (p. 7). In fact, Willis (1996) has provided a list of useful expressions and routines that can be used at various lesson stages. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that *Ann*, when asked how she graded her language in the case of low level classes appeared to misunderstand the question. She said:

I thought motivating them was the first thing I should do . . . I focused on a variety of games for vocabulary to motivate them until the middle of the first semester, and then, from the latter half, I used simple English sentences more frequently, still not using English in the whole class hour. I tried not to translate everything that a native speaker of English said in the classroom.

Unlike Ann, *Mary* believed that it was always unrealistic to expect English teachers to use English as the medium of instruction:

I don't think it's realistic. Actually, English teachers lack the necessary proficiency in English. The young ones who have been teaching for 5, 6 or 7 years generally have a 6 month or 1 year experience of language study abroad. So, their language proficiency is okay. However, English teachers who are over forty definitely only have had experience of English lessons in Korean language in their secondary school days and even in their university days as well. They tend to use Korean in class.

*Sally* noted that although she had run classes through the medium of English in the past, she no longer did so, adding:

[The] class I took charge of at first was the lowest among three differentiated levels. The level was so low that many students couldn't reply even to 'How old are you?' even though they were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of middle school. I had difficulty running the class in English. In fact, you can't use English one hundred percent of the time even in the highest class. I know education policies are changing to focus on communication in English. However, we have to maintain a certain level of progress in class as well as preparing for mid-term exams and final exams. Actually, it is impossible to run a class in English when you are supposed to keep up the progress. . . . Also in a high-level class, I think it takes too long to teach even the grammar part of English. It's more effective to teach them in English and Korean mixed.

*Sally*'s response is interesting in that she appears to perceive of maintaining progress as being something different from developing communicative competence (i.e. "education policies are changing to focus on communication . . . [but] we have to maintain a certain level of progress"). She also appears to think of teaching "the grammar part of English" as something that is separate from other aspects of teaching English, something that involves explicit instruction rather than something that involves a largely inductive process (i.e."it takes too long to teach *even the grammar part of English*" . The extract above, furthermore, highlights the fact that she sees the main aim of English lessons as being to prepare students to do well in examinations rather than to help them to develop their communicative competence. It would also appear from what she said that the exams set by schools take their bearings from university entrance exams, stressing something other than communicative competence. It would appear, therefore, that the aims of teaching English as outlined in the curriculum documentation are very different from the aims of some teachers and, presumably, also some students and their parents/ caregivers .

Asked whether she had tried to adapt the English she used in class to the English level of the students, *Sally* replied as follows:

Sure, I have. Once I tried a speed game in a class. I made them explain some simple and easy words such as a ‘desk’ or a ‘chair’ for the speed game. I was embarrassed when they asked me what the meaning of a desk was. For some of them, the level is really low.

The extract above indicates that, whatever teaching methods are actually being used, some students are failing to learn things that, presumably, they are perfectly capable of learning. Whether this is a problem that relates specifically to the teaching of English, one that is related to other aspects of the students’ lives, or some combination of the two is unclear. However, that this is not a problem that is found only in the students’ control of the English language is indicated in the following extract from Ann’s interview:

[Those] in the low level classes were behind the other students in all of the subjects including English. . . . What I thought in teaching the low level classes was that it’s the most important thing to have rapport with them beyond teaching. Most of the students in low level classes suffered from lack of affection for some personal reasons such as broken families.

*Tina* observed that she used English for about twenty to thirty percent of the time in class, gradually reducing from around fifty percent rather than increasing the percentage of its use:

I usually use English in class for around 50 percent of the time near the beginning of the semester and then tend to decrease the percentage. You find that some students don’t understand when you use lots of English in class, so after all you find yourself using just simple instructions in English. . . . They don’t understand when I provide instructions for classroom activities in English just once. So, I repeat them once more and then change them into Korean

In **Tina**'s opinion, it is not possible for teachers to use English all of the time as the medium of instruction and this relates, in part, to the nature of examinations and the teaching of grammar:

It would be realistic if the questions in the grammar domain were not set for the exam. Otherwise, I don't think it is possible to use English for one hundred percent of the time in class. We consider teaching grammar to be really important. . . . I can see that even native speaking teachers of English cannot explain what they want to explain about grammar in English. I suppose they are not experienced in teaching grammar.

It appears, then, that **Tina** has not been introduced to the inductive teaching of grammar, does not believe in teaching grammar inductively or does not believe that teaching grammar inductively will prepare students adequately for the examination types that prevail.

**Tina** appeared not to fully understand when asked whether she had tried to grade the English she used in class. Her response was:

I returned to my place in September after one semester of training. I try to speak English more than before - for example, speaking the English twice and then providing a Korean translation.

**Diane** asserted unequivocally that she did not use English as the medium of instruction in class:

[This] is not a good school. I tried a lot at first but I found students failed to understand when I taught them in English. Therefore, I'm using English only partially in class since I know the level of students is really low.

She indicated, however, that she had tried to grade the English she used:

I tried but it takes too long to use those kinds of easy expressions in English in class. Considering that there are several exams in a year, you can't spend too much time explaining one scene because you also need to pay attention to keeping up with the textbook. In English, you should repeat some situation many times in very easy words to make them understand. I think it takes too much time to do.

*All five of the interviewees agreed that it was simply not possible to teach through the medium of English at all times, particularly in low level classes. They seemed to believe that a failure to understand the teachers' English was generally a problem that related to the students' language proficiency and believed that this, combined with the nature of the examination system, meant that teachers could not be expected to use English in class all of the time. They appeared to see effective use of the target language in class as being directly related to the overall proficiency of teachers and there was no evidence that any of the interviewees had had any effective training in grading the language they used in class.*

#### **6.6.2.2 University entrance examinations**

Asked if she believed that university entrance examinations required different skills and abilities from the ones the curriculum favours, *Ann* indicated that she believed that they did, but added that this was likely to change when the new NEAT exam was introduced “if the entrance exam affects the teaching in class”. She noted that although she had been sceptical about the new exam at first, she had changed her mind “after some assessment marking and training.”

With reference to the examination system, *Mary* made the following points:

I've realised that classes cannot be changed unless the test system is changed. A professor said, as I remember, changing the testing system in education was not acceptable because the order was reversed. But the problem is that schools are being influenced a lot by CSAT [the College Scholastic Ability Test]. Well, I heard the existing CSAT is going to be replaced. . . . I support NEAT. . . . Students tend not to concentrate in class when they think something is not directly related to entrance exams.

That's the reason why they don't focus on classes by native speaking teachers of English. Students even ask me if I want them not to study in class when an entrance exam is near at hand, whenever I am making them do activities, using classroom English. So do their parents. . . . In this situation, I can't make students improve their communicative ability while I focus on entrance exams. However, the entrance exam itself is going to be changed. I can guarantee that English teachers would apply a communicative approach effectively in class if the exam was changed into the same type as NEAT. . . . I guess we'll come to teach in an ideal way since the University entrance exam has been changed. We've had a hard time dealing with the dilemma of a high score in the test versus communicative ability. Now we'll be able to teach in a communicative way, as teachers want to do, thanks to NEAT.

Unlike Ann and Mary, *Sally* did not believe that it would be possible to change the entrance exams in a way that would make them more consistent with the communicative requirements of the curriculum:

If it were possible, it would have been done already. I'm 32 now but I can't see anything special has been changed in education since I was a secondary student. I also doubt that NEAT will prove acceptable in the conditions that are prevalent now. If the entrance exam is changed into NEAT, I assume it will be ineffective in this circumstance. . . . And . . . when there is a gap between entrance exams and the English curriculum, we need to run the classes more in line with the entrance exam than the curriculum.

Commenting on the plans to introduce the new NEAT entrance examination, *Sally* made the following observation:

I'm worried that we haven't prepared anything for it. . . . [Now] now we need to spend more time on writing and speaking in regular classes.

Otherwise, students can't catch up with the requirements of the new exam without private lessons.

**Tina** indicated that she believed that entrance examinations should be changed first – before curriculum changes – because “we mostly consider the exam very important”. She believed that NEAT was out of line with the curriculum but the reasons she gave seemed to have more to do with the settings in which the exams were likely to be conducted and the implementation of the curriculum rather than the exam itself or the curriculum itself:

First of all, you have to have an appropriate classroom setting for NEAT. But I don't think we have the proper equipment for listening and speaking. Audio laboratories should be changed. The facilities are just not good enough. In terms of lessons, we have, at most, one hour for speaking and actually only some of the students in class practice their language in that limited time. Speaking and listening must be considered important in class for the new entrance exam to succeed but I think we have lots of problems at the moment. There aren't enough English teachers to correct the students' compositions.

**Diane** made the following points in relation to entrance examinations:

First of all, we must establish an appropriate English curriculum. And then it should be well established in classroom circumstances with teachers of English who are sufficiently well trained. Only then should you change the entrance exam to bring it into line with the English curriculum. However, we can expect more problems around private education now that we are supposed to teach according to the entrance exam - which was changed first regardless of the curriculum. . . . : I think it [NEAT] is impractical. I am at a loss about what to do in class from next year. . . . I like NEAT itself. But I think our educational circumstances are different from it. Therefore, we need some time to tune school education to the good framework of what NEAT is headed for, and

then we can introduce NEAT. I'm afraid they made a hasty decision. . . .  
[We] don't have enough teacher training for it.

*Apart from Sally, all of the interviewees approved of the new NEAT examination type. However, while Mary believed that the backwash effect of a new NEAT examination would be a positive one, encouraging teachers to teach in a more communicative way, Diane stressed the fact that examinations should reflect teaching rather than vice versa. She did not believe that teachers and pupils were ready for a new examination system, a view shared by Sally. In the event, the observations made by Sally and Diane proved to be prophetic. The start date of the new NEAT examination was initially delayed but none of the delayed targets were reached. It now appears that the NEAT examination may have been shelved indefinitely.*

#### **6.6.2.3 Textbooks**

Interviewees were asked whether they were satisfied with the textbooks they used and whether they believed that these textbooks focused more on exams or more on learning to communicate in English.

**Ann** said that she was ‘all right’ with the textbook she used, adding that she believed there was a greater focus on communication in current textbooks than there had been in earlier ones. However:

They don’t demonstrate tasks and activities especially in pairs and groups. Teachers should decide within the content what should be changed for specific activities. Some ideas are needed.

**Mary** believed that textbooks focused on both communication and examination requirements, adding:

Yes, indeed [textbooks have enough tasks and activities]. But we can’t afford to do these things in class. I heard they can do them in middle school. For high school, we are teaching only the reading part. In fact, we

are doing only reading and grammar. Just after finishing a textbook, we deal with some workbooks preparing for entrance exams.

Referring to textbooks, *Sally* made the following points:

The English curriculum is emphasises all 4 skills but I find some problems in the textbooks. Actually the textbooks contain all 4 skills - speaking, writing, listening and reading - but mostly you can find too much reading. [Even so] there is only one page in each chapter. One page is for listening and another for speaking. There isn't much when you compare them with the reading section.

In common with *Mary*, she referred to the difficulties involved in making appropriate use of textbooks:

Textbooks contain all 4 skills but realistically, you can't cover all of them. I wish I could have students practise the expressions in the speaking and listening part in the front section of the textbook. However, we have too many reading sections in the textbook. Therefore, we usually move quickly in the front section and spend lots of time teaching the reading parts. . . . I don't think we make the best use of the textbook.

So far as textbooks are concerned, *Tina* made the following points:

As I understand it, the content of the textbooks supplied by many publishers is fine. However, some specific activities for NEAT should be in the textbooks intended for middle school since it is be too late when you try to prepare for NEAT only in high school. . . . I can see a lot of expressions for everyday English in the textbooks. However, there is still a need for more teaching aids. . . . I know there is a speaking session for describing pictures in NEAT but I found only some basic daily expressions relating to speaking are in the textbooks. Those kinds of expressions are required in NEAT as well but we need more. I can't find

any speaking section about describing something or speaking based on some particular information.

She believed, however, that currently available textbooks contained enough tasks and activities.

Commenting on currently available textbooks, *Diane* said:

I used to try lots of activities shown in the textbook at the beginning, but now I'm not using them anymore because they are not helpful or interesting to me. I assume publishers reckoned they gave weight to communication in the textbook because every chapter has a section for activities - but I don't agree with them. . . . I don't think so [that textbooks have enough tasks and activities]. The activities for pair work are included only in the part that is related to listening dialogues. . . . [There] is too little in the speaking section. Reading is okay but more is required in the speaking and writing sections. . . . We already have the Activity Book, which is another textbook published with the main one. However, to tell the truth, it does not help us at all. It is similar to the main book and does not focus enough on activities. . . . If the supplementary activity book were to work well, it would have a lot of activities and some practice relating to the main book. But I can see only similar content to the main book in it. I've even noticed that the activity book is not divided up well according to level.

*All of the interviewees appeared to believe that textbook writers had attempted to make changes, including supplying more tasks and activities than had been included in the past. However, three of them (Tina, Mary and Diane) believed that the textbooks either did not include enough activities relating to speaking and writing or put too much emphasis on reading. Whatever is actually the case, one of the interviewees (Mary) noted that teachers could not be expected to use parts of them that did not reflect their beliefs about what the students would actually need in the context of the existing examination system.*

### **6.6.3 Private education**

*Ann* spoke about the prevalence of private education. She said that her school, in a rich area, had introduced extra classes as an alternative to private education after regular classes but:

[The] classes run by the school [after regular schooling] seemed to be considered only as regular school classes. . . . Students still went to private classes after finishing the classes in school. . . . Students with poor circumstances were exempted from the fees, but they didn't want to take the classes. . . . I think lack of money can hardly be the reason students can't study. . . . But I think the outcome was not good. I suppose the project can be effective in the case of schools in areas with lots of poor families.

*Mary* also commented on after-school classes:

After school classes were designed to replace the private education provided by Hagwon<sup>45</sup> with the school programme. Nevertheless, they made their children go to Hagwon even at six when after school programmes lasting two hours are over. . . . I suppose this problem will be endemic to our society so long as the structure of competition doesn't change and some paradigm shift doesn't occur.

Even so, *Mary* believes that the solution may lie in state schools providing the equivalent of private education after regular classes.

The lessons after school were planned for the students who couldn't afford to go to private classes but they were mostly not enthusiastic. Actually, I think that programmes in school were less effective for those who couldn't afford to go to private institutions, regardless of whether they paid money or not. But anyway, it is a good idea that we try to teach students after school who can't afford private lessons.

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<sup>45</sup> Private training institutions

**Tina** made the following point:

I think NEAT will encourage private education. I'm afraid some students who can't afford to go to private classes will be in a worse position with the introduction of NEAT. I guess that private education will be more popular. . . . All the exam questions in the current College Scholastic Ability Test are multiple choice ones but speaking and writing have been added in a new exam. . . . In the current circumstances, one teacher is supposed to teach roughly 200 students, so we cannot help all of them by editing and correcting their speaking and writing. If you rely on only public education, you won't have enough time for your speaking and writing to be corrected. . . . I hope there will be free programs where native speaking teachers of English correct students' compositions.

**Diane**, like Tina, expressed concern that the proposed NEAT examination would actually increase the desire for private education:

I'm afraid they made a hasty decision. I believe that parents will be more likely to look for private education since they know their children can't take classes in school that are appropriate in relation to NEAT.

We used to run [special programmes] as an alternative to private education in an attempt to reduce the gap. You know, the programme was run in several selected schools till late at night. Nevertheless, I don't think the outcome was as good as we expected. . . . We ran it mainly for the poor students, but not only for them. I suppose we didn't have much time to teach each of them individually. We wondered about the results in view of the effort put in during the programme.

*All of the interviewees appeared to accept that supplementing state education with private education, and the inequalities that accompany it, are a fact of life in South Korea. None of them believed that attempts to provide after school classes in state schools as an alternative to private after school education had been*

*effective thus far, either in terms of quality or in terms of attracting and assisting those students who were most in need. In fact, one (Mary) pointed out that while some poorer students failed to attend, some of the others attended both state school provided after school classes and private after school classes. Two of the interviewees, Tina and Diane believed that the introduction of a NEAT examination would actually encourage higher levels of attendance at after school private classes. Of particular concern is the fact that none of the interviewees appeared to believe that the state system could provide what parents wanted and what children needed in a context in which there are limited opportunities and in which, in relation to English, success in examinations (however outmoded the type of examination) is considered to be of greater importance than communicative competence.*

#### **6.6.4 Attitudes towards English teachers and the teaching of English**

*Mary* pointed out that teachers of English are being blamed for problems that are, in fact, largely beyond their control:

The self-esteem of English teachers in Korea is getting . . . I can see all parents, society, mass media, and so on targeting English teachers. The entire blame concerning global data about Korean students' English proficiency level is thrown on English teachers. It is down to secondary teachers, not professors in the university or others. Actually we have something to say for ourselves as secondary teachers. . . . I think that we English teachers have been facing a dilemma. Students and parents have urged us for better grades in preparation for entrance exams, and society - such as via the media - have raised the issue of class problems.

They [parents] expect a high score in the English section in the College Scholastic Ability Test, in the case of high schools. . . . If you focus on communication in class in high school, you will get a number of complaints from parents who blame you and ask if you are out of your mind.

I believe English teachers in Korea are the cream of the crop even among teachers' groups. Last summer I saw 55 or 57 year old male teachers come to the training to learn something about NEAT. They must not have experienced running their class in English, but I saw them try their best when they needed to do demonstration class teaching. I was overwhelmed by them.

*Tina* appears to believe that parents want their children to be able to communicate in English and believes that this can be achieved by increasing the number of sessions taught by native speakers of English. In fact, she appears to believe that teaching communicatively is something that is best left to native speakers of English:

I can see that they [parents] expect lots of English in class. And they seem to want classes to be interesting and easy to understand. . . . They say they wish there were more classes taught by native speaking teachers of English. . . . I hope the Education Office will promote a lot of programmes with native speakers since every school has only one of them currently.

*Diane*, on the other hand, acknowledged the complexity of parents' expectations and, to some extent at least, appears to understand their concerns:

[Parents expect] communicative competence plus high grades. Definitely, high grades are what parents in Korea are usually expecting. . . . However, in another way, I can agree with them. . . . Nevertheless, I also think it is not good when you only consider entrance exams and place too much emphasis on the grade.

*Sally* noted the resistance of students to engaging in activities involving English (activities which, however, may not have been well designed or managed):

In my school, a native speaker of English was taking charge of that part last year. I saw that he got students into pairs or groups to do some activities but the students showed little response.

While two of the interviewees (*Ann* and *Mary*) believed that the problems South Korea is facing in relation to the teaching of English might be resolved, in part, by having schools that focus on English, *Tina* believed that the answer might be to provide special English programmes in regular schools. However, *Ann* pointed out that proficiency in English is something that all students are likely to need in the future:

[L]anguage is useful to know. When you take a long look at your life, not aiming at school achievement, English proficiency is essential for the future. You can gain access to some of the information you want since I have heard that English is used for 80% of all the information in the world.

Finally, *Mary* and *Diane* made reference to the difficulties they had as teachers of English in attempting to respond to their own expectations and those of others:

***Mary:***

The most serious problem I had was that I couldn't deal with discussion or debate in class. I believe it can make students expand the scope of their thinking and improve their proficiency. But I couldn't handle it with my capabilities. . . . [Also] teaching in high school exhausted me as I got older. I was teaching 36 hours a week because I had to teach supplementary classes after regular classes.

***Diane:***

English teachers are always especially busy in school. I can see that English teachers usually have more administrative tasks than teachers of other subjects as well as bigger classes.

*The comments by interviewees indicate the ambivalence of South Korean attitudes towards English language competence in a context in which although the ability to use English is increasingly important, an outmoded examination system essentially determines students' future opportunities, militating in favour of knowledge about language. Add to this student resistance to change, large class sizes and the fact that neither the examination system nor, in many cases, the training available to teachers, are in line with the recommendations in the curriculum and the situation would appear to be an explosive one.*

### **6.7 Some concluding comments**

The data collected from the teacher training-focused questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews suggest that teachers of English in South Korean state schools are struggling to understand what is involved in teaching communicatively in a context in which parental attitudes, an outmoded examination system and a deeply- embedded social hierarchy all militate against their efforts.

## **Chapter 7**

### **A focus point-based analysis of a sample of textbooks produced in South Korea for secondary school students of English**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to report on the focus point-based analysis of a sample of English textbooks that are widely used in South Korean middle schools and secondary schools. The chapter begins by providing some relevant background on the regulations concerning the selection of textbooks for South Korean schools and on the textbooks selected for analysis here (7.2). It then introduces the focus points used in the analysis of the textbooks (7.3). This is followed by the analyses themselves and a discussion of the findings (7.4). The chapter ends with some concluding comments (7.5).

#### **7.2 The textbooks selected**

All of the textbooks used in this research project were collected in 2012 when all six grades in middle school and high school were using textbooks based on the 2007 curriculum revision (see *Chapter 3*).

Clause 29 of the Korean *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* requires schools to select only textbooks that are screened and approved by the Ministry of Education as indicated in the Selection Manual for Curriculum Books<sup>46</sup>. According to the Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, further screening is required at school level so as to ensure that the textbooks selected are appropriate in relation to the specific circumstances in which each school operates (see *Appendix 9*). At the time textbooks were selected for analysis (2012), the number of authorised textbooks from which every regular secondary school could select was:

#### **Middle school**

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<sup>46</sup> This was prepared by the Ministry of Education and delivered to each school through local educational offices.

1<sup>st</sup> grade = 25 books; 2<sup>nd</sup> grade = 19 books; 3<sup>rd</sup> grade = 15 books

### **High school**

English = 17 books; English I = 10 books; English II = 10 books; Practical English Conversation = 4 books; Advanced Practical English Conversation = 4 books; English Reading and Writing = 4 books; Advanced English Reading and Writing = 4 books.

One hundred and fifty-five participants (155/ 87%) in the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 4* indicated that they used textbooks. However, selecting the most popular ones was not a straightforward matter because many of them simply gave the name of the publishers of the textbooks they used (with several publishers publishing more than one textbook) rather than the name of the textbooks themselves (seen *Appendix 8*). However, after consultation with publishers (which was undertaken in order to determine which textbooks sold most), three textbooks were selected from those available at secondary school level (two used in middle schools and one used in high schools).<sup>47, 48</sup> These were:

*Middle School English I* (Dukki Kim et al., 2010): Chunjae Education.

(Intended largely for Grade 7 students, aged approximately twelve years);

*Middle School English II* (Dukki Kim et al., 2010): Chunjae Education.

(Intended largely for Grade 8 students, aged approximately thirteen years);

*High School English* (Chanseung Yi et al., 2012): Neungyule Education.

(Intended largely for Grade 10 students, aged approximately fifteen years).

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<sup>47</sup> None of the books selected related to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade of high school because teachers generally use Educational Broadcasting System (EBS) workbooks for these students in preparation for the current entrance exam, that is, the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). Furthermore, only four questionnaire respondents indicated which textbooks they used at this level. EBS was the only educational television and radio network and was operated by a type of public corporation. The website address is <http://www.ebs.co.kr>. The current CSAT has taken various forms since 1945, after the Korean War. The one current in 2012 had been in place since 1993.

<sup>48</sup> According to a report of the government audit (2010 & 2011), the EBS workbook was used in regular English classes in between 50% and 87.5% of schools in Inchon Metropolitan City even though schools are required to use Ministry of Education approved textbooks.

Each of these textbooks is accompanied by *an activity book*, *a teachers' guide* and *an e-book* (CD-ROM) made up of the content of the textbook and the activities book.

All three of the textbooks selected for analysis are similar in appearance, having attractive glossy cardboard covers. On the front and back covers of the two published by Chunjae there are simple cartoon-style drawings of people engaging in a variety of activities; on the front cover of the book published by Neungyule there is a picture of part of a smiling face. The inside pages are made of thin, recycled paper which is easily torn. The text and graphics in all three books are similar in appearance.

The overall structure of each of the textbooks is outlined in *Tables 7.1 and 7.2* below.

**Table 7.1: Overall Structure - Middle School English I & II**

Main sections	Sub-sections						
<b>Unit focus</b>	<i>Expressed in a dialogic exchange</i>						
<b>Listen and Talk I</b>	<i>Before You</i> <i>Listen</i>	<i>Listen</i>	<i>Talk</i>				
<b>Listen and Talk II</b>	<i>Before You</i> <i>Listen</i>	<i>Listen</i>	<i>Talk</i>				
<b>Real-Life Activity</b>	<i>Listen and Do</i>		<i>Talk and Write</i>				
<b>Read and Do</b>	<i>Get Ready</i>	<i>Read</i>	<i>Before You</i> <i>Go On</i>	<i>Over to You</i>			
<b>Language Focus</b>	<i>Vocabulary</i>	<i>Grammar</i>					
<b>Think and Write</b>	<i>Often involving an introductory mini-dialogue, some questions and a writing exercise, such as filling in blanks.</i>						
<b>Project</b>	<i>Tasks to be conducted in pairs and groups, often involving 'games'</i>						
<b>Wrap Up</b>	<i>Questions for students to check out for themselves: In Middle School English I these are generally presented in the context of a game of dice; in Middle School English II, they are in test format.</i>						
<i>Middle School English I</i> has 10 main units and two subsidiary ones on 144 pages; <i>Middle School</i>							

**English II** has 10 main units and one subsidiary one on 182 pages.

**Table 7.2: Overall Structure - High School English**

Main sections	Sub-sections					
<b>Lesson Goals</b>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Reading and Writing Focus</i>	<i>Grammar Points (expressed as sentences with some words highlighted)</i>	<i>Project work</i>		
<b>Listen In &amp; Speak Out</b>	<i>Topic 1</i> <i>Get Ready; Listen and Check; Let's Talk Together</i>		<i>Topic 2</i> <i>Get Ready; Listen and Check; Let's Talk Together</i>			
<b>Real-life Listening</b>	<i>Authentic listening text</i>					
<b>Reading</b>	<i>Before You Read</i>		<i>As You Read</i>	<i>After you Read</i>		
<b>Discovering Grammar</b>	<i>Listen and Notice</i>			<i>Read and Notice</i>		
<b>Write It</b>	<i>Reading for Focus</i>			<i>Writing, often involving filling in blanks.</i>		
<b>Language Focus</b>	<i>Communicative Functions</i>	<i>Word Formation</i>	<i>Word Partners (dealing with collocation)</i>	<i>Words in Context</i>	<i>Useful Expressions</i>	<i>Grammar Points in Use</i>
<b>Project Work</b>	Suggestions for, for example, searching for information in groups and making a presentation.					
<i>High School English</i> includes eleven chapters/ units over 231 pages.						

### 7.3 The focus points

The focus points used to guide the analysis of the textbooks and accompanying teachers' guides are derived from a consideration of the 2007 version (and relevant amendments) of the South Korean national curriculum for English (see

*Chapter 3* for discussion of the curriculum).<sup>49</sup> The overall goal of teaching English as outlined in that curriculum document is:

- to cultivate the basic ability to understand and use English in everyday life.

The goals for secondary school students are as follows:

- to understand the necessity to communicate in English;
- to effectively communicate in daily life and about general topics;
- to understand diverse foreign information in English, and put it into practical use; and
- to appreciate diverse cultures and introduce our culture in English.

Each of the following is listed under the heading of *Characteristics*:

- Students should be exposed to a variety of educational experiences which can develop fluency and accuracy;
- Teaching and learning methods that stress the acquisition of language should be applied in order to let the students become the center of English classes;
- The different learning abilities of individual students should be considered . . . and different levels of lessons should be conducted according to each school's circumstances.

Among the listings under the heading of *Teaching and Learning Methods (Secondary schools)*, each of the following is included:

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<sup>49</sup> There have been several revisions to the 2007 curriculum document, including, in 2009, the addition of two (very ambitious) additional statements (which I have translated into English): *Students should develop their aesthetic sensibilities, such as creativity and imagination, through areas such as literature and the arts; Students should develop academic knowledge of areas such as Humanities, Social sciences, Natural Sciences and the Arts*. In addition, the 2009 amendment made changes to the appendix dealing with examples and functions of communication.

- Wherever possible, classes should be carried out in English;
- Plan a student-centred class, where students can actively participate, and teachers can cooperate with them;
- Develop a variety of activities in order to achieve lively interaction between teacher and students, and among students;
- [Teaching] methods should . . . be diversified based on the performance standards (proficiency criteria).

As indicated in *Chapter 4*, there are a number of potential problems associated with the content of the curriculum document and the way in which that content is presented. One of these is the fact that the only indication of language content takes the form of four appendices which provide lists of topics, functions, vocabulary and ‘linguistic forms needed for communication’. The last of these is made up of unanalysed, semantically unrelated decontextualised sentences which are, presumably, intended to illustrate a range of structures and structure-related meanings (e.g. *Mary hasn’t told him what to do; Tom will not be at the meeting tomorrow*). There is, however, no indication of the level/ grade at which particular examples – or the structure-related meanings the examples are intended to relate to – might usefully be introduced, recycled, etc. The danger of this is that it could lead to a sort of ‘pick’n’mix’ approach similar to phrasebook learning (with teachers and/or textbook writers being driven by the need to select from the lists of examples rather than focusing on exactly what is being exemplified in particular instances). This danger is reinforced in a number of ways. For example, readers are advised that the appropriateness of sentences in the case of students in different grades of schooling is a factor not of some measure of sentence complexity but, simply, of sentence length (up to 7 words at Grades 3 & 4; up to 9 words at Grades 5 & 6). Added to this is the repeated use throughout the curriculum document of adjectives such as ‘basic’ and ‘simple’ which do not, in this context, have any explanatory power. Of even greater concern in relation to the potential for a mechanical type of interpretation of the curriculum is the fact that under the heading of ‘communication activities’, readers are advised to refer, in the case of activities involving listening and speaking, to examples of functions in appendix 2 and, in the case of activities

involving reading and writing, to the examples of functions in appendix 2 and items listed as ‘language forms necessary for communication’ in appendix 4 (*The School Curriculum of the Republic of Korea*, pp. 44 & 45). This is likely to encourage a search for examples (since examples are all that we have in the appendices) rather than a consideration of the principles underpinning the examples (which are not explained).

In order to determine how textbook writers actually interpret the curriculum documentation in designing materials, the textbooks selected have been analysed in relation to a number of focus points emerging directly out of a consideration of the curriculum document. These are:

***Language content and presentation***

What language is introduced and how is it introduced, supported (including the use of illustrations) and recycled?

***Tasks and activities***

What types of tasks and activities are included and could they be described as being ‘communicative’?

***Medium of instruction***

What language/s does/ do the textbook writers use to give instructions/ explanations and what language/s does/do they encourage teachers to use?

***Approaches to teaching and learning***

What approaches to teaching and learning are encouraged and, in particular, what types of tasks and activities are included?

***Cultural content***

What is the nature of the cultural content introduced and what sort of cultural assumptions appear to underpin that content?

Some of the questions listed under the focus points headings can be answered in a relatively straightforward way; others require considerably more analytical investigation. In each case, prior to the focus point-based analysis is a section in which first impressions of the textbooks are recorded.

## 7.4 Analysing the textbooks

### 7.4.1 First impressions

In the case of *Middle School English I* and *English II*, I was initially struck by the fact that the illustrations often appeared to be more appropriate for kindergarten students than for students who are likely to be aged between twelve and thirteen. It also seemed to me that there was a great deal of Korean writing, particularly in the middle school textbooks (often in the form of instructions or translation). Thus, for example, the first page of the first unit of *English I* actually has more Korean (including translation) than it does English (see below).

The image shows a page from a Middle School English textbook. At the top, there is a speech bubble containing both English and Korean text: "Nice to meet you." and "반갑게 인사하고 서로 소개해 볼 시간." Below this, there is a small illustration of a person. To the left, a box titled "UNIT FOCUS" contains several English-Korean pairs. On the right, there is a photograph of three young boys standing and talking. At the bottom, there is a section titled "Starting Out" with numbered instructions and a note to go to p. 8 in the Activity Book.

Nice to meet you.  
반갑게 인사하고 서로 소개해 볼 시간.

UNIT FOCUS

의사소통 기능  
이름 묻고 답하기  
A What's your name?  
B I'm Han Junha. Call me Junha.  
소개하기  
Hi, my name is Kim Jiho.  
I like music.  
연어 형식  
A Is she American?  
B No, she isn't.

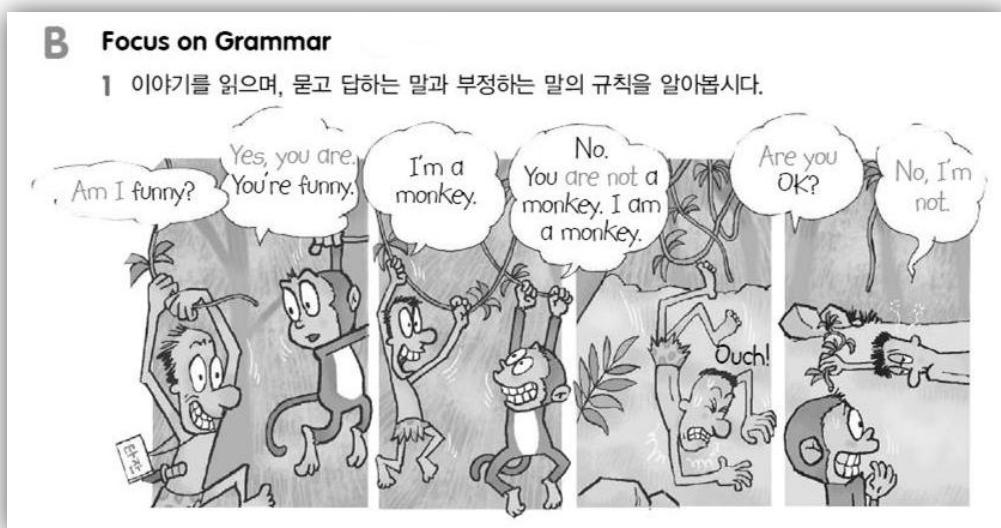
Starting Out

1 여러 가지 인사말을 들어 봅시다.  
2 다시 듣고, 큰 소리로 따라 해 봅시다.  
3 짹과 반갑게 인사해 봅시다.  
Go to p. 8 in your Activity Book. 학습 계획을 세워 보세요.

**Figure 7.1:** Middle School English 1, p. 11

*Unit Focus* sections seem to take the form of a few sentences/ utterances that are *examples* of some of the types of sentences/ utterances in focus in the unit (reflecting the format of the national curriculum appendices) rather than being inclusive of the unit's *actual* language focus content. Thus, for example, the first unit of *English 1* introduces a wide range of vocabulary, sentence constructions and idioms that are not indicated in the *Unit Focus* section in *Figure 7.1* above. Furthermore, all the various aspects of the language covered in the main picture-based dialogue of the unit (and some that are not) are introduced in mini-dialogue snippets before the main picture-based dialogue. In spite of this, some of the language in that picture-based dialogue (entitled *Katie's Shoe* even though possessive nouns do not appear to be in focus in the unit) are translated into English in a box at the foot of the page.

The *Language Focus* sections appeared to be almost as selective as the *Unit Focus* sections and, in an attempt to be humorous, seemed sometimes to be potentially more confusing than enlightening (see sample below).



**Figure 7.2:** Middle School English 1, p. 18

In addition, looking through the middle school English books as a whole, it appeared that little attempt had been made to ensure that language introduced at a certain point in the textbook was recycled.

In the case of *High School English*, my first impression was that the illustrations were, overall, more age-appropriate than they were in the case of *Middle School English I* and *II*. However, although it appeared that there was less Korean writing overall on the pages, Korean still seemed to be used consistently for instructions. In addition, since it was not always clear what the language focus points actually were, and since new language appeared generally not to be presented in the form of marker sentences<sup>50</sup> in the context of language that was already known, it seemed to me that teachers who followed the textbooks would be obliged to use translation frequently. As in the case of *Middle School English I* and *English II*, recycling of newly introduced language appeared not to be one of the authors' priorities. Finally, language focus points in *Discovering Grammar* sections sometimes seemed to have been selected almost at random from those that actually occurred in units and the ways in which they were presented in these sections seemed to be often largely unhelpful (see example below in which the word 'notice' is, I believe, indicative of one of the major influences on this particular textbook and, possibly, also the others, that is, the 'focus-on-form' approach as defined by Long (1991) which involves drawing students' attention to (encouraging them to notice) "linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (pp. 45-46)).

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<sup>50</sup> This term is used to refer to sentences that illustrate a particular construction.

## Discovering Grammar

### Point 1

**A Listen and Notice** | 다음은 용돈 관리 소프트웨어에 대한 라디오 광고입니다. 밑줄 친 부분에 유의하여 들어 봅시다.

*Money Manager* is a money management program made by Dream Computer. It is especially useful for those having trouble with planning their spending or those interested in managing their money wisely. Try *Money Manager* and you'll become a wiser consumer.



**B. Let's Find the Point** | 각 문장에서 밑줄 친 부분의 역할을 살펴보고, 굵게 표시된 부분이 바로 앞 단어와 능동, 수동 중 어떤 관계인지 알아봅시다.

**C. Let's Find More Examples** | 굵게 표시된 부분과 동일한 용법의 구문을 본문에서 찾아봅시다.

[p. 60, 61]

**Figure 7.3:** High School English, p. 66.

So far as tasks and activities are concerned, many of them seemed to be artificial and repetitive and, in addition, the language included sometimes seemed to be contextually inappropriate, as in the use of the auxiliary verb ‘can’ in the example below:

### B Read and Talk

각 항목에 표시한 뒤, 짹과 대화하며 애완견을 잘 키울 수 있는지 알아봅시다.

#### Is a Dog Right for You?

can can't

I can feed a dog every day.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

I can check its water every day.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

I can brush it often.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

I can take it for a walk.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------

I can wash it.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------



**A** Can you feed a dog every day?

**B** Yes, I can. / No, I can't.

can이 2개 이하: Sorry.  
You can't have a dog.

can이 3개 이상: Great!  
You can have a dog.

**Figure 7.4:** Middle School English I, p.50.

#### 7.4.2 Language content and presentation

To illustrate the type of language content selection that characterizes the three textbooks in focus here, Unit 3 of *Middle School English I* has been selected. In that single unit, there are 25 verbs, 26 adjectives, 52 nouns; 9 adverbs; 6 prepositions; a selection of subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns (e.g. yours) and possessive adjectives (e.g. your); a range of question types, formulaic functions<sup>51</sup> and idiomatic expressions; and examples of both present simple tense and present continuous aspect. Of these, the vast majority are used for the first time in the textbook.<sup>52</sup> Included among these are present continuous aspect used for ongoing activities and simple present aspect (with and without negatives and interrogatives involving the auxiliary verb DO) used for habits, states, routines and characteristics. Also used for the first time in the textbook are, for example, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular possessive pronoun (yours); third person singular possessive adjectives (her; his); a number of adverbs, including ‘every’; a number of nouns, including ‘comedy’ and ‘comedian’, ‘family’, ‘uncle’ and ‘cousin’, ‘grandmother’, ‘grandma’ and ‘granny’, ‘stomach’, ‘stomachache’ and ‘toothache’; and inversion questions (*Is . . . ?; Does . . . ?*).<sup>53</sup> As in the case of all of the other units in *Middle School English*, the contents list at the front of the book includes, under the heading of ‘Language focus’, one or more examples. In this case, the examples are (p. 5): *My grandma loves onions* and *Jino doesn’t say he’s sorry*.

On the introductory pages of each of the units, teaching points are provided in the form of examples under the headings (in Korean) of communicative functions and

<sup>51</sup> This term is used to refer to functions (e.g. greetings) that are characteristically expressed in set ways.

<sup>52</sup> The exception (those items that are used earlier in the textbook) are: subject pronouns (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. person singular), object pronouns (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular), 11 verbs, possessive adjectives (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular), 5 of the 26 adjectives, 8 of the 52 nouns, 5 of the 9 adverbs, and 1 of the 6 prepositions.

<sup>53</sup> At the beginning of the parallel unit of the Activities Book (p. 45), a number of words are listed, accompanied, in some cases (but not all) by markers of primary stress. These are: comédian, cómedy, curly, féver, gínger, héadache, ice cream, mágic, médecine, ónion, rub, runny nose, stómachache, térrible, toothache and the like. These stress markings are potentially confusing in view of the fact that students are still likely to be learning to spell these words when they encounter them in the Activities Book.

language structures. In the case of Unit 3 of Middle School English I, these are outlined as follows (p. 35):

*Communicative functions*

*Describing a person*

What does he look like? B: He is tall and has curly hair.

*Expressing sympathy*

A: I have a headache. B: I'm sorry to hear that.

*Language structures*

My grandma **loves** onions. Jiho **doesn't say** he's sorry.

A number of points could be made about the classification illustrated above. First, in the case of the third example, which is, presumably, intended to illustrate use of present simple tense (positive and negative), there is some uncertainty concerning the second sentence. The first sentence refers to an ongoing characteristic. The second sentence is, however, more difficult to classify in the absence of context. If it is intended to refer to an ongoing characteristic, it is an unusual one, one which would generally be accompanied by 'ever' ('doesn't ever') to clarify the meaning. It is certainly not a sentence that clearly demonstrates the use of present simple for characteristics. In the case of the second example above, the decision to focus here on the function of the second utterance rather than on the function of the first (complaint? assertion?) or its structure seems, at first sight, to be arbitrary. However, it could be that the writers were attempting to avoid drawing attention to the fact that present simple tense is used differently here. It refers not to a characteristic but to a temporary state. It seems that there is here, and elsewhere throughout these textbooks, a studied avoidance of any direct reference to structures and structure-related meanings. In its early stages of development, CLT was associated with the total avoidance of any reference to language structure (the 'strong version'). Later, however, its proponents became more relaxed about this (the 'weak version') although there has been a general preference for teaching structural rules implicitly, encouraging learners to make structural inferences on the basis of input (Howatt, 1984, pp. 296-297).

Another aspect of language content in the case of the middle school textbooks is the extent to which the language introduced is appropriate in context. It is often the case that it is not, particularly where idioms are selected from the list included in the curriculum statement. In the following example, from *Middle School English II* (p. 20), a young girl uses idiomatic language that would generally be considered inappropriate in the circumstances (child addressing an old gentleman) and then thanks him, inappropriately:

An old gentleman: Oh, are you Mina?  
Mina: sure. Long time, no see, Mr. Smith.  
An old gentleman: You're a big girl now.  
Mina: Thank you.

The approach to language content illustrated here with particular reference to Unit 3 of *Middle School English I* is little different in the case of the other units of the two middle school textbooks and the high school English one. In the case of *High School English*, there is, however, a greater emphasis on pronunciation and more attention appears to have been paid to the desirability of including a wide range of genres (e.g. narrative, recount, instruction, argument and classification/description). Even so, the avoidance of any reference to grammar that characterizes the middle school English books is also evident here, as is a frequent lack of clarity in presenting different syntactic formations. Thus, for example, in Lesson 1, structures involving VERB + BE (base form) are contrasted with structures involving VERB +/ PREPOSITION + VERB (present participial form). However, because of the nature of the selection of items that are introduced<sup>54</sup>, the students are likely to make the erroneous inference that although the modal lexical verbs ‘hope’ and ‘expect’ can be associated with a wide range of other verbs (e.g. *expect to meet someone*), ‘want’ is always associated with the verb BE (e.g. *want to be a pianist*). In addition, at the same time as they are being introduced to WANT + infinitive (e.g. *I want to be a pianist*), they are exposed not only to the use of the infinitive as a subject complement (e.g. *My dream is to become a*

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<sup>54</sup> These are, for example, want TO BE, HOPE TO

*lawyer*). Also, at the same time as they are being introduced to HOPE + infinitive (e.g. *I hope to do . . .*), they are exposed to HOPE + NOUN PHRASE + VERB + ADJECTIVE (*I hope your dream comes true*). If the aim of this sort of presentation is to encourage the students to use inferencing to reach a number of conclusions about language structure, it makes little sense to include sentences that could be confusing. If inductive approaches that avoid providing learners with explicit grammatical rules are to be effective, the examples selected for inclusion need to be based on a very clear grammatical understanding and an acute awareness of the types of thing that can act as distractors.

So far as these three textbooks are concerned, the underlying syllabus seems to be made up largely of linguistic structures and communicative functions which are selected, in part at least, in relation to the topics that are highlighted. At first sight it seems, therefore, that the syllabuses on which these textbooks are based might best be described as a *situationalized* and *functionalized* structural syllabus. However, since any reference to grammatical categorization or even to the notional meanings that can be conveyed by particular grammatical items (e.g. habitual activity) seem to have been studiously avoided, and since there is no evidence of careful application of the type of criteria that typically guide selection in the case of structural syllabuses (such as frequency of use, usefulness, or perceived level of complexity)<sup>55</sup>, it seems inappropriate to refer to the underlying syllabuses as structural ones. What we appear to have are eclectic syllabuses that are primarily topic driven. First, topics appear to have been selected from one of the appendices of the national curriculum document. Next, selections appear to have been made from the material included in the other appendices largely in relation to topic suitability. The material is then presented in a way that relies on a combination of translation (to convey the meanings of words and constructions new to the students) and inferencing (to detect grammatical regularities) although examples are sometimes selected and presented in ways that are unlikely to be helpful.

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<sup>55</sup> For an outline of such criteria, see the discussion of *Le Français Fondamental* in Valax (2011).

### 7.4.3 Tasks and activities

As two of the interviewees noted (see *Chapter 5*), South Korean textbooks relating to the teaching of English have changed a lot since the South Korean curriculum began to focus more on communication.<sup>56</sup> This is certainly true. However, it does not follow from this that the textbooks currently in use could be described as involving authentic communication so far as the tasks and activities included are concerned.

All three textbooks in focus here include a variety of activities, including *talking in pairs*, *completing projects* and *presenting material in groups*. In addition, there are further activities in the activity books that accompany the main students' books. The definitions of CLT provided by Littlewood (1981) and Nunan (1991), together with the outline of activity types provided by Littlewood (2004) (see *Chapter 3*), provide a useful context in which the activities included in the textbooks can be discussed. That discussion focuses on three sample chapters/units, one from each textbook. These are:

- *Unit 3: We're Family*, from *Middle School English I*;
- *Unit 7: From Cover to Cover*, from *Middle School English I*; and
- *Unit 9: Curiosity about Nature*, from *High School English*.

*Unit 3* from *Middle School English I* (called *We're Family*), like other units in the series, contains a number of activities. These include:

- an activity involving finding the right person/ picture to match a written description (in *Starting Out*);
- filling in blanks and finding an appropriate person to match an oral description and identifying symptoms referred to in a listening text (in *Listen and Talk* ).

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<sup>56</sup> One of these interviewees also noted that she believed that textbooks now provide opportunities for teachers to adjust activities depending on students' ability.

Each of these activities could, in terms of Littlewood's (2004, p. 322) definitions, be described as either *pre-communicative* or *non-communicative*.

The remaining sections also include a variety of activities. These are, in general, formulaic and artificial. For instance, activities in which students talk in pairs in *Real-Life Activity* from *Middle School English I*, (p. 37- see below) are, in fact, simple drills. Where the language required is supplied rather than elicited, mini-dialogues such as this cannot be described as involving 'structured communication activities'.

1. Guess the prescription for each sickness<sup>57</sup>.

- (1) Go to a dentist.
- (2) Use a cold towel.
- (3) Drink some hot ginger tea.
- (4) Take some medicine and get some rest.

· a cold                    · a toothache                    · a high fever                    · a  
stomach ache

2. Practice the dialog with your partner using the information in number 1.

A: What's wrong?

B: I have a cold.

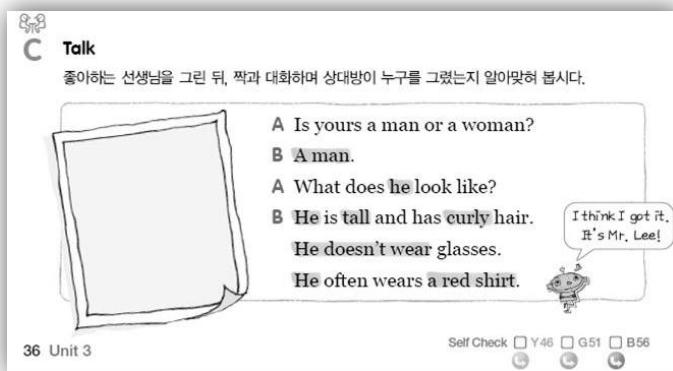
A: I'm sorry to hear that. Drink some hot ginger tea.

An activity in which students are asked to draw their favourite teacher and ask a classmate to guess who it is (p. 36) appears, on the surface, to involve authentic communication. In fact, however, the sample questions (e.g. *Is yours a man or a woman?*) and answers (which reflect pre-taught chunks) make the drawing largely redundant. In addition, an activity such as this one is potentially inappropriate and risky for both the students and the teachers concerned.<sup>58, 59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> The instructions for 1 and 2 are given in Korean in the textbook.

<sup>58</sup> Tasks in which students are asked to describe people do not generally reflect authentic communication. In fact, the only times when native speakers are likely to describe people in detail relate to situations in which there is, for example, a lost child, missing person or escaped prisoner,



**Figure 7.5:** Middle School English I, p. 36

In the *Activity Book*, which is intended to include level differentiated activities, a review of the activities that actually are included indicates that the difference between one ‘level’ and another is generally small and may also have little genuine relationship to linguistic proficiency. Thus, for example, the exercise outlined below is included in the *Activity Book* relating to Unit 3 of *Middle School English I* where it is intended for the lowest of three ‘levels’.

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or ones which involve, for example, preparing to meet an unknown person at an airport or station.<sup>59</sup> The first activity in *Listen and Talk 1* in the main textbook asks students to circle the words that best describe themselves from six possibilities: tall, short, long hair, curly hair, kind and *cute*. Once again, as in the case of describing a favourite teacher, there are a number of potential problems associated with this activity. Furthermore, this non-communicative activity is, in itself, unlikely to be of any genuine interest or significance

## Read and Do

**My Family Video**

Reading Tip 1. 문장을 의미 단위로 끊어 읽습니다.

② Meet my grandma / and my little brother.

2. 인물을 소개하는 글에서는 인물의 특징을 파악하는 데 초점을 둡니다.

Read "My Family Video" in the textbook again.

**A**

그림에 해당하는 낱말을 빈칸에 찾아 쓰니 뒤, 글을 소리 내어 읽어 봅시다.

tea      onions      comedy      doctor

My grandma loves \_\_\_\_\_. Her nickname is Granny Onion. She is like a family \_\_\_\_\_. When I have a stomachache, she rubs my stomach. When my brother has a bad cold, she makes hot ginger \_\_\_\_\_ for him. I am glad she lives with us.

My twin brother, Jiho, loves chocolate. He likes \_\_\_\_\_. shows. He is funny, and we all laugh every day. I love my brother.

**Figure 7.6:** Middle School English I, Activity Book, p. 48

At the next level (p. 53), the only difference is that the small pictures included in the extract above are omitted (although the words are written in the line above and could, therefore, simply be copied from there). At the highest level (p. 58), the exercise is exactly the same as for the intermediate level except for the fact that the following two questions are added:

What does Granny onion do when Jiho has a bad cold?

What is Jiho like?

In *Unit 7 of Middle School English II* (called *From Cover to Cover*) the section headed *Listen and Talk* includes activities. Some examples are provided below. The first four are from *Listen and Talk I*; the others are from *Listen and Talk II*:

- Students are asked to say whether they have read certain books whose front covers are supplied (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; *Alice in*

*Wonderland; Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*) and, if they have, what they think of them.<sup>60</sup>

- Following a listening text, students are given two multiple choice questions (selecting from three illustrations who the speakers of the listening text are) and a sentence completion task (*What does Minho think of the book? He thinks it is \_\_\_\_\_*).
- Students are asked to practise a pre-written model dialogue snippet in pairs (replacing one word as appropriate).
- Students are asked to complete a repetitive substitution drill in the form of a mini-dialogue.
- Students are asked to select from a list by ticking (true/ false) what types of book they like to read in their free time.
- Students are provided with a sentence completion task (e.g. *I like \_\_\_\_\_ books*) following a listening text.
- Students are asked to talk, in pairs, about their reading habits using a dialogue frame and some suggested words and phrases (e.g. they might replace ‘on weekends’ by ‘before going to sleep’, ‘in the morning’ or ‘during lunchtime’).

None of the activities listed above could be described as communicative. However, there are a few activities in the *Listen and Talk* sections that appear, at first sight, to be communicatively orientated. For example, there are two questionnaire-based tasks that involve students in (a) finding out what their partner has read, or (b) recording their own reading habits and those of three other class members. This type of questionnaire-based information-gap activity is characteristically associated with a communicative focus. However, in this case, in the absence of any constraints on how these activities are to be conducted, it would be perfectly possible to complete the task by passing the questionnaires around and adding appropriate ticks/ checks.

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<sup>60</sup> It seems highly unlikely that many, if any of the students will have read these books if their proficiency in English is not significantly above the level that would appear to be presupposed in relation to *Middle School English II*.

The activities included in the listening, writing and speaking sections of *Real-Life Activity* are similar in type to those included in *Listen and Talk*. In the case of the *Read and Do* section, the activities are all of the comprehension check type, including matching and rearranging, filling in blanks and providing short answers. A final open-ended question asking (in Korean) what kind of books students would like to write is unlikely, in the context of the chapter/ unit as a whole, to elicit anything other than a sample of the pre-taught phrases or sentences.

In the *Language Focus* section of the chapter/ unit, the activities take the form of multiple choice questions, filling in blanks and word corrections.

The section headed *Writing Project* provides a short story, asking the students to rearrange some of the sentences and, in a group, to change the story into a play script and perform the play. This is, potentially, a useful communicative activity. However, on closer examination, it turns out that the writing involved is essentially little more than formulaic transformation and the speaking involves simple repetition of the transformed sentences.

The section called *Wrap Up*, with which the unit ends, involves all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the listening part, students select one of three possible sentences to match part of a dialogue snippet. In the speaking part, they answer three questions by selecting one of three set answers in each case. They then practise the resulting question/ answer sequence with a partner. The reading and writing section involves reading a short passage and filling in gaps by selecting the appropriate word from a list of three possible words.

In *Lesson 7* of the *Activity Book of Middle School English II*, the activities are, as in the case of the Activity Book associated with *Middle School English I*, presented at three different levels. The differences among the levels are, once again, slight.

One of the activities in *Listen and Talk* in the main textbook (p. 119) asks students to talk about certain books (whose front covers are supplied), using a dialogue

frame with possible substitutions (e.g. I *think it's terrific/ touching/ boring/ funny/ interesting*. This activity changes its appearance a little in the *Activity Book* (p.128), where students are asked to talk with a partner about a magazine, a book and a movie.<sup>61</sup> All three levels are provided with pictures of a magazine cover, a book cover and a movie poster. All three are given the same dialogue sample with the same highlighted parts (pp. 28, 134 & 140):

A: Have you read the magazine National Geographic?

B: Yes, I have.

A: What do you think of it?

B: I think it's exciting.

At the lowest level, the students are provided with alternatives to the sections that are italicized as follows:

read the story *The Old Man and the Sea*/ watched the movie *Kung Fu Panda*;

touching; funny

At the next level, the only difference is the length of the second substitution list:

terrific; exciting; interesting; funny; touching; boring

At the highest level, the students are not provided with the words ‘watched the movie’ or any of the possibly relevant substitution adjectives. In addition, although members of this group are, arguably, the ones most likely to have read the books or watched the movie specified, they are the only ones provided with the option of saying ‘No, I haven’t’ (words supplied for them).

What we have in the case of this activity set is simply, irrespective of the ‘level’, a substitution drill. In this respect, this activity set is similar to the others in the

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<sup>61</sup> If the students have read none of these, the mini-dialogues will be simple two-part exchanges.

*Activity Book*. Most of them are formulaic and most involve repetitive drilling. None appears to involve authentic communication.

In *Lesson 9 (Curiosity about Nature)* of *High School English* it may appear, at first sight, that the authors have included lots of different types of activity. In fact, however, most of the activities are of a very similar type. The unit contains:

- seventeen multiple-choice questions in total (in *Listen In & Speak Out*, *Real-life Listening* and *Language Focus*);
- ten sentence completion exercises (in *Reading*, *Write* and *Language Focus*);
- eight short-answer questions (in *Reading and Language Focus*);
- four identifications of a specific grammar point in *Discovering Grammar*;
- four true or false questions (in *Discovering Grammar*);
- three substitution drills (in *Listen In & Speak Out* and *Language Focus*);
- three mini-dialogue substitution drills (in *Listen In & Speak Out* and *Reading*); and
- three table completions involving creating sentences from sentence frames (in *Project Work*).

An example of a writing activity involving gap filling/ sentence completion is provided below:

Write It

**Step1 ▶ Bentley가 가장 기억에 남는 선물에 대해 쓴 글을 읽어 봅시다.**

*An Unforgettable Gift in My life - W. Bentley*

when  
why  
how he felt

On my fifteenth birthday, my mom gave me a birthday present. It was a microscope! She gave it to me because she knew how much I was interested in studying snowflakes. The first time I looked through the microscope, I felt so excited.

who  
what



**Step2 ▶ 위의 글을 참고하여, 여러분이 받은 것 중 가장 기억에 남는 선물에 관해 간략히 메모한 후 글을 써 봅시다. A**

*An Unforgettable Gift in My life*

When	gave me _____
when you got the gift	_____
who gave you the gift	It was _____
what you received	gave it to me because _____
why he/she gave you the gift	When I got the gift, I felt _____
how you felt	_____

Basic p.170, Intermediate p.175, Advanced p.180

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**Figure 7.7: High School English, p. 187**

Once again, as in the case of *Middle School English I* and *II*, the activities that are intended for students at different levels do not necessarily differentiate in any useful way. Below are three related exercises – the first one is intended to be for students at the lowest level; the second one for students at an intermediate level; the third for students at the highest of the three ‘level’. All of them involve a simple lexical substitution exercise, the only real difference being the fact that the words to be substituted are supplied only in the first example.

## B. Act It Out

다음 배우를 묘사하는 표현을 참고하여, 아래와 같이 대화해 봅시다.



- tall, thin
- short brown hair
- blue sweater



- short, thin
- long straight hair
- red checkered jacket



- tall, overweight
- wavy brown hair
- green striped shirt

• Example

A: I'm a really big fan of that girl!  
 B: Who? What does she look like?  
 A: She's tall and thin, and she has short brown hair.  
 B: Ah! You mean the girl in the blue sweater?  
 A: Yes, her!

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## B. Act It Out

다음 그림에서 연상되는 단어를 써 본 후, 아래와 같이 대화해 봅시다.



peaceful



warm



interesting

• Example

A: Which one do you like best among the three pictures?  
 B: I like the first painting. I think it's warm and peaceful. What do you think of it?  
 A: I know what you mean, but I prefer the second painting. It's interesting. What do you say?  
 B: Well, I don't understand what that watch means.

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## B. Act It Out

다음 배우를 묘사하는 다양한 표현을 써 본 후, 아래와 같이 대화해 봅시다.



ex) tall, slim, ...



2.



3.

• Example

A: I'm a really big fan of that girl!  
 B: Who? What does she look like?  
 A: She's tall and slim, and she has long black hair.  
 B: Ah! You mean the girl in the white T-shirt?  
 A: Yes, her!

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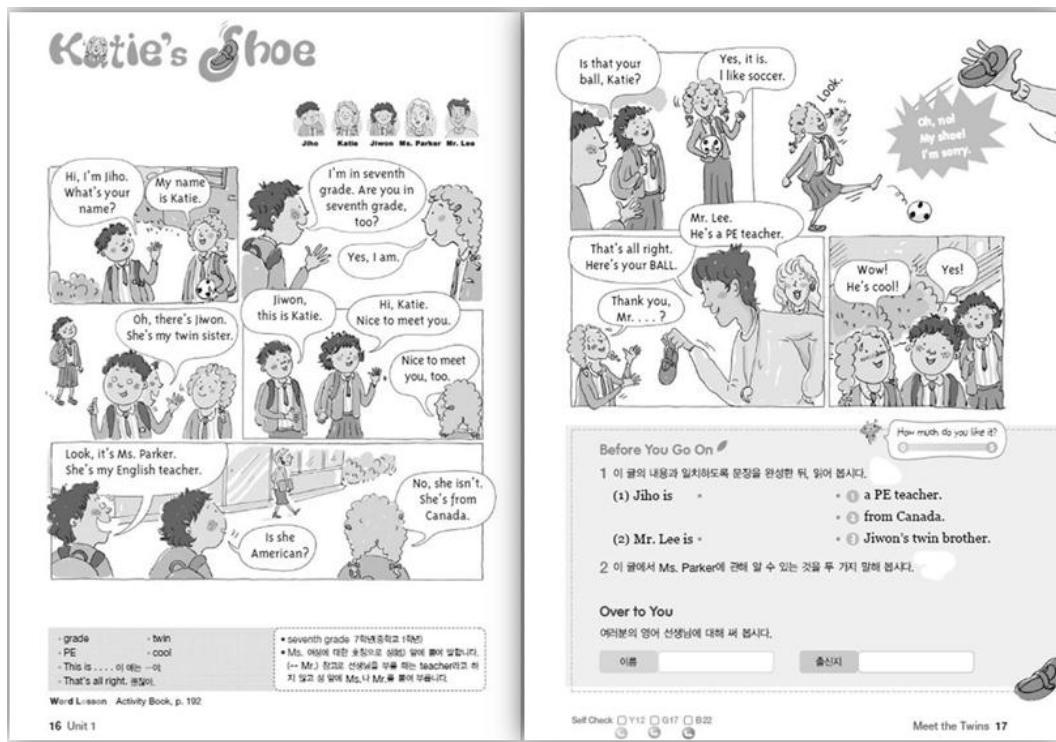
**Figure 7.8:** Three parallel exercises from High School English, Activities, pp. 127, 131 & 137

The activities included in the textbooks in focus here appear to be largely formulaic in nature. They are very similar in many respects to the repetitive drilling type of exercise that is commonly associated with audio-lingual methodology. This is in spite of the fact that there is a wealth of colour illustrations and what appears to be a genuine attempt to provide for students at different 'levels'. These activities do not in themselves constitute the course syllabus. Rather, their role is that of providing the students with opportunities to practise using the language that is at the core of the syllabus. From this perspective, the syllabus can best be described as being task-supported rather than task-based. However, so far as the activities are concerned, the approach cannot be described as being communicative. Overall, in terms of Littlewood's (2004) definitions, most of the activities are either *non-communicative* or *pre-communicative*. Even in cases where there is structured role play, the activities cannot generally be described as involving 'structured communication'. This is because substitutions are generally chosen from lists provided rather than being elicited. There are a few exceptions to this, including the final example in *Figure 7.8* above in which students do need to supply for themselves words or phrases similar to those provided (although there is little incentive for them to select words and phrases that genuinely express a personal perspective).

#### **7.4.4 Medium of instruction**

It has already been noted (see section 6.4.1) that my first impression of the Middle School English textbooks was that they included a great deal of Korean writing (often in the form of instructions or translation). This impression was reinforced on closer inspection of the books.

In both *Middle School English I* and *Middle School English II*, instructions and explanations are given in Korean and words, phrases and even sentences are often translated into Korean. However, there are mini picture-based dialogues at the core of each unit that include very little translation (as illustrated in the dialogue from Unit 1 of *Middle School English I* that is printed below).



**Figure 7.9:** Middle School English I, pp. 16 & 17

The existence of picture dialogues such as the one above suggest that the textbook writers are relying on illustrations to convey meaning, thus removing the need for teachers to use English in introducing language that is new to the students. However, two factors militate against this interpretation. First, the illustrations do not, in fact, support meaning most of the time.<sup>62</sup> Second, before these picture-based dialogues are themselves introduced, all of the language they contain is presented (and translated) in short exchanges. Thus, although teachers need to use little or no Korean when the dialogues themselves are introduced, the main language of instruction appears, nevertheless, to be Korean.

In the case of *High School English*, the situation is very similar. There are, however, fewer illustrations but the function of those that are included appears often to be to set context rather than to support specific meanings. Except for the fact that instructions and explanations are in Korean, it might be supposed that the writers' expectation is that teachers will use English exclusively in class.

<sup>62</sup> If you block out the words and try to decide, on the basis of the illustrations, what is being said, you will see more clearly that the illustrations do not help in any fundamental way to convey meaning most of the time.

However, the language used in the core texts in each section of the books is often so varied and, in many cases, so complex that, unless it is assumed that the students are already familiar with most of it, it is unclear how the teachers could explain its meanings without translation. In fact, it is clear from the nature of the teachers' guide, which does not discuss concept introduction or concept checking strategies (other than translation), that the teachers are likely to have recourse to translation.<sup>63</sup>

The teachers' guides relating to all of the three textbooks discussed here are relevant so far as the language of instruction is concerned. All of these teachers' guides include translations into Korean of the texts that appear in the students' books and newly-introduced words and expressions are provided in Korean and English. Instructions for activities are also provided in Korean. However, they also, presumably in an attempt conform to the expectations as outlined in the curriculum, include what might be described as 'lesson scripts' in English. These lesson scripts provide teachers with the actual words that can be used by them during the lesson along with, curiously, student utterances (which are uncannily correct). Thus, for example:

### Introduction

학습하게 될 내용을 간략히 소개하고 핵심 표현을 제시한다.<sup>64</sup>

TEE<sup>65</sup> : Open your books to page 134 and read today's topic aloud. I want you to read the two expressions right under the topic. They are "What do you think of the picture?" and "I know what you mean, but it's a famous painting." Let's learn about them together.

### Development

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<sup>63</sup> As Nock (2014, p. 186) observes: "From the late 18th century onwards, beginning with those involved in the Reform Movement, a wide range of concept introduction and concept checking strategies which do not rely on translation have been developed. These include, for example, the use of real objects (realia), pictures, drawings, gestures, mime, timelines, and concept questions. They also involve ensuring that new structures are introduced in the context of familiar structures and vocabulary and that there are also opportunities for students to attempt to use the language to which they have been introduced (and for teachers to observe them doing so)".

<sup>64</sup> This translates as: Briefly introduce what students will learn and show them the key points.

<sup>65</sup> The preface (p.3) of the guide refers to TEE as Teaching English in English.

### A. Get ready

그림을 보면서 연상되는 단어를 고르게 한다.<sup>66</sup>

#### 1. 연상되는 단어 찾기<sup>67</sup>

TEE: Let me show you two paintings drawn by famous artists. How do you feel about these paintings? Please choose the words that can be used to describe the paintings.

정답 a. scary, dark, simple

b. peaceful, calm, beautiful

#### 2. 간단한 듣기 활동<sup>68</sup>

TEE: Now we will listen to a short description. Listen carefully and find which painting is being described.

정답<sup>69</sup> 1) b 2) a

*High School English, Teachers' Guide*, p. 216

¶ Now we will listen to some short sentences. Listen carefully and find what each student enjoys doing. (Listen) what is the girl's favourite activity?

§ Her hobby is reading books.

¶ What is the boy interested in?

§ He is interested in watching movies.

¶ Good job. This time we will listen to a dialog longer than the one we heard before. The first time you listen, try to find out what the man wants to do in the future. (Listen) What does the man want to do in the future?

*High School English, Teachers' Guide*, p. 12

¶ It's time to talk and practice using what we just learned. Look at the picture on page 15. What is it?

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<sup>66</sup> This translates as: Get the students choose the words which they associate with the painting.

<sup>67</sup> This translates as: Find the words which students can associate.

<sup>68</sup> This translates as: Short listening activity

<sup>69</sup> This translates as: Answer

- § It's an application form for school clubs.
- ¶ Yes. Now I am going to give you a form. First, fill in your name and age in the blanks. Then choose which club you want to join from the clubs mentioned. Finally, check the reasons why you want to join the club. Are you ready?

*High School English, Teachers' Guide*, pp. 12-13

What we have here is a curious paradox. On the one hand, the students' books seem to be designed in such a way as to require translation to facilitate understanding. On the other hand, the teachers' guides encourage the teachers to use English as the medium of instruction in a way that (a) presupposes that the language used in the textbooks has been understood by the students, and (b) is not adapted to the requirements of learners at particular stages of the language learning process. The lesson scripts provided by the textbook writers are not only formulaic - they are invariant. They make no allowance whatsoever for varying circumstances. The concept of teaching through the medium of the target language that underlies them, a type of narrative concept in which the teacher dominates, is certainly not one that is consistent with CLT. Interestingly, it is precisely at points in which teachers often require guidance that none is forthcoming – see, for example, the section in ***bold italicised print*** below:

- ¶ Good! Look at the picture and mark the item you enjoy doing most.
- 2. ***Listen to the dialog and check if the students understand it.***
- ¶ Now we will listen to some short sentences. Listen carefully and find what each student enjoys doing. (Listen) what is the girl's favourite activity?
- § Her hobby is reading books.

Two further points could be made about the danger of providing scripts of this type. First, they either demand prestigious feats of memory from the teachers or they ensure that the teachers spend valuable lesson time consulting the teachers' guides.

In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the teachers involved in earlier parts of the research project appeared to have little concept of adjusting their language use in relation to specific learning contexts, believing that a major reason why teachers often did not use English as the primary language of instruction in class was students' failure to understand rather the teachers' lack of training in using the target language appropriately in different classroom contexts.

#### **7.4.5 Approaches to teaching and learning**

It is widely believed that the South Korean national curriculum guidelines recommend a communicative approach to the teaching of English. The word 'communicate' and derivatives of it occur fifty-nine (59) times (excluding the section dealing with elementary schooling) in the Guidelines for English. In addition, two of the four appendices use the word 'communication' in their titles: *Examples and Functions of Communication* and *Linguistic Form Needed for Communication*. This, together with use of the word 'functions' and the recommendation that teaching should be through the medium of English to the extent possible, suggests a communicative orientation although this need not necessarily mean that what is being recommended is CLT as it is generally now understood (see discussion in *Chapter 4*). Indeed, if the curriculum writers had CLT in mind, it seems likely, in view of the nature of the appendices and the apparent total avoidance of grammatical terminology, that the version of it that had most impact on them was the strong version (referred to above). In view of the fact that the textbook writers (in the case, at least, of the textbooks in focus here) also seem to be at pains to avoid all reference to grammatical terminology, it seems that they share this perspective. However, closer examination of the textbooks does not suggest that the overall approach adopted is a communicative one. As indicated above, the syllabuses upon which the textbooks are based, apart from the inclusion of topics and functions, seem to be largely structurally orientated (but without the careful attention to grading and the ordering of selections that is typical of the structural syllabus). The activities included in the textbooks are largely of a type that is non-communicative in nature. Many are, in fact, very similar to the types of repetitive drilling that is characteristic of audio-lingualism (but without the careful attention to replacement in the context of repetitive framing that is characteristic of audio-lingualism). Although translation

appears to play a major role in concept introduction and concept checking, the careful explanation of grammatical structures that is typical of grammar translation is absent. Indeed, as indicated above, this seems to have been replaced by the type of highlighting through examples that is recommended by Long (focus on form) to encourage learners to notice aspects of language, a strategy that is popular with some advocates of CLT.

Looking at the Teachers' Guides provides little that explains the overall approach adopted in the textbooks. Apart from direct references to the curriculum document, there are no references to literature that has guided the authors. So far as lesson sequencing is concerned, the advice is that the teaching should follow the ordering in the textbooks. There is no discussion of potential sources of learner errors, how to deal with learner errors or, indeed, how to deal with other issues likely to be encountered during lessons. Such advice as is supplied is so general as to be largely unhelpful, as in the examples below (translated by the researcher):

#### Focus Point in Teaching

Teach them all twelve months in English so that they can say their birthday.

Teach them that they should use the ordinal for the date and pay attention to the pronunciation of -th [θ].

*Teachers' Guide: Middle School English I, Unit 5, p. 102*

#### Tips for Teachers

Let the students know that they should read texts in English as much as possible in order to be able to be a better English writer.

*Teachers' Guide: High School English, Lesson 8, p. 275*

In the case of the first extract above, all except the most expert teachers are likely to want to know how they should do the things suggested.

So far as assessment is concerned, all three teachers' guides provide quizzes and end of session tests, the extracts below being typical of the types of question included:

### Mini Test

대화의 빈칸에 알맞은 것을 모두 고르시오.<sup>70</sup>

A: What did you do during summer vacation?

B: \_\_\_\_\_

- ① It was wonderful.
- ② Yes, I went diving.
- ③ I want to be a scientist.
- ④ I took some art lessons
- ⑤ Well, I want to be a singer, so I went to a music camp.

*Teachers' Guide: Middle School English I, p. 124*

### Dictation

대화를 들으면서 빈칸에 알맞은 말을 쓰시오.<sup>71</sup>

W: \_\_\_\_\_ you have a nice vacation, Mark?

M: Yes. I \_\_\_\_\_ to a \_\_\_\_\_ camp.

W: Really? How \_\_\_\_\_ it?

M: It \_\_\_\_\_ fun. I really want to be a \_\_\_\_\_. What did you do, Dabin?

W: I \_\_\_\_\_ to an English camp. It was \_\_\_\_\_.

*Teachers' Guide: Middle School English I, p. 125*

### Mini Test –Grammar

[1-3] 주어진 말을 알맞은 형태로 고쳐 쓰시오.<sup>72</sup>

1. He \_\_\_\_\_ (play) baseball last Saturday.
2. She \_\_\_\_\_ (take) art lessons yesterday.
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ (visit) many exciting places last summer.

*Teachers' Guide: Middle School English I, p. 135*

[1-5] 주어진 문장을 읽고, 괄호 안의 말을 알맞은 형태로 바꾸어 쓰시오.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> This translates as: Choose all of the appropriate answers to complete the blanks.

<sup>71</sup> This translates as: Listen to the dialogue and fill in the blanks.

<sup>72</sup> This translates as: Correct the given word.

1. I had my purse \_\_\_\_\_. (stole)
2. Mary had her leg \_\_\_\_\_. (bruise)<sup>74</sup>
3. All customers need to have their receipts \_\_\_\_\_ by an employee. (check)
4. My mom had her bag \_\_\_\_\_ after it got ripped. (repair)
5. Tony had his nose \_\_\_\_\_ in a fight. (break)

*Teachers' Guide: High School English*, p. 170

Since communicative teaching requires communicative testing, the nature of the questions in quizzes and texts (as exemplified above) provides further evidence for the conclusion that the textbooks are not genuinely communicative in orientation.

What we appear to have in the case of all three of the textbooks in focus here is a curious, largely ad hoc mixture of aspects of a range of different approaches (reflecting the curriculum guidelines themselves) that does not add up to any coherent approach. It might be argued that this is an example of what is sometimes referred to a ‘post-communicative’ or ‘post-methods’ condition (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). While this does, in fact, seem to be the case, it does not follow that this type of eclecticism – eclecticism that lacks any theoretical rationale for choices made - is either justifiable or likely to be effective As Larsen-Freeman (2000, p. 183) observes, there is a major difference between eclecticism and principled eclecticism:

When teachers who subscribe to the pluralistic view of methods pick and choose from among methods to create their own blend, their practice is said to be *eclectic*. Remember, though, that methods are *coherent* combinations of techniques and principles. Thus, teachers who have a consistent philosophy and pick in accordance with it (which may very well make allowances for differences among students), could be said to be practicing *principled eclecticism*. . . . Teachers who practice principled eclecticism should be able to give a reason for why they do what they do.

<sup>73</sup> This translates as: Fill in the blank with an appropriate form using the word in the bracket.

<sup>74</sup> It is difficult to imagine a context in which “Mary had her leg bruised” would be appropriate because this type of constriction requires that the initiator/s of the action had a specific intention in mind, that intention being encoded in the final verb.

#### 7.4.6 Cultural content

All three of the textbooks in focus here contain chapters dealing with cultural characteristics in various countries. All of them include references to peoples for whom English is a first language but all of them also include many references to peoples for whom English is an additional language, including Koreans. Thus, for example, in ***Middle School English I***, traditional Korean food which foreigners are likely to experience is introduced and an activity involving discussion of the way in which Korean culture is represented on postage stamps is included in the project section.<sup>75</sup> ***Middle School English II*** contains units/ chapters dealing with cultural differences in a range of countries. *Unit 4*, entitled *Culture in Gestures*, introduces gestures used to communicate in several countries, such as China, Bulgaria, Greece, Argentina, Peru, Tibet and Latin America. *Unit 10* refers to festivals and traditional costumes in several countries (including an African American feast, Kwanzaa<sup>76</sup>). *Unit 3*, entitled *Money and Life*, includes a brief description of the historical figures appearing on the banknotes of different countries. ***High School English***, like ***Middle School English II***, includes sections dealing with currency and different cultural representations.

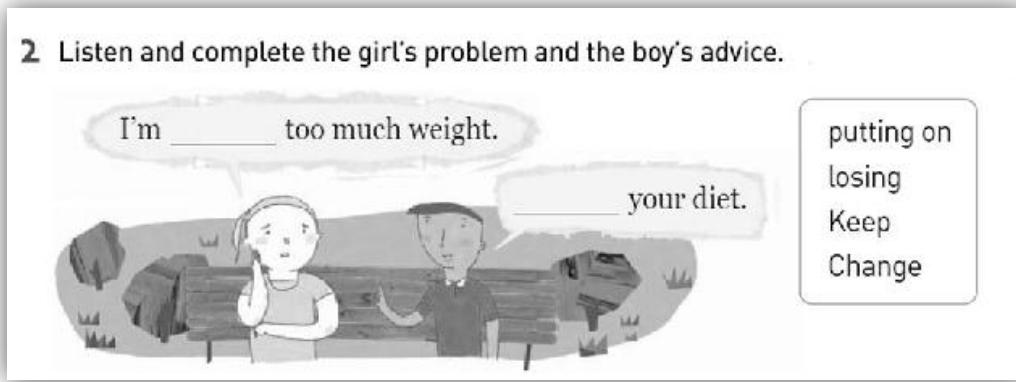
Each of the three textbooks includes a travel essay which highlights tourist attractions and/ or aspects of cultural heritage. ***Middle School English I*** introduces Vancouver in Canada (in *Unit 9*) and discusses a camping trip in the UK (in *Unit 6*). ***Middle School English II*** refers to several places registered as World Heritage sites by UNESCO (in *Unit 8*). ***High School English*** makes reference to several possible positive future scenarios in Korea (in *Lesson 10*, entitled *Dynamic Korea*). In the *Listen In & speak Out* section of that lesson there is a description of behaviour that South Korean students believe foreigners associate with them, a section that provides an opportunity to initiate a discussion about cultural stereotypes.

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<sup>75</sup> However, the appearance of kangaroos on an Australian coin is referred to in a unit entitled *Culture Around Us* even though the reading section is concerned only with Korean currency.

<sup>76</sup> Kwanzaa is a celebration of African heritage held in the US between December 26 and January 1, based on traditional African harvest festivals.

In general, there is a relatively even distribution throughout the textbooks of male and female characters and little gender stereotyping. However, there are some notable exceptions to this – see, for example, the two examples below, both from *Middle School English 11*. In terms of the cultures represented in the textbook, including Korean culture, both of these vignettes would be likely to be considered inappropriate, the first being clearly sexist and the second potentially ageist.



**Figure 7.10:** *Middle School English II, Unit 5, p.76*



**Figure 7.11:** *Middle School English II, Unit 2, p. 39*

In general, references to culture, of which there are many in all three textbooks, focus largely on aspects of cultural representation that are unlikely to be contentious or to raise issues relating to cultural stereotyping. These include references to food, feasts and distinctive national costumes. However, there are

several instances, all associated with *Middle School English II*, in which the writers engage in a type of sexist stereotyping that is inconsistent with dominant attitudes in English-speaking countries (and in South Korea) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **7.5 Some concluding comments**

While the three textbooks in focus here contain much that is likely to be of interest to students, they are problematic in a number of important respects, lacking any clear rationale for the decisions made about language content and language practice and adopting a curious, formulaic approach to the use of the target language as the language of instruction. In the next chapter, which focuses on the analysis of a sample of language lessons taught in South Korean schools, the ways in which teachers interpret textbooks such as these is exemplified.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Reporting on the analysis of a sample of English lessons taught in South Korean secondary schools**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports on the analysis of a sample of English language lessons taught in middle schools and high schools in South Korea. Some background to the lessons (8.2) and the approach to analysis are provided followed by analysis and discussion of each lesson in turn (8.3) and, finally, there is an overview accompanied by some general conclusions (8.4).

#### **8.2 Background to the lessons recorded**

Twelve (12) of those who completed questionnaires provided contact details and indicated that they would be willing to be involved in other aspects of the research. Even so, only one (1) of the twelve agreed to take part in an interview and also to provide a recorded lesson (*Class 1*). I therefore contacted several acquaintances who were currently teaching English in South Korea, asking if they would be willing for me to record one of their lessons. In the event, two (2) indicated that they would be willing to provide (with the permission of the teachers involved) a videotape of a demonstration lesson taught by another teacher in their school. In each case, these demonstration lessons had been taught in the presence of school supervisors (*Classes 2 and 4*). A further lesson (*Class 3*) was a demonstration lesson found by me on the website of a Korean education office, with permission for its use being granted by the teacher involved. The final lesson (*Class 5*) was a demonstration lesson that had been given to a friend of mine by a South Korean school principal during the distribution of questionnaires. Permission for its use as part of this research project was given by the school principal who noted that he considered the lesson to be of a very high standard.

**Table 8.1: Profiles of the five lessons**

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
<b>School grade</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade of Middle school (Year 8)	1 <sup>st</sup> grade of Middle school (Year 7)	1 <sup>st</sup> grade of Middle school (Year 7)	1 <sup>st</sup> grade of High school (Year 10)	1 <sup>st</sup> grade of High school (Year 10)
<b>Students' ages</b>	13-14	12-13	12-13	15-16	15-16
<b>No. of students</b>	36	37	23	28	34
<b>Gender of Korean teacher</b>	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
<b>Whether assistant teacher (native speaker of English) involved</b>		Male native speaker of English		Male native speaker of English	
<b>Length of lesson</b>	45 minutes	45 minutes	45 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes
<b>Name of textbook used</b>	Chunjae (Kim <sup>77</sup> )	Chunjae (Jaeyoung Yi <sup>78</sup> )	Doosan (Kim)	No textbook used	Neungyule
<b>Year when lesson recorded</b>	2011	2011	2010	2011	2010

### 8.3 Approach to analysis

Approval for use of the recorded lessons in the research was granted by the relevant Research Ethics Committee<sup>79</sup> on condition that all videotaped lessons were transcribed to protect the identity of the participants, with only the written

<sup>77</sup> This means ‘Dukki Kim’ as noted in a previous chapter.

<sup>78</sup> The full name is provided here because Chunjae Education publisher had other version of the textbook by another person named Yi (Inki Yi).

<sup>79</sup> The Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Waikato

transcriptions being used in the reporting of the research. Each of the five recorded lessons was therefore transcribed (see *Appendix 10: Transcripts of lessons*), with the following code being used:

KT = Korean Teacher; NT = Native speaking English assistant teacher;  
S = one student; Ss = several students; [ ] encloses researcher's translations of Korean used in class; ( ) encloses researcher's comments.

The following focus points used in the analysis of textbooks were also used here:

*language content and presentation; tasks and activities; medium of instruction; approach to teaching and learning*

In this case, ‘cultural content’ is not treated as a focus point because individual lessons rather than complete courses/ programmes are being considered and consideration of approach to culture requires a broader sample.

Where resources were used – from textbooks or other sources – they are included in *Appendix 11: Resources used in the recorded lessons*.

## **8.4 Analysis and discussion**

### **8.4.1 Lesson 1**

The first lesson was taught by a female Korean teacher to a mixed ability group of 36 male and female students (approx. age 13-14) in the second grade of middle school. The classroom was designed specifically for language teaching and was equipped with multi-media resources, including a whiteboard, a projector and roll screen, a wide screen television monitor, an audio system and a personal computer for each student. The students were arranged in single sex groups of four, facing towards the front of the class. The textbook resource used was Unit 8 (*Make Life Easier*) from *Middle School English II* (Chunjae Education).

#### **8.4.1.1 Focus point 1: Language content and presentation**

Much of the focus of this lesson was on the meaning of two expressions: *Are you with me?* and *You've lost me*. The students were invited to watch and listen to video clips, something that suggests that listening skills were intended to be in focus. However, the small sections of the text segments to which the attention of the students was drawn were translated for them by the teacher and no attempt was made to determine whether they had understood other aspects of the language that occurred in the video clips. This was in spite of the fact that language included grammar and vocabulary that is very unlikely to have been familiar to the students, such as: *I'm in a heated existential discussion with this deadeye plastic desk toy*. In fact, in spite of its potential to confuse, no attention was paid to the text segment that preceded and motivated the use of one of the expressions in focus:

... We have it all. Yet we have nothing. . . .  
... You've lost me, sir. . . .

So far as concept introduction is concerned, this was largely achieved through direct translation as indicated in the following segment from near the beginning of the lesson:

- T: (Just after the video clip played) ‘*You've lost me.*’ 丟失? ‘*You've lost me?*’ 아, 무슨 뜻인 거 같아? [Did you hear *You've lost me?*? You've lost me. Uh, What do you think it means?]’
- S: 무슨 말인지 모르겠어요. [I have no idea.]
- S: 선생님 다시 한번 처음부터 봐요. [Ma'am, play it one more time from the first part, please.]
- T: 자 ‘*You've lost me*’ 보면 뜻이 ‘*I don't understand*’ 또는 ‘*What do you mean?*’ 무슨 뜻인 거 같아, 아를게 하면? 아, ‘*You've lost me*’가 ‘당신 말이 무슨 뜻인지 모르겠어요.’ 라는 뜻이지!

‘You’ve lost me.’ 자, ‘I don’t understand’ 나 ‘What do you mean’

대신에 ‘You’ve lost me’라는 말을 쓸 수 있는데. (한 학생을

향해) 민준이 왜 그래? (다시 전체 학급에) 자, 이거

적어놓으세요. ‘You’ve lost me. I don’t understand. What do you

mean?’ 적어 봐. [Now, if you see ‘You’ve lost me.’, it means ‘I don’t understand’ or ‘What do you mean?’. What do you think they mean, if you say that? Uh, ‘You’ve lost me.’ means ‘I don’t understand what you’re saying.’ ‘You’ve lost me.’ Now, you can say ‘You’ve lost me’ instead of ‘I don’t understand’ or ‘What do you mean?’ and ... (Looking at a student) What happened, Minjoon? ... (Towards the class again) Now, you should take a note. ‘You’ve lost me. I don’t understand. What do you mean?’ Write them down.]

At the end of the lesson, concept checking simply involved translation as a whole class group (in unison) accompanied by the teacher:

T: 자, 그럼 복습 한번 해 보면, 알아듣겠니, 영어로 어떻게

할까요, 알아듣겠니. [Now for the review, what can you say

for ‘Are you with me?’, ‘Are you with me?’?]

Ss: Are you with me?

T: 자, 그 다음에, 못 알아듣겠어요. [Now, then, you’ve lost  
me?]

Ss: You’ve lost me.

T: 다시 한번 말해주시겠어요? [Can you say that again?]

Ss & T: Can you say that again?

T: 자, 잘했어요. 도장 받을 사람 오세요. 도장 받을 사람.

**oh~! 파일 여기다가 두고 가.** [Well done. Come up to the front to get stamps. Anyone who can get stamps. Yes, guys, put your files here and leave.] (Students pack their things to leave and put their files on the desk.)

There was, however, one point in the lesson where, following instructions in the textbook used, the teacher asked the students, after listening to a video clip, to select (as a whole class – by a show of hands) which one of three sets of two pictures each best represented the content of three short dialogues.

#### **8.4.1.2 Focus point 2: Tasks and activities**

In addition to choral repetition and answering some questions (often in Korean) posed by the teacher (also often in Korean), the students were involved in listening to short video clips<sup>80</sup>, engaging in what was referred to as ‘running dictation’ and beginning a task involved inventing something and then making a poster/ advertisement that included a picture of the invention and an explanation of its purpose.

Instructions for the running dictation activity occupied approximately 5 minutes of class time, with the activity itself occupying approximately 10 minutes. That activity involved discovering the teachers’ mobile telephone number through a process of memorisation of sentences, communicating what had been memorised, filling in blanks, translation into Korean and sentence ordering. Although the students appeared to enjoy the activity and although it was conducted in groups, it involved a series of largely non-communicative exercise types. Furthermore, the students spoke to each other in Korean while they were involved in the activity. The following extract is from a stage of the lesson during which the teacher was monitoring the students’ progress in the activity:

T: (Passing between the groups) What is my telephone number?  
**내 번호가 몇 번일까요?** [What’s my phone number?]

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<sup>80</sup> This involved a total of approximately 2 minutes listening and approximately 9 minutes answering the teacher’s questions on a specific aspect of the listening texts in unison as a whole class.

- T: (Looking at the outcome of one of the groups) *어, 어/떻게 육이 두 개지? 나 육 하나인대.* [Uh, how you do have two sixes? I have just one six.]
- S: (From other group) 선생님 첫 번째가 뭐예요? [Ma'am, what is the first?]
- T: (Not responding to the student and still staying in the group) *어, 츠! 이/ 없잖아. 츠!* [You don't have seven, seven.]
- T: *칠큰 츠!* [Seven, seven]
- S: (From another group) 선생님! [Ma'am]
- T: (Going to the group and speaking to them) *아니, 앞에 두 개는 맞아.* [No, the first two are right.]

It is relevant to note that the sentences used in this activity were extracted from a text included in the textbook, a text that was intended to be used as a listening task. It is also relevant to note that this activity would appear to be a ‘cracked mirror’ (inaccurate) version of an activity that could, in the appropriate context and with different procedures at some points, prove to be a much more useful and productive language practice activity.

So far as the invention activity is concerned, following an explanation of a teacher invention (winged shoes) and of the task itself (which involved reference to a section of the textbook and circulation of handouts), the students had only 2 minutes to proceed with the task (in groups) before time ran out and it was assigned for homework. There was no discussion of how the students should manage the group component of the task in the context of homework.

#### **8.4.1.3 Focus point 3: Medium of instruction**

The lesson began with some questions/ observations about the weather and moved through two video clips from different films and a textbook sound file (interspersed with the teacher’s comments and questions) to a group activity involving running dictation, and, finally, a group activity involving a poster-based advertisement for an invention (which was, due to time constraints, set as homework).

Most of the lesson was conducted as a quasi-narrative in Korean (interspersed with questions), often with translations of Korean into English or English into Korean by the teacher. An example is provided below:

T: *자, 애들아. 여기 보세요.* [Hey, guys. Look at me.] Before we start today's lesson, *오늘 거를 시작하기 전에* [Before we start today's lesson] We are going to watch a short video clip. *아주 짧은 걸 볼 건데* [We're going to watch a short one] The expression *표현이* [The expression] (Looking at a student) *수연아!* [Sooyeon!] What we are going to learn today *오늘 배울 표현이야. 근데 아마 아는 애들은 알고 있을 거야.* [This is what we're going to learn today. But some already could know it.]

Occasionally, the teacher used English without translation into Korean. However, this appeared to happen only where, as at the beginning of the lesson, the language used can be assumed to have been very familiar:

T: Okay, everybody. Hello everyone.  
Ss: Hello.  
T: Good morning!  
Ss: No~~  
T: (Going toward the window, drawing up the blinds) How's the weather today?

Instructions were in Korean or in Korean with translation into English and occupied a considerable amount of class time. The following is an extract from instructions for the running dictation task. Although the task type involved was familiar to the students (*We already did this many times*), the instructions as a whole took up one ninth of the total class time;

T: . . . What should you do first? *첫 번째로 해야 되는 건* [What are you going to do first?] Decide *누구를 결정하더라?* [Who do you have to select?]  
Ss: *쓸 사람.* [A person to write.]  
T: *응. 누구를 결정해?* [Yes, who do you have to select?]

- Ss: Writer.
- T: Writer. *자*, [Now,] How many writers can you be one team.  
*몇 명이 있어야 되지?* [How many writers do you have to select?]
- Ss: One.
- T: *그*. [Yes.] Only one person will be a writer. *한 명이 라이터가 되지?* [One will become a writer.] *그 다음에 나머지 사람은 무슨 역할을 하더라?* [What is the role for the rest of people?]
- Ss: Runner.
- T: *그*, *러너지*. [Yes, runners.] Just one by one, *한 명씩* [one by one] Stand up, *일어난 다음에* [After you stand up] go to the wall, *벽에 가 가지고* [go to the wall] read it. *그 다음에 또 뭐해야 되?* [What do you have to do next?]

Interactions about events that were not part of the lesson as such were invariably in Korean, as in the case of the following examples:

- T: *왜 그렇게 떠드나? 너네는 다 점수 깎아. 네 명*. [Why are you so noisy? I'll move you down a grade. Four of you.]
- T: (She comes close to a student who joined during the class)  
*책을 아무 것도 안갖구 왔나, 펜도 안갖고 오고?* [Haven't you got any book? Nor pens?]
- S: *문이 잠겨 있어서요*. [I was locked out.]

#### **8.4.1.4 Focus point 4: Approach to teaching and learning**

As in the case of grammar translation, translation played a central role in this lesson. However, this is the only sense in which the approach adopted has something in common with grammar translation. Similarly, the fact that there was a great deal of emphasis on memorisation and repetition is reminiscent of audio-lingual methodology. However, once again, this similarity is a superficial one only as there were many aspects of audio-lingual methodology (such as pattern repetition) that were not present. The emphasis on rote learning of lexical chunks in the context of situations that characterised this lesson is reminiscent of phrase book-style instruction. There were also aspects of the lesson that seemed to bear

some relation to communicative language teaching (CLT). For example, the fact that English was used to give instructions and to ask questions suggests that an attempt had been made to use English as the medium of instruction (as is often the case in CLT). However, the fact that the English used was clearly not carefully adapted to students' existing competence levels and was almost always accompanied by translation into Korean indicates that the extensive use of English by the teacher should not be interpreted as a signal that a communicative approach is in operation. The lesson was, overall, teacher dominated and the students' role was, with very few exceptions, simply to repeat information or to answer (in chorus) questions asked by the teacher. Attempts to integrate communicative activities into the lesson (as in the case of the running dictation) were set up in such a way that the students communicated largely in Korean or (as in the case of the group activity involving creating a poster advertising an invention) were not given adequate class time and were, furthermore, conducted in the absence of any clear sense of what the linguistic objectives were.

Almost all of the students' utterances (often in English) were delivered in chorus, with the teacher selecting correct responses and ignoring incorrect ones and also, on two occasions, ignoring student requests for assistance. The result of this was that a few students with a higher level of proficiency in English than the others tended to dominate the few opportunities the students had to make a contribution.

It was impossible to tell at the end of this lesson precisely what the students had learned other than, possibly, two idiomatic expressions (which had been repeatedly translated throughout the lesson). The lesson was largely teacher dominated, with much of it being conducted as a quasi-narrative by the teacher, generally with translations of each section from Korean into English or English into Korean. The students' contribution was largely confined to repeating in chorus what they heard, answering in chorus (often in Korean) the teacher's questions (which were also often in Korean) and briefly taking part in a 'running dictation'. Every section of a listening task was translated into Korean and the teachers' questions about late attendance and complaints about behaviour were also delivered in Korean.

A video file played to the students in the initial part of the lesson seemed to include language that was likely to have been considerably beyond the level of at least some of the students (e.g. *I'm in a heated existential discussion with this deadeye plastic desk toy*) but no attempt was made to determine whether the students understood these sections and, furthermore, the teacher ignored a student's request to hear one of the texts again.

Long, complex instructions, including long preparatory instructions for a task which was then given as homework, took up valuable lesson time and much of the lesson time was also spent on assigning and giving out reward stamps.

The teacher noted in Korean near the beginning of the lesson that some of the students might already know what was to be included in that day's lesson. My impression was that many actually did and that this was a demonstration lesson in which part of what was being demonstrated was the teacher's own individual English language proficiency. However, the fact that she made some basic errors in places seemed inconsistent with the otherwise high level of proficiency indicated by the language she used and suggested to me that parts of the lesson may have been carefully scripted in advance.<sup>81, 82</sup>

#### **8.4.1.5 Reviewing the lesson in the context of the teacher's views as expressed in questionnaire and interview responses**

Because the teacher of this class (referred to as Tina in *Chapter 6*), completed a questionnaire and took part in an interview, it is possible to consider this lesson in the context of her own observations.

In her questionnaire responses, this teacher indicated that her preferred approach to teaching was a communicative one. However, although she indicated during her interview that she had taken part in a wide range of training activities, including an Intensive English Teacher Training Programme, she also indicated

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<sup>81</sup> The errors included: *one of the doctor; there are three question; fill in the blank; How many writers can you be one team?; This team will see the left wall; Only one team are left.*

<sup>82</sup> This impression was even greater in the case of some of the other lessons analysed.

that she believed (in common with one of the other interviewees) that much of the training she had participated in had been geared more towards improving teachers' spoken proficiency than towards improving their language teaching skills. Furthermore, when asked to identify three characteristics of a communicative approach, her response (*group work; co-teaching with a native speaker of English; and using stimulating materials*) indicated that she had only a very general understanding of what is involved in CLT.

The fact that this teacher considered co-teaching with a native speaker of English to be a characteristic of communicative teaching suggests that she may also consider use of English as the medium of instruction to be a fundamental requirement of CLT. Whether or not this is the case, however, the fact remains that the South Korean national curriculum expresses the expectation that English teachers will use English as the medium of instruction as much as possible and all of the interviewees signalled that they believed that this was problematic. In connection with this, it is relevant to note that this teacher indicated that she believed she used English in class for about 50 per cent of the time at the beginning of the semester and less later in the semester. She noted, in particular:

They don't understand when I provide instructions for classroom activities in English just once. So, I repeat them once more and then change them into Korean.

In fact, attendance at training courses seems to have reinforced this practice:

I returned to my place in September after one semester of training. I try to speak English more than before - for example, speaking the English twice and then providing a Korean translation.

This is, in fact, what she did in the recorded lesson (rather than, for example, reducing teacher talking time and simplifying her instructional language).

In the lesson that was recorded, there were 36 students present. It is never a straightforward matter to ensure that all of the students in large classes such as this have an opportunity to practise using English. However, in well designed and well-organised communicatively-orientated classes involving pair and group activities this problem can be overcome to a considerable extent. The fact that the training programmes in which this teacher participated may not have demonstrated this in practice is suggested by a comment she made during her interview:

In terms of lessons, we have, at most, one hour for speaking and actually only some of the students in class practise their language in that limited time.

While the teacher appears to have attempted to make this lesson both interesting and interactive, it was, overall, teacher-dominated with most of the student utterances being responses to teacher questions delivered in chorus. It was also heavily reliant on translation and lacked, apart from two idiomatic expressions, any clear language focus.

#### **8.4.2 Lesson 2**

The second lesson was taught by a female Korean teacher and a male assistant who was a native speaker of English to a mixed ability group of 37 female students (approx. age 12-13) in the first grade of middle school. The classroom was designed specifically for language teaching, having a wide screen television, a beam projector and roll screen, large speakers and a whiteboard. It was decorated with large photographs of landmarks in the UK and USA (e.g. the Statue of Liberty, the White House and Big Ben). The students were seated in groups of five or six at tables facing the front of the room. There was very little space in which students or teachers could move about freely. The textbook resource used was Unit 10 (*No Easy Answer*) from *Middle School English I* (Chunjae Education). This was an official demonstration lesson and a number of observers (Ministry officials and senior school staff) were present.

In the transcript KS represents the Korean teacher and NS represents the assistant teacher who is a native speaker of English.

#### **8.4.2.1 Focus point 1: Language content and presentation**

The overall tone of this lesson, one characterised by artificiality, was established at the outset when the students and the Korean teacher began by expressing their love for one another in Korean before moving into English:

- Ss: 사랑합니다. [I love you.]  
KT: 사랑합니다. [I love you.] Good morning everyone.  
Ss: Good morning, teacher.  
NS: Good morning. How are you all today?  
Ss: I'm fine. Happy.

The lesson objective (a mixture of specific and general) was written on a card attached to the whiteboard at the beginning of the class and the students were instructed to read it aloud in chorus:

- NS: All right, so.  
KT: Okay, so today we will learn talking on the phone and also talking about the future. So let's read the learning aim.  
NS: All right, so these are the learning aims today. I'm gonna read them and then you repeat them, okay? So, we will be able to ask and talk about the future and plans using 'will' and 'will not'. So let's say that, right now.  
Ss: We will be able to ask and talk about the future and plans using 'will' and 'will not'.  
NS: And we will be able to practise greeting friends on the phone.  
Ss: We will be able to practise greeting friends on the phone.

Throughout the lesson, 'will' was said by both teachers to be used in the context of future plans:

- NS: So, 'I, you or he or she will' is used to talk about the future and plans, the things you'll definitely do.

In fact, however the modal auxiliary 'will' is generally only used in this way when followed by BE (e.g. *I will be in Taiwan tomorrow*). Otherwise, it is generally used where there is no prior plan and a decision is reached at the time of

speaking (e.g. *I think I'll leave now*) or in the case of a prediction (e.g. *It will probably rain tomorrow*). On the other hand, BE + going and/ or the present continuous *are* often used refer to future plans (e.g. *I'm going to see Tom later today; I'm having dinner with Tom this evening*). Oddly, while the teachers continued to insist that ‘will’ was used in the context of future plans, they both repeatedly used ‘going to’ in this way while addressing the students in English.

For example:

NS: I'm going to show a sentence. You're going to read it. And then, there<sup>83</sup>, going to try and get the team to guess what it says<sup>84</sup>.

KT: Now what we are going to do is we are going to review what we learned last time.

It would be interesting to know whether the students had already been introduced to the use of ‘BE + going to’ and, if so, what meaning/s they associated with it. If they had not been introduced to this construction, its repeated use by the teachers, particularly given the primary focus of the lesson, is, at best, odd. Either way. Repeatedly using ‘going to’ while attempting to teach ‘will’, particularly using it in the way in which ‘will’ is said to function, seems very likely to confuse learners. Learners may be ready to come to terms with a particular construction but they are unlikely to do so if the mode of presentation is more confusing than enlightening.

The overall aim of the lesson, then, apart from revising ‘must’ (obligation) and ‘should’ (suggestion) was to learn to use the modal auxiliary ‘will’ in the context of future plans and, as became evident later in the lesson, to practice repeating some expressions that can occur in telephone conversations.

#### **8.4.2.2 Focus point 2: Tasks and activities**

The activities in which the students were involved were:

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<sup>83</sup> It was not possible to determine what ‘there’ was intended to refer to.

<sup>84</sup> Note the fact that the Korean teacher uses the construction containing ‘BE + going to’ wrongly in the second sentence.

- a ‘warm up’ activity involving using illustrations in the context of finding the common word in pairs of compound words;
- revision involving what appears to be the use of memorised sentences containing the modal verbs ‘must’ and ‘should’;
- memorising and repeating, in chorus and in the context of a real time video conference link, questions that include the auxiliary verb ‘will’;
- guessing the words in sentences containing ‘will’ on the basis of clues provided by other students;
- guessing who uttered a particular sentence on the basis of its content;
- putting sentences into the correct order to discover a phone number;
- using the phone number discovered to initiate a practice telephone conversation;
- lesson review in the form of teacher-initiated questions;
- setting of homework.

This list of activities suggests, at first sight, a largely communicatively orientated lesson in which the students are actively involved throughout. The reality was very different. In fact, the students were largely involved in repeating utterances, as a whole class or in groups and the activities, even in the case of a video conference call involving a native speaker of English, were stilted and unnatural, with, for example, the person called using the modal auxiliary ‘will’ inappropriately and studiously avoiding using the contracted forms that would be natural in the context:

- KT: So there is a friend who lives in US, the US. And we’re going to call him and ask about his future activity. So are you ready?
- Ss: Yes.
- KT: We also have some examples for this activity and we’re going to ask him about his future plan using ‘will you’ question. So, can you read this altogether? (Attaching a card on the whiteboard)
- Ss: Will you visit Korea next year?
- KT: And any volunteer group who wants to ask this question to Mr Davis? His name is Mr Davis. Who wants to ask Mr Davis this question? Which group? Your group. You can help altogether. Can you read this question together?
- Ss: Will you see a movie this weekend?
- KT: Which group wants to ask this question? Very good. Read it

together.

Ss: Will you watch TV before you go to bed?

KT: Any volunteer? What about this one?

Ss: Will you have dinner with your friend tonight?

KT: We will ask this question. Then last one. Altogether. Read it.

Ss: Will you call us again on the phone?

NS: All right, so, let me call him up.

NS: Hello. Can I speak with Mr Davis?

KT: Say hi.

Mr Davis: Mr Davis speaking.

NS: Hi, Mr Davis. This is James, how are you?

Mr Davis: I'm good. Good to talk to you.

NS: Good to hear. Will you answer some questions for us?

Mr Davis: Yes. I will answer some questions.

NS: All right. Well, my class has some questions for you.  
(Groups seem to have been already organised for this conversation.)

Mr Davis: Hello, class.

Ss: Hello.

NS: Go ahead.

Ss: Will you visit Korea next year?

Mr Davis: I will not visit Korea next year.

NS: Oh, very sad.

NS: Why not?

Mr Davis: I'm very busy.

NS: All right, next.

NS: Who is this?

KT: Ready, go.

Ss: Will you see a movie this weekend?

Mr Davis: I will see a movie this weekend.

Ss: What movie?

Mr Davis: In Time

Ss: Oh

KT: Which group was it?

NS: This group?

KT: Ready, go.

Ss: Will you call us again on the phone?

Mr Davis: Could you repeat that?

NS: Will you call us again on the phone? It's what they're saying.

Mr Davis: I will call you again on the phone if James asks.

KT: Okay, and this question. Which group? Ready, go.

Ss: Will you watch TV before you go to bed?

Mr Davis: I will watch TV before I go to bed.

NS: Right, last one.

Ss: Will you have dinner with your girlfriend tonight?

Mr Davis: I will have dinner with my girlfriend . . .

NS:            Oh, okay. . . Right. Well, thank you very much, Mr Davis.  
                  So good bye.  
Mr Davis:     You're welcome, James.  
Ss:            Bye.

In the case of a team-based task that involved guessing what the content of sentences was on the basis of clues (e.g. a picture of Neil Armstrong as a clue for *I will walk on the moon*), the students had considerable difficulty. This is not surprising in view of the unnatural temporal displacement and the fact that utterances cannot generally be predicted on the basis of visual clues alone. Here, and at other stages of the lesson, the students communicated with one another in Korean.

#### **8.4.2.3 Focus point 3: Medium of instruction**

The medium of instruction for most of this lesson was English. Although the two teachers alternated with one another in providing commentary and instruction (in a way that suggested careful prior planning and rehearsal), the native speaking teaching assistant played a dominant role. It was not, therefore, as evident as might otherwise have been the case that the Korean teacher had some difficulty on occasions in expressing herself accurately and appropriately in English.<sup>85</sup> A major difference between this lesson and the first one was the fact that the English used by the teachers was not translated. Although it seemed that the students understood much of what was said, it was impossible to be sure. Furthermore, as in the case of the first lesson, teacher talk dominated the lesson and on those occasions when the students' contribution involved something other than choral repetition, they appeared to have considerable difficulty in responding.

#### **8.4.2.4 Focus point 4: Approach to teaching and learning**

This lesson was very different from the first lesson in that it did not rely on translation. However, in common with the first lesson, a great deal of emphasis was placed on repetition and on rote memorisation and repetition, often in chorus, of chunks of language (generally complete sentences in this case). Once again, although the nature of some of the activities suggests a communicative

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<sup>85</sup> Among her utterances were each of the following: *Take these all and you're going to work at the group; How do you make a sense for that?; You guys right; And the rest of your members will explain you what the sentence is, okay?*

orientation, they were conducted in ways that were essentially non-communicative. In fact, there were occasions when the teachers not only asked questions but also answered them:

NS: So let's do some examples real quick. So, will James celebrate his birthday in November? I will celebrate my birthday in November, is the answer. Will you go trick or treating this weekend? I will not go trick or treating this weekend. I'm too old.

Apart from references, in English, to 'the future', no concept questions were used to introduce the meaning associated with the use of the auxiliary 'will' (concept introduction) and no attempt was made to check whether all of the students had understood the meaning at the end of the lesson. The assumption appeared to be that the ability of some of the students to articulate memorised sentences guaranteed accurate understanding of their meaning.

As in the case of the first lesson, the lesson was teacher dominated and seemed in parts, particularly in view of the nature of the interaction between the two teachers, to have been carefully rehearsed.

### **8.4.3 Lesson 3**

The third lesson was taught by a female Korean teacher to a mixed ability group of 23 male and female students (approx. age 12-13) in the first grade of middle school. The classroom had an overhead projector and screen and two whiteboards. There were also roll screens over the windows (some pulled down) on which there were some photographs. The students were seated in groups of four facing each other (rather than facing the front of the class). The resource used was the reading section of Lesson 9 (*Our Dreams*) from *Middle School English I* (Doosan Donga Kim). This was an official demonstration lesson and a number of observers were present.

#### **8.4.3.1 Focus point 1: Language content and presentation**

The teacher of this lesson outlined two aims at the beginning as follows:

T: So, today we'll talk more about Beatrix Potter and her dream.  
S: Yes.

- T: Okay. (A screen in the centre shows the aims.) And these are what we are going to do. Tada ~ Mission number one. We can understand the life of Beatrix Potter by reading the text. 본문을 읽고 Beatrix Potter의 전기를 이해할 수 있어야 합니다. [You have to be able to understand her biography by reading the text.] Okay? Mission number two. We can make a book about her. 그에 대한 책을 만들어 보도록 해요. [We are going to make a book about her.] Sounds fun and exciting?
- S: Yeah.
- T: Yeah. I hope we love it.

Although some words (e.g. ‘biography’) were translated into Korean, the focus in this lesson was not on specific vocabulary, grammar or discourse features. This may be because these things are dealt with in earlier sections of the textbook being used, the focus of this particular section being on reading skills.

The extract above provides a useful introduction to analysis of the lesson in that it signals the theatricality (e.g. *Tada*) and hyperbole (e.g. *I hope we love it*) that characterised the whole lesson in spite of the fact that the students remained largely passive, generally avoiding making any contribution unless pressed to do so.

The resource for this lesson was the reading section of a textbook which provided some information about Beatrix Potter, the author of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. The central aim of the lesson seems to have been to summarise written text segments and organise them chronologically according to temporal signals (largely dates) in order to demonstrate understanding of the text. However, there was no clear evidence during the lesson that the students did actually understand the text.

#### **8.4.3.2 Focus point 2: Tasks and activities**

The lesson involved the following stages:

- introduction to the protagonists;
- outline of lesson aims;

- quizzing involving guessing who someone was on the basis of written information provided;
- creating, in groups, what was referred to as ‘mind maps’;
- organising text segments chronologically according to cues;
- recounting a short ‘personal history’ (involving only a few individual students).

What was referred to by the teacher as ‘mind mapping’ actually involved summarising as is indicated in the following instruction:

T: I give each group a text. It’s a part of Beatrix Potter’s biography. *Beatrix Potter의 전기를 according to the time order, 6등분을 했어요. 6분의 1을 갖게 되시겠죠, 그룹별로.* [I have divided Beatrix Potter’s biography into 6 parts, according to the time order. You are supposed to have a sixth in each group.] So you read this text with your group members and pay attention to the time markers and organise the text. Mindmap the text. Like this (Sliding the layered whiteboard to show another one having a PowerPoint screen.). My group has this. Readings (Reading the example she had prepared.). 1905. In 1905, Beatrix was engaged to Norman. (Writing ‘in 1905’ on the whiteboard which was being used as a PowerPoint screen.)

The students communicated with one another in Korean while undertaking the group task, with some playing a much more major role than others. One member of each group read the outcome of the task to the class as a whole before engaging in the next task which was to write a summary on coloured paper.

The final activity, an individual one, in which some students were asked to provide a short personal biography, had clearly been prepared and rehearsed in advance as the similarity between the following two presentations indicates.

S: I was born in Seoul. So I was raised in a city. I’m quiet and I have one elder brother. I am good at playing the flute. I want to be a professor in the future.

S: I was born in nineteen...oh sorry. 1997. I was raise in a city. I am friendly. . . I have one sister. I am good at baseball. I want to be a lawyer.

#### **8.4.3.3 Focus point 3: Medium of instruction**

The medium of instruction throughout most of this lesson was English, with occasional moves into Korean. However, the teacher clearly had difficulty in providing explanations in English:

- T: At the age of 6, she helped the blind. People can't see, can't hear.  
Very good. She must be a brave person.
- T: Engage. **종사하다.** [to be involved] Any other meaning (Writing  
'engaged to Norman')? Before getting married, **약혼하다.** [to get  
engaged] She was engaged to Norman. Norman was a publisher.  
**출판사집 막내아들.** [the youngest son of a publisher]
- T: But Beatrix's parents said no because Norman was a tradesman.  
He is a businessman, salesman.

In addition, the teacher, who dominated the lesson, had, understandably in view of the amount of English spoken, some difficulty in maintaining accurate and appropriate use of English throughout:

And don't have other group get annoyed; So every team will have smile;  
Maybe it reminds me to today's objective; So what's biographies are  
describe?; Please pay attention to this time markers; She always like to  
drawing animals; That's a hard work; My mind map turns into like this;  
Midterm test will do next Wednesday; So what's biographies are describe?

#### **8.4.3.4 Focus point 4: Approach to teaching and learning**

In spite of the fact that group-based activities were included in the lesson, there was no evidence of any genuinely communicative interaction or of involvement of all members of the class in the activities (which were largely formulaic in nature). In fact, the lesson seemed to be made up largely of a scripted, rehearsed and staged performance. Thus, for example, although the making of a book about Beatrix Potter is signalled at the beginning of the lesson as being one of the lesson's aims, the 'book', at the end of the lesson, is nothing more than a collection of student papers:

T: Mission number two. We can make a book about her (at beginning of lesson).

T: And we made a book about her. Look. Take a look. It's lovely, isn't it? . . . Come and enjoy this fit book we made. (Showing the 'book'.) (towards end of lesson)

In what may have been a reaction to anxiety about their performance, the teacher failed to provide the students with sufficient time to complete tasks, interrupted them frequently (where, it seems, they may not have been performing as expected) and sometimes even offered praise for something that she had, in fact, done herself:

S: She liked to write about

T: Animals, flowers, insects and fungi this area. Animals, 동물 [animals], flowers, 꽃 [plants], insect, 곤충 [insects], fungi, 곰팡이 [fungi]. She was interested in these animals. Very good. Good job.

S: In 1943 she died at the age (The teacher is holding her by the arms.)

T: At the age of

S: Of 77. She left almost all her

T: Her money. Then. Land to the....

S: To the...

T: National Trust

S: She was to

T: protect

S: protect their future

T: generation

S: generation. Here then are

T: a part of a national park. 사사/던 곳이/ 국립공원의 일부분이/ 도/는 [The place she lived came to a part of a national park.] Good job.

T: In 2006. You know. 4 years ago. 불과 4년 전. [Only 4 years ago.] (There is a student's voice which is not capturable.)

T: to protect. 보/마인드가 무슨 뜻이야? [What does it mean by remind?] What is the meaning of remind? It, the movie reminds us. 영화를 보니까 생각이 났어. 뷔아트릭스가 [It reminds us

that Beatrix. . . ] A writer 훌륭한 작가였고 [was a good writer] A nature protector. 자연을 보호하려고 애썼던 분이시다라는 생각이 영화를 보니까 생각이 났더라는 얘기야. [It reminds us that she was a nature protector.] Very good.

Where students clearly fail to understand, the teacher generally simply repeats or summarises quickly, in English, what she has said earlier:

T: So read a text with the group members and organise the text on the board. You have 5 minutes. Okay? Hmm. Student A, what will you do now? 뭐할까? [What're we going to do?] (The student can't answer.) Hmm...organise, mind map, work with the group members, okay? Here we go. Let's get started.

So far as 'checking student comprehension is concerned, this teacher's approach was simply to provide a leading question without waiting for a response:

T: Do you understand her story much, much better?

In summary, the students' role in this lesson consisted largely of (a) copying chunks of text into their own writing (which they mostly did rather than summarising) and then, in some cases, memorising them or reading them aloud, and (b) recounting, in a few cases, memorised chunks of pre-prepared autobiographical material. The teacher's often exaggerated prompts and responses (a few examples below) had little to do with what was actually happening in the lesson, often ringing hollow:

Sounds fun and exciting: Can't wait to get started; I hope we love it; You did a wonderful job today; You are very good at reading; Very good. Excellent; Very good. Very good; Good job, everyone; I'm so proud of you.

There was no evidence in this lesson of the influence of grammar translation, audio-lingual methodology or any other approaches or methods apart from what appeared to be a rehearsed version of a very idiosyncratic interpretation of CLT.

In fact, however, traces of the approach adopted here were evident in the other lessons analysed.

#### **8.4.4 Lesson 4**

The fourth lesson was taught by a female Korean teacher and a male teaching assistant who is a native speaker of English to a mixed ability group of 28 male and female students (approx. age 15-16) in the first grade of high school. The classroom had a television screen and a blackboard. The students were arranged in pairs, facing towards the front of the class. The students appeared to be largely passive, seeming to participate somewhat reluctantly in class activities. The teaching resource used was a worksheet and a PowerPoint slide on Halloween, prepared and presented by the teachers.

In the extracts below, KT = Korean teacher and NS = teaching assistant (native speaker of English).

##### **8.4.4.1 Focus point 1: Language content and presentation**

So far as language acquisition is concerned, the primary objective of this lesson seems to have been that students should be able to use some vocabulary new to them appropriately by the end of the lesson. That vocabulary was related to Halloween and some of it seemed to be likely to be of minimal usefulness (e.g. *broomstick; werewolf*). The vocabulary was presented in the context of a teacher dominated lesson in which the teaching assistant spoke at length in English with the Korean teacher translating and/ or summarising in translation almost everything he said and the students largely providing single words in Korean or, occasionally, in English (in chorus). Examples of the translation are provided below:

NS: We are going to talk about Halloween today.

KT: 오늘 할로윈에 대해서 이야기해 볼까요. [We're going to talk about Halloween today.]

NS: Okay. I want to stop it there. And we will be talking about that later. So what was happening in the video?

KT: *性价에서 무슨 일이 일어났어요? [What happened in the video?]*

#### 8.4.4.2 Focus point 2: Tasks and activities

The entire lesson was dominated by teacher talk. Apart from listening to the teacher and teaching assistant, repeating what was said (which they may not have understood) or, occasionally, answering teacher generated questions in chorus using single words (most often in Korean), the activities in which the students were involved in this lesson were (a) watching a short video clip and PowerPoint, and (b) filling in a page of a worksheet. The worksheet activity, which simply involved copying writing from a screen, was introduced as follows:

NS: I have some worksheets for you. You'll have pencils and pens.  
And just pencils.

NS: Okay. Halloween is celebrated on October 31. Now on your worksheet, on the worksheet.

KT: *자, 지금 워크시트에. [Now, on the worksheet.]*

NS: You'll see some sentences here in the PowerPoint. I want you to follow along and fill in the paper if you finish the paper, at the end of class, maybe I'll give you some Halloween candy.

KT: *잘하시면 수업 끝나고 캔디 있습니까. [If you do a good job, you'll be able to get some candies.]*

NS: So I want you to pay attention to the PowerPoint. So yes. Halloween is celebrated on October 31.

KT: *10월 31일이죠, 할로윈데이입니다. [Halloween is on October 31.]*

The total amount of student talking time was only a few minutes and only a few of the words or word groups spoken by the students were in English.

#### 8.4.4.3 Focus point 3: Medium of instruction

The medium of instruction in the case of this lesson was English and translation of English into Korean. Where there was no translation of the English used by the teachers, there was evidence that at least some of the students did not understand and/ or were confused, as indicated in the following two extracts:

- NS: Did you play soccer?  
KT: *play soccer* **�았어요?** [Did you play soccer?]  
Ss: No.  
NS: No. No soccer game? I thought there was a big tournament.  
Ss: We are loser.
- NS: Pumpkin farms. (A photo of a pumpkin farm on the screen) People go to pumpkin farms and what do they do?  
KT: **자, 뭣할까? 호박 밭에 가서.** [So what do they do? At the pumpkin farms]  
(Some students are murmuring.)  
Ss: **[따요.]** [Picking them.]  
KT: **크게!** [Louder]  
NS: If you go to a pumpkin farm, why do you go there?  
KT: **자, 호박밭에서 뭣할까? 파다 뭐야? 디그? 몰라?** [So what do they do? What's 'pada' in English? Dig? Don't you know it?]  
NS: People go there and they buy a pumpkin. They buy a pumpkin and they take it home to carve it. Can you all say, carve?  
(Students are repeating)

Where explanation was attempted, even though it involved translation, it was not necessarily helpful:

- NS: Halloween Day, people would build big fires and wear masks. Wear masks to scare away - to stop the evil spirits and the ghosts from stealing the food.  
KT: **자, scare away, 무슨 뜻이에요? 뮬리치기/ 위해서 악마의 영혼을 뮬리치기 위해서 큰 불을 피우고, 자, 뭐를 썼어요? 마스크.** [Now, scare away, what does it mean? To defeat. They built big fires to defeat evil spirits. What did they wear? Mask.]

Where the teachers asked the students to do something, they sometimes provided them with no space/ time in which to do it and they had a tendency to answer their own questions, sometimes in ways that were not particularly helpful (see below):

- NS: But today Halloween is about having a fun time. Fun time and spooky time. Can you all say spooky?  
KT: Spooky. What's meaning, spooky?  
NS: Do you know what spooky means?  
KT: Spooky means. **지금 할로윈 하고 있잖아. 아까 악마의 영혼을 뮬리치기 위해서니까 무슨 뜻일까?** Spooky. [We're

talking about Halloween. To scare away evil spirits, we said before. So what can it be? Spooky.]

S: *悪魔*. [Devil]

NS: Okay, if something is spooky, it's like scary.

KT: Scare, Scary.

NS: Scary and fun. Spooky. So Halloween, you have a fun and spooky time with your friends and family.

#### 8.4.4.4 Focus point 4: Approach to teaching and learning

Apart from watching, listening, copying sentences and responding to teacher initiated questions (generally with single word utterances, often in Korean), student involvement was confined to repetition as indicated in the extract below:

NS: And repeat after me. The werewolf howled at the full moon.

(Students repeat it.)

NS: Okay, again. The werewolf howled at the full moon.

(Students repeat it again.)

It was clear that some of the students were having difficulty completing a simple task that involved copying:

KT: *못쓰는 학생들이 조금 있나요.* [Some of you can't fill in the blanks.]

In spite of this, the few attempts made to determine the extent of student understanding and/ or involvement took the form of asking whether they had any questions:

NS: Any questions? Questions about trick-or-treating?

Ss: No.

NS: Okay. Yes. Go to haunted house. Okay and very good job. Do you have any questions about Halloween?

Ss: No.

NS: No questions about Halloween?

KT:  *알고 싶은 거 없어요, 할로윈?* [Anything you'd like to know? About Halloween?]

NS: Okay. Very good.

There was no evidence of any genuinely meaningful interaction among the students at any point in this lesson. The use of translation, although an important characteristic of grammar translation, was not accompanied by any other characteristics of that approach. The assumption that appeared to underpin much of this lesson was that simply listening to English spoken by a native speaker for a small amount of time, if constantly accompanied by translation into Korean, would lead to language acquisition.

#### **8.4.5 Lesson 5**

The fifth lesson was taught by a female Korean teacher to a mixed ability group of 34 female students (approx. age 15-16) in the first grade of a co-educational high school. The classroom was equipped with a whiteboard, a television screen and a beam projector and roll screen. There were some small photographs on the walls. Facing each other and on different sides of the room were two groups of 12 students each, sitting in 3 rows (4 students per row). Two students were seated at the front of the class, one on the right-hand side, the other on the left-hand side. The remaining five students were seated at the back of the class, facing towards the front. The atmosphere was positive. The textbook resource to which the lesson related was Unit 9 (*A Debate: Mixed-gender classes or single-gender classes*) from *High School English* (Neungyule).

##### **8.4.5.1 Focus point 1: Language content and presentation**

The lesson took the form of a debate about whether high schools should have mixed gender classes. Some key terms which reappeared from time to time (and were included in a test at the end of the lesson) were: *proposition* (used wrongly in several instances), *opposition*, *rebuttal*, *social skills*, *ideal classes*, *purification* (consistently used wrongly); *distracted*; and *solidarity*. The class began with a review of some words and phrases relating to debating (e.g. *agree*; *agreeing*; *motion*; *Yes, I agree with you*; *Yes, exactly*; *Yes, that's true*; *Yes absolutely*; *I couldn't agree more*; *I don't agree with you*; *I'm afraid that isn't right*; *Yes, I see your point but . . .*). Next, the lesson objectives were outlined as follows:

By the end of this class you be able to. Why don't you read aloud altogether? Number 1. Yes. Express your own ideas, your own opinion,

whether you agree or disagree, freely. And number 2. Yes participate in a role. I mean in a debate as in a role. You have a role like supporter, writer, speaker, staff and judging panel. You have a role so you can participate as your role.

Following this, the class members were invited to indicate by holding up a particular colour (green = agree; red = disagree; white = neutral) whether they agreed with a number of what were referred to as ‘propositions’ but actually took the form of (sometimes ungrammatical) questions (e.g. *Do you think voting age to be lowered?*).

Next, the class watched a video clip intended to introduce a debate in which they were to participate. The debate followed. The central question (referred to by the teacher as a ‘motion’) was: *Do you agree with mixed gender classes in our high school?* The debate proceeded in rounds: proposition team and opposition team statements; rebuttal/ cross-examination; judging panel evaluation. Although the evaluation sessions by the judging panels were expected to make reference, among other things, to “general English, grammar and vocabulary”, they did not do so.

This was followed by a test. The test was introduced as follows:

It is time to see whether you understood the debate overall clearly so I give you this formative test

In fact, however, the test consisted of five questions involving producing the words ‘proposition’, ‘opposition’ and ‘rebuttal’ and providing three words (clearly determined in advance) to describe the arguments that were presented in favour and against.

#### **8.4.5.2 Focus point 2: Tasks and activities**

The main activity in which the students were involved in this lesson was participation in a debate about whether high schools should have mixed gender classes. A great deal of effort had clearly gone into preparation for this debate,

including familiarising students with useful phrases to use at particular points. However, because the students had clearly been provided in advance not only with the roles they were to take in the debate but also with the arguments they should use, there was little in the way of genuine exchange of views/ opinions.

#### **8.4.5.3 Focus point 3: Medium of instruction**

Both the teacher and the students used English throughout this lesson with very occasional translation by the teacher:

T: Rebuttal means 반론, 반박 [Rebuttal]

Much of what was said appeared to have been prepared in advance and it often appeared to be partially digested phrases and sentences jammed together like pieces of a partially planned prefabricated building. Some of the expressions/ sentences that were used repeatedly (often inappropriately or with inaccurate variants) were:

I have a question; I see your point; And here is my question; Thank you for listening. What do you think about that? What do think of that? Can you understand what I mean?

While this was clearly a language practice session with a focus on fluency rather than accuracy, and, therefore, one in which correction might be expected to have little or no role to play, this cannot be an adequate explanation for the fact that everyone, including the teacher, seemed to be attempting to operate at a level that was very far in advance of their existing English language proficiency. The result was that much of the language used was inaccurate, inappropriate, incomprehensible and/ or, unfortunately, comical. Some examples of some of the teachers' utterances and some of those of the students are provided below:

**Teacher:**

How can you the definition of the debate? It's arguing. It's fight. Yes.  
I'm sorry about I disagree with you.  
Do you want to unification?

Do you think voting age to be lowered?  
Do you believe destiny?  
Do you agree with president teenager?  
Single gender class cause you then have basic of social interaction.  
Stalking offend because of too much love?  
This is a kind of one way of your opinion freely okay?  
Second we show good levels understanding what the argument.  
However you're good job.  
And second question is a ...motion argues against the motion in a debates.  
And number 3 is still also spend some time criticising, criticising the arguments presented by the other team. Other team.

### **Students:**

For example, if a one boy point out a teacher then he will feel really shameful, while if a one girl really concentrate in class and get pressed to teacher then students remember her in that way.

... in mix gender classes make both gender purification.

But we think your argument is not clear because to the same sex can experience in mix gender class enough.

... so there what you have to hide for not to be a rude person . . .

. . . but excessive curiosity to the same sex can limited by school works which bads making a couple

The opinion with mix gender class is check study because of carrying on our appearances.

. . . boys can solve, boys can solve curiosity of the girls and they will be more released.

And final reason is that mix gender classes can make boys and girls purification themselves.

Some of the errors included in the video clip prepared in advance by students to introduce the debate were:

*I think a purpose of school is make student stood up for society.*

*We can commonly think inconvenience caused to sexual difference every physical training and Taekwondo classes.*

Towards the end of the lesson, the teacher made the following comment:

And next week we're gonna have feedback time. That's why we recorded today. So we're write the video clip that we made today. And making a correction and have fun. Okay? Okay.

While it is never a straightforward matter to decide which errors to focus on in reviewing fluency-based sessions, the problem is likely to be particularly acute in this case.

#### **8.4.5.4 Focus point 4: Approach to teaching and learning**

The overall impression gained from a review of this lesson was that almost all of it was pre-prepared, with everyone, including the teacher, attempting to operate at a level that was very considerably in advance of their existing English language proficiency, the result being that much of the language used was incomprehensible and /or, unfortunately, comical. There were some occasions on which the teacher clearly misled the students, such as her repeated description of questions as motions and her misuse of the word 'purification'.

The atmosphere in the class was positive, the students seemed enthusiastic and there was considerable emphasis on enjoyment, with the teacher praising the students (often somewhat extravagantly):

Now, how was the video clip? Yes, very good. Perfect.  
Okay. Great. It was very interesting.  
Okay. Thank you. Wow. Yes. Good job.  
Okay. Perfect. Yes. Okay. Good job, guys.  
It was good. And you summarised well your opinion, so we understood your point.  
You did a great job. I think you did a great job today. . . . I'm very happy.  
I'm very happy to watch you guys.

There was, however, a problem. While fluency seems to have been emphasised and encouraged, something that is potentially very positive in view, in particular, of the history of language teaching in South Korea, it seemed that accuracy (in spite of a reference to reviewing the lesson in a later session) had become almost wholly irrelevant. Thus, while a great deal of effort had clearly gone into setting up the session, and while the students had been made familiar (or, in some cases, partly familiar) with some useful expressions, no real attempt appears to have

been made to ensure that the task in which the students were involved was designed in such a way as to capitalise as fully as possible on their existing competencies. In fact, the students appeared for most of the time to read from material prepared in advance and/ or to fill in worksheets rather than attending to what was being said. Furthermore, heavy reliance was placed on the contributions of a few students. Thus, while the lesson appeared at first sight to be student-centred and fully communicatively orientated, it was actually designed and conducted in a way that promoted confidence at the cost of competence. Furthermore, in what appears to have been the absence of training in the use of appropriate instructional language, the teachers' determination to use English exclusively resulted in a situation in which the students were exposed to repeated errors.

## 8.5 Overview and conclusions

In four cases, the lessons analysed here were demonstration lessons, taught, in line with official policy in South Korea, in the presence of a team of evaluators, including education authority representatives. In the other case, the lesson was recorded by the teacher and then given to the researcher. Presumably, therefore, all of these lessons, in which there was considerable evidence of rehearsal, reflect teachers' understanding of what is expected of them (even though this may not reflect what actually happens in day-to-day classes that are not designed to be observed).

In all five of the lessons, an attempt was made by the teachers to use English for all or much of the time in class. In the case of the **first lesson**, this was achieved by moving backwards and forwards between Korean and English, with heavy reliance being placed on translation. This directly reflected the teacher's own understanding, as expressed during her interview with the researcher and following many training sessions, of how best to use English as much as possible in class. In the **fourth lesson**, translation also played a fundamental role, with almost everything that was said by a teaching assistant who was a native speaker of English being translated into Korean or summarised in Korean by the Korean teacher. In this respect, both of these lessons had something in common with grammar translation (but without the emphasis on complete texts or on

grammatical instruction that characterises grammar translation). In the **second lesson**, also involving a Korean teacher and an assistant who was a native speaker of English, the approach to using English as much as possible was very different. In this case, English was used for almost all of the time as the medium of instruction, with the teaching assistant playing a dominant role in the lesson and with little attempt being made to ensure that the students actually understood what he said. In the **third and fifth lessons**, the teachers spoke for a considerable amount of time. In both cases, they had difficulty in sustaining accurate and appropriate use of the language.

**Three** main conclusions emerge from a consideration of the teachers' language use in these five lessons. **The first** is that all of the teachers appear to have believed that it was important to demonstrate their own competence in English, something that may be partly responsible for the fact that all of the lessons were either teacher-centred (**lessons 1 – 4**) or more teacher-centred than was necessary (**lesson 5**). **The second** is that while some of the teachers involved relied on translation as a way of ensuring that students understood what was going on in the lesson (**lessons 1 & 4**), others attempted to do so by engaging in a great deal of advance rehearsal. In no case was there any indication that any of these five teachers had been trained to use English as the primary medium of instruction in a way that adequately accommodated the needs of the students and their own level of competence<sup>86</sup>. **Thirdly**, while the involvement of untrained teaching assistants may reduce the anxiety of Korean teachers when faced with the expectation that they use English as the medium of instruction in class, it need not necessarily enhance lessons or promote effective learning.

So far as the extent and nature of student involvement in the lessons is concerned, this varied. Even so, **with the exception of lesson 4**, all of the teachers attempted to engage the students in some activities that were potentially communicative in orientation. It was, however, only in the case of **the fifth lesson** that the students were engaged for most of the class time in a potentially communicative activity

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<sup>86</sup> This would involve, in addition to using brief, formulaic instructions, a very considerable reduction in teacher talking time, allowing more time for a specific focus on the lesson objectives and more time for student participation in the lesson.

(although much of what was communicated was clearly pre-determined and rehearsed and the communication was dominated by a few students). In **the first, second and third lessons**, although most of the student contribution involved memorisation and choral repetition, there were some attempts to involve the students in group-based activities. In **lesson 1**, there was a ‘running dictation’ (which was, however, conducted in a way that involved a series of largely non-communicative exercise types) and a poster creation activity involving explaining an invention (assigned as homework when time ran out, thus providing no opportunity to observe how the students engaged with the task). In **the second lesson**, the establishment of a telephone video link with a native speaker of English, while potentially involving authentic communicative interaction, actually involved artificial memorised language chunks. In **lesson 3**, although the students were invited to work in groups to summarise text segments and organise them chronologically, only a few students participated actively and little other than repetition proved to be involved. In one case (**lesson 4**), it seemed that, while the teachers made an attempt to ensure that the students were exposed to spoken English (always translated into Korean), they made no attempt to engage the students in pair or group activities that involved communicating in English. For them, it appeared that what mattered most was demonstrating teacher proficiency in English.

For four of the Korean teachers involved in these lessons, it would appear that engaging the students in group work was seen as being an important aspect of teaching that is in accordance with the expectations as outlined in the curriculum. However, they did not appear to believe that such activities need involve the exchange of authentic information for a genuine communicative purpose or, with one exception, that students should be encouraged to use English while engaging in such activities.

While all of the teachers involved in these lessons almost certainly believed that they were teaching in a way that was in line with the expectations of the Korean national curriculum, these expectations are far from clear. Indeed, as indicated in *Chapter 3*, it is a simpler matter to work out what is effectively proscribed in that

curriculum than what is *prescribed*, and one of the things that appears to be proscribed is any emphasis on grammatical structure or structure-related meanings. Hence, with the exception of **lesson 2** (in which students were misled about structural meaning in the case of the modal auxiliary ‘will’ plus the base form of the following verb), the language used was not presented in a way that highlighted structure or structure-related meanings. Instead, the emphasis was on vocabulary, the copying of sentences or idioms, or memorisation and reproduction of text segments.

Although grammar translation and audio-lingual methodology were prevalent in the teaching of additional languages until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and beyond in many cases), there was little sign of the influence of either in these lessons. Translation was confined largely to teacher talk (**lessons 1 & 4**), and/ or to the introduction/ explanation of new concepts (as in the case of the ‘bilingual method’ - see section 3.3.4.1) and the emphasis on text and structure that characterises grammar translation was absent. While the constant repetition found in some of the lessons bore some vague resemblance to an aspect of audio-lingual methodology, there was a complete absence of the pattern practice (repetition with variation) that characterises audio-lingualism.

These teachers were almost certainly attempting to teach in accordance with their understanding of the national curriculum. This involved maximising use of English by the teachers (but not, with one exception, by the students) and the inclusion, generally in the context of much class-based and teacher-centred choral repetition, of one or more group-based activities. However, in the one case where a group-based activity took place in English and involved something other than largely formulaic, predictable interaction (**lesson 5**), the language produced by the students was frequently incomprehensible even though the task itself involved, in terms of Littlewood’s (2004) definitions (see *Chapter 6*, p. 159), a combination of structured and authentic communicative activities. While the emphasis was, in this case, clearly on fluency rather than accuracy, a requirement of fluency, in the context of language teaching and learning, is comprehensibility.

The lessons observed here were either demonstration lessons (lessons 2 – 5) or similar to demonstration lessons (lesson 1). As such, they were frequently theatrical and there was considerable evidence of detailed rehearsal (sometimes on the part of the students as well as the teachers). Lessons such as these can tell us what teachers believe is expected of them but they cannot tell us what happens in classrooms on a day-to-day basis. We are unlikely to find out exactly what does happen in classrooms on a day-to-day basis so long as teachers are resistant to any form of spontaneous classroom observation and they are likely to continue to be resistant so long as they believe that they are being judged. In fact, however, what teachers do is constrained by the contexts in which they operate. If what is happening in the teaching of English in South Korean classrooms is less effective than it might be, it is, I believe, largely educational authorities, teacher trainers and academic researchers who must be held responsible.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Conclusions, reflections and recommendations**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

The overall aim of the research project reported here was to explore actual and potential barriers to effective curriculum design and implementation in the case of the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in South Korea by analysing, in terms of their overall positioning in relation to second language acquisition research, each of the following:

- d) the national curriculum for English in schools;
- e) the content of a range of widely used textbooks;
- f) the background and training of a sample of teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea in relation to their beliefs about language learning, and the interaction between these beliefs and their actual teaching practices.

In this chapter, the research questions that underpinned the project are revisited in light of the research findings and these findings are themselves reviewed in light of the literature referred to in *Chapters 2 and 3* (9.2). The limitations and perceived contribution of the research project are then outlined (9.3 & 9.4), followed by a discussion of the implications of the research findings for the teaching and learning of English in South Korean schools (9.5) and recommendations for future research (8.6).

#### **9.2 Revisiting the research questions and reviewing the research findings**

In this section, the research findings are revisited in relation to the research questions and literature referred to in *Chapters 2 and 3*.

##### **9.2.1 Reviewing the curriculum**

The research question (in several parts) underpinning this aspect of the research project was:

What recommendations are made in the national curriculum for the teaching of English in schools in South Korea in relation to (1) syllabus content, and (2) teaching approach and methodologies, how consistent are these recommendations when the document as a whole is taken into account and what assumptions (about teachers, teacher training and language teaching and learning) underpin these recommendations?

As it relates to the teaching and learning of English, the 7<sup>th</sup> South Korean national curriculum (the one current at the time of writing), together with a 2009 revision, was reviewed here in relation to: *proficiency targets and achievement objectives; teaching/ learning content; recommended teaching approaches/methods, medium of instruction; assessment; and cultural content.*

The introduction to the English section of the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum appears to be broadly communicatively orientated. It noted there, for example, that the ability to communicate in English is an essential skill, that account should be taken of the differing learning abilities of students, and that in-class activities that enable students to carry out self-initiated study should be conducted. It is, however, important to examine the remainder of the documentation in detail in order to determine how the authors develop the themes introduced at the beginning.<sup>87</sup>

#### **9.2.1.1 Proficiency targets and achievement objectives**

Although B. F. Chang (2009, p. 88) refers to the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum as introducing a ‘proficiency- based system’, analysis of the curriculum documentation revealed that there are, in fact, no proficiency targets as such, that is, there are no statements indicating what the expectations are in respect of overall achievement at certain stages (e.g. the end of elementary schooling). This is clearly inconsistent with the move towards proficiency specification that has accompanied the development of communicatively-orientated curricula worldwide (see, for example, the common reference levels (A1 – C2) and global

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<sup>87</sup> Note that each of the sub-sections that follow ends with a short summary/ overview in italic print.

and skills-based descriptors relating to them in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001)). In addition, although there are a range of grade-related ‘achievement standards’ listed under skills-based sub-headings, these are, in general, not expressed as achievement objectives of the ‘can do’ type that are now widely used among curriculum developers (see, for example, Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 2001). These ‘achievement standards’ are, in fact, often too general to be genuinely meaningful in terms of actual student achievement (e.g. *understand basic conversations about personal daily life*), are the same at different levels (e.g. *carry on/ out a simple telephone conversation* (grades 5 and 6)), and/ or rely for discrimination among levels on readers being able, somehow, to make sense of the intended distinctions among descriptors such as ‘basic’, ‘simple’ and ‘easy’ (e.g. *understand basic conversations about personal daily life* (grade 3); *understand simple conversations about personal daily life* (grade 4)). In addition, some of the achievement standards included in the curriculum appear to relate not to language-based outcomes but to teaching/ learning strategies, and many of these appear not to be consistent with a communicatively orientated approach to teaching (e.g. *listen to one or two sentences and choose the appropriate picture*; *copy the dictation of a studied sentence*). Even in cases where achievement standards statements do have implications in relation to structural or discoursal competencies (e.g. *listen to a simple speech or dialogue and understand the order of events*), the lack of any link between these statements and particular language indicators at particular levels/ stages means that it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to determine whether these achievement standards had been reached or, perhaps, exceeded. Bearing in mind the fact that achievement standards should be amenable to assessment if they are to have any genuine role in educational programmes, it is important to note that it would be quite impossible to find ways of assessing many of the achievement standards included in the curriculum in any meaningful way.

*So far as both overall proficiency and more specific achievement objectives are concerned, the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum cannot be said to be ‘communicative’ in the sense in which that word is generally understood in the context of landmark*

*publications on the teaching and learning of additional languages such as, for example, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001).*

### **9.2.1.2 Teaching/ learning content**

Content specification is an important part of a curriculum and an important indicator of the overall approach to curriculum design and there are many different ways in which the content of language programmes can be specified (see *Chapter 3, section 3.3.2.1*). There is, however, very little in the main body of the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum that relates to the actual content of teaching and learning. Apart from a few references, generally oblique, to language in the achievements standards section, the only indication of language content that occurs in the main body of the document is located in a chart that specifies the expected number of words to be introduced in each grade and the expected sentence length associated with grades three and four combined and grades five and six combined. Otherwise, readers are referred to the document's appendices.

The *first appendix* lists 19 topics to be included in language programmes. These provide a context in which language content can be situationalised. This is consistent with developments that have taken place in language teaching since at least the mid-1960s when structurally organised syllabuses began to be located in relation to topical and/ or situational context. It is also now something that is consistent with almost every approach to syllabus design, including communicatively-based ones. It does not, therefore, provide much help in terms of locating the actual syllabus type that is being advocated. The *third appendix* includes an introductory section and a basic vocabulary list made up of 2,315 words, of which 736 are signalled as being recommended for elementary school lessons. There is no explanation of the basis for the selection of these words and no reason is given for the decision not to treat homonyms as separate words or to provide definitions of word senses. This type of presentation clearly indicates that vocabulary is to be treated as part of overall programme content rather than as the driver of that programme content, as it would be in the case of a lexical syllabus (Sinclair and Renouf, 1988; Willis, 1990). The other appendices provide 'examples and functions of communication' (*appendix 2*) and 'linguistic form needed for communication' (*appendix 4*). The first of these has forty-seven main functional headings under each of which are lists of decontextualised phrases and sentences which are treated as being functional exponents. While this type of

presentation may have been considered acceptable in the very early stages of development of notional-functional syllabuses, it can no longer be considered acceptable. After all, it has been widely understood for several decades that (except for some formulaic encodings) language functions cannot be determined in the absence of context (see, for example, Crombie, 1988). The existence of this appendix cannot, therefore, be taken as an indication of communicative-orientation. On the contrary, it seems likely to encourage a type of formulaic-phrasebook-style teaching and learning. In fact, this is precisely what B. M. Chang (2003) believes is happening (see *Chapter 2, section 2.2*). Finally, there is *the fourth appendix* which is, apparently, made up of “[the] linguistic forms . . . [that] should be used together with the communication examples in Appendix 2” (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2008, p.119). It is, however, unclear what the relationship is intended to be between the ‘examples’ in these two appendices.

Whatever the reason for the type of presentation we find in the fourth appendix, it is problematic. While it seems inconsistent with any of the syllabus types introduced in *Chapter 3*, the link that the curriculum writers make between the second and fourth appendices suggests that they believe that what they are specifying is, indeed, consistent with a notional-functional syllabus type. They may even have believed that the fourth appendix is equivalent to that type of notional specification that complements functional specification in the notional-functional syllabus (see, for example, Wilkins, 1976) or they may have believed that it provided an effective substitute for it. In either case, they are, I believe, misguided.

*It is difficult to classify the programme content suggested in the South Korean national curriculum for English in terms of syllabus type recommendations. Clearly, it is not the authors' intention to recommend a structural syllabus (Krahnke, 1987). Nor does the way in which vocabulary is presented suggest a lexical syllabus (Sinclair and Renouf, 1988; Willis, 1990). The absence of any clear grammatical specification militates against the core and spiral syllabus type proposed by Brumfit (1980) or the proportional syllabus type proposed by Yalden*

(1983). The fact that there are no progressively specified tasks means that it cannot be regarded as being based on the type of task-based syllabus outlined by, for example, Foster and Skehan (1996). Finally, although it seems, at first sight, that the authors may have believed that their presentation is consistent with the notional-functional syllabus design concept (Wilkins, 1976), there is no coherent notional specification and communication functions are presented in a way that has long been regarded as unacceptable. Furthermore, notional-functional specification is generally now accompanied by various types of skills-based and discourse-related specification. With the exception of the purely structural syllabus, most of the syllabus types referred to here, or some combination of aspects of several of them, could be regarded as being consistent with a communicatively orientated curriculum. However, the way in which programme content is specified in the South Korean national curriculum is not consistent with any recognisable syllabus design type or combination of syllabus design types and therefore cannot be said to support, or be consistent with, the apparent communicative orientation of the introductory section of the curriculum document.

#### **9.2.1.3 Recommended teaching approaches/ methods**

As indicated in *Chapter 3* (section 3.3.1.1), the earliest recorded textbooks designed for learners of foreign languages were bilingual (sometimes trilingual) and generally took the form of short mini-dialogues designed to be used in specific circumstances, with native and target language texts often being printed side by side in a way that is similar to a modern phrasebook. Gradually, translation involving classical languages and the meticulous parsing of sentences entered into the mix. It was not, however, until around the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that grammar translation as we now recognise it began to emerge in European grammar schools. Although grammar translation began to be challenged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that language professionals began to develop a methodology (audio-lingual methodology) that seemed to be genuinely different from grammar translation and it was not until the 1970s that that methodology began to be seriously challenged as a new approach began to develop. That approach, often referred to as ‘communicative language teaching’ (CLT) tended, in its earliest stages of development, to be associated with a

rejection of any structural focus (Howatt, 1984) and, more recently, has sometimes been associated with task-based as opposed to task-supported learning (Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993). In order to understand the nature of the South Korean curriculum as it relates to the teaching and learning of English, it is important to be able to locate its recommendations in relation to this type of methodological spectrum.

When reference is first made in the curriculum document to ‘communication activities’ readers are advised that these may be divided into phonetic and written language, the first encompassing speaking and listening and the second encompassing reading and writing. Readers are then referred to two appendices (2 & 4), neither of which includes useful examples of language teaching/ learning activities (see *Chapter 3*, section 3.3.3). In a table that includes ‘materials’ as one of its headings, reference is made to a further appendix (the one which includes a list of topics). With the exception of some activities that appear in the lists of achievement standards, there are no further references to teaching/ learning activities in the main body of the text or in the appendices. Those activities that are included in the achievement standards are of a variety of types. Some seem broadly consistent with grammar translation (e.g. *copy the dictation of a studied sentence*), some with audio-lingualism (e.g. *use given words to complete a sentence*) and some with CLT (e.g. *carry out a simple task through interaction*). However, the fact that two of the document’s appendices provide lists of decontextualised phrases and sentences (*appendix 2*) or sentences only (*appendix 4*) and the fact that these are accompanied by lists of topics (*appendix 1*) and vocabulary (*appendix 3*) suggests something similar to the type of dialogue-based, phrasebook style presentation that characterised the earliest extant versions of language textbooks<sup>88</sup>.

*Overall, there is very little in the South Korean national curriculum so far as methodology is concerned. While the appendices suggest an approach that is generally consistent with the earliest (mini-dialogue-based) examples of textbooks*

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<sup>88</sup> In Germany, for example, there are language teaching texts dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Glück, 2000, pp. 127 & 128).

*designed for foreign learners as outlined by Howatt (1984), and/ or the type of phrasebooks for travellers abroad that are commonplace today, the few references to methodology in the document do not necessarily support this interpretation. Those references, mostly indirect ones as in the case of some of the achievement standards, make up a sort of unexplained and unprincipled miscellany, some seeming to point in the direction of grammar translation (see Richards and Rogers, 2001); some seeming to point in the direction of audiolingualism (see Chastain, 1976); a few seeming to point, in a very general way, in the direction of CLT (see Littlewood, 1981 and Nunan, 1991). Certainly, there is little that is said about methodology that strongly supports the widespread belief that the curriculum as a whole is communicatively orientated.*

#### **9.2.1.4 Medium of instruction**

*As indicated in Chapter 3, teaching exclusively through the medium of English (the ‘direct method’) was not advocated by all of those who belonged to the Reform Movement that began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Nor is it regarded as a prerequisite by all of those who advocate CLT. Indeed, there are many language teaching professionals who, while generally not advocating the type of bilingual method recommended by Dodson (1972), nevertheless believe that there is an important place for the native language in the language classroom (see, for example, Antón & DiCamilla, 1999).*

There are only two references to the language of instruction in relation to the teaching of English in the South Korean national curriculum. One of these is in a section dealing with elementary schooling; the other in a section dealing with secondary schooling. In both cases, readers are advised that classes should be carried out in English ‘wherever possible’. It is unclear what is intended here by the use of ‘wherever possible’. What is clear is the fact that no reasons are provided for this recommendation and no advice as to how to conduct English classes through the medium of English is provided.

*Although there are many aspects of the national curriculum documentation that are confusing, contradictory and/or simply misguided, the single sentence that occurs twice and that recommends the use of English wherever possible has,*

*perhaps, been the cause of more anxiety, frustration and even anger than any other aspect.*

### **9.2.1.5 Assessment**

The assessment of language proficiency and competencies is a complex matter. However, as indicated in *Chapter 3* (section 3.3.6.1), there is general agreement among language education professionals that teaching and assessment methods should be consistent with one another and that, therefore, communicatively orientated methodologies should be matched by communicatively orientated assessment methods. In the case of language development, assessment can relate to overall proficiency benchmarks and/or to more specific achievement objectives (see, for example, Ministry of Education (New Zealand), 1995). It is, therefore, important, as Johnson (2000, p. 269) has observed, that the ways in which assessment is conducted should reflect the “ways in which the relevant curriculum objectives are conceived and articulated”. In the South Korean curriculum document, it is noted that assessment should be in line with the performance standards for each educational stage and that it should be both holistic and analytic. However, as indicated above and in *Chapter 3* (section 3.3.6.2), the performance standards statements are, in general, simply not amenable to any valid and reliable form of assessment and, furthermore, in the absence of any proficiency benchmarks, holistic assessment of language proficiency is simply not possible. Added to this is the fact that, although it is noted with reference to assessment at elementary level (but, interestingly, not with reference to secondary school level) that assessment and teaching methods should be related (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2008, p. 62), the curriculum document specifies that performance assessment should be carried out only ‘if possible’ (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2008, p. 61). Since performance testing is a requirement in the case of communicative assessment, this would appear to represent an implicit admission that any communicative teaching that takes place may not be matched by communicative assessment, something that effectively undermines any surface impression that suggests that the curriculum is intended to be communicatively orientated as a whole.

*Overall, what is said about assessment in the curriculum documentation is unlikely to give language professionals any confidence that the intention is that the approach to assessment should be consistent with the approach to teaching and learning or, indeed, that it is likely to be possible to conduct any valid and reliable form of assessment that is either proficiency-based or achievement objectives-based.*

#### **9.2.1.6 Cultural content**

As in the case of teaching methods, there is very little in the curriculum document that relates to culture other than the expectation that teachers should take account of learners' own culture as well as the cultures of 'English-speaking countries' and other 'non-English speaking cultures'. While there is here the implicit recognition that English is spoken as a lingua franca all over the world and should not, therefore, be associated with the cultures that have typically been associated with countries in which English is the dominant language, there is no discussion of cross-cultural hybridity, of how the culture component of programmes is to be assessed, or of the dangers of cultural stereotyping.

*In the area of culture, teachers and textbook writers are left to work out for themselves how they are going to cope, in the context of the teaching and learning of English, with the expectation that they should deal with a wide range of cultural representations.*

#### **9.2.1.7 Overview response to the first research question**

As indicated in *Chapter 2*, while there has been much negative criticism in recent years of the teaching and learning of English in South Korea, little of that criticism has been directed at the national curriculum documentation. In fact, that curriculum documentation (from the 6<sup>th</sup> revision onwards) has been widely praised by commentators for its innovative approach (see, for example, Kim, 1994) and, in particular, for its development in the direction of "cultivating the communicative competence of Korean learners" (Chang, 2009, p.83), something that has, it has been claimed, been reinforced by the 'historic decision' to include a listening section in the College Scholastic Ability Test in 1993. Negative views

about the curriculum itself appear to be both rarer and, in general, more muted than are negative views concerning its implementation. They do, however, exist. Of particular interest here are the views of those, such as Kwon (1995), who believe that the work of Korean-based researchers has been overlooked, that there is a lack of data to support the curriculum's positioning and that the Korean context needs to be taken more fully into account. In connection with this last point, there are those, such as Li (1998), who have noted the difficulties involved in attempting to impose developments closely associated with the West on Asian countries, attributing these difficulties to fundamental cultural differences. Whether or not this claim is justified – and there are those, such as Peng (2007), who regard such positioning as being an example of cultural stereotyping – the fact remains that there is a considerable body of evidence that indicates that communicatively orientated language teaching has not been successfully implemented in many parts of Asia. While there are many possible reasons for this, the analysis of the national curriculum conducted here suggests that, in the case of South Korea, one of the reasons is likely to be the nature of the curriculum itself (rather than being a matter that relates exclusively to teaching, teacher training and teaching materials design). In this connection, a research project conducted by B. M. Chang (2003) is particularly interesting in that it highlights one of the critical problems identified here, that is, the fact that the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum associates functions with lists of decontextualised phrases and sentences which are then picked up by textbook writers and appear to be learned in rote fashion by students. While this is only one of the problems identified in the curriculum analysis conducted here, Chang's conclusion, that there is a need for a more multi-layered curriculum that takes discourse considerations into account, certainly seems to be justified.

Overall, what we find in the South Korean national curriculum is a disjunction between the short introductory section and other parts of the document. Although the introductory section signals an approach that is broadly communicatively-orientated, there is little in the remainder of the document to support this except, possibly, (a) two sentences that indicate that English should be used as much as possible in class, (b) the avoidance of any type of syntactic specification, and (c)

the inclusion of an appendix relating to linguistic functions. However, as indicated in *Chapter 3* and above, none of these things does, in fact, necessarily indicate communicative orientation. There are, for example, many advocates of CLT who believe that there is an important place for native languages in additional language classes. Furthermore, while in the very early stages of development of CLT, syntactic specification was sometimes avoided altogether in language classes, there was never, so far as I am aware, a time when language professionals were not themselves expected to be able to use and understand syntactic classification, a use and understanding that can effectively underpin the implicit teaching of grammar. Finally, although there are communicative functions that are generally expressed in formulaic ways, most communicative functions emerge out of the interaction between language and context and so a list of examples of functions makes little pedagogic sense.

The recommendations made in the curriculum document are confused, confusing and contradictory but are presented in a way that does not indicate any uncertainty on the part of the authors. The assumptions underlying the curriculum document appear to be that (a) a broadly communicative orientation will be effective, (b) teacher trainers can, and will, train in ways consistent with the curriculum expectations; and (c) that teachers can, and will, teach in ways consistent with the curriculum. As there are no examples of learning and assessment activities, the assumption must be that the authors believe that their recommendations are sufficiently clear and explicit for teacher trainers, textbook writers and teachers to interpret them and put them into practice without undue difficulty. As much of the content of the literature review (*Chapter 2*) and the findings of the remainder of this research project indicate, this seems not to have been the case.

### **9.2.2 Reviewing a sample of textbooks**

The research question underpinning this aspect of the research project was:

To what extent are the contents of a sample of textbooks designed for the teaching of English in secondary schools in South Korea and approved by the Korean Ministry of Education consistent with the national curriculum and the recommendations and assumptions made in it and what impact is

this consistency, or lack of it, likely to have on teachers and learners of English?

One hundred and fifty five participants in the first questionnaire-based survey conducted as part of this research project (i.e. 87%) indicated that they used textbooks, suggesting that the vast majority of teachers of English in schools in South Korea also do so. For reasons provided in *Chapter 6* (section 6.2), it did not prove possible to determine on the basis of questionnaire participants' responses which textbooks were the most widely used by them. It was therefore decided to contact publishers regarding textbook sales and make a judgment based on their responses. In the event, three textbooks were selected for analysis from those available at secondary school level:

- Middle School English I (Dukki Kim et al., 2010);
- Middle School English II (Dukki Kim et al., 2010); and
- High School English (Chanseung Yi et al., 2012).

These textbooks, along with resources accompanying them, were analysed in relation to five focus points – *language content and presentation; tasks and activities; medium of instruction; approaches to teaching and learning and cultural content.*

#### **9.2.2.1 Language content and presentation**

In none of the textbooks was there found to be any indication of careful attention to the recycling of language focus points once they had been introduced for the first time. Each unit/ chapter of all three textbooks was found to have a high level of linguistic content and linguistic variation (language structures, vocabulary, idiomatic expressions). That linguistic content was prefigured in a way that was selective rather than inclusive, a few examples of sentence/ utterances types (generally under ‘functional’ headings) that were, presumably, intended to be more focal than others being provided. This suggests (although it is not identical to) the type of ‘focus on form’ approach advocated by Long (1991) in which students’ attention is drawn to “linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication” (pp. 45-46)

rather than the more conventional and graded/ progressive ‘focus on forms’ orientation that is characteristic of the structural approach to syllabus design (Krahnke, 1987). The examples of language forms selected for inclusion in introductory sections of units/ chapters were not described in semantico-grammatical terms and did not always appear to be particularly useful in relation to drawing students’ attention to critical aspects of structure and meaning (as in the case of the introduction to Unit 3 of *Middle School English I* where one example sentence involved the use of the present simple tense in the context of characteristics while another involved its use in the context of a temporary state, a contrast that appeared to be coincidental rather than intentional). Total avoidance of explicit references to grammatical categories was often advocated in the early stages of CLT (the ‘strong’ version described by Howatt, 1984). However, encouraging learners to use inductive reasoning (starting from examples) rather than always providing them with explicit grammatical rules is a characteristic of both the ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ versions. At first sight, therefore, the approach adopted in these textbooks appears to be consistent with CLT. In fact, however, any such conclusion is premature: an inductive approach that encourages learners to make structural and semantic inferences on the basis of examples requires much more careful selection and organisation of the examples provided than is evident in these textbooks.

*What we actually have in these textbooks seems to be strict adherence to the mode of presentation suggested by the appendices attached to the national curriculum document. In this sense, it would be true to say that these textbooks are consistent with the national curriculum and the recommendations made in it. The national curriculum includes, as examples of functions, a large number of decontextualised idiomatic expressions. The lack of context creates considerable potential problems in relation to when these expressions can be used appropriately. This is reflected in these textbooks where idiomatic expressions ‘plucked’ from the national curriculum document are sometimes used in ways that are wholly inappropriate (as in the case of a child using the expression ‘Long time no see’ when talking to an elderly gentleman in Middle School English II).*

#### **9.2.2.2 Tasks and activities**

All three of the textbooks analysed were found to include a variety of activities. However, most of these activities were, in terms of the activity types outlined by Littlewood, 2004), *non-communicative* (focusing wholly on the structure of language) or *pre-communicative* (paying some attention to meaning but not involving the exchange of new messages). Activities were often formulaic and artificial, involving matching and rearranging of expressions and/or filling in of blanks and/or a type of repetitive drilling similar to that generally associated with the audio-lingual approach (see, for example, discussion of audio-lingualism in Richards and Rogers, 2001). The language students are expected to use was often provided for them in the form of, for example, expressions that could be used to replace parallel expressions in pre-existing mini-dialogues. Where, as in the case of the activity books, three different versions of tasks/ activities are provided for different students, the differences were found to be generally slight and appeared not to be based on any detectable concept of general ability or linguistic proficiency. Rather, the differences appeared simply to reflect the expectation, expressed in the curriculum documentation, that there would be different ‘levels’ of activity. Clearly, the activities are not presented in these textbooks or in the accompanying teachers’ guides as constituting, in and of themselves, the syllabuses underlying the textbooks and, therefore, the teaching and learning can be described as being ‘task-supported’ rather than ‘task-based’ (see Loschky & Bley-Vroman, 1993). This is consistent with the curriculum documentation. The activity types are also consistent with the curriculum to the extent that they reflect those that are included in achievement standards statements.

*Overall, the textbooks analysed appear to be consistent with the curriculum documentation. Like it, they seem to lack any coherent underlying philosophical positioning.*

#### **9.2.2.3 Medium of instruction**

In two of the textbooks analysed (*Middle School English I* and *II*), instructions and explanations are given in Korean, and words, phrases and sentences are often translated into Korean. Furthermore, although the picture-based dialogues at the core of units include very little translation, most segments of these mini-dialogues are introduced and translated earlier in the unit. This seems unavoidable in view

of the fact that the illustrations do not, in general, help to clarify meaning and there is little or no advice in the teachers' guides about concept introduction. In *High School English*, the situation is very similar except for the fact that sections of texts that are central to the units are not introduced and translated before the texts themselves appear. Nevertheless, since these texts generally include a wide variety of different lexical items, structures and discourse features, and since there is nothing to suggest that all or most of the language included (with, of course, the exception of whatever aspects of the language are intended to be primarily in focus), is already familiar to the learners, it is difficult to see, once again, how translation could be avoided. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the teachers' guide includes translation into Korean of all of these texts and of all newly introduced words and expressions. This, combined with the fact that the teachers' guides often gloss over those aspects of lessons that are likely, for many teachers, to be problematic suggests that the textbook writers assume that translation will be a central part of the teaching.

The impression that translation is fundamental to the approach adopted by the textbook writers seems, at first sight, to be contradicted by the inclusion in all of the teachers' guides of lesson scripts that specify, in English and often at considerable length, more or less exactly what teachers are expected to say at each stage of the lesson (e.g. *Open your books at page 34 and read today's topic aloud*) and, often also what the students might say. What seems to be happening here is that lessons whose core elements rely on translation are surrounded by/encased in a great deal of (often wholly unnecessary) teacher talk that is not adapted to the needs/ proficiency levels of the students and that, therefore, may not be understood by the students. It may be for this reason that some of the sample lessons analysed included translation into Korean by the teacher of everything, or almost everything that was said in English (see *Chapter 7*). The overall impression I gained from all of this is that the appearance of a high level of teacher proficiency in English is regarded as being more important than students' actual English proficiency gains.

*It seems unlikely that the recommendation in the national curriculum that teachers should use English as much as possible in class was intended to be interpreted as a way of authorising textbook writers to provide teachers with lesson scripts that include exactly, or almost exactly what they are expected to say in English at the same time as encouraging an approach to the core of the lesson itself that appears to rely almost exclusively on translation for concept introduction and concept checking purposes. On the other hand, there is nothing in the curriculum document itself that indicates precisely what is meant, in the context of teaching English in South Korean schools, by using English ‘wherever possible’.*

#### **9.2.2.4 Approaches to teaching and learning**

As indicated in *Chapter 3* and above, there seems to be some disjunction between the initial section of the South Korean national curriculum, which appears to advocate a broadly communicative approach, and the remainder of the document, which appears, at some points, to be consistent with some aspects of communicatively orientated teaching and, at other points, to be wholly inconsistent with it. Those things that support a reading of the curriculum as advocating a communicatively-orientated teaching approach include the fact that:

- the word ‘communicate’ is used repeatedly; it is recommended that English is used ‘wherever possible’; there is a complete avoidance of grammatical terminology; there are references to pair work and to the need to be responsive to student capabilities; and one of the appendices highlights functional specification.

The last two items in the above list suggest an early, ‘strong’ version of CLT (as referred to by Howatt, 1984). The first (repeated reference to communication) seems to have been widely interpreted as indicating orientation towards CLT. There is, however, no reason why, on its own, it should be regarded as having this particular implication.

Among those things that militate against the interpretation of the curriculum as advocating CLT in some form are:

- most of the tasks/ activities that appear in achievement standards statements are repetitive and formulaic in nature; the quizzes and tests that are included in the teachers' guides are also largely formulaic.

*Because the curriculum itself provides very little guidance regarding teaching methodologies but seems, implicitly, to be uncertainly poised somewhere between advocating methodologies associated with CLT and methodologies associated with an audio-lingual approach, it is difficult to say with any certainty whether the textbooks analysed are, or are not consistent with the curriculum in terms of teaching methodologies. What it is possible to say is that these textbooks seem to represent the type of unprincipled eclecticism that Larsen-Freeman (2000) has cautioned against. All of them have: (a) aspects that are reminiscent of the style of learning associated with early bilingual textbooks and/ or with phrasebooks (e.g. a heavy reliance on mini-dialogues and mini-dialogue segments); (b) aspects that appear to be consistent with grammar translation (e.g. the use of pre-translated segments in the mini-dialogues and the fact that the teachers' books do not provide/ discuss a range of concept introduction or concept checking strategies; (c) aspects that are reminiscent of audio-lingual methodology; and (d) the occasional appearance of a task that could be interpreted, depending on how it is conducted, as involving authentic communication.*

#### **9.2.2.5 Cultural content**

So far as cultural content is concerned, the South Korean national curriculum is clear about the fact that what is required is language programmes that are culturally eclectic, including aspects of Korean culture and aspects of other cultures associated with countries that are not predominantly English speaking as well as those that are. It does not, however, refer explicitly to cultural hybridity as discussed by, for example, Hermans & Kempen (1998) or cross-cultural or inter-cultural competencies as discussed by, for example, Lusting & Koester (1993).

*The textbooks analysed seem, in general, to reflect the emphasis on cultural inclusiveness that is found in the curriculum, generally avoiding cultural caricature but appearing also to avoid any explicit references to the fact that the English language is used as a lingua franca by many for whom it is not a first language.*

#### **9.2.2.6 Overview response to the second research question**

The vast majority of participants in the questionnaire-based survey reported in *Chapter 4* indicated that they used textbooks. Of those who responded to a question asking them to indicate their degree of satisfaction with these textbooks on a six point scale (with 0 = I hate it/them and 6 = I like it/them very much), almost half (44%) selected categories 4-6, with only 7% selecting categories 0 or 1.

The textbook writers appear to try to follow the curriculum guidelines but fail to do so largely because the guidelines are themselves unclear. Like the South Korean national curriculum itself, the textbooks that were analysed as part of this research project seem to be poised uncertainly between different approaches. While they might, like the curriculum itself, appear at first sight to be communicatively orientated, closer inspection reveals a reality that is very different. These textbooks can be described as being eclectic in terms of their underlying syllabuses, their approach to assessment, and their recommendations and assumptions concerning teaching methodology. However, that eclecticism appears to be largely unprincipled, reflecting the type of largely unprincipled eclecticism that is found in the curriculum documentation itself. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the teachers who participated in this research project were not very enthusiastic about the textbooks they used.

Of those who took part in the teacher-training-centred questionnaire (reported in *Chapter 5*) and answered questions about whether any training programmes they had attended had included advice about textbooks, 71% indicated that these courses had not included any advice about *selecting* textbooks, 55% that they had not included any advice about *evaluating* textbooks and 46% that they had not included any advice about *using* textbooks. The five teachers who took part in

semi-structured interviews were also asked about textbooks. When asked about the textbooks they used, there was general agreement that they were broadly acceptable and that their writers had attempted to include more tasks and activities than had been included in English language textbooks written in South Korea in the past. However, two of the interviewees indicated that they could not find time to include all of these tasks and activities in class bearing in mind the need to prepare their students for examinations. One of them, however, as indicated in the interview transcripts, had reached, in some respects, conclusions similar to those reached here:

I used to try lots of activities shown in the textbook at the beginning, but now I'm not using them anymore because they are not helpful or interesting to me. I assume publishers reckoned they gave weight to communication in the textbook because every chapter has a section for activities - but I don't agree with them. . . . I don't think so [that textbooks have enough tasks and activities]. The activities for pair work are included only in the part that is related to listening dialogues. . . . We have the Activity Book . . . However, to tell the truth, it does not help us at all. It is similar to the main book and does not focus enough on activities. . . . I can see only similar content to the main book in it. I've even noticed that the activity book is not divided up well according to level.

There are some major differences between the findings of this research project as they relate to textbooks and research findings reported by Park and Suh (2003). The textbooks themselves were judged here to be deficient in a number of important respects and the teachers involved in the surveys conducted as part of this research project were, in general, lukewarm about the textbooks they used. However, the 45 teachers involved in a study conducted by Park and Suh (2003), were, in general, positive about five textbooks they were asked to evaluate, noting, in particular, that (a) they contained, compared to those available earlier, a wider variety of activities (including pair work), most of which were learner-centred tasks conducted in meaningful situations and/or which fostered

communication skills, and (b) the teachers' guides were useful in terms of taking teachers through all the steps of lesson preparation and in relation to provision of guidance for task-orientated activities. On the other hand, while the 103 teachers of English who participated in a study conducted by Lim (2014) judged five textbooks they were asked to evaluate to be appropriate in terms of their relationship to the curriculum, they nevertheless noted that they (a) attempted to cover too much language in the time available; (b) lacked intrinsic interest; and (c) had an insufficient number and variety of learning activities. In addition, they considered none of the teachers' guides that accompanied the textbooks to be satisfactory in relation to the provision of guidance concerning the approach to teaching the materials included in the textbooks.

*Overall, the textbooks analysed here were judged to broadly consistent with the curriculum documentation, exhibiting the same type of unprincipled eclecticism that characterises the curriculum documentation itself.*

### **9.2.3 Reviewing the backgrounds, beliefs and classroom practices of a sample of teachers of English**

The research question underpinning this aspect of the research project was:

What are the professional backgrounds, beliefs and practices of a sample of teachers of English in secondary schools in South Korea and how consistent are their backgrounds, beliefs and practices with the recommendations and assumptions made in the national curriculum and the theoretical positioning of its authors?

This research question was approached through two questionnaire-based surveys (the first involving 180 participants; the second involving 97 participants), semi-structured interviews (involving 5 participants) and lesson observations (5 lessons).

Some of the data that emerged from the questionnaire-based surveys and the semi-structured interviews are summarised and discussed below, followed by a discussion of the teaching observations.

### **9.2.3.1 Questionnaire and semi-structured interview responses**

#### **9.2.3.1.1 Training and attitudes towards training**

Of the 180 participants in the first questionnaire-based survey, only 20 (11%) claimed to have a qualification specific to TESOL. While only one (1) of the 97 who participated in the second questionnaire-based survey (the training-focused one) claimed to have a qualification specific to TESOL, 92 claimed to have been involved in some form of in-service training in the teaching of English.

So far as pre-service training is concerned, only the percentage in brackets of those involved in the second questionnaire-based survey indicated that particular areas had been included: *assessed practicum* (58%); *teaching observation* (39%); *teaching methodologies* (34%); *curriculum and syllabus design* (19%); *materials design* (12%). Furthermore, taking both pre-service and in-service training together, only the percentage in brackets indicated that particular areas had been included: *textbook selection* (25%); *advice about making sure that they were responsive to the different learning styles of their students* (30%); *advice about teaching the relationship between full and contracted forms* (31%); *advice about textbook evaluation* (39%); *advice about coping with classes that include learners with different levels of proficiency* (42%); *assistance in analysing English in terms of meaning and form* (47%); *advice about concept checking* (48%); *advice about adapting tasks to suit learners with different levels of proficiency* (48%); *advice about testing and assessment* (49%); *advice about classroom management* (58%); *advice about setting up and timing activities* (51%); *assistance in developing and using classroom language activities* (55%); *advice about correcting learner errors* (56%). In addition, over half of the participants (61%) indicated that they had experienced a number of problems in their teaching that had not been dealt with in their training programmes. It was not, therefore, surprising to find that in spite of the content of the national curriculum, of the 177 who responded to a question asking them to indicate (from a list of possibilities supplied) their methodological preferences, 21% selected ‘structural’ and 16% selected ‘grammar translation’. Of those who selected ‘communicative’ as their preferred teaching approach or one of their preferred teaching approaches (110/ 62%), over one third did not respond to a question asking them to list what they considered to be

important characteristics of communicative language teaching. In addition, of the 116 items provided by the 69 respondents to this question, some were clearly inappropriate (e.g. *main focus is on form; memorising and using minimum basic grammar rules*). In fact, only approximately half were judged to be genuinely characteristic of communicative teaching. In spite of all of this, when asked to indicate which of a number of listed aspects of language teaching they believed they needed to know more about, only 20% selected methodology and only 2% selected learning outcomes.

While the interviewees were generally positive about the training opportunities they had had (particularly in the case of a course taught by practicing teachers), two commented negatively on the contributions by university lecturers; two indicated that the programmes they had attended (taught by native speakers of English) related more to proficiency development than to pedagogy and one indicated that she believed that the training that was available was not sufficiently practical (particularly in the case of a session labelled ‘classroom English’).

*Writing in the first decade of this century, H. S. Kim (2000) and S-D. Kim (2008) observed that in spite of considerable efforts to improve it, high quality training of teachers of English in South Korea remained a goal rather than a reality. Data collected as part of the research project reported here strongly suggest that little has changed, with such training as is currently available often being inadequate, leading to a situation in which teachers may not even be aware that there are things they do not know that could be useful to them.*

#### **9.2.3.1.2 Beliefs and experiences concerning teaching through the medium of English and teachers' English language proficiency**

Many, perhaps most of those involved in the research project reported here saw the issue of teacher proficiency in English as being intimately related to the issue of teaching English through the medium of the target language.

The self-assessed English language proficiency ratings of the respondents to the first questionnaire were high overall, with very few considering themselves to be at level 5 (modest user) or lower on the IELTS scale in any of the 4 skills. Even

so, all of the respondents to the second questionnaire (most of whom were also respondents to the first one) agreed that the expectation that teachers of English would use English as the medium of instruction was unrealistic, as did all of the interviewees. In addition, at least one of them clearly thought that rather than being related to teacher understanding of how best to use English as the medium of instruction (see, for example, Willis, 1996), the issue was almost entirely one of (a) overall teacher proficiency in the target language, and (b) student competencies. This is in spite of the fact that, as indicated in *Chapter 6*, in a communicative context, one in which it is the students who do most of the talking, the expectation that teachers should use English as the only, or main instructional language is not necessarily particularly onerous. Further probing in the context of the semi-structured interviews suggested that the view expressed by one of the respondents to the second questionnaire was a widespread one, as indicated in the extracts (translated by the researcher) below (some of which are also indicative of strategies employed when using English in class)<sup>89</sup>:

You find that some students don't understand when you use lots of English in class, so after all you find yourself using just simple instructions in English. . . . They don't understand when I provide instructions for classroom activities in English just once. So, I repeat them once more and then change them into Korean.

I returned to my place in September after one semester of training. I try to speak English more than before - for example, speaking the English twice and then providing a Korean translation.

English teachers lack the necessary proficiency in English. The young ones who have been teaching for 5, 6 or 7 years generally have a 6 month or 1 year experience of language study abroad. So, their language proficiency is okay. However, English teachers who are over forty definitely only have had experience of English lessons in Korean

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<sup>89</sup> Several extracts are included here because this issue has turned out to be such a critical one.

language in their secondary school days and even in their university days as well. They tend to use Korean in class.

[You] can't use English 100 percent of the time even in the highest class. I know education policies are changing to focus on communication in English. However, we have to maintain a certain level of progress in class as well as preparing for mid-term exams and final exams. Actually, it is impossible to run a class in English when you are supposed to keep up the progress. . . . Also in a high-level class, I think it takes too long to teach even the grammar part in English. It's more effective to teach them in English and Korean mixed.

The teachers' ability to speak English is not actually as bad as people think. The media blames the teachers. They claim that classes cannot be run in English because of the teachers' ability in the language but in reality, there are lots of teachers with very fluent English. It's just that the students can't really understand it.

All of this had led some of those involved in the research to conclude that communicative activities should be primarily the responsibility of assistant teachers who are native speakers of English;

I can see that they [parents] expect lots of English in class. And they seem to want classes to be interesting and easy to understand. . . . They say they wish there were more classes taught by native speaking teachers of English. . . . I hope the Education Office will promote a lot of programmes with native speakers since every school has only one of them currently.

Those who had reached the conclusion that providing schools with more native speakers of English was necessary had done so in spite of the fact that many teaching assistants, almost certainly the vast majority, lack any background in language teaching (Dustheimer & Gillett, 1999) and also in spite of the fact that,

as M. Kim (2010) has indicated, engagement with them can prove counter-productive. In connection with this, it is relevant to bear in mind that Shin's (2007) study, which suggests that at least some Korean teachers of English are resistant to the notion that native speakers of English are necessarily of real value in language classes.

*The research project conducted here indicates that teachers of English in South Korea are experiencing difficulty in attempting to use English as the primary medium of instruction in English classes (which is how they seem to interpret using English ‘whenever possible’ as signalled in the national curriculum). This finding is generally consistent with the literature in this area discussed in Chapter 2 (see, for example, Kim, 2002; Chang, Kim & Choi, 2012). In connection with this, it is relevant to note that several Korean language professionals have indicated that teachers may be focusing on the wrong issues. Thus, for example, J-H. Lee (2007) has noted that the main focus tends to be on “the amount of teachers’ English use rather than its effectiveness on learners’ English acquisition” (p. 336), adding that “[researchers] have begun to recognize pedagogical as well as psychological benefits of using the L1 for instruction”. Furthermore, as Park and Lee (2006) have found, while Korean teachers of English seem generally to believe that the most important characteristic of an effective teacher of English is English language proficiency, their students generally tend to believe that pedagogical knowledge is more important. Furthermore, Shin (2007) found that over half of those involved in a questionnaire-based study that she conducted acknowledged the need for increased use of English in classrooms. The vast majority (81%) did not believe that it was best to use English as the sole means of instruction.*

#### **9.2.3.1.3 Examinations and private education and their impact of examination preparation on teaching**

Examination systems have been identified as a major barrier to the implementation of CLT across Asia (Butler, 2011). In a study conducted by Jeon (2009), the South Korean examination system was placed 13<sup>th</sup> in a list of issues identified by Korean teachers as being problematic in 1998 but had moved up to 6<sup>th</sup> position in 2008. Among the participants in the second questionnaire-based

survey reported here, there was a general feeling that that teachers' primary responsibility was to prepare students for examinations rather than to teach them to communicate in English, something that McGrath (2001) also found. There was, in addition, among almost all of the participants in this research project as a whole, a widespread belief that the South Korean examination system is creating significant problems in relation to attempts to implement a more communicatively-orientated approach to the teaching and learning of English. Furthermore, when asked how the teaching of English could be improved in secondary schools in South Korea, 8% of participants in the first questionnaire-based survey made reference to the need to make changes to the college entrance examination system. While two of the five interview participants insisted on the need to change the examination system if teaching was to change, another indicated that she did not believe it was possible to change the examination system in any fundamental way. In addition, two of them indicated that they did not believe that teachers and pupils were ready for a new examination system. Although the NEAT exam (which was intended to replace the English section of the College Scholastic Ability Test and be more in line with the national curriculum guidelines) has since been abandoned, several of the interviewees had undertaken training in it and were very positive about it (except for the belief that it could lead to even further reliance by some on private education). Even so, one of them stressed the fact that examinations should reflect teaching rather than vice versa. She seemed to believe, furthermore, that the problem is not something that can be resolved by attending to the examination system alone:

First of all, we must establish an appropriate English curriculum. And then it should be well established in classroom circumstances with teachers of English who are sufficiently well trained. Only then should you change the entrance exam to bring it into line with the English curriculum.

The issue of private education was linked by some of the research participants to that of private education, with some indicating that they believed that changing the examination system would lead to an even further increase in the number of parents/ caregivers who enrolled their children in private educational

establishments in order to improve their English, something that would lead to an even greater divide between the poorest members of South Korean society and others.

*There was widespread agreement among participants in this research project that teaching exclusively through the medium of English (which they seemed to associate directly with communicative language teaching) was problematic, especially in a context where the national examination system encouraged a very different type of emphasis. While there was acknowledgment that students needed as much exposure to English as possible, some felt that this was largely the responsibility of teaching assistants who were native speakers of English.*

#### **9.2.3.2 Lesson analysis**

Five lessons, each taught in a secondary school in South Korea, were analysed in terms of four focus points – *language content and presentation; tasks and activities; medium of instruction; approach to teaching and learning*. Four of these lessons had been delivered (and recorded) as demonstration lessons; the other one (the only case in which the teacher's questionnaire and interview responses could be tracked) was recorded by the teacher specifically to give to the researcher. It cannot therefore be assumed that these five lessons are representative of what happens behind closed doors in South Korean classrooms. It does, however, seem reasonable to assume that these lessons were conducted in a way that the teachers believed was expected of them. Certainly, it is known that one of the lessons (the one in which the students took part in a debate) was regarded as being exemplary by the principal of the school in which it was taught.

The lessons were a revelation. Nothing represented an adequate preparation for them – not the literature reviewed, not the analysis of the curriculum documentation or the sample of textbooks, not the questionnaire and interview responses.

The over-riding impression gained in all five lessons was that the teachers felt it necessary to attempt to demonstrate their own oral proficiency in English, either directly or, in one case, indirectly (that is, by translating into Korean almost

everything said in English by the assistant teacher). All of the lessons were teacher-dominated, with, in four cases, teacher talking time far exceeding student talking time. Clearly, therefore, so far at least as four of the South Korean teachers involved are concerned, communicatively-orientated teaching does not appear to include any restriction on teacher talking time.

Two of these lessons, each of which involved a South Korean teacher and an assistant teacher who was a native speaker of English, provided support for Jeon and Lee's (2006) contention that the contribution of native speaking assistant teachers may be considerably less effective than is sometimes supposed. They also provided further support for the views of the majority of those involved in a study conducted by Shin (2007), that is, that knowledge of the South Korean educational system and pedagogic understanding may be considerably more important than oral proficiency.

In the case of both of the lessons involving a Korean teacher and an assistant teacher, the students' contributions were almost wholly limited to memorisation and choral repetition. There were, however, some major differences between the two lessons. In one case, the assistant teacher spoke to the students in English, with the Korean teacher translating almost everything he said; in the other case, the two teachers took turns to speak English to the students, although the assistant teacher's contributions were more extensive than those of the Korean teacher. There was, however, little evidence that the students understood most of what the teachers said. In addition, the teachers misled the students in respect of the meaning/s associated with the structure that constituted the central teaching point ('will' + base form of main verb). In an attempt to make this lesson appear more authentic, the teachers had pre-arranged a video-link with a native speaker of English. However, his language was as artificial as the language that the students had clearly been encouraged to rehearse before the lesson began.

In each of the remaining three lessons, the teachers attempted to include student-centred activities. In the case of two of these lessons, these activities were clearly not communicatively-orientated. The students communicated with one another in

Korean while engaged with the activities. In one of these lessons, the students, dominated by a few who clearly had a higher level of proficiency than the others, did little more than copy text segments. In the second of these two lessons, there were two activities - a ‘running dictation’ (which occupied a small amount of lesson time) and the design of a poster (which was given for homework when time ran out). In the final lesson, conducted entirely in English by the Korean teacher, the students took part in a debate which had clearly been rehearsed extensively in advance. However, the students were clearly attempting to operate at a level that was considerably in advance of their existing competencies and the teacher was also struggling with some aspects of English, the result being that much of what was said, apart from some formulaic interactions, made little coherent sense. While many, possibly most language teachers would almost certainly agree that there are occasions when it is entirely appropriate for fluency to take precedence over accuracy, attempting too much on such occasions can result in the sacrifice of competence on the altar of confidence.

*Writing in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Nunan (2003) claimed that “there has not been a great deal of change from the grammar translation approach in South Korea since the policy and textbooks changed to a communicative orientation in 1995” (p.601). Furthermore, Dusheimer and Gillett (1999) have claimed that “[the] Grammar-Translation Method has been, and continues to be, the preferred method of instruction in Korean schools” (p.9). On the other hand, on the basis of close observation of two language teachers, one Korean, the other English, Mitchell and Lee (2003) reported that although both of the teachers involved claimed allegiance to communicative language teaching (CLT), there were some major differences in how they interpreted it which led to differences in the nature of the classroom discourse and the language learning opportunities available to students. This conclusion seems closer to what was observed in the five lessons analysed here. As indicated at various points throughout this research project, it would seem to be an over-simplification to claim that the policy and textbooks in South Korea are, in fact, unambiguously communicatively orientated. In fact, the theoretical positioning of the authors of the national curriculum as it relates to the teaching and learning of English is far from clear. To claim that*

*teaching has not changed much since the days when grammar translation was dominant would, however, if the evidence of these five lessons is anything to go on, appear to be simply wrong. While translation featured prominently in three of these lessons and while many of the activities in which students were involved in four of them were formulaic and repetitive, neither grammar translation nor audio-lingual methodology as such were in evidence. Nor was there evidence that the lessons were conducted in accordance with the principles of CLT. There was, however, evidence that the teachers were attempting to conform to what, in general, English language teachers appear to believe is required of them in terms of national language policy, that is, that they use English as much as possible in class and include some activities that students conduct in pairs and groups. These two things emerge clearly from the South Korean national curriculum and the textbooks available to teachers.*

#### **9.2.3.3 Overview response to the third research question**

Taken together, the findings of the two questionnaire-based surveys, the interviews and the lesson analyses suggest that teachers of English in South Korean secondary schools, while having access to a significant amount of in-service training, do not have access to the type of training necessary in order to approach their teaching with confidence, understanding how the decisions they make relate to the research-based literature on language teaching and learning. Overall, while they accept that the increasing pace of globalisation and the increasing use of English as a lingua franca throughout the world means that it is important that their students should be exposed to as much spoken English as possible and that the methods that were considered appropriate in the past may no longer be so, they nevertheless believe that too much is now expected of them, particularly in a context where the national examination system appears to be at odds with the curriculum. Many of them appear to believe that the employment of a greater number of teaching assistants who are native speakers of English will resolve some of the difficulties they currently face. Many, while often regretting the impact that tuition in English at private educational establishments has in a context where some have no access to it, appear to accept that parents and caregivers will continue to rely on private education irrespective of the nature of

the curriculum, the ways in which the curriculum is implemented and the examination system.

The teachers involved in this research project seemed to believe that they were expected to use English as the medium of instruction all or most of the time in class even though the curriculum documentation simply states that they should do so ‘whenever possible’. Certainly, none of them questioned what the authors of the national curriculum had in mind when they used the phrase ‘whenever possible’. They also seemed to believe that they were expected to include activities involving pairs and groups of students in class. However, the analysis of the lessons that were analysed as part of this research project, all except one of which were demonstration lessons, suggests that Korean teachers of English may be more intent on demonstrating their own English language proficiency than they are on clearly outlining the objectives of their lessons and demonstrating that their students have achieved them. Whatever their interpretation of student-centredness, it seemed, in general, not to include any expectation that there should be a strict limit on the amount of teacher talking time or to involve the expectation that students should not be encouraged to engage in choral repetition.

#### **9.2.3.4 Brief overview of the findings of the research project as a whole**

According to Nunan (2003, p. 601):

[i]n 1995, the Sixth National Curriculum adopted a communicative, grammatical-functional syllabus. In 2001, the Ministry of Education adopted a policy of teaching English through English, which encourages the use of English in English classes. However, as with other countries in the region, a major problem is that many English teachers simply do not have the proficiency, and therefore the confidence, to teach in English.

The findings of this research project indicate that it is an over-simplification to assert that the South Korean national curriculum for English is either ‘communicative’ in the sense in which this term is now generally understood in recent literature on language teaching or that it includes a grammatical-functional syllabus. There are, as demonstrated in *Chapter 3*, major problems associated with

any attempt to interpret the curriculum documentation, problems that relate to consistency, coherence and transparency. These problems are reflected in textbooks and, in turn, in the teaching that takes place in South Korean classrooms. The problems observed in South Korean classrooms may have less to do with teacher proficiency than they have to do with attempting to implement policy that is inconsistent and incoherent.

Szulc-Kurpaska (1996) has observed that governments and ministries of education around the world are framing policies and recommending practices in the language area without adequately considering their impact on the lives of teachers and students. I believe that professional researchers in the area of language education around the world are making recommendations that are often both unclear and largely untested without considering their impact on ministries of education and, hence, on teacher trainers and textbook writers and, ultimately, teachers and students. The problems that have been commented on in relation to the teaching of English in South Korea are certainly not confined to South Korea. Nor are they confined to Asia. These are not problems that teachers alone need to own. They are problems that should lead all of us involved in language education to reconsider some of the assumptions we have made over the past few decades.

### **9.3 Limitations of the research**

There are a number of limitations associated with the research project reported here. The first of these relates to the fact that it did not prove possible to ensure that each of the teachers whose sample lessons were analysed had participated in the semi-structured interviews and that each of those who participated in the semi-structured interviews had taken part in both of the questionnaire-based surveys. If it had been possible to do this, the beliefs of teachers as reported in early stages of the research could have been compared with their actual classroom practices. In the event, this proved possible in only one case since only one of the teachers who took part in the first stage of the research (the questionnaire-based surveys) agreed to take part in a semi-structured interview and to supply a videotaped lesson for analysis.

A second limitation relates to the fact that it was not possible to be present while the lessons that were analysed took place. This was because none of the teachers who had indicated at the end of their questionnaires that they would be willing to take part in further aspects of the research was prepared to permit me to attend one of their lessons. In one case, a lesson was recorded by a teacher specifically for use in the research project. In the other cases, the lessons analysed were demonstration lessons that had been delivered in the precedence of adjudicators and recorded at the time of delivery. Under these circumstances, it is not possible to determine whether these lessons are actually typical of lessons that take place in South Korean secondary school classrooms in a day-to-day basis. Even so, analysis of these lessons proved very useful in terms of determining what these teachers believed was expected of them.

A further limitation of the research is the fact that teacher training was viewed entirely through the eyes of teacher participants. It would have been useful to have followed up on teacher observations about teacher training by interviewing some of those who provide pre-service and in-service training in order to gain some insight into how they interpret the national curriculum, how they respond to the textbooks available to teachers, and what they include in their training programmes. This is something that would have been done if there had been more time available.

#### **9.4 Research contribution**

Instead of focusing on a single issue, this research project was more inclusive, adopting a mixed methods approach to the exploration of a range of issues which impinge on the teaching and learning of English in secondary schools in South Korea. Although language teacher cognition, involving links between teachers' professional knowledge and beliefs and their actual classroom practices, was at the core of the research project, this was considered in the context of analysis of the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum as it relates to the teaching and learning of English and analysis of a sample of textbooks that are widely used in secondary school classrooms. This contextualisation proved to be very valuable in terms of (a) the contribution that the research project makes to understanding what is currently happening in relation to the teaching and learning of English in South Korean

secondary schools, and (b) its contribution to understanding *why* it is happening. Analysing the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum in detail, particularly doing so in the context of an account of some of the major changes and developments in the teaching of additional languages that have taken place since the middle of the last century (see *Chapter 4*), highlighted some critical problems associated with any attempt to make coherent sense of the curriculum documentation. In doing so, it helped to explain some of the problems associated with the textbooks that were analysed, textbooks whose authors had clearly attempted to be as faithful as possible to what they understood to be the intentions of the authors of the curriculum. Taken together, the analysis of the curriculum documentation and the analysis of a sample of textbooks approved by the Korean Ministry of Education provided a context in which the beliefs and practices of the teachers were more readily explicable.

This research project indicates that the problems associated with the teaching of English in South Korean schools are as much to do with the curriculum, teacher training and textbooks as they are to do with the things that are usually identified (the nature of entrance exams, for example) as issues of significance.

### **9.5 The implications of the findings of this research project**

Since, in general, there is little point in highlighting problems unless some solutions are suggested, readers might expect to be provided here with some indication of what could be done to alleviate the problems identified in relation to the teaching and learning of English in South Korean secondary schools. However, the problems identified start from the curriculum documentation itself and run throughout the entire system. For this reason, I believe that nothing short of a complete review of the system that is accompanied by major changes is likely to have any significant impact. The question of whether the South Korean government, having already spent so much in an attempt to improve the teaching and learning of English, would be prepared to finance such a major review is something that cannot be answered at this stage. However, I believe that undertaking such a review would be much less costly than continuing to shore up a failing system. Furthermore, if such a review were undertaken in a spirit of genuine openness to various different theoretical and practical perspectives,

including those of South Korean teachers of English, it could result in a dramatic improvement even in the relatively short term.

### **9.6 Recommendations for future research**

There are some specific things that were not done as part of this research project that could usefully be done in the future. These include conducting research that is directed primarily towards finding out as much as possible about who is engaged in language teacher training in South Korea, what pedagogic backgrounds the trainers have, whether they themselves have been trained, and what their pedagogic beliefs and training practices are. It would also be very useful to conduct a research project involving South Korean teachers of English with language teacher cognition at its core in which the same teachers contributed to all of the various aspects of the project. More pressing than either of these, it seems to me, is the need for a research project that focuses on how best to conduct a thoroughgoing redesign of the South Korean national curriculum for English (including the examination system) followed by detailed consideration of how a new curriculum could best be implemented. This would involve a consideration of how the personnel involved should be selected, who they should consult and how they should operate.

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