

# Korea TESOL Journal

Volume 11, Number 1



Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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*The Korea TESOL Journal* is a peer-refereed journal, welcoming previously unpublished practical and scholarly articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language. The Journal particularly focuses on articles that are relevant and applicable to the Korean EFL context. The Journal is scheduled to release two issues annually.

As the Journal is newly committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to the application of theory to practice in our profession, submissions reporting relevant research and addressing implications and applications of this research to teaching in the Korean setting are particularly welcomed.

The Journal is also committed to the fostering of scholarship among Korea TESOL members and throughout Korea. As such, classroom-based papers, i.e., articles arising from genuine issues of the English language teaching classroom, are welcomed. The Journal has also expanded its scope to include research that supports all scholars, from early-career researchers to senior academics.

Areas of interest include, but are not limited, to:

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## About KOTESOL

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Korea TESOL, Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (KOTESOL) is a professional organization of teachers of English whose main goal is to assist its members in their self-development and to contribute to the improvement of ELT in Korea. KOTESOL also serves as a network for teachers to connect with others in the ELT community and as a source of information for ELT resource materials and events in Korea and abroad.

Korea TESOL is proud to be an Affiliate of TESOL (TESOL International Association), an international education association of almost 13,000 members with headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, as well as an Associate of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), an international education association of over 3,500 members with headquarters in Canterbury, Kent, UK.

Korea TESOL was established in October 1992, when the Association of English Teachers in Korea (AETK) joined with the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE). Korea TESOL is a not-for-profit organization established to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons associated with the teaching and learning of English in Korea. In pursuing these goals, Korea TESOL shall cooperate with other groups having similar concerns.

Korea TESOL is an independent national affiliate of a growing international movement of teachers, closely associated with not only TESOL and IATEFL, but also with PAC (The Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies), consisting of JALT (the Japan Association for Language Teaching), ThaiTESOL (Thailand TESOL), ETA-ROC (English Teachers Association of the Republic of China/Taiwan), FEELTA (Far Eastern English Language Teachers Association, Russia), and most recently with PALT (the Philippine Association for Language Teaching, Inc.). Korea TESOL is also associated with CamTESOL (Cambodia) and ACTA (the Australian Council of TESOL Associations).

The membership of Korea TESOL includes elementary school, middle school, high school, and university-level English teachers as well as teachers-in-training, administrators, researchers, material writers, curriculum developers, and other interested individuals.

Korea TESOL has ten active chapters throughout the nation: Busan-Gyeongnam, Daegu-Gyeongbuk, Daejeon-Chungcheong, Gangwon, Gwangju-Jeonnam, Jeju, Jeonju-North Jeolla, Seoul, Suwon-Gyeonggi, and Yongin-Gyeonggi, as well as numerous International members. Members of Korea TESOL are from all parts of Korea and many parts of the world, thus providing Korea TESOL members the benefits of a multi-cultural membership. Approximately thirty percent of the members are Korean.

Korea TESOL holds an annual international conference, a national conference, workshops, and other events, while its chapters hold monthly workshops, annual conferences, symposia, and networking events. Also organized within Korea TESOL are numerous SIGs (Special Interest Groups) – Reflective Practice, Professional Development, Young Learners, Christian Teachers, Research, Multi-Media & CALL, etc. – which hold their own meetings and events.

Visit [www.koreatesol.org](http://www.koreatesol.org) for membership information.



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## Preparing Students for Transition: Challenges and Solutions

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**Sue Garton**

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The introduction of early language learning, especially English, is now a global phenomenon that has attracted increasing interest from researchers at both the policy level (see, for example, Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011) and the pedagogical level (see, for example, Enever, 2011). However, one very important consequence of this trend has been largely ignored: the impact of the introduction of languages into the primary curriculum on the transition to subsequent levels of schooling. And yet, as Cameron (2003) noted, “it is not a minor change that can be left to young learner experts, but a shift that will have knock-on effects for the rest of ELT, particularly secondary level teaching and teacher education” (p. 105). This article reports on a British Council-funded research project<sup>1</sup> that investigated the main issues that primary and secondary school teachers<sup>2</sup> perceive about transition and the challenges they face. The article also looks at what local solutions exist to transition issues and whether these have the potential for international relevance.

### INTRODUCTION

In spite of the widespread introduction of languages into primary schools and the seemingly obvious “knock-on effects” mentioned by Cameron (2003), there appears to be remarkably little research into any aspect of the transition from primary to secondary school, and what research there is tends to focus on learner attitudes and attainment in general. Thus, West et al. (2010), for example, carried out a large-scale longitudinal study looking at the factors affecting pupils’ experiences of

transition and the effects on later attainment, while Sirsch (2003) looked at children's perceptions of the opportunities and challenges afforded by transition in Austria.

The small body of work that has been done on effective transition practices, mainly in the U.K. (see, for example, Evangelou et al., 2008; Zeedyk et al., 2003), report very similar factors. In particular, good practices identified include, for example, the use of "bridging materials"; close cooperation and information-sharing between primary and secondary schools; visits by teachers, pupils, and parents to secondary schools; mentoring of primary school by secondary school students; and talks for primary school students by teachers and students from secondary schools. The pupils themselves in the Evangelou et al. (2008) study identified practices such as help from secondary schools in familiarizing students with the school, a gradual introduction of rules, and special inductions as particularly helpful. However, Evangelou et al. noted that such practices are not necessarily widespread in the U.K., and there is huge variation between local authorities (responsible for secondary admission procedures at the time).

The studies reported so far concern the transition phase in general and are not specifically concerned with languages. With reference to the U.K. context and the teaching of modern foreign languages (MFLs), Driscoll et al. (2004) reported that around half of the primary schools surveyed who offered MFL had no transition arrangements for languages with secondary schools. Secondary school teachers in particular were concerned about the impact of early language learning and reported a lack of time and resources to liaise with their primary school colleagues. Similar issues were identified by Bolster et al. (2004), who listed the key considerations that need to be addressed if transition in language learning is to be smooth. They identified the aims of foreign language learning, the pedagogical approaches used, who should teach languages at primary school, and the impact of diversification at the secondary level as the main factors to take into account. Amongst a number of obstacles and constraints identified, the participants in their study acknowledged the challenge of dealing with the wide variety in language learning experiences of pupils in secondary school classes. This was, in particular, a result of the large number of primary schools the pupils came from, and therefore continuity of the curriculum was virtually impossible. Moreover, there was no differentiation for pupils who had studied languages in primary school, and teachers tended to focus on reassuring

those who had no prior language learning experience rather than encouraging those who did, with potential consequences on the motivation of those with an early language learning background.

Although the above-mentioned studies are focused mainly on the U.K. context, the issues identified are likely to be similar in many countries that seem to be struggling to implement systematically the kind of links that would assist schools, students, and teachers with effective transition. Mahoney (2012) and Kanno (2007), for example, while referring specifically to Japan, both identified lack of continuity in the curriculum as a big problem. As Kanno (2007) stated, “High schools continue to assume zero proficiency when [students] start their programs” (p. 68).

The issue of support for teachers, especially at the primary level, has been raised by Mahoney (2012) and Kwon (2006), for example. Mahoney argued for the need to support primary teachers in Japan to deal with the introduction of compulsory foreign language teaching in 2011, while Kwon noted that in-service primary teachers in Korea need to be taught about secondary English education. In Europe, Drew, Oostdam, and van Toorenburg (2007) found that a high proportion of primary teachers in the Netherlands and Norway had no formal qualifications to teach English, nor had they ever attended training courses. Moreover, only a quarter of them claimed to know about the secondary syllabus and methodology.

As with other studies, Mahoney (2012) identified building links between primary and secondary school teachers as a key source of support in ensuring successful transition, a point also made by Kwon (2006) for Korea. Mahoney found that primary teachers in particular were keen to establish links, and secondary Japanese teachers of English (JTEs) showed a high level of interest in an inter-school curriculum. Kwon maintained that the curricula at both levels needs to be developed to ensure smooth and close connections and that secondary and primary school textbooks should be more closely linked “to ensure a spiral development of the educational content” (p. 84).

Analyses relating to policy in the European context have raised similar issues. Noting that research on transition in foreign language education is “nearly non-existent,” Rosa (2010, p. 11) reported on a major collaborative project, Pr-Sec-Co (Primary and Secondary Continuity), among universities in seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland) that sought to

analyze the problem and make recommendations for smoother transition.

In almost all the countries included in Rosa's research, although the transition between the two levels is mentioned in policy documents, there appeared to be no real continuity in the syllabus or in teaching practice, and no guidelines to assist teachers. The exception was Sweden, where the curriculum encompasses all 12 years of schooling and assessment is continuous at key stages.

The strategies recommended by the project for strengthening transition reflected those identified in other research and were the following: (a) regular institutionally supported meetings for transition teachers, (b) systematic meetings for students and information for parents, (c) transitional materials that could be locally adapted, (d) bridging tasks that allow for engagement by both primary and secondary students (e.g., creating stories for each other), and (e) records of student achievement (e.g., through a widely used tool such as the European Language Portfolio).

This brief overview of previous research in transition shows a number of common challenges as well as strategies that seem to be widely applicable as potential solutions. The main challenges identified are the lack of a continuous curriculum, inadequate or no training for teachers, inappropriate resources, and lack of contact and cooperation between primary and secondary schools. However, all the previous studies discussed are relatively limited in their geographical spread, and very few are specifically about English language teaching, which is a global phenomenon.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The data presented here are part of a wider project that aimed to obtain English language teachers' perspectives on the transition from primary to secondary school. The main questions in the larger study were (a) What are the main teaching and learning issues that primary and secondary teachers perceive about transition? (b) What are ELT teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in relation to transition and what challenges do they face? (c) What similarities and differences in transition issues can be identified across different international contexts?

The study falls principally within a qualitative interpretive-exploratory paradigm (Dörnyei, 2007), the main goal being to obtain an “insider” or *emic* (Burns, 2010; van Lier, 1988) perspective on the key construct of primary-secondary transition.

Quantitative data were obtained through an international survey of teacher perceptions of transition and their roles and responsibilities in this phase of schooling. The cross-sectional survey was provided both electronically through Survey Monkey and via hard copy to accommodate participants with limited or no technological access. This approach allowed for geographically diverse samples of data to be collected in an efficient, economic, and standardized manner (de Vaus, 2002; Dörnyei, 2009) and resulted in 884 responses from 62 countries, of which 395 were from teachers at the primary level while 489 were from the secondary level. The survey responses drew on non-probability “opportunity” sampling, which, together with the uneven distribution of responses (four countries – Turkey, Portugal, Malaysia, and Spain – accounted for 424 responses), means that no generalizations can be made. Moreover, it should be recognized that survey data represent reported practices rather than provide conclusions about actual practices.

Two versions of the survey were available, depending on the level the teacher taught, but both covered similar areas: information about the local context, strategies for helping students move, support available, and teachers’ views.

Qualitative data were obtained primarily through interviews with teachers at both levels in Cambodia, China, Ethiopia, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Russia, Serbia, and the United Arab Emirates. The interviews ranged from more formal, recorded research interviews to more casual “chats” with teachers. This range of locations gave a wide geographical spread and allowed for the discussion of issues of transition with both primary and secondary teachers.

This article focuses in particular on

- whether teachers consider that children are well prepared for the transition from primary to secondary school;
- what challenges teachers face in the transition process;
- what strategies are used or could be used to facilitate the process.

## FINDINGS

Before presenting the findings on specific issues around transition, it is useful to give some background information about the survey respondents.

Of the 884 teachers who responded to the survey, 80% were female and 20% were male, and the majority worked in urban state schools. The majority of children move from primary to secondary school at age 12 or older, and 65% of secondary school teachers said their school received students from three primary schools or fewer. Only 32% of the respondents said that they had received any special training to deal with transition; and of these, 58% said it was as part of their teaching qualification, while 39% said it was school-based, 29% said they had attended a workshop, and 28% a special course.

It is against this background that the teachers expressed their views.

### Preparation for Transition

Teachers at both levels were asked if they believed English teaching at primary school prepared children well for secondary school. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was some discrepancy in the views of the teachers at the different levels. Primary school teachers were asked, "In your view, does English teaching at Level 1 in your country prepare the students well for Level 2?" The answers were fairly evenly distributed, with 39% saying "yes," 30% saying "no," and 31% saying "maybe." However, when secondary school teachers were asked, "In your view, are the students who move from Level 1 English teaching in your country well prepared for learning English in Level 2 schools?", the results were very different. Only 12% of the teachers responded "yes," while 55% said "no" and 33% said "maybe."

The teachers gave a number of reasons why they thought the children were not well prepared. The most common reason identified by primary school teachers was the wrong sort of teaching at that level, both in terms of method and syllabus, together with a strong orientation towards preparing for examinations. A number of the other reasons given closely reflected the more general challenges identified by primary school teachers in previous research (Copland, Garton, & Burns, 2013; Garton et al., 2011). These included lack of training for teachers to teach

young learners, too few hours a week, lack of resources, and mixed-level groups. Unequal access to English, especially the divide between urban and rural contexts; the lack of value given to English at primary level; and the change in teaching methods from primary to secondary schools were also given as reasons for the lack of preparation. For example, as one teacher expressed it,

Large classes; poor command of language among many teachers; not all teachers are English language optionists, therefore they are NOT trained to teach English but could be just fluent users of the language. Many of these teachers lack accuracy in the use of language themselves. Due to an exam oriented system, there's an over emphasis on writing. Doubt if there is any listening in many of these classrooms. Reading as a skill is sporadic only. Writing tasks are usually using ready-made models to copy from. Therefore, spontaneity is lacking. (Malaysia)

Secondary teachers identified the lack of training for primary school teachers together with the sort of preparation children receive at primary school as the main reasons for the difficulties in transition. They too listed unequal access to English, too few hours, mixed-level groups, and poor resources; but they also added large classes as a factor.

Interestingly, as can be seen from the list of factors above, at both levels, the main reasons given for lack of preparedness concern teaching methods and teachers' preparation, or teaching conditions. The actual transition and strategies (or lack of strategies) in place for dealing with this phase are rarely mentioned.

On the other hand, when teachers stated that children were well prepared, it was often because there was no transition as such. In other words, children moved from primary to secondary level within the same school, ensuring continuity at all levels. Other reasons given for good preparation reflected previous research and mainly concerned cooperation between levels (see below for further discussion).

## **Challenges**

The teachers identified a number of challenges that they faced in ensuring an effective transition.

1. Syllabus documents do not take into account continuity of content and methodology in the transition from primary to secondary school. Very often it seems that the introduction of English into primary school has not led to any change in the secondary school curriculum. The result is that children often find themselves starting from the beginning again and can feel demotivated or inadequate (Cameron, 2003):

The central problem is starting all over again: many schools start from the beginning as if nothing has been done. (Portugal)

2. There are often no systematic training opportunities, in particular those relating specifically to transition. The lack of adequate or appropriate training for primary school teachers in particular has been widely identified as a key obstacle to effective language learning (see, for example, Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008). Even where such training exists, it does not seem to deal with transition. As one secondary school teacher suggested, it is necessary to

make it possible for teachers [to] attend useful and practical seminars, conferences, workshop to raise their qualification by exchanging and presenting ideas, techniques and methods that would help teachers make this transition easier and more effective. (Lithuania)

3. In many countries, contact between teachers at different levels may be ad hoc or non-existent. Possibly the biggest obstacle to effective transition is the lack of systematic and organized contact between the two levels of schooling. Whilst teachers and schools may organize activities, this is rarely supported by governments and ministries, and relies on the individuals involved.

I think the biggest problem is the lack of communication between level 1 and level 2 school teachers. [. . .] and the teachers there haven't got enough information about the students. (Croatia)

4. There is often a lack of (appropriate) resources. Lack of appropriate resources has also been identified in previous research as a challenge, particularly for primary school teachers. As this teacher stated,

Another important reason is the lack of resources the schools have to teach a foreign language such as, books, cds, smart boards, laptops, ect [sic]. (Colombia)

This comment refers to resources in general. However, there was no reference in our data to specific resources to help with transition, except in the preparation of in-house materials (see below).

5. Students and parents are not always aware of the different expectations at secondary school. A number of teachers pointed to the affective and emotional challenges that students face in the move to secondary school, as well as differences in curriculum and methodology:

This transitional period is very difficult for students, they are in a completely new surroundings, they are forming new relationships, they have to develop new social bounds and, last but not least, they have assess their level of language competence in accordance to their peers' knowledge and skills. On top of that, there is a teacher who is trying to instil in them new rules of language behaviour. Mostly, they are at a loss. And, so is the teacher. (Poland)

6. Students transitioning to secondary school have different levels of English competence. As mentioned above, mixed-level classes was identified as one of the reasons why children are not well prepared for transition, and different levels of language ability was also identified as a key challenge. As one secondary school generally takes pupils from a number of different primary schools, the children will inevitably come for different experiences:

Some are from the big cities and some are from the poor areas and their English level is quite different. And also, in the same school some of them are quite different. Some of them are much better and some of them are poor. So their age maybe their age is in Junior 1 but actually their level is primary 3 or 4. But in China's system we have to keep them in Junior 1. So that's quite difficult for them to follow the teacher. (China)

7. Primary and secondary schools often have different pedagogical aims and methodological approaches. Methodological differences were briefly mentioned in connection with general expectations above, but the

specific challenge posed by different teaching approaches was underlined by a number of teachers. Language teaching methodology at primary school is generally more informal and based on play, while at secondary school, it may be more grammar-based, causing difficulties in adaptation for children.

Level 2 features significantly more formal work in English (grammar, vocabulary), as opposed to level 1, which is highly informal and more well-rounded. (South Korea).

So far, this article has focused on the negative side of transition, looking at why children are not well prepared and the challenges teachers face. However, the survey also gave a number of actual instances of good practice as well as suggestions for solutions to the challenges, and it is to these that we now turn.

## **Possible Solutions**

Both primary and secondary school teachers were asked to describe the strategies used in their context to facilitate transition, or to suggest strategies that they thought would work. A number of good ideas and examples showed what is both possible and feasible across a variety of contexts, as well as more ambitious and far-reaching solutions. Four main areas of activity can be identified: curriculum change, contact between teachers, bridging activities, and introductory activities at secondary school. Each one is described in turn below.

### **Curriculum Change**

With the widespread introduction of English into primary schools, it seems clear that the language curriculum now needs to be viewed as a whole across levels of schooling, so the main solution to the challenges in managing transition would be to have a continuous curriculum across primary and secondary school. Where this is happening, transition appears to be more successful, in spite of the potential difficulties posed by children coming from different primary schools:

The strategies used for helping students move from level 1 to 2 in Cuba are all contained in the curriculum and syllabuses for teaching English. All the syllabuses are designed for the teacher to follow a

hierarchy in the level of the contents he/she has to teach, and when and how he/she has to teach it. (Cuba)

Curriculum change is usually a matter for national governments or at least regional authorities and cannot generally be influenced by teachers or schools. However, the survey respondents identified a number of strategies and solutions that can be enacted at the school level.

### **Contact Between Teachers**

More contact and the need to share experiences were emphasized strongly in the survey and interview data, with a number of different solutions and examples of good practice given:

a. Ensure contact between primary and secondary teachers. Systematic and principled contact between levels can be achieved at the school level and does not necessarily have to involve time-consuming visits, as the experience below shows:

We use a curriculum mapping site so that teachers from level 1 and level 2 can view each other's curriculum. (Turkey)

b. Organize meetings across schools but within levels. Whilst contact between those working at the different levels of schooling is key, sharing experiences at the same level can also be useful for teachers, especially for those in secondary schools:

We hold what we call school cluster workshops where teachers of English in level 2 meet and discuss common problems and find possible solutions to the problems in the teaching of English in secondary schools. (Malawi)

c. Organize reciprocal observation and teaching. This solution may be more complex to organize, but reciprocal observation would help address challenges around changes in teaching approach from one level of schooling to the next. If teachers are aware of how their counterparts teach, then they are more likely to be able to prepare the children for the transition.

Last term we had the demonstration classes, compare the primary

school the teachers' teaching method and the JHS teachers' methods.  
(Interview, China)

d. Organize periods of exchange where primary teachers teach in secondary schools and vice versa. One further stage in sharing experiences can be the exchange of teachers between levels. Although the teacher's experience in the extract below was not planned for this purpose, it is clear that he/she gained a much better understanding of primary school language teaching and was able to use that understanding to help his/her secondary pupils.

The school send me to primary school because there was a lack of English teachers. . . . But in the end it was the best experience I could make and so I got a much better feeling how to teach the little ones. And I still benefit from these two years at primary school teaching level 2 [grade 2] students and the older ones. (Germany)

#### **“Bridging” Activities**

The teachers also identified a number of activities that can be carried out to prepare students for the transition. Some of these concern in-class activities, but a number seem to involve summer courses or other extra activities.

a. At primary school, gradually introduce the more formal learning approaches of secondary school. While teacher exchanges may be logistically difficult to manage, giving primary school students a “taster” of what they are likely to experience at secondary school may be more feasible:

In the final year of level 1 we give lessons in the rather similar way with level 2, as in the teaching method, the English structure, we used in class, the form of exams, etc. So students will face less difficulty when they enter level 2. (China)

b. Introduce primary school students to the secondary syllabus before they move schools. Whilst the previous example concerned work done in scheduled classes, the Malaysian experience below introduces the transition through an interim course, which clearly bridges the transition between the two levels in terms of English. The Hong Kong experience

below is a more general preparation for the move:

We introduce level 2 English to those who have just finished level 1 during the “Holiday Programme” so that they will be prepared for level 2. (Malaysia)

The children go through a bridging course in the summer before they go to secondary. It is only about a week and it introduces the culture, the rules, the subjects of secondary schools. They are run by the secondary schools. (Interview, Hong Kong)

c. Organize portfolios of work that primary school students can show secondary school teachers. A complaint of teachers at secondary level was the lack of adequate information about the students’ levels and abilities when they leave primary school. One solution could be the following, adopted in Hong Kong:

Teachers always ask them to keep a portfolio of the writing they do. So they can show this when they go for a secondary school interview. (Interview, Hong Kong)

d. Work with parents and students to ensure that they are fully informed. Managing both parents’ and students’ expectations would seem to be one of the keys to successful transition, as some of the anxiety for the students can be removed while parents will be better able to support their children.

Our school administration together with the class teachers organize visits for children to level 2 schools, hold information meetings for parents of students who are moving. (Lithuania)

### **Introductory Activities at Secondary School**

The final set of strategies identified concern activities at the beginning of secondary school that can allow a gradual introduction to the expectations at this level.

a. At the beginning of secondary school, provide students with a period of time for consolidation of what they know. When students arrive in secondary school from a number of different primary schools,

the common response seems to be to start again from the beginning. One alternative is to use an introductory text and/or set aside some time for review and revision:

The department writes a 'pre-text' to basically review and bridge what incoming students should know in relation to what they need to know to start the textbook. (Japan)

We try to cover all material that has been learned in the first level and revise. We also allow a few weeks for the revision. (Turkey)

b. Acknowledge in a positive way the English that students have already learned. Given the problems that can be caused by lack of recognition of previous achievement, acknowledging the positive value of what students have done at primary school seems fundamental, as this teacher notes:

Take into account they have learnt more at primary school than secondary school teachers often think. Work in a way that allows revision for poor students but also improvement for good students. (Spain)

As can be seen from the discussion above, although transition remains a widespread issue, there are a number of positive lessons that can be learned from the numerous examples of good practice identified in the data.

## DISCUSSION

The study reported here has a number of limitations, in particular the unevenness in the geographical location of the survey respondents. Therefore, none of the findings can be generalized. For this reason, the presentation of the data has, on the whole, not used actual numbers but has focused on the content of the responses and in particular on those that may be more widely relevant on the basis of previous research into language teaching, especially in primary schools. Moreover, the limited nature of survey responses means that it is not possible to investigate further the details of the challenges in transition or the strategies in place

to address them. Further ethnographic research is needed for a more detailed qualitative picture. However, the data presented here do provide a snapshot of transition from the point of view of the teachers themselves and constitute important examples of what is currently possible as well as desirable for the future.

Overall, it can be concluded that transition is currently dependent above all on individual teachers or individual schools. More rarely, there may be activities at a district level or across groups of schools. Such activities particularly focus on promoting contact amongst teachers at the two levels, meetings with parents and students to talk about the transition, and school visits. These activities are usually general, however, and are not specific to languages.

There is very little evidence of transition being managed at a higher level; and in many cases, national policies seem to hinder rather than facilitate transition. One example of this is the general lack of curriculum reform following the introduction of English into primary school, meaning that secondary syllabuses have remained the same and do not take into account any previous language learning experiences.

A final issue is that many teachers are not even aware that transition is an issue, underlining the lack of initiative on the part of education authorities at all levels. As one teacher put it,

This aspect of language teaching has not been considered by me earlier but this questionnaire is broadening my teaching horizon and I will do something about it very soon. (Pakistan)

## CONCLUSION

The transition from the primary to the secondary level in English language teaching and learning has grown in importance with the widespread introduction of English into the primary curriculum at an ever-earlier age. Yet in spite of the fact that this trend started more than 20 years ago, there is still very little evidence that transition is being dealt with in a systematic and principled way on any sort of scale. This article has underlined the challenges that this situation presents for teachers but has also highlighted some of the excellent work that is being done to address the situation by individual teachers, groups of

teachers, and schools. The hope is that there are useful ideas and suggestions that can be adopted more widely, but also that the issue itself is given more attention, not only by teachers but also especially by educational authorities. Ultimately, if the introduction of early language learning is to be truly effective, it is necessary to ensure continuity across all levels of schooling, and that is the responsibility of education authorities.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The project, "Key factors and challenges in transition from primary to secondary schooling in ELT: An international perspective," was led by Anne Burns; and the project team consisted of Anne Burns, Fiona Copland, Sue Garton, Muna Morris Adams, and Julianne Schwarz.

<sup>2</sup> In the original survey, the terms *Level 1* and *Level 2* were used. In this article the terms *primary school* and *secondary school* will be used for convenience, whilst recognizing that this is problematic, as levels of schooling differ from country to country.

## Developing a Personal Theory of Teaching Practice: The Role of Reflection

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Developing a personal theory of teaching practice is the goal of a number of language teacher development programs. Being able to say what they do and why, with the aim of improving their teaching/learning environments, enables teachers to grow professionally and personally. This paper focuses on the role of reflection in this process. It draws on Brookfield's notion of four lenses to develop the skill of reflecting systematically and critically. It gives practical examples of the reflective process using narrative data from diverse teaching contexts.

### INTRODUCTION

The theme of the 2013 KOTESOL International Conference, *The Road Less Traveled: From Practice to Theory*, created the opportunity to highlight an aspect of teachers' work that is often neglected: that of theorizing from practice. Instead of perpetuating the divide between theorists and practitioners the conference theme put teachers and their classroom practice squarely in focus. In doing so, it acknowledged them as creators of theory, validating what they do.

Many teacher development programs, mine included, have as a goal for their participants, the development of a personal theory of teaching practice (Freeman, 2003). The articulation of a theory requires that teachers develop an awareness of their practice, make explicit the beliefs that undergird it and the principles that drive it, generate explanations for what happens in their classrooms, and plan actions as a result of this

process. Being able to say what they do and why, with the aim of improving their teaching/learning environments, enables teachers to grow professionally and personally, and in doing so, to give meaning and value to what they do.

As teachers, we all theorize from our practice; and if we take seriously our own learning and development, we must recognize and generate our own contextually relevant theories of practice. Two master's programs that I have been connected with have had teachers articulate a personal theory of teaching practice as part of their coursework. In the first program, it took the form of a synthesis paper for a course on approaches to language teaching, and in the second, an overarching document that introduced their portfolio. In both cases, the teachers have had to synthesize their conceptions of learners and learning, teachers and teaching, and language of the contexts in which teaching and learning occur, and of the outcomes they anticipate.

## A THEORY OF PRACTICE

The metaphor for this article is that of a road, with practice as the starting point and a personal theory of teaching practice as the destination. The means by which we get to our destination, I believe, is reflection. It is by reflecting on our practice that we can learn to really see what is happening in our classrooms and generate explanations for this. This understanding can be distilled into a theory. I will begin by outlining what I mean by "personal theory" and "practice," and why developing a personal theory can be of benefit to us, and then focus on the role of reflection, in particular, the role of critical reflection in this process. In terms of the latter, I draw largely on the work of Stephen Brookfield. He has written widely on the topics of adult education, critical reflection, and teaching. His book, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (1995) has been influential in our thinking about our practice as teacher educators at Marlboro College and in developing theories about why we do what we do. I have come to realize that reflection, even systematic reflection, alone, is not enough. Unless we can become critically reflective, we run the risk of leaving unexamined some of the deeply embedded assumptions we have about teaching, learning, and the social contexts in which they occur – we remain in our comfort zone.

What is meant by a “theory of practice?” Patrick Moran (2012) puts it this way:

A personal theory of teaching practice is a teacher’s union of theory and practice, both a way of conceptualizing and enacting teaching. It is an answer to the questions: *How do I do my work as a teacher and why do I do it in this way?* (p. 2)

Embedded in this definition are both a description of practice and a rationale for it. Brookfield (1995) speaks of “a set of critically examined core assumptions about why one does what one does in the way that one does it” (p. 16). The challenge here is to uncover one’s assumptions and critically examine them before synthesizing them into a rationale and articulating that as a personal theory.

What are some of the benefits of doing this? Apart from the obvious benefit of having a professional manifesto, something you can produce if asked about your theory of teaching, I extracted the following points, which are related to everyday teaching life, from Brookfield’s (1995, pp. 22-23) discussion regarding the importance of having a rationale for one’s practice:

- We are better placed to communicate to colleagues and students the rationale behind our practice.
- We can call on it to help in difficult situations.
- It grounds us in a moral, intellectual, and political project and gives us an organizing vision of what we are trying to accomplish.
- It communicates a confidence-inducing sense of being grounded.
- This sense of groundedness stabilizes us when we feel swept along by forces we cannot control.
- It establishes credibility with students.

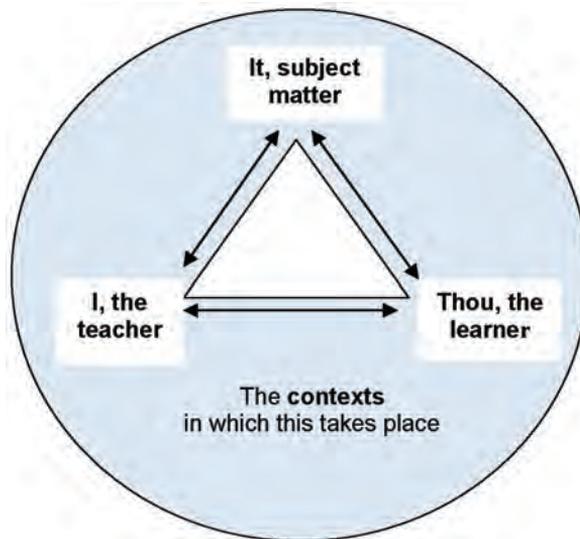
Any teacher in any context can relate to these points. Who has not been in a position where you wanted to introduce something into your classroom, but it has not been the accepted practice in the institution and you have had to justify your actions? For example, when communicative language teaching came in, many schools were leery of it: “too much noise” or “the teacher is abdicating her role.” So we had to think about *why* we wanted to do group work and have students talking instead of the teacher talking. Being able to draw on SLA research helps, but if this

has been integrated into a personal theory of practice when you know from your own experience that this has worked, you can justify your actions. Faced with the question “Why do you do that?”, you can answer firmly and logically. For anyone who has experienced the introduction of new assessment policies, or a new curriculum, or other aspects of educational reform, having a clear sense of what you do and why enables you to examine and evaluate the new processes and not be intimidated by them. Having taught in a country that was transitioning to a new democracy and developing new policies for everything, being able to draw on my own articulated theory of practice, gave me a sense of quiet confidence and stability when all around was in flux.

## EXAMINING OUR PRACTICE

Having established that there is some value in developing a personal theory of teaching practice, let us turn to practice itself. What is it that we are theorizing about? The model in Figure 1 captures, in a simplified form, the elements of this complex process. The central triangle represents I, the teacher; THOU, the learner; and IT, the subject matter. These elements are in relationship with each other. As a teacher, I exist in relationship with my learners, as they do with me. I also relate to the subject matter. This inter-relationship exists across the elements of the triangle. It also exists in a context, represented by the circle. In fact, context is multilayered and can be thought of as many concentric circles, the closest and most personal being that of our own classroom, the next layer being the school, moving out from there to the community, the city, the state and the nation. Each layer has some kind of influence and impact on what we do and how we interact in the center, and each is characterized by social, political, and economic factors, to name just the most obvious ones.

The I-THOU aspect of this model has its root in the work of Austrian-born philosopher, Martin Buber (1937/2004). David Hawkins (1967/2003) developed it further by including subject matter. The notion of “context” was added by Carol Rodgers (2002b). This gives us a framework for thinking about our practice, about our relationship with our learners, with the subject matter, and the ways in which the social, political, and economic contexts impact these relationships.



**FIGURE 1. A Model of Language Learning and Teaching**

[With acknowledgements to Martin Buber (1937/2004), David Hawkins (1967/2003), & Carol Rodgers (2002)]

What is the process for examining our practice? There is hardly a teacher development program that does not, in some way, claim to foster reflective practice. It has become widespread across many professions. The definitions of reflective practice are numerous, going back to John Dewey (1933), but what they have in common is that it is a meaning-making process that is systematic, rigorous, and values personal and intellectual growth of self and others (Rodgers, 2002a). Schön (1987) introduced the notion of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. What we do on our feet, in the moment, is informed by what we have thought about and learned from previous experience.

If we are to engage in the process of reflection, we need a way of seeing our experience, our practice, more clearly, describing it in detail so that we can better understand it. To do this, we have to slow things down so that we can really focus.

One way of engaging in this in a systematic way is to use Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1994). This provides a framework to keep us on track and to give some rigor. It enables us to slow down, be present, describe our experience in detail, interpret it in different ways,

develop some abstract conceptualizations about it, and then plan what we will do about it. Rodgers (2002b) phrases this slightly differently when she proposes a Reflective Cycle that includes

- Presence in Experience: Learning to see;
- Description of Experience: Learning to describe and differentiate;
- Analysis of Experience: Learning to think from multiple perspectives and form multiple explanations;
- Experimentation: Learning to take intelligent action.

This, too, provides a framework for thinking in a systematic and rigorous way, and encourages the development of the skills of observation, rich description, and the generation of explanations.

Being systematically reflective is not enough unless one is also critically reflective, argues Brookfield (1995). What does he mean by this? Simply put, critical reflection “happens when we identify and scrutinize the assumptions that undergird how we work” (p. xii). This means uncovering the beliefs, attitudes, values, and ways of being that we take for granted and that are often deeply buried. He asserts that reflection only becomes critical when it has the following two purposes:

The first is to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame, and distort educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but actually work against our own best long-term interests. (p. 8)

He goes on to give examples of both power and hegemonic assumptions. In the case of the dynamics of power, he asserts that a taken-for-granted practice, like sitting in a circle, instead of being experienced as a democratic space in which all are seen as equal, can actually have “oppressive potential” (p. 9). It will depend on how it is set up and how students respond to and experience it. One can find this out by getting feedback from them.

In terms of hegemonic assumptions Brookfield (1995) uses the concept of teaching as “vocation” (p. 15). As long as it remains associated with commitment and dedication, it is an assumption that can be acted on; but when it leads to teachers doing two or three jobs in what was supposed to be one, it becomes hegemonic. It no longer serves

their best interests.

Uncovering our assumptions does not mean that we devalue or negate them, but rather that we re-examine them and recognize the basis from which we are acting. Examining them forces us to reconsider why we do things the way we do and to decide whether we will continue to do so, or whether, in the light of new evidence, we alter the premises on which we operate.

An example of a paradigmatic assumption from my practice comes from when I was involved in the development of a new diploma for language teachers in post-apartheid South Africa. I was driven by my assumptions about how adults learn – that they should be self-directed, that their experience is valuable and needs to be drawn on, etc. This was manifest in the way I set up the class and what I expected from the teacher-participants. I had them doing group work, reflecting on what they currently did in their classes, what worked for them and why. When I got the first bit of feedback from the group, I realized that there was a mismatch in terms of expectations. What I was requiring of them did not match what they thought should happen in a university-level course. Most of the teachers in the group were operating from a different paradigm. Their experience in schools in apartheid South Africa, had led them to have different views about how things should be in a classroom and what to expect of a university course. They expected me to deliver lectures, to be the authority, and to exercise that authority. They did not see the value of discussing things with their peers; they wanted answers from the “source.” We had a bumpy first few months. However, by the end of the two years (it was a part-time course) the first cohort openly acknowledged the value of group work, they saw that their experience was valuable and that they, themselves, were repositories of knowledge. But I had also had to make some compromises.

The experience gave me reason to pause and rethink my expectations of teacher-participants. I did not radically change my assumptions about how adults learn, but I changed the way in which I set up opportunities for that learning. For the next iteration of the diploma, I began by asking the group what their expectations were of the course, of me, of themselves, and of their peers. By putting things out there to be discussed, we were able to make explicit some of the principles that undergird the program and to debate them.

In my work as a teacher educator, I have always encouraged reflective practice by teachers and myself. Taking the step into critical

reflection is not easy. We need to be nudged into seeing things differently. Brookfield suggests that we use four lenses to get different perspectives on our practice, and in so doing, to be able to better understand what we currently take for granted. These lenses are

1. autobiographies – self as learner and teacher,
2. our students' eyes,
3. our colleagues' experiences and perspectives,
4. theoretical literature.

### **The Lens of Our Autobiographies**

Reflecting on our own experience is extremely valuable. In all the teacher development programs that I have been involved in, autobiographies have been used as a “way in” to understanding content and to highlighting the implications for teaching practice. The most common of these is the learning autobiography, usually of language, but not limited to this. The following comment made by a student teacher when reflecting on his language learning experience demonstrates his growing awareness of how his experience can inform his practice:

I had done language learning for years but never thought to turn that experience on its head. But during the Afrikaans lessons my schema was activated and I was able to take my own experiences as a language learner and see them in the light of others learning my language. (TESOL Certificate student, Learning Statement; Marlboro College, 2013)

This is not yet critical reflection, but it is the beginning of the process, the first step in looking at things in new ways. Using our own experiences of learning is a good way to challenge assumptions we have about teaching. We can do this on our own, keeping a journal as we engage in the learning of something new; or as Brookfield suggests, it can be the focus of faculty professional development. Instead of studying external, predetermined content, the group members can focus on their own experiences of learning. These can be catalytic in thinking about implications for teaching. By describing the experiences, giving different interpretations for what they mean, they are able to see things in new ways.

Brookfield also recommends that we reflect on our experience in graduate and other courses as a means of gaining insights into factors that help and hinder learning. Professional development workshops and conferences fall into this category of autobiographical reflection.

Other ways of seeing ourselves in new ways include watching videos (as painful as that can be), keeping teaching logs, doing a teacher learning audit, and creating a role model profile. In each of these cases, Brookfield has a series of questions to provide a structure to follow in trying to discover more about what underlies our practice and the reasons for it.

### **Through Our Students' Eyes**

However, depending on ourselves alone will not necessarily result in seeing things differently. We need alternative perspectives. The metaphor of lenses has been put forward by others, including Parker Palmer (1998), who states,

We cannot see what is “out there” merely by looking around. Everything depends on the lenses through which we view the world. By putting on new lenses, we can see things that would otherwise remain invisible. (p. 26)

The views of our students can provide such a lens. The same phenomenon can be interpreted and experienced in many different ways, depending on who describes it. Getting feedback from our students is imperative. Course evaluations, although useful, do not give the kind of feedback we need. They come too late in the process and don't always give us the kind of information that we need to understand more about the quality of our students' learning and the ways in which our actions influence this. Nor does a course evaluation allow us to make adjustments during a course.

The simplest form of feedback involves using an index card (or slip of paper) where students answer the questions:

1. What helped my learning?
2. What hindered my learning?
3. Suggestions I would make:

A more elaborate form Brookfield (1995) calls a “critical incident questionnaire” (Appendix). He recommends handing this out once a week to get students to reflect on their experiences in class. They describe when they were most engaged, most distanced, most puzzled, and most surprised. The framing of the statements focuses attention on what was working for each individual and what was not. It gives the teacher insight into what the students find interesting and where they need to make adjustments.

Asking for feedback is one thing, responding to it is another. If we don’t demonstrate to our learners that we take feedback seriously, there is no motivation for them to give us honest feedback in the future. This does not mean that we have to radically alter a course, but rather that we respond by telling them what adjustments we are making and why. There will inevitably be some non-negotiables, but you need to justify them.

Student learning journals and letters to successors are other ways that Brookfield suggests we tap into our students’ minds to better understand how our class is going. I have often used the “Advice to the next group” as a means of gaining insight into students’ experience of learning in my classes.

### **Through Our Colleagues’ Experiences and Perspectives**

The next lens we can benefit from is that of our colleagues’ experiences and perspectives. We do not need our colleagues to tell us what to do, but rather to prod us into generating alternative explanations for what happens in our classroom. This can happen in a number of ways. We have been experimenting with the notion of a “critical friend”: someone who observes your class and acts as a second pair of eyes and ears, and who, in a post-lesson discussion, is able to support you in developing a rich description of what went on.

A teacher recently told me about having a colleague observe her class, and in discussion afterwards, the colleague commented that she “echoed” her students frequently. This got the teacher thinking. She had not been aware of it. This was a beginner-level class that she had not taught for a while. She began to pay attention to when and how often she echoed what a learner said. She found that it happened in a couple of different circumstances. Sometimes it was to affirm the student’s pronunciation or use of a word; for example, “*Brought*, yes, *brought*.”

In other cases, it was said with rising intonation: “Brought?” This alerted the student to self-correct. At other times, it was to give the correct form. She had been responding intuitively but being made aware of what she was doing enabled her to decide whether she needed to modify her responses.

Other ways of eliciting perspectives from and drawing on the experience of peers include holding critical discussions and inquiry groups. With regard to holding critical discussions, Brookfield (1995) suggests that one creates ground rules for these conversations. He advises on how to get the conversation started and how to experiment with different conversational roles (the storyteller, the detective, and the umpire). All of these strategies give structure and purpose to the conversation, and aid it in moving along productively.

A framework that we draw on in structuring critically reflective conversations in our master’s program is the ORID (Objective/Reflective/Interpretative/Decisional questions) framework. The idea is that a colleague will ask questions to aid you in developing a full, objective description and the generation of multiple explanations for an experience. We adapted it from *The Art of Focused Conversations* (Stanfield, 2000). In the first, the objective, stage, questions are in relation to the senses: what is seen, heard, touched, etc.

The key questions are

What happened? What did you do? What did the Ss do? What materials were used? How was the class set up? How long did each activity take? What words or phrases stand out? Who said and did what?

In the reflective stage, the key questions are

How does it make you feel? Where were you surprised? Where delighted? Where did you struggle? What does it remind you of?

At the interpretive stage, the key questions are

What is this all about? What does this mean for you? How will this affect your teaching? What are you learning from this? What is the insight? What assumption were you working on here and is this valid?

And, finally, at the decisional level, the key questions are

What action can you take in future lesson planning? What is your response? What are the next steps? How does this affect choice of materials? Will you continue to operate from this assumption?

You may notice that the ORID framework loosely fits the stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle.

### **The Lens of Theoretical Literature**

External, published theory also has a role to play in critical reflection and the development of a personal theory of teaching practice. Brookfield views this in two ways: reading theory critically and using the literature of critical reflection.

This is a summary of the reasons he gives for drawing on literature:

- It enables us to name our practice, to give a technical and/or professional label to what we do.
- It broadens our perspective. [He quotes Freire on what happens if we don't read. We may "*walk in a circle without the possibility of going beyond*" (Horton & Feire, 1990, p. 98).]
- It can be a substitute for colleagues/critical friends.
- It can improve conversations, prevent groupthink.

Embarking on the path of critical reflection is not for the faint-hearted, but it is rewarding. Instead of becoming disillusioned or stuck in a routine, you can re-frame your thinking about your practice and re-energize it. Nona Lyons (2010) puts it well when she states

But surprisingly, in these deeply troubling times, when unprecedented global and national change surrounds us with financial and ethical disasters and uncertainty, many professionals are turning back to educating for reflection and reflective inquiry with the hope for a new viability of their professions. (p. v)

## THE AUTHOR

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## APPENDIX

### The Critical Incident Questionnaire

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about this week's class(es). Don't put your name on the form – your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, put one copy of the form on the table by the door and keep the other copy for yourself. At the start of next week's class, I will be sharing the responses with the group. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make the class more responsive to your concerns.

1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)  
(Brookfield, 1995, p. 115)



## The New General Service List Version 1.01: Getting Better All the Time

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The purpose of this brief paper is to explain a bit further about the New General Service List (NGSL), as well as to give some initial comparisons in text coverage between the General Service List (GSL), the NGSL, and the Other New General Service List (ONGSL) for a range of different text types.

### INTRODUCTION

The General Service List (GSL) is a list of about 2,000 of the most commonly used words based on a corpus of written English compiled by West (1953). Although the original GSL was a remarkable, pre-computer era, corpus-derived list of important high-frequency words for second language learners that has been used for more than 60 years, the corpus it was based on is now considered to be quite dated (most words were published in the 1800s to early 1930s), small by modern standards (the original analysis was done with a corpus of only 2.5 million words), and in need of a clearer definition of what constitutes a “word” within the list.

In February 2013, on the 60th anniversary of West’s publication of the GSL, my colleagues and I put up a website ([www.newgeneralservicelist.org](http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org)) that released a major update of West’s GSL known as the NGSL. This list was derived from a carefully selected 273 million-word subsection of the 2-billion-word Cambridge English Corpus (CEC). The 1.0 version of the NGSL was then published in several journals, including the July issue of *The Language Teacher* (Browne, 2013).

Following many of the same steps that West and his colleagues did (as well as the suggestions of Professor Paul Nation, project advisor and one of the leading figures in modern second language vocabulary

acquisition), we did our best to combine the strong, objective scientific principles of corpus and vocabulary list creation with useful pedagogic insights to create a list of approximately 2,800 high-frequency words that met the following goals:

1. To update and expand the size of the corpus used (273 million words) compared to the limited corpus behind the original GSL (about 2.5 million words) with the hope of increasing the validity and the ability to generalize the list.
2. To create an NGSL of the most important high-frequency words useful for second language learners of English, which gives the highest possible coverage of English texts with the fewest words possible.
3. To make an NGSL that is based on a clearer definition of what constitutes a word.
4. To be a starting point for discussion among interested scholars and teachers around the world with the goal of updating and revising the list based on this input (in much the same way that West did with the original interim version of the GSL)

Unbeknownst to us, about six months after we released the 1.0 version of the NGSL, another General Service List was put out by Brezina and Gablasova (August, 2013), which I will refer to as the Other New General Service List (ONGSL) in order to avoid confusion. Although the ONGSL looks to be a very carefully constructed and impressive piece of research, the purpose of their list and the way it was developed seems to have a slightly different focus than what we undertook for the NGSL presented here. The authors of the ONGSL state that they used a purely quantitative approach to try to identify high-frequency words that were common across several different corpora, two of which were hugely different in size (1 million words for the LOB and BE06 corpora, 100 million for the BNC, and 12 billion words for the En Ten Ten 12 corpora) and resulted in the identification of 2,494 lemmas (according to their way of counting).

Our own NGSL project has been more directly focused on the needs of second language learners and teachers, and started with a selection of sub-corpora that were carefully balanced in size so as to avoid one corpus or type of text dominating the frequencies (which appears to be a real problem in the ONGSL) and, just as with the original GSL, our NGSL project employed both quantitative as well as qualitative methods

to attempt to identify the words that are most useful to the needs of language learners while providing the highest possible coverage.

Like the original GSL, which was released to the public in 1936 as an interim list, one that was revised and refined for more than 17 years before being published as the GSL in 1953, so too, our NGSL list should be seen as one that is still in its interim stages, released to the public in evolving versions (with 1.01 being the latest) and through various venues, including conferences, research papers, the web, and social media, with the hope that the list will be used, discussed, debated, and improved over time.

## **THE NGSL: A WORD LIST BASED ON A LARGE, MODERN CORPUS**

One of the obvious axioms of corpus linguistics is that any word frequency list generated from a corpus will be a direct reflection of the texts in that corpus. In the case of the original GSL, there are many words on the list, which were arguably useful for second language learners of the time, but seem a bit dated for the needs of today's learners. For example, the GSL contains many nautical terms (oar, vessel, merchant, sailor, etc.), agricultural terms (plow, mill, spade, cultivator, etc.), religious terms (devil, mercy, bless, preach, grace, etc.) as well as many other terms that seem less likely to occur frequently in texts that the modern second language learner would likely use in the classroom (telegraph, chimney, coal, gaiety, shilling, etc.). As much as my colleagues and I were in awe of how much West was able to accomplish without the benefits of computers, digital text files, scanning equipment, or powerful corpus analysis software, we felt that the GSL was long overdue for an update and hoped that the application of modern technology to a more modern corpus could result in an NGSL that offered better coverage with fewer words.

Cambridge University Press offered us full unrestricted access to the Cambridge English Corpus (CEC), a multi-billion word corpus that contains both written and spoken text data for British and American English, as well as the Cambridge Learner Corpus, a 40-million-word corpus made up of English exam responses written by English language learners. They furthermore agreed that whatever list we derived from

their corpus could be made available to the public for free. We began our development of the NGSL in early 2010, using both the SketchEngine (2006) tools that Cambridge provided and a wide range of other tools, including publicly available ones such as Lawrence Anthony's very useful AntConc program (<http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.html>), along with several specialized bits of software that we developed specifically for the purpose of this project.

The initial corpus we used was created using a subset of the CEC that was queried and analyzed using the SketchEngine corpus query system (<http://www.sketchengine.co.uk/>). The size of each sub-corpus that was initially included is outlined in Table 1:

**TABLE 1. CEC Corpora Used for Preliminary Analysis of the NGSL**

<b>Corpus</b>	<b>Tokens</b>
Newspaper	748,391,436
Academic	260,904,352
Learner	38,219,480
Fiction	37,792,168
Journals	37,478,577
Magazines	37,329,846
Non-Fiction	35,443,408
Radio	28,882,717
Spoken	27,934,806
Documents	19,017,236
TV	11,515,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,282,909,322</b>

The newspaper and academic sub-corpora were quickly eliminated for very similar reasons. First, although statistical procedures can be used to correct for minor differences in the size of sub-corpora, it was clear that the newspaper sub-corpora at 748,391,436 tokens and the academic sub-corpora at 260,904,352 tokens were dominating the frequencies and far too large for this kind of correction (a potential problem with the ONGSL since the variance between the largest and smallest corpus is 2 billion words). Second, both of these sub-corpora did not fit the profile

of general English text types that we were looking for, with the newspaper sub-corpus showing a marked bias towards financial terms and the academic sub-corpus being from a specific genre not directly related to general English. As a result, both corpora were removed from the compilation.

Table 2 shows the sub-corpora that were actually used to generate the final analysis of frequencies. While smaller than the corpus described in Table 1, the corpus is still more than 100 times the size of the corpus used for the original GSL and far more balanced as a result:

**TABLE 2. CEC Corpora Included in Final Analysis for the NGSL**

<b>Corpus</b>	<b>Tokens</b>
Learner	38,219,480
Fiction	37,792,168
Journals	37,478,577
Magazines	37,329,846
Non-Fiction	35,443,408
Radio	28,882,717
Spoken	27,934,806
Documents	19,017,236
TV	11,515,296
<b>Total</b>	<b>273,613,534</b>

The resulting word lists were then cleaned up by removing proper nouns, abbreviations, slang, and other noise, and excluding certain word sets such as days of the week, months of the year, and numbers (this proved to be a controversial decision and these word sets will most likely be re-added in the 2.0 version of the list in early 2015).

We then used a sequence of computations to combine the frequencies from the various sub-corpora while adjusting for differences in their relative sizes. Specifically, we used Carroll's measure of dispersion, ( $D_2$ ), estimated frequency per million ( $U_m$ ) and the Standard Frequency Index (SFI; Carroll, Davies, & Richman, 1971; Carroll, 1971) to combine the frequencies from the various sub-corpora while adjusting for differences in their relative sizes.

Finally, based on a series of meetings and discussions with Paul

Nation about how to improve the list, the combined list was then compared to other important lists such as the original GSL, the BNC, and COCA to make sure important words were included or excluded as necessary.

## NGSL VERSION 1.01

Though we were as careful and systematic as possible in the process of developing the original NGSL, we view the release of the 1.0 version of the NGSL as no more than an interim list, representing the best research and development that we could do in relative isolation. The next very important step was to release the NGSL publicly so that teachers and researchers around the world could begin to react to it, and give ideas and advice on how to improve it. To this end, most of 2013 was devoted to making the list and a variety of NGSL-related resources available via a dedicated website (<http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org/>), publishing and presenting about the list at more than a dozen conferences around the world, and creating an NGSL social media presence on websites such as Facebook. Through these efforts and the excellent feedback and suggestions that we have received from many experts, we are now releasing the 1.01 version of the NGSL both here and on the NGSL website. The net result of these changes will decrease the number of NGSL headwords by 17 from 2,818 to 2,801 with the following being the main changes made:

### Two Words Added

- Insertion of TOURNAMENT, which was accidentally deleted in the initial analysis.
- YEAH, which was originally counted as a derived form of YES, is now counted under its own headword.

### Nineteen Words Deleted

- Four numbers were deleted and moved to the supplemental list:  
ZERO  
BILLION  
FIFTEEN  
FIFTY

- The inflected parts of speech of pronouns were demoted and listed under their canonical objective pronoun:
  - HER was listed under SHE.
  - HIM and HIS were listed under HE.
  - ITS was listed under IT.
  - ME and MY were listed under I.
  - OUR and US were listed under WE.
  - THEIR and THEM were listed under THEY.
  - THESE was listed under THIS.
  - THOSE was listed under THAT.
  - WHOM and WHOSE were listed under WHO.
  - YOUR was listed under YOU.

### **Why Weren't Word Families Like Those in the Original GSL Used?**

It is important to remember how the original GSL counted words. The GSL did not amalgamate frequency counts for derived forms, but it did combine the frequencies for word forms regardless of parts of speech. For example, the frequency counts for both the noun and verb forms of CARE are summed, while the frequency counts for the derived forms CAREFUL and CARELESS are listed separately (Figure 1).

Following the publication of Bauer and Nation's *Word Families* (1993), the number of words included under the headword expanded greatly. They stated a word family consisted of a base word and all its derived and inflected forms that can be understood by a learner without having to learn each form separately" (p. 253). For example, CARE under the word family rubric contains, along with the inflections of the verb and noun, the following: CARE, CAREFUL, CAREFULLY, CAREFULNESS, CARELESS, CARELESSLY, CARELESSNESS, CARER, CARERS, UNCARED, and UNCARING. However, the assumption that the form "can be understood by a learner without having to learn each form separately" has been called into question. Research by Schmitt and Zimmerman (2002) "did not support a strong facilitative effect for knowledge of words within a word family" (p. 158).

Another problem with determining which words would be included under the headwords using the word family concept was suggested by Gardner (2007), who wrote "case-by-case assessments of affixed word



## **What Constitutes a “Word” in the NGSL?**

There are many ways to define a word for the purpose of counting frequencies. The simplest is to look at “types,” where each form is counted as a different word regardless of part of speech. For example, LISTS would include both the third-person singular form of the verb LIST and the plural form of the noun LIST.

The second method is to count “lexemes” where homographs are counted separately, but all the inflected forms of a word are added together. For example, the nouns LIST and LISTS would be counted together but not with the verbs LIST, LISTS, LISTED, and LISTING, which would be counted as a separate item. Inflections for nouns include the plural and the possessive. Verb inflections include the third person, the past, and the participles. Inflections for short adjectives include the comparative and the superlative.

The third method of counting words is called “word families” and was proposed by Bauer and Nation (1993). Word families include the inflected forms and certain derived forms. The NGSL uses a modified lexeme approach, where we count the headword in all its various parts of speech and include all inflected forms. Unlike the traditional definition of a lexeme, it includes all the inflected forms from the different parts of speech. For example, LIST would include LISTS, LISTED, LISTING, and LISTINGS. It does not include any of the derived forms using non-inflection suffixes. Variations such as the difference between US and UK spelling are also grouped within the same lexeme.

## **Why Are Unusual Lemmas Like WINDOWING and WHILES Included as Part of the Headwords WINDOW and WHILE?**

Word lists are created in different ways and for different purposes, and what is or is not included in a list really depends on the final purpose. Although the version of the NGSL that you will see on either the free Quizlet flashcard program, or the free NGSL with definitions in the easy English file, contains only the headword since the purpose is teaching, you may notice that the main NGSL list includes not only the headword but also a wide range of its associated lemmas, including several that may seem strange or unusual. This is because another

purpose of the NGSL was to be useful to researchers who are analyzing real world texts to identify the frequency of words in order to predict the probability of the reader encountering the lemma. When faced with making the word set for a given headword, one can use evidence or arbitrarily imposed rules. For example, when making the revised version of the GSL in 1995, Bauman and Culligan chose an evidence-based approach. If the derived form did not appear in the Brown Corpus, they did not include it. This resulted in the exclusion of many legitimate derived forms.

For the NGSL, we wanted to address two primary tasks. First, we wanted to predict the probability of the reader encountering the lemma. To do so, our lists were used to analyze real-world texts to identify the frequency of words. Second, we wanted to identify unique lemmas that were not on our word list. In Probability Theory, there is something called an event space. Basically, it is the set of all possible ways a rare or frequent event can happen.

Once the parameters of the event space are defined, only those words are permissible. It may sound logical to conclude that only high-frequency events be included in the list, but what does a researcher do when a rare event occurs? Do they ignore the event and maintain the event space or do they update the event space? More concretely, what should researchers do when they encounter words that clearly belong to a Level 6 affix family (Bauer & Nation, 1993) but are not on the word list? Should they ignore it and pretend it is a unique occurrence, or add it, thus changing the list? We have chosen the latter, evidence-based approach, including lemmas with even a very low or no occurrence in the main list so that researchers who are doing corpus research with the NGSL using analytical tools such as VocabProfiler and AntWordProfiler can explore questions and issues beyond what the typical EFL learner or teacher might be interested in. English is an incredibly flexible language with words shifting parts of speech with ease, as Susanna Centlivre showed in 1709 with her creative use of the word "but" with the phrase, "But me no buts." We chose rule-based and completeness.

### **Why Weren't the Numbers, Days of the Week, and Months of the Year Included?**

Although these word sets were excluded from the NGSL proper in the same way they were excluded from the original GSL, they are

actually included as an appendix in the main NGSL Excel file. Though pulling these words out had a negative effect on our coverage figures, it seemed to be the right decision from a pedagogic point of view. In the case of days of the week and months of the year, it was consistent with our decision (and most corpus-derived vocabulary lists) not to include proper nouns. Furthermore, keeping them in would have caused another kind of problem since not all items of each lexical set occurred at a high enough frequency to appear on the NGSL list even within the 273 million sample of the CEC corpus used for this project.

### **Why Weren't Letters of the Alphabet Included in the NGSL?**

The alphabet by itself is used as signs or symbols, often as placeholders, like numbers or bullets in a list. They are often used in sequences or stand in as variables in formulas. While they are of interest in the field of semiotics, they cannot be classed as words, but are more often used in the same way as smiley faces or other emoticons.

### **Text Coverage: Covering Your Bets with the NGSL**

One of the most important goals of this project was to try to develop an NGSL that would be more efficient and useful to language learners and teachers by providing more coverage with fewer words than the original GSL. One of the problems with making a comparison between the two lists, indeed between any well-known vocabulary lists, is the way the number of words were counted in each list, which needs to be done according to the same criteria. As innovative as the GSL was at the time of its creation, West's definition of what constituted a word was, by his own admission, non-systematic and arbitrary: "no attempt has been made to be rigidly consistent in the method used for displaying the words: each word has been treated as a separate problem, and the sole aim has been clearness" (West, 1953, p. viii).

This means that for a meaningful comparison between the GSL and NGSL to be done, the words on each list need to be counted in the same way. As was mentioned in the previous section, a comparison of the number of "word families" in the GSL and NGSL reveals that there are 1,964 word families in the GSL and 2,368 in the NGSL (using Level 6 of Bauer and Nation's, 1993, word family taxonomy). Coverage within

the 273 million word CEC is summarized in Table 3, showing that the 2,368 word families in the NGSL provides 90.34% coverage, while the 1,964 word families in the original GSL provides only 84.24%. That the NGSL with approximately 400 more word families provides more coverage than the original GSL may not seem a surprising result, but when these lists are lemmatized, the usefulness of the NGSL becomes more apparent as the more than 800 fewer lemmas in the NGSL provide 6.1% more coverage than is provided by West’s original GSL.

**TABLE 3. Comparison of Coverage for the CEC by the GSL and NGSL Word Lists**

Vocabulary List	Number of “Word Families”	Number of “Lemmas”	Coverage in CEC Corpus
GSL	1,964	3,623	84.24%
NGSL	2,368	2,818	90.34%

After analyzing coverage of the CEC corpus for the GSL and NGSL word lists, the next step taken was to compare coverage figures against other kinds of corpora I had at my disposal. In this round of analysis, I have also included the ONGSL in the analysis. All calculations were conducted using Lawrence Anthony’s excellent AntWordProfiler, which easily allows for the uploading of vocabulary wordlists and texts to be analyzed as long as they have been converted to .txt files. For this comparison, all word lists used were first converted to modified lemmas so that word counts would be done in the same way. A modified lemma is one that combines all possible parts of speech into one lemma. For example, the modified lemma for ROUND includes the inflections for the noun, verb, and adjective; for example, ROUND, ROUNDS, ROUNDED, ROUNDING, ROUNDINGS, ROUNDER, and ROUNDEST.

Please note that the slight difference in number of word families and lemmas between the analysis done in early 2013, shown in Table 3, and the results given for this report, in Tables 4 and 5, are due to the fact that the GSL in Table 3 was taken from the GSL/AWL version of the Range program (Heatley, Nation, & Coxhead, 2002). These lists were not specifically cited to have been developed up to Affix Level 6 (Bauer & Nation, 1993) while the lists from the BNC/COCA, shown in Table 4, are. Therefore, the headwords from the GSL/AWL word lists were matched to the derived forms from the BNC/COCA lists.

The first corpus used was a 12 million word corpus of the top 100 most important classic works of English literature as rated by professors of English literature at several top Japanese universities (Browne & Culligan, 2008). All texts selected were ones that were available in the public domain for download and analysis via Project Gutenberg (2014). As a collection of classic literature texts (the newest texts available for download in Project Gutenberg are at least 50 years old), it was hypothesized that the word list, which was based on the oldest corpus, the original GSL, would probably provide the highest coverage.

The second corpus was a more modern corpus of 27 million words taken from *The Economist*, spanning issues from 2001 to 2010 (Culligan, 2013a). The third corpus, too, was also quite modern, a 13-million-word sample taken from *Scientific American*, covering issues published between 1993 to 2000 (Culligan, 2013b). Here it was hypothesized that one of the word lists based on more modern corpora (either the NGSL or the ONGSL) would provide more coverage.

As can be seen from Table 4 below, the GSL provided slightly better coverage (0.8%) than the NGSL for the corpus of classic literature and a more substantial 3.4% higher coverage than the ONGSL. That the GSL, which is based on a corpus with a far older collection of texts, provided the best coverage of a collection of older literary texts is perhaps an expected result, but a more surprising one was that the NGSL, which is based on a more modern corpus, was able to come within 0.8% coverage of the GSL despite using 700 fewer lemmas.

**TABLE 4. Comparison of GSL, NGSL, and ONGSL Coverage Figures**

Word List	Number of Headwords	Number of Unique Headwords	Number of Types	Number of Lemmas	Number of BNC-COCA Word Families	Classic Literature	Scientific American	The Economist
GSL (Nation, Level 6)	1,986	1,927	9,293	3,553	2,245	86.17	65.87	76.55
ONGSL	2,228	2,189	6,365	2,130	1,929	82.76	68.68	78.30
NGSL 1.01	2,801	2,801	8,481	2,801	2,483	85.35	71.34	81.75
						12,377,844	13,047,726	27,337,358

If we narrow down the results for classic literature to look at coverage for two well-known novels within the corpus, *The Count of Monte Christo* and *Dracula*, Table 5 shows very similar results with the

GSL giving slightly better coverage than the NGSL (0.8% and 0.7% more coverage, respectively), with the NGSL giving 2.5-2.6% more coverage than the ONGSL.

**TABLE 5. Coverage Figures for Two Well-Known Novels**

	Number of Headwords	Number of Unique Headwords	Number of Lemma	Coverage of <i>Count of Monte Cristo</i>	Coverage of <i>Dracula</i>
GSL Range	1,986	1,927	3,553	85.6	90.6
NGSL 1.1	2,801	2,801	2,801	84.8	89.9
ONGSL	2,228	2,189	2,130	82.2	87.4

When looking at coverage figures for the two more modern genre-specific corpora, the efficiency of the NGSL becomes more apparent, with the NGSL giving 3.5% more coverage than the ONGSL, and 5.5% more coverage than the GSL for the *Scientific American* corpus and similar figures of 3.5% and 5.2% more coverage for *The Economist* corpus.

### Where to Find the NGSL and Associated Resources

From the very beginning, our focus has been less on simply publishing an academic paper on a new list of words than it has been on creating a list of high frequency words that would be as useful as possible for students, teachers, and researchers around the world. One culmination of this effort is our dedicated website ([www.newgeneralservicelist.org](http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org)), which gathers all associated NGSL resources in one place. Here you can download the 1.01 (and 1.0) version of the NGSL in lemmatized or headword form, as well as all papers that have been written on the NGSL, and see a list of past and upcoming conference presentations on the list. Because word lists are only useful to learners and teachers if there are definitions and learning tools, I have already written original definitions for all words in easy English for all NGSL words and uploaded the entire list in 50 word blocks (by frequency) to the free Quizlet vocabulary flashcard learning program ([www.quizlet.com](http://www.quizlet.com)). As for analytical tools, the NGSL is already

available on the free Online Graded Text Editor (OGTE) program (<http://www.er-central.com/ogte/>), which is part of the free Extensive Reading Central website ([www.er-central.com](http://www.er-central.com)) developed by Charles Browne and Rob Waring, as well as on Tom Cobb's wonderful VocabProfile tool (<http://www.lex tutor.ca/vp/eng/>), and will soon also be available via Laurence Anthony's free AntWordProfiler Program ([http://www.laurenceanthony.net/antwordprofiler\\_index.html](http://www.laurenceanthony.net/antwordprofiler_index.html)).

## THE AUTHOR

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## **Square Approach, Round Classrooms: Adapting Communicative Language Teaching into a Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy for the Korean Tertiary EFL Environment**

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This paper raises questions about the cultural appropriacy of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for the Korean English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context and recommends how the ubiquitous “Western” version of CLT can be adapted to resonate with the socio-cultural nuances of the Korean tertiary EFL environment. To investigate the scope and nature of adaptation required, a sample of tertiary Korean EFL learners was surveyed regarding their language goals, their perceptions of their English skills, and their beliefs about English language teaching and learning. Quantitative examination of the results revealed Korean tertiary EFL learners’ language goals are predominantly instrumental; that they perceive their English strengths to lie in reading and listening and their weaknesses in speaking and writing; that they perceive skill in spoken English as being fundamental to achieving their language goals; and that they believe English language teaching should be focused on meaning with some attention paid to form-focused instruction. Informed by these results, adaptations were recommended to the fundamental goal of CLT, the classroom practices of a communicative approach, and the role of teachers within communicative EFL classrooms in Korea. This study thus provides tertiary EFL practitioners in both Korea and other EFL environments with useful insights regarding how they might also adapt CLT to harmonize with the unique socio-cultural and educational specificities of their own classrooms.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite Communicative Language Teaching's (CLT) current reign as the dominant paradigm for English language teaching (ELT) (Knight, 2001; Brown, 2007), there are those who question the cultural appropriacy of its implementation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (e.g., Savignon, 1991, 2007; Holliday, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2001, 2006; Li, 1998; Hedge, 2000; Sullivan, 2000; Bax, 2003; Littlewood, 2006). In particular, these researchers caution against EFL teachers adopting a purely "Western" model of CLT, which may not reflect socially or culturally relevant pedagogy for EFL learners in those environments. Instead, they advocate that EFL teachers adopt a broader, more flexible version of CLT that is grounded in "context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge" (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 539) and adapted to harmonize with the unique socio-cultural demands and local needs deeply embedded in individual EFL environments.

With its history, pedagogy, and "culture of learning" (Littlewood, 2006, p. 245) firmly entrenched in Confucian ideology, Korea provides a unique platform for investigating the impact of contextual constraints on the principles and practices of CLT, and how those constraints can be superseded through adaptation. Implementation of CLT in Korea at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels has largely been claimed as inapplicable in popular teaching culture, due to the Korean teachers' insufficient training in CLT, institutional pressure to prepare students for grammar-based examinations, and both Korean teachers' and learners' low proficiency in spoken English (Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2006; Park, 2009). At the tertiary level, however, EFL classes in Korea are taught predominantly by teachers whose native language is English, and students are motivated to attain the oral English proficiency necessary for taking the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) speaking tests, which are required for most employment in Korea (Nunan, 2003; Cho, 2004).

To further investigate the perception that CLT is more applicable to tertiary education in Korea, a study was conducted to investigate Korean tertiary learners' language goals, their perceptions of their English skills, and their beliefs about English teaching and learning. Based on the results, recommendations of macro- and micro-strategies for adapting CLT to the socio-cultural and educational nuances inherent in Korean

education are presented. As many tertiary institutions in Korea, and other institutions in Asia, share similar approaches to ELT, this study has implications for how EFL teachers in these environments might also adapt CLT to address the unique challenges in their institutions and their own classrooms.

Before turning to the cultural appropriacy of CLT for the Korean tertiary EFL context, Table 1 clarifies relevant terminology used in this paper.

**TABLE 1. Descriptions of Relevant Terminology**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>CLT</b>	In this paper, the term CLT is used to denote the “Western” version of CLT described in the introduction.
<b>L2 Development</b>	Using the term “acquisition” to indicate how proficiency in an L2 is attained has become outmoded as language growth is now considered to be a dynamic and evolving process rather than a series of static, irrevocable events (De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Brown, 2007). Therefore, the term L2 “development” (Spada & Lightbown, 2008, p. 182), signifying continuous change, is used instead to refer to this process. Despite making this distinction, however, “Second Language Acquisition (SLA)” and “language learner” (or “learner”) will continue to be used over the awkward terms, “SLD” and “language developer.”
<b>Learning</b>	The term “learning” will denote the conscious processes used for focusing on and internalizing an L2 and its “rules” (Littlewood, 1984; De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005).
<b>Second Language</b>	Literature often distinguishes between learning English as a “second language” (ESL) in environments where the language used outside the classroom is also English, and learning English as a “foreign language” (EFL) in one’s own native culture where there are limited opportunities for engaging in authentic English discourse outside the classroom (Littlewood, 1984; Brown, 2007). In this paper, “second language” is used as a cover term for both ESL and EFL, except when making the distinction is crucial to the discussion.

**Stabilization**

“Fossilization” was the term originally used to refer to the process whereby morphosyntactic or lexical inaccuracies became relatively cemented in learners’ interlanguages (Brown, 2007; Gass & Selinker, 2008). However, the process of L2 development is now viewed as a dynamic, evolving process with no definitive point of cessation (De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Gass & Selinker, 2008). Furthermore, the term “fossilization” has grown to become somewhat imperialistically problematic in that it fails to clarify the distinction “between speakers of nativized Englishes and learners of English as a foreign language” (Mollin, 2006, p. 37). Therefore, for lack of a more ideologically appropriate term for this process at the present time, the term “stabilization of linguistic form” (Long, 2003) will be considered sufficient for the purposes of this paper.

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## **THE CULTURAL APPROPRIACY OF CLT**

### **The Cultural Appropriacy of CLT for the Korean EFL Context**

After decades of relying on theory-deficient (Brown, 2007), structurally-oriented methods of language learning, ELT experienced a paradigm shift in the 1970s when SLA research provided the theoretical rationale for moving away from structural methods towards a fluency-oriented CLT approach (Knight, 2001; Savignon, 1991). Characterized as a broad consolidation of elements derived from earlier ELT methods (Brown, 2007), CLT promotes “the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events” (Savignon, 2007, p. 209). The implementation of the “Western” model of CLT to EFL contexts, however, has not been without its critics (e.g., Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Littlewood, 2006; Pennycook, 1989, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Sullivan, 2000). For example, Littlewood (2006) questions the compatibility of CLT with the educational values and cultures of learning embedded in non-Western contexts, while Phillipson (1992), Kramsch and Sullivan (1996), and Pennycook (1989, 1994) add that what is defined as appropriate

pedagogy in each individual environment is socially constructed. To assume, therefore, that “what works well in one educational setting will work well in another is to ignore the interrelatedness of history, culture, and pedagogy” (Sullivan, 2000, p. 115).

Regarding the Korean EFL context in particular, potential incompatibilities with CLT emanate from two contradictory schools of thought. Pedagogical practices in Korea are grounded in the doctrines of Confucianism, which suppressed individualism and self-expression in favor of collectivist ideals, saw education as a means for achieving status and power, and considered the classroom a place for moral and self-cultivation (Hu, 2002; Park, 2009; Song, 2005). In contrast, the roots of Western pedagogy are entrenched in Aristotelian logic and a Socratic view of teaching, which hold dialogue, critical analysis, free-thinking, and a strong sense of individualism as the driving forces behind the learning process (Scollon, 1999; Sullivan, 2000; Yum, 1996). Yum (1996) and Sohn (2006) also point out socio-cultural differences embedded in their respective communication patterns. Specifically, Western communication styles manifest an egalitarian consciousness and place high value on personal autonomy, while communication patterns in Korea exhibit strong ties to social hierarchism and interpersonal dependency. The contradictions evident between these two cultural orientations, therefore, have the potential to precipitate mismatches between the assumptions about the teaching-learning process inherent in CLT and the local dynamics underpinning Korean classrooms. The following sections highlight these potential mismatches by paralleling the theoretical tenets and classroom practices of a CLT approach with the educational and cultural sensitivities of the tertiary Korean EFL context, with the implications of those mismatches being discussed as evidence of Korea’s need to adopt an “adapted” version of CLT that is modified to supersede them.

### **The Cultural Appropriacy of CLT’s Fundamental Goal**

Intrinsic to a CLT approach is the goal of developing *communicative competence* in learners. Coined by Hymes (1971), the term “communicative competence” referred to the ability to use knowledge of a language for communicative purposes across a range of contexts and situations. As the term is still used to encompass what it means to know and use a language (e.g., Brown, 2007; Savignon, 2007; Saville-Troike,

2012), “communicative competence” will be used throughout this paper with this meaning.

Just as education was said to be socially constructed in the previous section, what constitutes communicative competence for a particular speech community also emerges from the socio-cultural context in which the target language is used (Berns, 1990; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Savignon, 2007). In determining what norms of proficiency will be associated with communicative competence in a given EFL context, it follows that teachers in those contexts need to consider an appropriate goal in light of contextual variables such as learners’ ultimate purposes for learning the L2 and how the L2 functions in that particular environment (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Savignon, 2007). As English is not used for everyday communication in Korea, virtually no opportunities exist outside EFL classrooms for learners to engage in authentic English discourse (Li, 1998). Therefore, equating the goal of a CLT approach in Korea with native-like command of the linguistic features and social conventions of English may seem to Korean learners to be both unrealistic and socially irrelevant.

## **The Communicative Process**

Much of how the communicative process is hypothesized to occur is rooted in Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-constructivist view of language learning, which emphasized the supportive role of social interaction in fostering children’s language development. Current interactionist perspectives on L2 development also stem from this socio-constructivist view (Brown, 2007) but were more pedagogically informed by seminal SLA research in the 1970s and 1980s, which advocated learners being given opportunities to interact in the interpretation and production of comprehensible input (Hatch, 1978; Long, 1983, 1985, 1996) and comprehensible output (Swain, 1985, 1995, 2005).

The relationship between interaction and comprehensible input derives from the notion that when learners interacting in pairs or small groups experience communication breakdowns, they collectively exploit the full extent of the linguistic resources in their L2 repertoires to render their input comprehensible (Hedge, 2000; Pica, 1987). This process, known as “negotiation of meaning” (Varonis & Gass, 1985), is hypothesized to be accomplished through modifications learners make to their interactions that contribute to the dialogue of meaning-making.

Some examples of interactional modifications are clarification or confirmation requests, comprehension checks, paraphrase, expansion, elaboration, self-repetition (Gass, MacKey, & Pica, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Long & Porter, 1985; Pica, 1987), and sentence completion (Saville-Troike, 2012).

Underpinning negotiation of meaning at a cognitive level is an intricate process whereby learners manipulate their *interlanguage* (IL): a separate and dynamic language system (Gass & Selinker, 2008; Saville-Troike, 2012) that has a “structurally intermediate status” (Brown, 2007, p. 256) between a learners’ first language (L1) and the target language (L2) as it evolves towards greater accuracy and complexity (Saville-Troike, 2012). While negotiating meaning, interactional modifications such as requests for clarification convey negative feedback on the correctness of learners’ utterances, and thereby draw their attention to gaps in their linguistic knowledge (Brown, 2007). Informed by this negative feedback, learners then attend to these gaps by “resetting the parameters” (Saville-Troike, 2012, p. 51) of their evolving ILs toward a more target-like representation of the L2 (Gass, MacKey, & Pica, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Long & Porter, 1985).

To complement the process of rendering input comprehensible through interactional modifications, Swain (1985, 1995, 2005) advocated learners also contributing to meaning-making by pushing one another in the production of comprehensible output. Producing output during negotiated interactions not only allows learners to test hypotheses they may be forming about what is feasible in the L2 (Brown, 2007; Swain, 2005), but by “noticing” (Schmidt, 1990; Schmidt & Frota, 1986) their “erroneous attempts to convey meaning” (Brown, 2007, p. 298), they are prompted to overcome the linguistic limitations of their IL by producing target-like output (De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). An additional function of output is a metalinguistic one, tying in fittingly with a Vygotskian view of L2 development (Brown, 2007). That is, collaborating in the production of meaningful language offers learners the means to reflect on and crystallize concepts, ideas, and inconsistencies related to language itself, and subsequently functions as a medium through which they can cultivate their own fluency (Swain, 2005).

Despite the “importation” of CLT to Korea, the next section sheds light on socio-affective elements ingrained in Korea’s EFL classrooms that can seep into and disrupt the communicative process.

## **Confucianism, Social Harmony, and the Communicative Process**

Rooted in Korean traditions of collectivism and interdependence, a prominent Confucian precept with the potential to disrupt the communicative process is Koreans' perceived need to maintain social harmony. This precept is regulated through the achievement of stable social relationships and knowledge of one's status within social groups (Shim, Kim, & Martin, 2008; Yum, 1996), and can pervade communicative classrooms in three interrelated ways: through *chemyeon*, literally meaning "face"; through age-asymmetrical learner interactions; and through Koreans' belief that silence is a virtue.

### **Social Harmony and *Chemyeon***

Defined as "the prestige, pride, dignity, honor, and reputation" connected with one's social standing (Oak & Martin, 2000, p. 30), *chemyeon* arose primarily out of the complex relationship between Koreans' concept of self and inter-relational concerns with how others perceive them (Shim, Kim, & Martin, 2008; Sohn, 2006). Closely intertwined with *chemyeon* is "shame," and in Korea, as shame is "associated with the fear that one's inadequacies will result in the loss of union with or expulsion from the group," great effort is made to avoid occurrences that may induce shame and consequently threaten ones' *chemyeon* (Shim, Kim, & Martin, 2008, p. 74).

In Korean EFL classrooms, threats to learners' *chemyeon* carry the potential to permeate the socio-affective fabric of the communicative process, particularly during anxiety-inducing speaking situations, where errors could be regarded by other interlocutors as a lack of language proficiency (Kang, 2002), or where "students may feel . . . they are presenting themselves at a much lower level of cognitive ability than they really possess" (Hedge, 2000, p. 292). The "language anxiety" (Brown, 2007, p. 162) resulting from these potential threats, therefore, could induce culturally based inhibitions about taking the risks with language that are necessary for facilitating L2 development.

### **Social Harmony and Age**

A second way the regulation of social harmony can disrupt communicative classrooms in Korea manifests itself in how the factors of age or seniority can influence pair or group dynamics during communicative activities. Although age-symmetrical relationships in

Korea are balanced in terms of power, age-asymmetrical relationships are based on strict interpersonal behaviors intended to reinforce the “subordinate’s unilateral obedience to the senior” (Sohn, 2006, p. 13). Essentially, says Song (2005), younger Koreans are required to “respect the old as they respect their own parents” (p. 11), and any display of disrespect to an elder would be indicative of a bad upbringing. Respect and unilateral obedience are typically reinforced through the elaborate honorific system embedded in the Korean language (Choo, 2006; Yum, 1996), but in L2 classrooms where the medium of communication is not Korean, social harmony is commonly reinforced through deference or acquiescence in the presence of elders (Sohn, 2006; Yum, 1996).

Potential for this deference to affect the communicative process is primarily evident in learners’ propensity “to avoid expressing disagreement or discontent to the old” (Song, 2005, p. 11). Until the end of secondary school, Koreans advance through their schooling in age-symmetrical classrooms. Korean university classrooms, though, are composed of a range of ages. As a result, younger students in asymmetrical communicative interactions with older students may perceive their attempts to modify or restructure interactions as challenges to their elders’ *chemyeon*, and the entire negotiation process could disintegrate into a modification-less exchange of non-target-like forms (Pica, 1987; Yum, 1996).

### **Social Harmony Through Silence**

As mentioned above, meaning negotiation is predicated on the interplay between interaction, comprehensible input and output, and on learners’ willingness to modify their interactions to contribute to the dialogue of meaning-making. Implied in this complex interplay is a “demand to interact” characteristic of most interpersonal communication patterns in the individualistic contexts of the West: “a built-in assumption that when people are engaged in focused conversation, it is their responsibility to keep verbal communication alive” (Shim, Kim, & Martin, 2008, p. 37). With preservation of social harmony being emphasized in Korea’s collectivist culture, considerable value is placed on remaining silent, speaking sparingly, or providing brief silences before responding to questions, with understanding coming not from the overt, verbal expression of individual thoughts and feelings, but instead from “the greater understanding of shared perspective, expectations, and intimacy” (p. 37). With talkative people in collectivist cultures being considered

“show-offs” due to the shared understanding that “meaning can be sensed and not phrased” (p. 37), Koreans’ desire to maintain social harmony through the proper application of silence or a more indirect communication style would appear to conflict with the “demand to interact” underlying most Western-based communicative activities (Yum, 1996).

### **The Cultural Appropriacy of Communicative Practices**

In response to the failures of previous structurally oriented ELT methods, proponents of CLT shifted the focus of classroom teaching towards communicative practices providing learners with opportunities to interact meaningfully through exchanges characteristic of those outside the classroom (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Introduced as part of this approach were role-plays, communicative scenarios, and activities or tasks with a form of “gap” in information, reasoning, or opinion (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Prabhu, 1987). Terms like “interaction” and “meaningful communication,” though, which have become ubiquitous in descriptions of ideal communicative practices, are “linguistically and historically linked to ‘Western,’ and particularly Anglo-Saxon, nations” (Sullivan, 2000, p. 118). Sullivan (2000) also argues that a CLT approach assumes learners’ values are congruent with concepts like independence, choice, and freedom, and that they are comfortable interacting and exchanging information in pairs or groups where the power relationship is non-hierarchical. These assumptions, however, present a conflict with the socio-historical values embedded in the interpersonal and hierarchical ways Koreans typically interact and communicate with each other.

### **The Cultural Appropriacy of CLT’s Learner and Teacher Roles**

Learners in contemporary classrooms committed to a communicative approach are self-regulated, autonomous, and willing to “function effectively as cooperative members of a classroom community” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 546), and their autonomy is primarily exercised by developing effective strategies for exploiting learning opportunities and by assuming control over the outcomes of their own learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Teachers in contemporary communicative classrooms are also considered autonomous, but with their autonomy emerging in the competence and willingness to “build

and implement their own theory of practice that is responsive to the particularities of their educational contexts and receptive to the possibilities of their sociopolitical conditions” (p. 548).

Evident in these contemporary learner and teacher roles is a shift away from the rigid principles and practices of traditional classrooms, that may conflict with Korean learners’ Confucian ideals. Confucianism dictates, for instance, that authority is to be held solely by the teacher and any classroom practices subverting that authority in favor of bringing about equality with learners were to be strictly avoided (Hu, 2002). In communicative classrooms focused on learners, teachers are expected to relinquish their authority over classroom discourse in the interest of allowing learners to extract from communicative activities what is most relevant for them (Hedge, 2000). For Korean learners acclimatized to traditional teacher-centered classrooms, evaporation of this authority could evoke a sense of dissonance with a teaching-learning process that does not speak to their view of what makes “pedagogic sense” (Thompson, 1996, p. 14) in an L2 classroom (Littlewood, 2006).

Although the incompatibilities discussed so far appear to indicate that a purely Western version of CLT may not be culturally appropriate for the Korean EFL environment, the question remains whether these incompatibilities thereby invalidate “the potential usefulness of CLT theory” (Hiep, 2007, p. 196). CLT’s classroom practices are focused on meaningful communication with the ultimate goal of enabling learners to use language for communicative purposes in ways that coincide with their language needs. This goal is also consistent with the immediate and/or long-term goal of ELT in most EFL contexts (Hiep, 2007). Therefore, while the criticism of CLT voiced earlier may indicate rejection of the Western-based teaching practices of CLT, it is unlikely that those critics denounce “the spirit of CLT” (Hiep, 2007, p. 196) embodied in its theoretical tenets.

Sullivan (2000, p. 122) recommends that “if any language learning approach is to be advocated worldwide it must be broad enough to allow it to be appropriated by any who use it.” Given that CLT was defined earlier as taking a broad view of L2 pedagogy (Brown, 2007), appropriating it for the Korean EFL environment would necessitate comprehensive consideration of not only the socio-cultural landscape of Korea’s EFL classrooms, but also Korean learners’ language goals, their perceived English strengths and weaknesses, and their beliefs about English teaching and learning. To ensure the relevance of the

forthcoming adaptations recommended to CLT, therefore, investigating those goals, perceptions, and beliefs is the focus of the following quantitative study.

### **Investigating Korean Learners' Goals, Perceptions, and Beliefs: Design**

To provide an empirical basis for adapting CLT to the tertiary Korean EFL environment, a three-part questionnaire was designed by amalgamating elements from two instruments successfully used in Brubacher (2012a) and (2012b). The following research questions were investigated:

#### **Part One**

1. What are Korean tertiary EFL learners' goals for studying English?

#### **Part Two**

2. What are Korean tertiary EFL learners' perceived strengths and weaknesses among the five English language skills (writing, grammar, reading, speaking, and listening), and which of those skills do they feel is paramount to achieving their designated language goals?

#### **Part Three**

3. In terms of communicative practices and form-focused instruction (FFI), what are Korean tertiary EFL learners' beliefs regarding how English is best taught and learned?

In Part One, knowledge of learners' language goals was considered essential in gauging the need for adjustments to CLT's fundamental goal of native-like English proficiency. In Part Two, knowledge of how learners perceived their English skills was deemed important for adapting the classroom practices extrinsic to CLT in ways that spoke to their strengths but also targeted areas in need of improvement. In Part Three, cognizance of learners' beliefs regarding what constitutes optimal English language teaching and learning was considered necessary for determining which CLT classroom practices require adaptation.

Statements included in Part Three were structured in terms of communicative practices and FFI to reflect elements of the current paradigm for language teaching and also the form-based ELT methods

through which Korean learners were conditioned. Communicative practices were defined as those that provide opportunities for learners to engage dialogically in the “interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning” (Savignon, 1991, p. 262). That is, pair and small group interaction, minimal focus on learner errors, and cultivating a learner-centered classroom atmosphere with attention paid to grammatical items when necessary (Savignon & Wang, 2003). Conversely, practices related to FFI were defined as those that draw learners’ attention to the linguistic features of language either implicitly or explicitly, and allow for practice of discrete grammatical items.

## METHODS

To garner a range of perspectives regarding learners’ goals, perceptions, and beliefs, a sample of one hundred and twelve students from a Korean national university was used. The sample consisted of fifty-nine female and fifty-three male students enrolled in a Liberal Arts English course that met for two seventy-five-minute classes a week for fifteen weeks. Maximum class size was set at twenty-five students. Participants comprised seventy-nine first-year students, ten sophomores, nine juniors, and fourteen seniors from various majors, with ages ranging from nineteen to twenty-six. As Korean students are required to study English from grade three of elementary school, most participants had studied English for at least eight years. Disparity may exist in the participants’ levels of English proficiency depending on whether they studied English abroad or the extent to which they received English education in private institutes in Korea (Park, 2009), but overall, the participants’ English levels can be estimated as varying from intermediate-low to intermediate-high based on the most recent ACTFL proficiency guidelines (2012).

The questionnaire was written in English, then translated into Korean, and administered voluntarily in paper-form during participants’ class time (see the Appendix for the English version). One hundred and twelve questionnaires were handed out and all were returned. Part One was adapted from an instrument used by Hedge (2000) and was structured to elicit four goals Korean learners have for studying English. Part Two consists of three statements devised to ascertain Korean

learners' perceived strengths and weaknesses among the five English language skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing, and grammar) and which of those skills they perceive to be essential for achieving their reported language goals. Part Three was designed to elicit learners' beliefs about English teaching and learning, and was adapted from Savignon and Wang's (2003) own questionnaire used to determine Asian learner beliefs in a similar EFL environment. It consists of fifteen statements with eight statements pertaining to communicative practices and seven statements pertaining to FFI. A synopsis of these statements can be seen in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Statements Related to Communicative Practices and FFI**

<b>Statements Related to Communicative Practices</b>	
S.2	A language classroom should be communication-focused.
S.3	It is important to practice English in real-life or real-life-like situations
S.4	Languages are learned mainly through communication, with grammar rules explained as necessary.
S.5	I believe making trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English helps me to learn English.
S.6	A teacher should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage interaction as a class, in pairs, or in groups.
S.7	I believe talking with other students in pairs or groups helps me to learn English.
S.13	Learning English is learning to use the language.
S.14	Learning English by practicing the language in communicative activities is essential to eventual mastery of a foreign language.
<b>Statements Related to Form-Focused Instruction</b>	
S.1	Learning English is learning its grammar rules.
S.8	I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar.
S.9	It is important for the teacher to correct students' errors in class.
S.10	There should be more formal study of grammar in English class.
S.11	It is more important to study and practice grammatical patterns than to practice English in an interactive way in the classroom.
S.12	Grammar rules should be explicitly explained in class.
S.15	Teachers should correct students' pronunciation or grammatical errors in class.

Statements 2 to 7, 13, and 14 are related to communicative practices. Statements 2, 3, 5, 13, and 14 concern beliefs about meaning-based instruction and authentic English practice, while statements 6 and 7 specifically address beliefs regarding pair and group interaction. Although related to grammar, statement 4 is subsumed under the category of communicative practices as it concerns belief in grammar instruction within the context of communicative activities. Statements 1, 8 to 12, and 15 relate to beliefs about form-focused instruction. Statements 1, 8, and 10 to 12 pertain to beliefs regarding grammar instruction, while statements 9 and 15 specifically address error correction.

Responses in Part One and Part Two were tabulated and arranged in order of the frequency with which they were indicated, while learner responses in Part Three were measured using the Likert format and scored from 1 to 7. Following Savignon and Wang (2003), those scores were then adjusted to a scale from -3 to +3 to ease interpretation. The results are presented in the following section and are referenced throughout this paper.

## RESULTS

Table 3 presents the results for learners' reported language goals. Although participants were asked to indicate four goals for studying English, some indicated only two or three. The numbers displayed in Table 3 reflect that discrepancy. Furthermore, as students in Korea require both TOEIC and TOEIC Speaking scores to gain employment (Nunan, 2003), indications of TOEIC or TOEIC Speaking as language goals were classified together in the category relating to the goal of employment.

To classify learners' reported language goals, they are distinguished into two forms of motivation for studying English outlined by Gardner and Lambert (1972): instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation is associated with "needing a language as an instrument to achieve other purposes such as doing a job effectively or studying successfully at an English-speaking institution," while integrative motivation is connected with the desire to "integrate into the activities or culture of another group of people" (Hedge, 2000, p. 23).

Responses in Table 3 clearly demonstrate that Korean tertiary learners are almost entirely motivated to study English by instrumentally oriented goals. Most predominant was gaining employment in Korea (100), the ability to communicate or make friends with foreigners (48), and the need to speak English while traveling abroad (42). Other noteworthy

**TABLE 3. Korean Learners' Reported Language Goals**

Language Goals	N*	No. of Indications
Employment/TOEIC/TOEIC Speaking	112	100
To communicate/make friends with foreigners	112	48
For traveling abroad	112	42
For self-development (Ex., self-achievement and self-satisfaction)	112	24
The need to have skill in English	112	21
To receive course credit	112	19
A desire for English fluency	112	18
For enjoyment or pleasure	112	17
For my future	112	16
Skill in English represents social status in Korea	112	15
To read/watch/understand foreign books/movies/TV programs	112	15
Because English is a global language	112	15
A desire to study abroad in the future	112	14
To assist with the study of English terms/concepts in my major	112	13
Because my peers are all studying English	112	8
Desire to speak a second language	112	7
To improve my ability in English	112	7
To learn about foreign cultures/societies	112	6
To live abroad someday	112	6
For use in my daily life	112	2
To communicate with greater proficiency in class	112	1
To attend graduate school abroad	112	1
To improve my chances of getting a scholarship in the future	112	1
To participate in a working-holiday program	112	1

Note: \*N = number of students surveyed

instrumental goals indicated were the desire for self-development (24), the need to have skill in English (21); course credit (19), a desire for English fluency (18), and for simple enjoyment or pleasure (17). Among all reported language goals, however, the only goals demonstrating integrative motivation were the desire to live abroad someday (6) and the desire to attend graduate school abroad (1).

Learners' reported perceptions of their English skills are shown in Table 4. Although participants were asked to indicate only the skills they perceived to be their strongest or weakest, some chose to indicate more than one strength or weakness. The numbers presented in Table 4 reflect those additional indications.

**TABLE 4. Korean Learners' Perceptions of Their English Skills**

<b>Learner Perceptions</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Grammar</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Listening</b>
Perceived strength	112	8	5	45	6	50
Perceived weakness	112	12	49	5	48	8
Perceived as essential	112	2	12	7	89	6

Table 4 reveals that learners perceive their strengths in English to lie relatively equally between reading (45) and listening (50), and their weaknesses to lie almost identically in grammar (49) and speaking (48). Regarding the skill they perceive to be essential for attaining their reported language goals, the overwhelming majority of learners indicated skill in spoken English (89).

Learner responses to Part Three of the questionnaire concerning their beliefs about English teaching and learning are presented in Table 5.

The results in Table 5 clearly indicate learners' strong belief in all items related to communicative practices (18.49). Items 2, 3, 5, 13, and 14 reveal strong support for meaning-based instruction and authentic English practice, while items 6 and 7 reveal strong belief in the need for communicative interaction. Item 4 also reveals that learners strongly believe in the need for grammar to be explained during communication (2.28).

Learner responses concerning FFI indicate the overall belief that an English classroom should not focus primarily on form (-0.63). In particular, items 1, 10, and 11 reveal learners' lack of belief in the need for more formal study of grammar (-1.48); that grammar is more

important than interaction (-1.42); and that learning English is learning grammar rules (-1.27). Learners did express some positive support for FFI by indicating belief in the need for grammar rules to be explained explicitly (0.53) and for teachers to correct learner errors (1.73, 1.79).

**TABLE 5. Korean Learners' Beliefs Regarding English Teaching and Learning**

<b>Communicative Practices</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
I.2 Classroom should be communication-focused	112	2.05
I.3 Important to practice real-life English	112	2.41
I.4 Grammar explained during communication	112	2.28
I.5 Trial-and-error attempts helps students learn English	112	2.50
I.6 Teachers should encourage pair/group interaction	112	2.11
I.7 Talking in pairs/groups helps students learn English	112	2.28
I.13 Learning English is learning to use the language	112	2.48
I.14 Practicing during communication leads to mastery	112	2.38
<b>Total</b>		<b>18.49</b>
<b>Form-Focused Instruction</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>
I.1 Learning English is learning grammar rules	112	-1.27
I.8 Studying and practicing grammar improves English	112	-0.51
I.9 Teachers should correct errors in class	112	1.73
I.10 There should be more formal study of grammar	112	-1.48
I.11 Grammar is more important than interaction	112	-1.42
I.12 Grammar rules should be explicitly explained	112	0.53
I.15 Pronunciation/grammar correction in class	112	1.79
<b>Total</b>		<b>-0.63</b>

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDED ADAPTATIONS TO CLT

### The Fundamental Goal of CLT

As discussed, a fundamental consideration for teachers in EFL contexts is determining whether the goal for target language proficiency should be equated with that of native-like competence. As Korean learners' reported goals for learning English were predicated almost entirely on instrumental motivations, such a prevalence could be considered more consistent with attaining a proficiency goal manifesting "intelligibility and acceptability" (Stern, 1992, p. 116) as opposed to the precision of a native speaker. When these instrumental motivations are also taken together with the reality that Korea does not support English as a medium of discourse outside the "linguistic microclimates" (Fotos, 1998, p. 303) of its EFL classrooms, it becomes apparent that gaining native-like mastery of English may not be in accordance with Korean learners' view of a socially relevant or culturally appropriate language goal.

### Recommended Adaptations to the Fundamental Goal of CLT

One way CLT's goal of native-like English proficiency could be adapted for the Korean tertiary EFL context is by scaling it down to correspond with Brumfit's (1984) concept of "fluency." In accordance with an intelligible and acceptable level of English proficiency, Brumfit's (1984) concept stresses a natural pattern of classroom language interaction "which is *as close as possible* to that used by competent performers in the mother tongue in real life" (p. 69). Moreover, Brumfit's (1984, summarized in Hedge, 2000, p. 57-58) criteria for attaining fluency does not sacrifice the underlying theoretical tenets of CLT, nor diverge from Korean learners' beliefs about English teaching and learning:

- Language should be used to achieve a purpose and be focused on meaning-making to the relative exclusion of form.
- Interlocutors, whether speaking or writing, determine for

themselves the content that goes into their negotiated interactions.

- Unpredictability in the discourse is engendered through a gap in information, opinion, or reason.
- There is potential for all four English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) to be put to strategic use.
- Error correction by the teacher is performed but minimized to preserve the flow of communication.

If Brumfit's concept of fluency were to supplant native-like command of English as the fundamental goal of communicative pedagogy in Korea, it could represent a language goal for Korean learners coinciding more realistically with their ultimate goals for learning English, with what they consider socially relevant and culturally appropriate, and with how English functions in everyday Korea.

### **Classroom Practices**

That Korean learners' largely perceive skill in spoken English as essential to achieving their language goals is not surprising given the prevalence of their reported goals requiring oral English proficiency (e.g., TOEIC Speaking tests, communicating with foreigners, and traveling abroad). Learners' perceived strengths in listening and reading, and perceived weakness in speaking were also not surprising due to their extensive conditioning through ELT methods focused on manipulating the linguistic structures of the target language (Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2006; Park, 2009). Given this structural-based conditioning, however, their perceived deficiency in grammatical skills was not anticipated. This finding could be related to a perceived lack of the grammar knowledge necessary to score well on the form-laden TOEIC tests required for most employment in Korea (Nunan, 2003), or after years of focusing primarily on grammatical accuracy, Korean learners may have lapsed into a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the pressure of both needing and wanting to attain consistent grammatical perfection has led them to perceive their linguistic competence as substandard. Overall, though, the results for Korean learners' perceptions suggest that classroom practices in a tertiary EFL class should play to learners' perceived strengths in reading and listening, but also be geared towards improving their perceived deficiencies in grammar and speaking.

Regarding beliefs about English teaching and learning, Korean

learners indicated overwhelming support for communicative practices. This finding correlates directly with their perceived need for skill in spoken English, but could also be explained by the “English fever” that has become ubiquitously interwoven within the fabric of contemporary Korean society (Park, 2009). This fever results from spoken English proficiency having become universally recognized in Korea as a strong marker of class (Park & Abelmann, 2004), and may induce learners to perceive communicative practices as the most effective means for achieving both oral English proficiency and the increased social status accompanying it.

In terms of FFI, Korean learners’ overall lack of belief runs contrary to the form-heavy language classrooms through which they were conditioned, but may be a result of their perception that structurally based ELT methods hinder achievement of their speaking-oriented language goals. Learners did recognize at least some value in FFI by reporting belief in the need for error correction and for grammar rules to be explained both explicitly and during communication.

### **Recommended Adaptations to Communicative Practices**

It was said that conventional communicative practices engage learners in interactive, meaningful exchanges through role-plays, communicative scenarios, and gap activities. In contrast, earlier definitions of CLT were much broader in their scope of what falls within the category of “communicative” (Sullivan, 2000). Breen and Candlin (1980, p. 95), for example, originally defined the communicative process as one that “grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, texts, & activities.” By this definition, then, the entirety of the resources, procedures, and activities allowable within a communicative classroom exist to be exploited for their communicative potential (Breen & Candlin, 1980). Using this broader, revisited definition of CLT, adaptations to communicative practices are recommended at the levels of activity design and content along with how those adapted practices can be progressively implemented within the framework of a Korean tertiary EFL syllabus.

### **Integrate Opportunities for Learners to Read for Meaning**

One way this broader definition of CLT can be applied to tertiary EFL classrooms in Korea is by adapting communicative practices to

include the occasional use of texts as opposed to giving sole exclusivity to pair or group interaction. Practices involving meaningful reading would allow Korean learners to apply their skills of translation and comprehension acquired through previous traditional methods (Fotos, 1998), yet still engage them in a form of communicative involvement through the written medium (Holliday, 1997; Thompson, 1996). Activities of this nature would fit with Korean learners' perceived strength in reading, and by focusing on salient forms within the texts, also coincide with their reported belief that attention be given to grammar within the context of communication.

### **Infuse Communicative Activities with Socio-cultural Relevance**

Western ESL classrooms often immerse learners in communicative situations where prominence is given to authentic language of the kind believed to represent that used in the "real world." However, notions of what is "authentic" or "real" in one context may not be considered as such in another (Sullivan, 2000). In the Korean tertiary EFL context, communicative activities should be adapted to encapsulate a brand of authenticity that is both socially and culturally relevant for Korean learners. To use one example, communicative activities related to the practice of shopping language frequently emphasize language and scenarios geared towards those encountered in Western shopping contexts. While practice of this type of language could also be considered useful, a more relevant activity for Korean learners could involve communicative practice of the English bargaining interactions they might encounter while shopping in Asian or European marketplaces. For learners whose third highest language goal was the desire to study English for traveling abroad, communicative activities focusing on language of this nature may be more congruent with what they believe to be a socio-culturally relevant brand of authenticity.

### **Incorporate Spontaneous Language Play**

A third possible adaptation to communicative practices in Korea is the incorporation of teacher-led "spontaneous language play" (Sullivan, 2000) into communicative activities. Sullivan (2000, p. 123) describes spontaneous language play as "verbal play within the social context of the classroom," arguing that "playful exchanges are a socially mediated activity that stand between the individuals (students and teacher) and the language being learned." Sullivan (2000) makes the point that playful,

teacher-fronted exchanges in the classroom support learners' L2 development by serving as tools for them to associate meaning with and internalize the linguistic structures of language. Although learner-learner interactions are the mainstay of a communicative approach, adapting communicative activities to incorporate instances of spontaneous, teacher-fronted language play would not represent a departure from the goals of a communicative curriculum. In fact, interspersing language play within communicative activities would not only speak to Korean learners' reported strength in listening, it could also evoke in them a sense of familiarity with a teaching-learning process akin to the transmission-style model of pedagogy with which they are accustomed.

### Implement and Introduce Communicative Activities Accumulatively

Before recommending ways communicative activities can be implemented within a Korean tertiary syllabus, it is important to clarify the distinction between two earlier versions of CLT put forth by Howatt (1984): the "weak" version and the "strong" version. The weak version "stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes," while the strong version "advances the claim that language is acquired through communication" (p. 279). Use of the weak version, observes Howatt (1984), has become ubiquitous throughout L2 classrooms. As Holliday (1994) points out, for teachers subscribing to the presentation, practice, production (PPP) framework for language teaching, the weak version allows for seamless integration of communicative activities into the production component.

In implementing communicative activities within a tertiary EFL syllabus in Korea, one recommendation is to regard these two versions of CLT not as distinct, but as the opposite ends of a progressive spectrum of language learning (see Figure 1).



FIGURE 1. Weak Version–Strong Version Language Learning Spectrum.

During the formative stage of a semester when the socio-affective climate of the classroom is beginning to take shape, language knowledge can be gradually and accumulatively introduced through the teacher-guided activities characteristic of the weak version. As the semester progresses and learners' intimacy and cohesiveness solidify, so too should communicative activities be evolving in complexity towards communicative scenarios, gap activities, and semi-guided role-plays, and culminating with autonomous communicative projects. It is important to acknowledge, though, that much of the literature does not support the strong version of CLT in its purest form (e.g., De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Sullivan, 2000). For this reason, as the next section expands upon, communicative activities reflecting the strong version should always be supplemented with balanced doses of FFI.

### **Recommended Adaptations to Form-Focused Instruction**

Due to their homogenous L1 backgrounds, Korean learners have similar ways of "conceptualizing and verbalizing their life experiences" (Han, 2002, p. 3). As a result, they are able to decode their interlocutors' linguistically deviant utterances during communicative interactions and thus supersede the meaning negotiation intrinsic to the communicative process (Han, 2002; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). If FFI is neglected in a homogenous L1 context, learners' persistent production of inaccurate forms could eventually stabilize into "false fluency" (Han, 2002, p. 3-4).

Regarding the integration of FFI into Korea's communicative EFL classrooms, it is recommended that communicative teachers situate the form focus within the context of learners' meaning-based interactions through explicit explanations on error or corrective feedback that help them contribute to meaning-making with increased accuracy and effectiveness (Spada & Lightbown, 2008). This approach to FFI coincides with learners' reported beliefs in the need for grammar to be explained during communication, the need for explicit grammar instruction, and the need for teachers to correct learner errors.

Explicit explanations of errors and corrective feedback can be situated within learners' communicative interactions through recasts, or prompts such as metalinguistic feedback, repetition, elicitation, clarification requests, and explicit error correction (Lyster, 2004; Brown, 2007). Learners can then acknowledge their "uptake" (Lyster & Ranta,

1997) of the feedback by opting to self-repair an erroneous utterance, by repeating the corrected form of an utterance, or by integrating the corrected form into a longer utterance (Brown, 2007).

In adapting FFI for the socio-cultural sphere of Korean EFL classrooms, achieving a relative balance between recasts and prompts is also recommended. The value of recasts lies in their mitigating, non-threatening nature, and their capacity for preserving the flow of communication (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Ellis & Sheen, 2006; Sheen, 2004). Mitigating the illocutionary corrective force of teacher feedback on error is essential for preserving Korean learners' *chemyeon*, and by providing FFI within the flow of communication, recasts do not derail learners from their focus on meaning-making or their progress towards fluency.

The value of prompts, on the other hand, is evident in how “they withhold correct forms (and other signs of approval) and instead offer learners an opportunity to self-repair by generating their own modified response” (Lyster, 2004, p. 405). For Korean learners whose English backgrounds are wrought with attention to form (Littlewood, 2006), the ability of prompts to elicit modified output affords learners valuable opportunities to “enhance control over already-internalized forms” (Lyster, 2004, p. 406) that have yet to emerge in their IL output.

### **Recommended Adaptations to a Communicative Teacher’s Role in Korea**

At the outset of a tertiary semester, when most students are unfamiliar with one another and the seniority hierarchy has yet to be established, interpersonal relationships in the classroom can be said to consist largely of out-groups. According to Shim, Kim, & Martin (2008), maintaining *chemyeon* in interactions with out-group members is less complicated “than when one is involved in settings with in-group members who have multiple layers of relationships” (p. 73). Early in a semester, therefore, younger students placed in asymmetrical communicative interactions with older students may not yet feel the need to display unilateral obedience to their seniors by refraining from modifying or restructuring their interactions. As in-groups emerge throughout the semester and accumulate layers of complexity, however, and as groupwork shifts towards the type of collaboration necessary for

more elaborate or autonomous projects (Hedge, 2000), it is then that communicative teachers in Korea should contemplate the dynamics of age or seniority when seeking to effect “interactional symmetry” (Van Lier, 2001, p. 98).

If the ratio of younger to elder students in a class precludes groups from being composed solely according to age-symmetry, an additional dynamic for teachers to consider is the degree of “closeness” between learners. Closeness is highly valued in Korean society, and a bond of closeness that develops between two asymmetrically aged Koreans can serve to bridge the socio-psychological distance between them and result in the genesis of a relationship equivalent to the balanced, non-hierarchical one existing between same-aged Koreans (Choo, 2006). As the rules for reinforcing unilateral obedience are nullified by this type of relationship, age-asymmetrical Korean learners known to be close can be safely grouped together with little to no detriment to the communicative process.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has investigated and discussed the cultural appropriacy of CLT for a tertiary Korean EFL environment. Quantitative examination of Korean learners’ language goals, their perceptions of their English skills, and their beliefs about language teaching and learning revealed that they are motivated to attain predominantly instrumental goals with English; that their perceived English strengths lie in reading and listening, and their weaknesses in speaking and writing; that they perceive skill in spoken English as being paramount to achieving their language goals; and that they believe English language pedagogy should focus predominantly on meaning with some attention given to FFI.

Informed by the results of the quantitative study, recommendations have been made for adapting CLT’s fundamental goal of attaining native-like mastery of English into a more intelligible and acceptable level of fluency; for adapting communicative activities to incorporate meaningful reading, social relevance, and spontaneous language play; for how communicative activities can be implemented accumulatively within a Korean tertiary EFL syllabus; for how FFI can be integrated and balanced within a meaning-focused classroom; and for communicative

teachers in Korea to refine their group formation practices to also consider the dynamics of timing and closeness.

To evince the efficacy of the recommended adaptations to CLT, they were evaluated in a related study (Brubacher, 2013) within the framework of a communicative project (Brubacher, 2012a, 2012b) into which they had been synthesized by qualitatively analyzing learners' communicative interactions during the project for the presence of the type of language exchange that contributes to their second language (L2) development. Findings from the study revealed that the adapted goal of fluency plays a significant role in increasing learners' willingness to contribute to the dialogue of meaning-making by producing a substantial number of both negotiation moves and instances of modified output; that meaningful engagement with authentic texts allows learners to support their own and their interlocutors' learning by increasing the salience of language items and subsequent internalization of those items into their group members' ILs; that incorporating social relevance into communicative activities allows learners to customize the content of their interactions for their future language goals; that spontaneous language play provides learners with valuable opportunities to jointly engage in discourse with the teacher, which raises their awareness of connections between language meaning and form; that recasts and prompts lead to some learner uptake; and that forming groups based on timing and closeness helps to supersede younger learners' reluctance to negotiate meaning with their elder interlocutors.

As the research in this paper has primarily been exploratory, the findings should not be taken as representative of all Korean tertiary EFL environments. What a reader should leave with, however, is the knowledge that socio-cultural and educational exigencies deep-rooted in EFL environments will invariably provide obstacles to the widespread adoption of a CLT approach underpinned by imported values and beliefs. When contemplating either the adoption or adaptation of a CLT approach in any context, teachers in those contexts need only to "trust their own voice and develop a pedagogy suited to their own specific situations" (Littlewood, 2006, p. 248), and as further observation gives rise to new insights and new innovations, continue to refine and restructure that pedagogy to contend with the perpetually evolving sphere of L2 teaching and learning.

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## APPENDIX

### Learner Questionnaire (English Version)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. It should take you about ten minutes. The results will remain confidential, and they will be used only to help your teacher with his graduate school dissertation. This survey is not connected with your grade in this class and participation is completely voluntary, so feel free to skip any questions you are not comfortable answering. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact me anytime at [horangee15@yahoo.ca](mailto:horangee15@yahoo.ca). Thanks again for your help!

#### Part 1. My Language Goals

Please describe below 4 goals you have for studying English:

I am studying English to...

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Part 2. My Perceptions of My English Skills

1. The English skill in which I have the most confidence is:  
a) writing   b) grammar   c) reading   d) speaking   e) listening
2. The English skill in which I have the least confidence is:  
a) writing   b) grammar   c) reading   d) speaking   e) listening
3. The English skill that I believe will help me the most to achieve the four goals I wrote above is:  
a) writing   b) grammar   c) reading   d) speaking   e) listening

**Part 3. My Beliefs About Teaching and Learning English**

Please circle the number that best reflects your view for each item.

1. Learning English is learning its grammar rules.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
2. A language classroom should be communication-focused.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
3. It is important to practice English in real-life or real-life-like situations.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
4. Languages are learned mainly through communication, with grammar rules explained when necessary.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
5. I believe making trial-and-error attempts to communicate in English helps me to learn English.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
6. A teacher should create an atmosphere in the classroom to encourage interaction as a class, in pairs, or in groups.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
7. I believe talking with other students in pairs or groups helps me to learn English.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree
8. I believe my English improves most quickly if I study and practice the grammar.  
Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    Strongly Agree

9. It is important for the teacher to correct students' errors in class.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
10. There should be more formal study of grammar in English class.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
11. It is more important to study and practice grammatical patterns than to practice English in an interactive way in the classroom.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
12. Grammar rules should be explicitly explained in class.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
13. Learning English is learning to use the language.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
14. Learning English by practicing the language in communicative activities is essential to eventual mastery of a foreign language.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree
15. Teachers should correct students' pronunciation or grammatical errors in class.  
Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

## **Students' Perception of F2F TBLT and Smartphones to Enhance Vocabulary Retention**

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This study aims to examine students' perception of the implementation of face-to-face (F2F) Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and the use of smartphones to enhance vocabulary retention. Five classes of Korean middle school students completed TBLT vocabulary activities in the classroom. The treatment group (TG) completed the post-tasks using smartphones, while the control group (CG) used traditional flashcards. Students' perceptions of the vocabulary study approaches were collected through a questionnaire, and the results of the vocabulary pre- and post-tests were compared. The study results suggest that students perceived that TBLT was useful in retaining the target words. Both groups showed meaningful development in retaining vocabulary with a marginally higher retention of learning for those in the TG. These results suggest that smartphones could be an effective tool to allow students to retain more vocabulary by allowing students to review and use the target words out of class on a mobile device.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has captivated a lot of researchers' interest due to the broad and positive influence it has had on learner interaction (Leaver & Kaplan, 2004; Littlewood, 2004). In particular, Lee (2005) reports that TBLT improves students' self-esteem, creativity, social skills, and personal relations. Burrows' (2008) study, however, reveals that the passive disposition and lack of learner autonomy in some contexts negatively impacted the effectiveness of

TBLT. However, the lack of student receptiveness may also be influenced by teachers' skeptical perceptions of TBLT in Asian contexts (Carless, 2007; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Lee, 2005; Li, 1998) where test-driven curriculums may make TBLT appear less suitable. In fact, studies investigating Korean teachers' perceptions of TBLT have been conducted (Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Lee, 2006), but there are few studies that examine students' perceptions of TBLT for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in K-12 schools in Korea. As a consequence, this study aims to provide insight into students' views to complement the field's understanding of teachers' views on TBLT in Korea. In doing so, the study will be able to make recommendations for the implementation of TBLT. Additionally, this paper aims to examine a modern adaptation of TBLT using smartphones, as mobile devices are a ubiquitous tool for learning in Korea.

The core mission of the 7th English curriculum revision of Korea over the past 10 years has been to promote communicative skills and language use through a communicative activity-oriented curriculum. Accordingly, learner-centered teaching has attracted attention across English education in Korea. This focus on communicative teaching naturally has drawn attention to the use of TBLT in Korean primary and secondary school settings. Additionally, the interest in and demand for TBLT in English education in Korean schools are expected to increase based on educational trends in Korea and standards of best practice in EFL.

As a consequence, this study examines EFL students' perception of TBLT in conjunction with the use of smartphones for vocabulary learning. First, the paper provides an examination of the literature on TBLT and language learning, vocabulary learning and tasks, and vocabulary learning and smartphones. Second, the paper describes how TBLT with smartphones can inform task design for classroom practice. Third, the methodology is presented, describing the procedures for the control group (CG), which used pen and paper, producing flashcards to study vocabulary, while the treatment group (TG) used smartphones to study and review vocabulary. Then, a description of the data collection and analysis is presented. Lastly, the results are reviewed with respect to the research objectives, and recommendations are made for Korean EFL.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### TBLT and Language Learning

Most studies agree that the critical feature of a task is the meaningful communication it provides learners. Ellis (1990, as cited in Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 349) argues that “control over linguistic knowledge is achieved by means of performing under real operation conditions in meaning-focused language activities.” This implies that the importance in the task design rests on the realistic and meaningful communication among learners. In order to identify a task’s authenticity, Guariento and Morley suggest that a task should be analyzed with respect to four factors: purpose, real world targets, classroom interaction, and engagement.

*Authenticity through a genuine purpose:* The critical emphasis of the task is on meaning and communication. Learners should have opportunities to interact naturally in real time to accomplish a specific goal, which promote fluency and natural acquisition as opposed to rote learning and controlled exercises.

*Authenticity through real-world targets:* Long and Crookes (1992) contend that pedagogic tasks should connect to real-world target tasks. On the other hand, they argue at the same time that classroom-based pedagogic tasks are not the same as target tasks, but “complex approximations of them” (p. 44). From this notion, a task could be said to be authentic if it had a relationship with real world’s needs.

*Authenticity through classroom interaction:* Breen (1985) asserts that the most genuine classroom activity is dealing with the procedure of the learning situation: “One of the main authentic tasks within a language classroom is communication about how best to interact.”

*Authenticity through engagement:* Widdowson (1978) explains that task authenticity depends on whether or not a learner engages in the task. Unless learners are interested in its topic and purpose, there is no way for authenticity to take place. Lee (1995) asserts that a certain kind of authenticity is created through the interaction of the language users, situation, and the text.

In summary, Nunan (2006) explains that a task is classroom work that drives learners to comprehend, manipulate, produce, and interact in L2 while their attention is concentrated on using the language for real-life, meaningful communication with a purpose. Language learning

occurs within the context of the learners' interactive activities and the given conditions of the classroom to accomplish specific goals that are driven by how speakers of that language use the language (Jeon-Ellis, Debski, & Wigglesworth, 2005).

### **Vocabulary Learning and Tasks**

Negotiation of specific second language (L2) lexical items may benefit productive acquisition provided that students have the chance to use the vocabulary and receive feedback from others (De la Fuente, 2006) on their use of it. Nation (2003) proposes that meaningful communication should be controlled to include target words and that activities offer opportunity for students to recycle target vocabulary while producing language during a meaningful task-based activity. The tasks that push students to produce target lexical items result in increased oral vocabulary retention (Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1994). In particular, Sarani and Sahebi (2012) reveal that TBLT is effective in assisting students to learn technical or field-specific vocabulary.

The individual stages or design of a TBLT lesson have a bit of variation as a variety of researchers (Lee, 2000; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996) have described lesson phases. However, Ellis (2006) suggests a well-accepted design consisting of three phases: pre-task, task cycle (during task), and post-task. In the pre-task phase, students are aware of the purpose of the task in order to be able to later perform the task. During this phase, students may work with target vocabulary or focus on form. Next, during the task cycle, learners pay attention to the task itself and work based on various instructions. Finally, in the post-task phase, learners produce a tangible outcome, using the lexical item(s) and the language form(s) studied. The opportunity to interact with one another and communicate to produce a palpable result allows for the opportunity to acquire the language and develop proficiency.

### **Vocabulary Learning and Smartphones**

A plethora of studies imply that mobile learning has great potential in offering EFL learners a large amount of exposure to target words or time on task using a mobile device in practice because of its convenient access. Mobile devices allow learning to be more enjoyable by enhancing the activities done and the communication among students (Hardless,

Lundin, & Nulden, 2001; Roschelle, 2003). The rate of smartphone users among not only adults but also junior-high and high school students is increasing. In fact, a survey by the Office of Education for Gyeonggi Province indicates that their use among middle and high school students had increased over 75% from the previous year (Kim, 2012), in which a 2011 Ministry of Gender and Equality study reported middle school student smartphone use at 41% and high school student use at 48%. As a result, it is appropriate that students take advantage of the convenience of smartphones for foreign language learning. The additional mobile devices in many cases allow students to practice the language as part of a community of practice.

As a result, research has suggested that mobile learning has positive effects by providing EFL learners with autonomous, yet communicative, learning anytime and anywhere (Chinnery, 2006). For vocabulary learning, exposure to lexical items using smartphones can enhance information processing activities to lead to greater retention (Laufer & Hulstijn, 2001) because mobile phones facilitate regular study that leads to more exposure to the target words and acquired vocabulary (Thorton & Houser, 2005). In contrast, traditional paper-based lists and flashcards offer no communicative interaction with others or engaging activities while studying. Smartphones are also suitable as they allow learners to have numerous, short study sessions on the device while on the go. Lexical items are better retained when they are presented temporally apart than when they are presented all together at one time (Dempster, 1987; Nation & Meara, 2002).

Consequently, the benefits of TBLT for developing communicative proficiency and the smartphone's advantage of allowing learners to access language activities anywhere and anytime in short study sessions complement each other to build not only communicative competence but also retention of the vocabulary needed for such communication.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants and Learning Context**

The participants were 50 students who were first-year students at Gocheon Middle School, Gyeonggi Province, Korea. The students were

in five classes that participated. Each class consisted of 11 to 12 students. Not all students in each class participated due to absences and other reasons.

## Lesson Design

The classes met twice a week for forty-five minutes. The classes were taught using a TBLT framework. The three components of task design used in this study were as follows:

*Pre-task:* This phase was to clarify the objective of the task. The teacher had students understand necessary words and phrases, and recognize how they should use them during the coming activities. Students were shown a model outcome for the task. This step was important to attract students' interest in the task activities. Therefore, the teacher gave simple, but clear, directions for students to be aware of what they had to do and what kinds of support they should give to others in their group while working together.

*Task Cycle:* Students worked in groups or pairs to complete the assigned task. As their teacher, this author monitored whether any students were excluded from the task performance or not. The teacher allowed students to prepare to report their final product orally or in a written form. She also acted as a linguistic guide, giving appropriate feedback and answering any questions of language form, words, and pronunciation. The teacher witnessed how students interacted with each other in order to personalize the task's final outcome.

*Post-task:* Students had another opportunity to use the target words outside the classroom. In this research framework, the post-task was given as homework. Students had to visit the Seoul Land website and decide which ride at the amusement park they wanted to ride. The homework was titled *Build Up Friendship by Enjoying Seoul Land*. For these post-task sessions, however, the TG completed the activities using smartphones, using KakaoTalk chat, while the CG completed the activities using pen and paper, writing short notes to one another, as if emailing, along with flashcards they made. In both groups, however, students were put in a realistic situation where they needed to communicate to negotiate which ride they would go on, using the target lexical items. Pairing of students for the post-task was in groups of four, with more competent students matched with one or two weaker students to facilitate communication among students. In this way, weaker students

were supported by more proficient students.

**TABLE 1. Lesson Sequence** (*Chunjae Middle School English 1*; Kim Jinwhan)

UNIT 4	Step (min.)	Content	Post-task: Homework
1	Introduction of TBLT (20)	Seat settlement for group work Share ideas for effective learning	
	Pre-test (10)	20 target words of Unit 4	
	Pre-task (15)	Vocabulary PPT	
2	Pre-task (10)	Match word & definition	
	Task cycle 1 (20)	<b>Create my own flash cards</b> (pp. 62-79)	
	Task cycle 2 (10)	Pair & Share Reading Dalguk's Special Day (pp. 70, 71)	
3	Pre-task (15)	Listen and Speak (pp. 64, 66) Before you read (p. 69)	
	Task cycle 1 (15)	<b>Speed Quiz</b>	
	Task cycle 2 (15)	<b>Be a passionate Messenger</b> (pp. 70, 71)	
4	Pre-task (20)	Train Reading Review (pp. 70, 71) After you read (p. 72)	
	Task cycle (25)	Focus on language (p. 73) Wrap up (pp. 78, 79)	
5	Pre-task (15)	Writing Workshop (p. 74)	<b>Tech Class</b> <b>Build up Friendship by enjoying Seoul Land.</b> (Group KakaoTalk)
	Task cycle (30)	<b>Make the invitation card of my own unique event.</b> (p. 75)	<b>No-Tech Class</b> Build up Friendship by enjoying Seoul Land. (Write on the index card)
6	Post-test (10)	20 target words of Unit 4	

UNIT 5	Step (min.)	Content	Post-task: Homework
1	Recap TBLT(10)	Share ideas for effective learning	
	Pre-test (10)	20 target words of Unit 5	
	Pre-task (25)	Vocabulary PPT Pair & Share reading (pp. 88-91)	
	Pre-task (15)	Match word & definition	
2	Task cycle 1 (20)	<b>Create my own flash cards</b> (pp. 80-99)	
	Task cycle 2 (10)	Pair & Share Reading: <i>A Street Full of Colors</i>	
3	Pre-task (15)	Listen and Speak (pp. 82, 84) Before you read (p. 85)	
	Task cycle 1 (15)	<b>Speed Quiz</b>	
	Task cycle 2 (15)	<b>Be a passionate Messenger</b> (pp. 80-91)	
4	Pre-task (20)	Train Reading Review (pp. 88-91) After you read (p. 92)	
	Task cycle (25)	Focus on language (p. 93) Wrap up (pp. 98, 99)	
5	Pre-task (15)	Writing Workshop (p. 94)	<b>Tech Class</b> No homework due to final term
	Task cycle (30)	<b>Write from the viewpoint of the peacock, Perry</b> (p. 95)	<b>No-Tech Class</b> No homework due to final term
6	Post-test (10)	20 target words of Unit 5	

## Research Questions

By differentiating the post-tasks between the TG and the CG, this study investigated which mode of instruction using TBLT influenced better retention of target vocabulary. There have been very few studies investigating the effectiveness of TBLT blended with smartphones for vocabulary retention in Korean K-12 public schools. Additionally, students' perspectives of TBLT in the Korean context have also not been

investigated. Thus, this study can provide insight pertinent to understanding the effectiveness of smartphone use in TBLT. The current study was guided by the following research questions (RQ):

RQ 1: What are the students' perceptions of TBLT?

RQ 2: Which group shows better retention of target words – the CG or the TC?

## Procedures

The tasks were set up for Korean teenage learners, considering their learning characteristics and contexts: mixed levels (Li, 1998), avoidance in using English (Kim, 2008), foreign language anxiety (McNeil, 2014), and short attention span. Additionally, a realistic context of visiting an amusement park was selected to make the task meaningful and engaging for the students. In particular, the tasks were tailored to the students' needs by grouping the students to maximize peer interaction, in order to encourage them to focus on performing the tasks and effectively retain vocabulary.

All students participated in the same lesson plan, as described above. The level of students was mixed. Class 1 (12 students) and class 2 (12 students) were the TG. Class 3 (11 students) and class 4 (11 students) were the CG. Class 5 (11 students) was divided into TG students (6) and CG students (5), as decided by the students. In the first period of each unit of instruction, the students were administered a pre-test to assess their knowledge of the target words. The pre-test asked the students to write in Korean the meaning of each target word presented in English (see Appendix A).

Then, as a pre-task, the students asked questions and answered these questions in groups, while they viewed the vocabulary via a PowerPoint presentation. In the following period of instruction, as a pre-task, students matched five words to their proper definitions and engaged in rote memorization activities. Then, during the task-cycle phase, they produced their own flash cards on index cards with five target words per group. Lastly, students had a reading-race activity. In the third period of instruction, students completed the listening section of the pre-task phase.

For the task cycle, students had a speed quiz utilizing the flash cards. Then, students had a reading task, in which one student had to

complete a paragraph by listening to information provided by the others. The other members delivered a sentence verbally in turn referring to a sheet on the wall with the needed information by the selected student. In the fourth period of instruction, students completed questions addressing reading comprehension and grammar usage.

In the fifth period, students focused on writing practice in which they had to use at least seven target words in an assigned writing activity. For homework, students in the TG had to share their opinions and make a decision about selecting a ride at Seoul Land amusement park in their group using KakaoTalk. Students in the CG, completed the same task by writing short letters to each other on their index cards, as if exchanging email information, about which ride they wanted to go on and why. In the final sixth period, students took a post-test assessing knowledge of the target words (see Appendix A).

The results of the pre- and post-test of target words were recorded in order to identify which group showed better retention of the target words. Students took the pre-test (Units 4, 5) before they were exposed to the new words. Then, after completing each unit, at the end of the sixth period of instruction, they took the post-test. Some data were excluded because of absences and failure to answer questions. Thus, the final numbers of those who participated were 26 out of 30 for the TG and 21 out of 29 for the CG. The descriptive statistics of the pre- and post-test were processed by the statistical analysis program (SPSS) to acquire data results.

## Questionnaire

A questionnaire on students' perceptions of TBLT was administered at the end of the TBLT activities described above in the post-task phase (see Appendix B). The survey was an adapted version of an existing pre- and post-course questionnaire (Finch, 2006). The questionnaire had two categories: closed questions on students' perceptions of TBLT (CQSPT) and open-ended questions on students' perceptions of TBLT (OQSPT). The questionnaire included 29 closed question items, with five-point Likert-scale response choices for each item. It consisted of four sections asking the EFL students' perceptions of TBLT (items 1-6), their reflection of their own learning attitude (items 7-12) to identify how effective the task activities were, their opinion of any other necessary activities for better TBLT (items 13-20), and their preference of tasks

(items 21-28). Then, seven open-ended questions followed. The open-ended questions aimed to assist in a more precise inspection of the students' views in a qualitative way.

The questionnaire, designed for Research Question 1, was administered to the participants after all the intervention was completed. Fifty-seven questionnaires (TG: 30, CG: 27) were distributed to the students, and 50 questionnaires (TG: 27, CG: 23) were retrieved because of some students' absences, rejection, and insincerity. The data analysis process was composed of two methods, closed, Likert-scale items and open-ended items. The open-ended items were constructed to capture the reasons for the participants' closed item choices and to probe the participants' thoughts and opinions more deeply.

## RESULTS

### Research Question 1: What are the students' perceptions of TBLT?

*Perception of TBLT:* Over half of the students revealed positive reactions towards TBLT. Figure 1 shows 68% of the students answered that TBLT was helpful in assisting them to speak in English and learning the significance of doing things together to develop proficiency. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the students indicated that TBLT provoked them to reflect on their learning and develop metacognitive strategies for vocabulary learning. Additionally, TBLT was found to be favorable because of the students' increased class participation (66%), increased confidence in speaking English (54%), and ability to speak English outside class (58%). Forty-six percent (46%) responded that they came to have more interest in English.

*Highly Positive Cognition on Students' Own Class Attitude:* Figure 2 presents students' reflective data on their own attitude toward learning English. It reveals that TBLT had an enormously positive influence on their class attitude. Ninety percent (90%) of the students responded that they asked their friends and teacher for help when needed, which they may not have done previously. Seventy-eight percent (78%) agreed that they were able to fulfill tasks with the help of friends and that they also helped other students at their request, fostering a community of learning.

Sixty percent (60%) answered that they used English a lot more in class, and 74% also listened to their friends as part of the task activities.

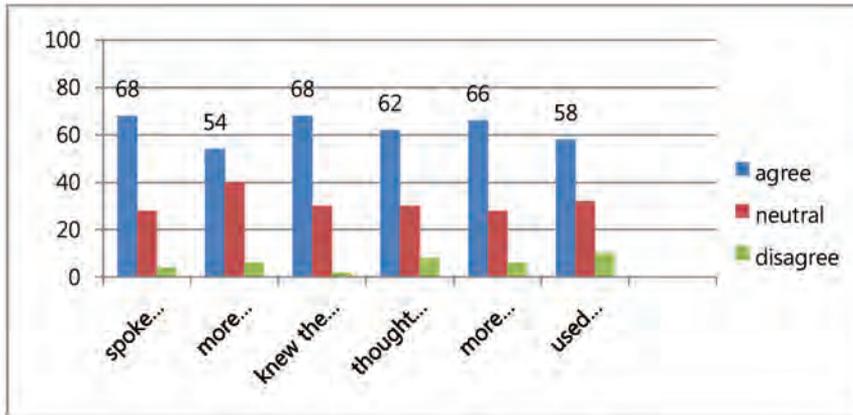


FIGURE 1. Students' perceptions of TBLT.

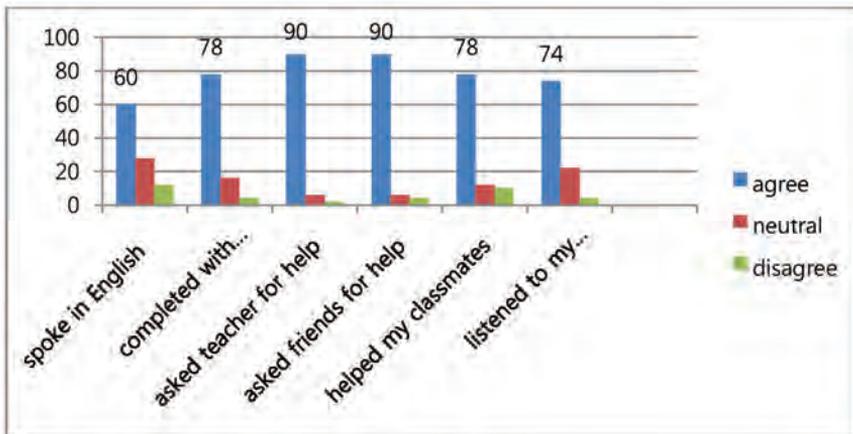
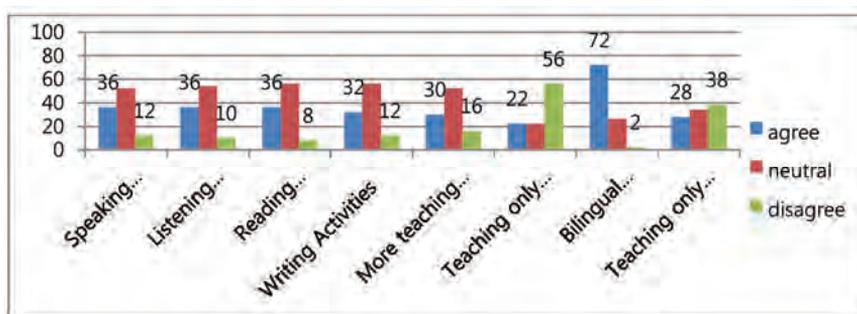


FIGURE 2. Students' reflection of class attitude in TBLT.

*Satisfactory Opinions on TBLT Activities:* Figure 3 presents students' opinions on whether any extra activities were necessary for better TBLT. It reveals that students were comparatively satisfied with the amount of the four language skills activities. Approximately 32-36% of the students were content with the current amount, and over half of the students were

neutral. As you see in Figure 3, there are two bars that are outstandingly high. One is students' negative opinion (56%) on teaching only in English, and the other is students' very high agreement on bilingual teaching. It is the only item that drew a large consensus. Seventy-two percent (72%) wanted to be taught bilingually. Around 30% of the students thought that it would be better if there was more English knowledge teaching by the teacher.



**FIGURE 3. Students' opinions of any other necessary activities for better TBLT.**

*Contrasting Task Preference:* Figure 4 presents which type of tasks students preferred most. The task cycle activities were received positively with over 50% rating them as preferable, whereas the post-task activities were received as less desirable with less than 50% approval. The task activities related to the flash card task cycle activities were well received. Making the flash cards received a 66% approval rating, and the follow-up speed quiz using the flash cards received a 64% approval rating. The writing activities that followed came in with lower ratings, in third and fourth place. The overall satisfaction of the TG with the post-task activities was lower than that of the CG, whereas the disapproval rating of the TG was a bit higher than that of the CG. Of the TG students, 37.1% were pleased with the smartphone activities involving speaking, while 47.8% of the CG students were content with the reading activities. With regard to the reading task using the flashcards, 29.6% of the TG students responded negatively to the activity, while only 8.7% of the CG responded negatively to the same activity. When it came to the decision-making post-task relating to selecting a ride at the Seoul Land amusement park, 40.7% of the TG

students and 39.1% of the GG provided positive feedback regarding the communicative activity, whereas 22.2% of the TG students and only 8.7% of the CG students reacted negatively.

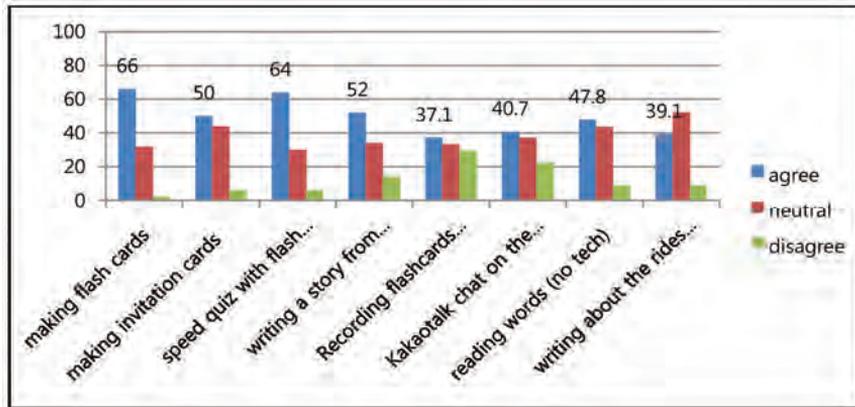


FIGURE 4. Students' preferences of the tasks in TBLT.

*Further Opinions on TBLT:* According to the results of the closed question portion of the questionnaire, over half of the participants responded that TBLT was helpful since they were more active and engaged in the activities. Students enjoyed cooperating and collaborating with their classmates to negotiate which ride they would select. Some students commented that consecutive tasks placed more responsibility on them, which was perceived as a burden. Numerous students said that making flash cards made it easier to acquire the target words and use them in the post-task. When students were interviewed randomly about the changes in the lesson design, they indicated that they were aware of the differences with the TBLT experience and enjoyed it as it allowed them to produce the language in a meaningful way.

Most intriguingly of all, a large number of students indicated that they had acquired a more positive perception of learning English. Some of them said that they came to know more words and acquired more confidence in using English. However, there were conflicting opinions concerning the post-task activities. Some students in the TG believed that KakaoTalk was meaningful because they could share their respective opinions and ideas in English, while others said that KakaoTalk presented obstacles in completing the activity because it was hard to

meet together at the same time.

Finally, students were divided on their preference for homework using conventional pen and paper or for homework using smartphones. Twenty-seven (27) out of 50 students indicated that they preferred using smartphones rather than conventional pen and paper to study vocabulary, because it was more convenient and simpler than engaging in handwriting. On the other hand, the other 23 students chose pen and paper because it was easier and more convenient since they were already familiar with it.

### **Research Question 2: Which group shows better retention of target words?**

In order to answer the second research question concerning the effect of TBLT on the retention of target words using smartphones, as compared with conventional pen-and-paper study, descriptive statistics were utilized. The data collected were processed by SPSS to acquire accurate results.

The results in Table 2 show that there was a significant improvement in the TG. The mean scores on the pre-test for the TG were 7.92 (Unit 4) and 8.54 (Unit 5). The standard deviations (SD) were 3.187 and 5.124, respectively. After implementing TBLT on target vocabulary, mean scores on the post-test increased to 16.69 (Unit 4) and 16.50 (Unit 5) with standard deviations (SDs) of 2.680 and 3.289, respectively. The results indicate a meaningful improvement with the decreased SD.

**TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Treatment Group Pre-test and Post-test**

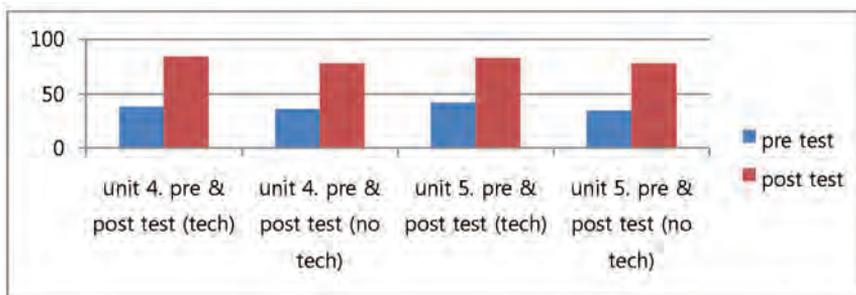
Unit	Type	N	Max.	Min.	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
4	Pre-test	26	14	0	7.92	3.187	0.6249
	Post-test	26	20	3	16.69	2.680	0.5256
5	Pre-test	26	16	2	8.54	5.124	1.0050
	Post-test	26	20	8	16.50	3.289	0.6451

The results in Table 3 reveal that there was also considerable improvement in the CG. The mean scores on the pre-test of the CG were 6.67 (Unit 4) and 6.52 (Unit 5). The standard deviations (SD) were 4.542 and 4.895, respectively. On the post-test, the mean scores increased to 15.57 (Unit 4) and 15.48 (Unit 5) with the SD of 5.084 and 4.966, respectively. This shows a clear improvement, but the high SD indicates that the data points were spread over a large range of values.

**TABLE 3. Descriptive Statistics of the Control Group Pre-test and Post-test**

Unit	Type	N	Max.	Min.	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
4	Pre-test	21	13	0	6.67	4.542	0.9912
	Post-test	21	20	3	15.57	5.084	1.1096
5	Pre-test	21	17	1	6.52	4.895	1.0682
	Post-test	21	20	6	15.48	4.966	1.0837

Tables 2 and 3 indicate that after the post-test for Unit 4, the TG recalled an average of 16.69 out of the 20 target words, while the CG recalled an average of 15.57 words. After Unit 5, the TG recalled an average of 16.50 out of 20 words, while the CG recalled an average of 15.48 words. There was no significant difference between the two groups.



**FIGURE 5. The results of the pre- and post-tests.**

## DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to explore students' perception of TBLT and the use of smartphones in TBLT. Additionally, it aimed to identify the effectiveness of TBLT using smartphones for vocabulary learning. First, the data from the student questionnaire suggests, in general, that the majority of students found TBLT motivating and had a positive experience. In particular, students showed a very positive perception of TBLT based on the change it produced on their attitudes towards learning English. This finding supports previous TBLT studies in which students had positive reactions, increased participation, self-fulfillment, and good rapport (Leaver & Kaplan, 2004; Lee, 2005; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007; Ruso, 2007). This result is in contrast to the teachers' negative perception found in studies within the Asian context (Carless, 2007; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Lee, 2005; Li, 1998; Mustapha, 2008).

The findings reaffirm that TBLT could offer effective learning environments in which students come to speak English with boosted confidence through performing task-based activities. Students' reactions in this study are in line with the studies of Lee (2005) and McDonough and Chaikitmongkol (2007) in which students felt more comfortable in a risk-taking environment, allowing them to practice the language more effectively. Some students commented that they felt like they became more intimate with their classmates and teacher. This community of practice was derived from cooperative classroom activities, producing a friendly atmosphere. The social interaction between students with one another allowed them to lower their affective filters and challenge themselves to communicate and cooperate more.

However, the use of English only during the TBLT raised negative perspectives. Over half of the students disagreed with teaching only in English because they could not understand fully and felt this inhibited their ability to learn. This is contrasted with the fact that some English educators in Korea have been arguing that English-only immersion teaching would be more beneficial to learners. However, around two thirds of the students wanted to be taught bilingually during the lesson. They commented that they preferred being taught in English for communicative activities and some simple, routine directions, but when learning grammar, they preferred to be taught in Korean.

The task activities involving flashcards were ranked the highest by students, followed by the writing tasks. Students enjoyed creating their own flashcards and using them for the speed quiz. They felt that such a learning strategy was beneficial. Additionally, the creation of flashcards allowed for hands-on engagement and also allowed personalization, accommodating different learning styles. For instance, an often-distracted and uninvolved student, who frequently disrupted the class, enjoyed creating the flash cards, as he was able to draw appropriate pictures of the target words to personalize the flashcards.

Burrows (2008) reports that TBLT can be ineffective in Asian contexts due to the often-passive attitudes of students and lack of autonomy. In this study, however, as students got used to TBLT procedures, they became more active, which was quite helpful in forming a lively and meaningful communication class. The tasks enabled students to explore what they wanted to know and interact more actively. At first, weak students avoided participating in tasks, but over time, they felt more comfortable in asking about what they did not know and pushing themselves to use the language.

The results of the data indicate that TBLT can be an effective teaching approach for mixed-level classes in a Korean small-sized secondary school context. Tasks can be differentiated among individuals within a group to be matched to their level. As a result, regardless of the participants' fluency, most students showed some eagerness to perform the tasks.

The findings regarding which group showed better vocabulary retention indicates there was no marked difference between the TG and the CG. Both groups showed improved results on the post-test. It is possible that this result was obtained as a consequence of the grouping arrangement during class and the grouping of students for the post-task activities. The grouping of more competent and less competent ones may have assisted students in both groups to learn more effectively, in spite of the post-task activity design. Therefore, the results of each may not solely reflect the post-task design's effectiveness.

Even though there were no notable differences in vocabulary retention between the groups, there was one thing that stood out. The SD of the TG (see Tables 1 & 2) between pre- and post-test was narrowed, but that of the CG widened slightly. This could indicate that the TG revealed a more stable result than the CG. This data shows some potential for the use of smartphones in conjunction with TBLT. The

students in the TG could have had more opportunity to engage with the target words when completing the post-task using KakaoTalk. Thornton and Houser (2005) and Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) suggest that frequent exposure to target words enhances the information processing activities to lead to increased retention because students meaningfully use the target words while completing the post-task.

Additionally, online communicative applications foster activities that allow for engagement using the vocabulary in meaningful communication. The TG students who participated in the smartphone communication indicated they were pleased with this activity due to the realistic communication they engaged in (see Tables 4 & 5). They indicated that it was fun to make sentences to communicate with classmates and that it was thrilling to chat in English. Similarly, Lai, Zhao, and Wang (2011) found that text-chatting online assisted students in alleviating stress and anxiety, and lowering the cognitive load of the task. Accordingly, students may have produced more language than if communicating face-to-face, facilitating more language practice.

**TABLE 4. Student Communication 1** (Excerpt 1 from Class 1-1)

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**Excerpt 1. Class 1-1** Student A: competent; Student B: intermediate competence

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:00, Student B: I want to ride sky cycle

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:00, Student A: Why??

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:01, Student B: Because sky cycle is made strong legs.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:01, Student B: You should not **tickle** your friend.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:02, Student B: How about you 하경?

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:03, Student A: I want to ride Flume ride.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:03, Student B: Why?

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:05, Student A: Because it is very cool.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:05, Student A: You should not **hold your breath**.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:07, Student A: And I want to ride Blake Hool 2000, too.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:07, Student B: Why?

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:08, Student A: Because it is very **exciting** ride.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:08, Student A: You should not **raise** your hands.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:08, Student A: How about you??

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:10, Student B: I want to ride crazy mouse.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:10, Student A: Why??

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:11, Student B: Because we can enjoy a cool speed.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:12, Student B: You should not make noisy.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:12, Student B: How about you?

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:14, Student A: I want to enjoy Character **Festival**.

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:14, Student B: Why?

2013년 6월 9일 오후 5:17, Student A: Because I can see cute character in this Festival.

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Excerpt 2 (Table 5) shows how the post-task encouraged students to interact in communicative activities providing peer assistance to each other using KakaoTalk.

**TABLE 5. Student Communication 2** (Excerpt 2 from Class 1-1)

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**Excerpt 2. Class 1-2** Student A: low competence; Student B: competent; Student C: extremely low competence

2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:40, Student A:	I thing to <i>I think so, too</i>
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:40, Student A:	이거였나 <i>Is this right?</i> → self-monitor
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:41, Student C:	몰르겠어요ㅠ
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:41, Student B:	<i>I've no idea, woo woo</i> → prompting for help um.....simple sentence it's ok!!! → supporting the interlocutor
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:41, Student B:	^^ ☺
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:42, Student A:	민아아는데까진해봐 <i>Just try as much as you can, Min.</i> → another support
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:42, Student A:	You can do it! → on-going support
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:43, Student C:	아는게 없디능ㅠ
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:43, Student A:	<i>I know nothing.</i> → prompting for help 그럼한글로해마
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:43, Student A:	<i>Then you can use Korean.</i> → on-going support 내가도와줄게
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:43, Student C:	<i>Let me help you.</i> → on-going support 롤러코스터는
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:44, Student A:	<i>The roller-coaster</i> → direct asking for help 롤러코스터is
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:44, Student A:	<i>The roller-coaster is</i> → co-constructing ㅋㅋㅋ ☺☺☺ → self-monitor
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:45, Student C:	재미있어??? 맞나 <i>Fun??? Right???</i> → prompting
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:45, Student A:	lolercoster? <i>The roller-coaster?</i> → self-construct
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:45, Student A:	fun → self-construct
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:45, Student A:	loler coster is fun <i>The roller-coaster is fun.</i> → on-going self-construct
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:45, Student A:	이렇게말하면되 <i>You can say it like this.</i> → direct help
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:45, Student C:	영어 잘한다;; <i>You are good at English.</i> → complimenting
2013년 6월 18일 오후 10:46, Student C:	loler coster is fun? <i>The roller-coaster is fun?</i> → success in communicating

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Interaction also permitted students an opportunity to reflect on their communication. Student A was continuously self-monitoring her output

and support for her interlocutor. She did not belong to the competent group of students, but she focused on giving proper supportive encouragement to Student C. Finally, they succeeded in uttering a sentence even though it did not have the correct spelling. What is important here is that they succeeded in communicating in English and Korean in a supportive environment. This kind of supportive interaction affected Student C's class attitudes very favorably. She asked a lot of things about English during this study, demonstrating the beauty of TBLT. It is noticeable that tasks fostered the provision of help between learners that resulted in assisted performance (Tharp & Galimore, 1991). This successful experience built up student confidence and good rapport. This finding is contradictory to Swan's (2005) suggestion that TBLT was most suitable for advanced learners.

## **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

Even though this study was grounded in a limited instructional design and some of its findings might not be able to be generalized to other TBLT contexts, it does offer some implications that shed light on pedagogical issues in Asian school contexts. It shows that TBLT can be worth implementing in the classroom for increasing a learner-centered environment in which students interact positively leading to more participation and increased confidence. Additionally, the study also suggests that mobile phones can be a more effective medium for self-directed learning of vocabulary for Korean learners.

The data shows that two thirds of the students wanted to be taught bilingually, while over half of the students were against the idea of instruction only in English. This implies that the teachers and pedagogues in Korea may need to be more open to bilingual instruction and move away from the English-only approach.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are clear limitations to this small-scale research study when drawing a general idea on the implementation of the TBLT blended with smartphones for vocabulary learning. First, the study contained only 20

target words instructed over a six-week period. Only receptive knowledge about the vocabulary was tested, productive knowledge was not measured quantitatively. A more in-depth study of TBLT using smartphones is needed to better understand their impact on student vocabulary learning. Future instructional projects using smartphones could explore their effectiveness in developing not only vocabulary but other skills as well.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study explored how students perceived the implementation of TBLT and which group showed better retention of target words between the two groups, TG or CG. The findings show that students perceived that TBLT generated a positive learning attitude, produced high self-esteem, increased class participation, and produced more English utterances in and out of class. The tasks led the participants to form a positive learning atmosphere in which peer assistance enabled weak learners to be outstanding with their unexpected utterances and to pool differential knowledge while performing tasks. This finding supported Ohta's (2001) claim that "no learner is universally more or less capable than a peer, but that each learner presents an array of strengths and weakness that may be complementary" (p. 76). Additionally, it revealed the preference of bilingual instruction, which is opposed to the current push in Korea for English-only instruction.

The results also show that pedagogical tasks can enable Korean EFL learners not only to explore the target words but also to build up an effective learning community. It has revealed a positive perception among teenage learners for F2F TBLT and the potential of TBLT in public school settings in Korean EFL contexts as well as a positive perception of the use of smartphone technology.

In line with previous TBLT research studies, this study found that student assistance-giving were visible in not only TBLT in the classroom but also in KakaoTalk chat relying on the three types of affordances: their peers, teacher, and tasks. This study also found that integrating smartphone technology does not automatically lead to successful learning. Instead, the interactions between students and its affordances are interrelated with a successful learning atmosphere. This study

revealed that tasks tailored to student needs could be positively perceived by the students and worked well in forming interactive learning environments.

## THE AUTHOR

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## APPENDIX A

### Pre- and Post-test of Unit 4

Please write the Korean definition or meaning next to the English word.	
Class No. _____	Name _____ Score _____
1. be ready to	16. scare
2. choir	17. shout
3. contest	18. special
4. event	19. still
5. exam	20. tickle
6. gone	21. laugh
7. hall	22. do one's best
8. hiccup	23. important
9. hold one's breath	24. exercise
10. festival	25. housework
11. interesting	26. take off
12. happen	27. take out
13. raise	28. cousin
14. noisy	29. famous
15. run away	30. watch out

## APPENDIX B

### Students' Perceptions of TBLT Questionnaire

Type of Class: Technology class ( ) No-technology class ( )  
 This survey was devised to find out what your perceptions are on TBLT implementation.

Check the box that most closely represents your degree of agreement with the statement.

SECTION A: The Perception of TBLT		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	TBLT helped me speak English more often.					
2	TBLT helped me have more confidence to use English					
3	TBLT helped me learn the importance of doing things together with others.					
4	TBLT helped me think about my learning.					
5	TBLT helped me participate more in the lessons in class.					
SECTION B: My Class Attitude in TBLT		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	I spoke in English a lot.					
8	I could complete a mission with the help of friends.					
9	I asked the teacher for help when I needed it.					
10	I asked friends for help when I needed it.					
11	I helped my classmates when they asked (no, check 1)					
SECTION C: Do We Need More of Anything in TBLT?		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
13	Speaking activities					
14	Listening activities					
15	Reading activities					
16	Writing activities					
17	More teaching from the teacher					
18	Teaching only in English					
19	Bilingual (Korean & English) teaching					
20	Teaching only in Korean					
SECTION D: Which Task Was Good?		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
21	Making flash cards					
22	Making invitation cards to the special events					
23	Speed quiz with flash cards					
24	Writing a story from the peacock's position					
25	KakaoTalk after recording the target words (with tech)					
26	KakaoTalk about which rides and festival are good for friendship? (with tech)					
27	Practice reading the target words (no tech)					
28	Writing about which rides and festival are good for friendship? (no tech)					

**\*\* Please answer each question frankly, stating how you feel. \*\***

- Q1. How do you feel about learning English in TBLT, good or bad? Why?
- Q2. Were there any changes in learning English during TBLT lessons?
- Q3. Which type of task do you think was the most difficult? Why?
- Q4. Which type of task do you think was the most interesting? Why?
- Q5. Do you have any suggestions for the teacher in implementing TBLT?
- Q6. Which lesson type do you prefer, TBLT or lecture-centered teaching? Why?
- Q7. Which type of homework do you prefer, using pen and paper, or using technology?

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## Self-Directed Teacher Professional Development for an L2 Teacher in an EFL Korean Alternative School Context

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Recently, teacher professional development (TPD) for English teachers has received a great deal of attention in Korea due to an increase in understanding of the importance of English as a global language. However, there has been little attention paid to how EFL teachers in Korean alternative schools engage in TPD. These teachers often work in settings where they do not qualify for in-service teacher education provided by the National Ministry of Education (Kang, 2005; J.-W. Lee, 2013). The purpose of this narrative study is to highlight the TPD of one such alternative school teacher. It first sought to describe the recurring problems that may prevent these individuals from pursuing TPD. In addition, it attempted to reveal how the subject pursued a self-directed form of TPD to overcome these challenges. To fulfill this objective, a longitudinal narrative study was conducted to explore the teacher's professional development based on a variety of data collected and analyzed over a period of four years. The results provide insights and implications for Korean EFL in-service teacher educators, EFL pre-service teacher educators, and possibly EFL policymakers both in private/public schools and alternative schools.

### INTRODUCTION

The steady globalization of the world has increased the role of English as an indispensable language for commerce and provoked significant demand in Korea for English education research. Specifically, studies on teacher education have received a lot of attention as a means to improve student success (e.g., Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman

& Richards, 1993; Johnson, 1992; Johnson & Golombek, 2011). Several intensive studies on teacher education particular to Korea (Chang & Jung, 2011; Jung, 2001; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009; Seong, 2006) have emerged.

It is often assumed that quality teaching is closely connected with student achievement in foreign language learning. Bernhardt and Hammadou (1987), for example, maintain that the quality of education depends heavily on teacher ability. Lee (2009) claims that the same is true in EFL contexts and that language teacher ability in particular plays an integral role due to these teachers' role as a model of the target language. He adds that teachers' behaviors or teaching styles displayed in language classrooms are a key factor in creating positive or negative classroom atmospheres, which greatly influence students' learning. Thus, several concrete actions to develop both pre-service and in-service English teachers' abilities have been implemented by the Korean government (e.g., consolidating the curriculum for pre-service training and a new teacher-training credit system for in-service training; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009).

Despite the importance of teacher education, several challenges with regard to in-service teacher training programs in Korea have been discussed within the field. Choi, Chung, and Chung (1997) attributed the challenges of teacher education in Korea to such factors as discontinuous reform efforts, failure to oversee teacher training institutions, and inadequate teacher education through reflective teaching.

Min (2006) also claims that several teacher training programs in Korea are not practical, making in-service secondary school English teachers mentally disengage from them due to a lack of applicability. It seems that such dissatisfaction may arise as a result of a disconnect between what these training programs offer and what in-service teachers experience in the reality of the classroom. The professional development programs operated by the government may not reflect realistic workplace situations in which in-service teachers find themselves.

Due to such obstacles concerning national-level in-service teacher training in Korea, there has been a strong demand for alternative options for teachers wishing to pursue professional development. Self-directed teacher professional development (TPD) has been found to contribute to these teachers' professional growth (Kim, 2005; Lee, 2009; J. S. Lee, 2013). Much of the recent literature related to EFL-TPD has focused exclusively on EFL teachers in Korean public school settings (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009), but EFL-TPD in alternative or private

schools in rural areas has not yet received the same attention. To compensate for this gap in the literature, the present study selected an EFL teacher in an alternative school context to investigate self-directed TPD. Specifically, the study aims to investigate recurring problems that prevent an in-service EFL teacher in an unfavorable EFL environment from pursuing TPD in order to illustrate how one can overcome such challenges through a self-directed TPD.

The review of the literature on self-directed TPD in EFL through self-study provides the theoretical background in support of the study. This review is followed by the analysis of the research context, including biographical details of the participant, his school setting, and the research instruments used for collecting and analyzing the data. The findings are then presented with a discussion and subsequent suggested means for EFL classroom teachers' TPD both in Korean private/public schools and alternative schools for EFL in-service teacher educators, pre-service teacher educators, and policymakers. These suggestions are also applicable to other Asian and Southeast Asian contexts, as the educational systems and TPD are informed by similar factors.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Defining Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

The term "TPD" has been defined by several teacher education researchers. Johnson (1996) shed light on the challenges of TPD from a sociocultural perspective, citing several second language (L2) pre-service teachers, noticing that a disparity exists between pre-service and in-service training. This is supported by Richards (1998), who claims that the knowledge novice teachers get from their pre-service course cannot be put into practice automatically in real classrooms because they must reconstruct "new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes" (p. 164). According to Adams and Pierce (1999) expert teaching cannot be achieved solely through many years of teaching experience. They emphasize that experience is effective only when the teacher puts effort into continuously examining his/her teaching practice to improve teaching methodologies and techniques. Richards and Farrell (2005) mention that "your professional development does not stop once

you have acquired your professional qualifications” (p. 15). Their view was recently supported by Wong (2011), who notes that “professionals” should “have the knowledge, skills, qualifications, connections, and accountability to engage in their professions as advocates” (p. 142). She adds that “professional development is a lifelong endeavor” (p. 142). These descriptions of professionals further support the earlier discussion that becoming a professional teacher needs to go beyond one’s pre-service education. Thus, the literature seems to support the idea that in-service teacher training and development needs to be supported, advertised, and made available to teachers.

In this study, the previously used term “TPD” is defined as a synthesis of all of the various definitions for TPD. The main element among the definitions that this study adopts is that TPD is understood as a series of lifelong activities involving the continuous examination of one’s teaching practice and the development of EFL instructional skills, knowledge, expertise.

### **Challenges of TPD in EFL Korea**

Farrell (2012) claims that pre-service teachers should have a responsibility to ensure that they are doing everything they can to assimilate the target language culture into the classroom and promote the TESOL profession. By extension, this is allocated to both pre- and in-service teachers. In other words, it is crucial for teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to engage in TPD. However, it seems that most teachers in Korea do not independently pursue TPD. For example, in Lee’s (2009) study, almost 90% of the in-service teachers are unfamiliar with reflective teaching, by such means as journal writing, portfolios, and classroom observation, which is regarded as an essential tool for improving teaching. Lee (2009) also reveals that the responders (English teachers in Korea) fail to implement TPD due to the wash-back effect of national tests, schools’ hierarchical atmospheres, and administrative management. In particular, an alarming 95% of the teachers spent most of their time in school handling tasks that were not relevant to teaching, which indicates incumbent teachers “just teach routinely as they are used to doing and do not often make any progress due to a lack of reflection” (p. 65).

Lee’s (2009) finding matches surveys conducted by OECD (2009) regarding TPD activities. It reports that 73.3% of the Korean teachers

respond that the primary reason for not sustaining more professional development is due to conflicts with work schedules. It also indicates that only around 25% of teachers in Korea received financial support for TPD from their institution, the lowest proportion of all participating countries. As described above, it seems that L2 teachers in Korea may find it difficult to actually implement TPD during their professional careers despite its strong need and importance.

### A Model of Self-Directed TPD in EFL

To overcome the challenges regarding the application of generally proposed TPD, a self-directed TPD has been suggested (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009; J. S. Lee, 2013). First, this section will cover Wallace’s (1991) reflective model, which has become a dominant paradigm in language teacher education research and programs worldwide. Then, a self-directed model will be discussed as to how it can help teachers further their education and development.

Wallace put forward the “reflective model” (Figure 1), illustrating that teacher development is a circular and dynamic process. The model is separated into three stages: pre-training, professional development, and the professional competence stages. During the “pre-training stage,” teachers start their career with some pre-training knowledge about teaching. The “professional development stage” indicates professional education or development where professionals using pedagogical theory continuously reflect on their own practice. This then leads to the final stage, “professional competence,” which is the ultimate goal of this model. To put it another way, the reflective model indicates that teachers improve their professional competence continuously through reflecting on their own practice.

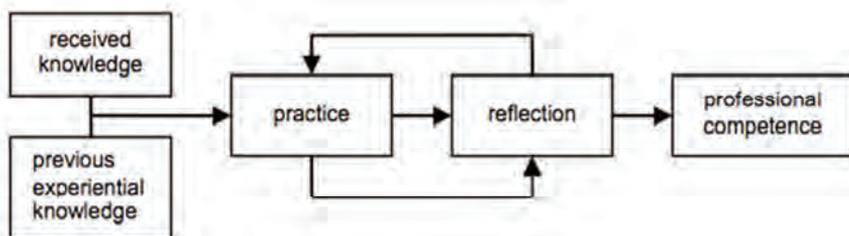


FIGURE 1. The Reflective Model (Wallace, 1991, p. 15).

Gaible and Burns (2005) also propose three models for Teacher Professional Development (TPD): standardized, site-based, and self-directed models. First, a large number of teachers can access standardized TPD to disseminate specific skills and information rapidly. This gives teachers (trainees) the opportunity to acquire broad and useful knowledge quickly while interacting with other professionals (trainers). Secondly, site-based TPD takes place within a school or region to meet the specific needs of its individual teachers. This method is effective because it addresses the problems and practices of their own real classrooms and teaching contexts. For example, mentors and coaches (trainers) meet with teachers during classroom instruction or lesson planning, and help the trainee utilize what trainers have learned in a real-world setting, bridging the gap between new concepts (theory) and classroom instruction (practice). However, this approach can be challenging in that it requires a significant amount of time. Finally, self-directed TPD is an independent-learning method that gives teachers more responsibility and is less dependent upon the school for training. It focuses more on the teachers' individual needs for professional growth. This method requires teachers to be autonomous to meet the specific needs of their classroom as they continuously engage in self-motivated and self-directed learning.

Frequently, in-service teacher training programs use all three methods of TPD. However, teachers in seemingly unfavorable EFL contexts, such as alternative schools or schools in rural areas, may struggle to implement all three models due to limitations on funding and staffing, and for other logistical reasons. Thus, self-directed TPD is often highly encouraged for such teachers.

### **Self-Directed TPD in EFL Through Self-Study**

Despite the importance of self-directed TPD in EFL, the existing accounts fail to illustrate how teachers implement the TPD model in real classroom contexts. Most studies on this issue have only focused on teachers in public or private schools, not newly emerging alternative schools (Kim, 2005; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009). Moreover, previous studies of TPD in Korean alternative schools (Kang, 2005; J. S. Lee, 2013) have only been assessed by quantitative measures (e.g., surveys and questionnaires).

Kang (2005) points out that alternative schools in Korea do not offer

enough continuous TPD education for their English teachers. Only 30% of the schools promote TPD, whereas nearly 60% do not offer any training at all. Kang's work also shows that EFL teachers spend a significant amount of time on many extracurricular events, which takes away much from their class time preparation and prevents them from engaging in TPD efficiently. J.-W. Lee (2013) examined the status of teacher training in nine Korean Christian alternative schools by administering questionnaires to 171 teachers. The results suggest that Christian alternative schools often attempt to improve the quality of teachers through intensive teacher training (i.e., one-month intensive teacher training during vacation). However, there are certain drawbacks associated with the use of such quantitative analysis on TPD. First, it is difficult to identify the "complexities of teachers' mental lives" such as teachers' authentic experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and the contexts within which they work (Johnson, 2006). Second, it only bases its analysis on a single feature. Third, it represents its findings in primarily quantitative terms.

In order to compensate for these limitations, J. S. Lee (2013) sheds light on this issue from the researcher's own firsthand experience and attempts to provide practical suggestions for in-service EFL teachers in alternative school contexts to overcome those obstacles and sustain self-directed TPD at personal and collaborative levels. However, the method of analysis for his research has some limitations. It only relies on one instrument and may lead to an issue of reliability. The findings would have been much more convincing if the author had adopted triangulation in the methodology. To fill this gap, this study attempts to conduct a narrative study on self-directed TPD in EFL alternative school contexts based on the multiple data collected and analyzed over a period of four years.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the recurring problems that prevent an L2 teacher in an EFL alternative school context from pursuing TPD?
2. How can the teacher overcome such challenges through a self-directed TPD?

## Subject and Setting

The participant, referred to here as “Mr. Lee,” is a 33-year old English teacher in Korea. He has taught ESL/EFL or KFL (Korean as a Foreign Language), both internationally and in Korea, for over 13 years. Mr. Lee obtained a B.A. in English Education in 2004. Then, he earned an M.A. in TESOL in 2009. He has continuously and actively participated in various ELT conferences and workshops, developing his teaching and research skills. Since 2010, he has been teaching English to K-12 students in an alternative boarding school in Korea.

An alternative school is a relatively new concept in Korea. Such schools have recently evolved as institutions that provide alternative education with a nontraditional and flexible curriculum and instruction. Alternative schools generally serve three main groups of youths in Korea: (a) students who could not succeed in formative Korean education due to dropping out, (b) young immigrants from Southeast Asia and North Korea, and (c) students who choose an alternative education because of its philosophy. Mr. Lee's school belongs to the third group, as a religious school. The institute does not receive any financial support from the government in order to run its own religion-based curriculum. Therefore, it is completely supported by parents. In terms of TPD within the institution, less funding and financial support are available due to its budget constraints. Thus, it is worth exploring how Mr. Lee, as an EFL in-service teacher in a seemingly unfavorable TPD condition, has managed to sustain his self-driven TPD.

## Data Collection and Analysis

This study uses qualitative analysis to overcome the drawbacks of previous research (i.e., Kang, 2005; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2008; Lee, 2009; J. S. Lee, 2013) and explores self-directed TPD by employing a range of methods in order to establish different perspectives.

Reflective narrative study refers to self-inquiry research that investigates different dimensions of one's own teaching beliefs and actions as an educator in one's educational institutions (Whitehead, 1993; Zeichner, 1999). Through such self-investigation, teachers attempt to comprehend their professional lives and grow professionally through self-inquiry studies such as reflective teaching, action research, and

teacher research. Johnson (2006) also encourages teachers to take advantage of self-study research as an alternative method to engage in TPD. Rather than relying on TPD programs organized by others, “teacher’s classrooms and their informal social and professional networks” initiated by individual teachers can play a vital role as an alternative TPD (Johnson, 2006, p. 243). She adds that the field of second language teaching and education can also benefit significantly from self-study research in that second language (L2) classroom teachers, L2 in-service teacher educators, L2 pre-service teacher educators, and ELT policymakers can identify the “complexities of teachers’ mental lives” (p. 243) more readily.

However, Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) recommend that self-study be systematic; make use of sufficient, stable, and empirical data; and be totally transparent. Considering their suggestions, the researcher carried out a longitudinal study (Mar. 2010 – Dec. 2013) in order to increase its reliability. Specifically, the researcher attempted to conduct the study in a systematic fashion by implementing triangulation. In order to triangulate multiple data sources, the data was collected primarily through his reflective teaching journals (i.e., personal e-blog with over 1100 journal entries) as shown in Figure 2. Additionally, the researcher obtained other data sources including oral data (i.e., two teaching observation video clips and 30 audio clips for monitoring his own teaching) and written data (i.e., eight teacher evaluation papers by anonymous students, a teacher portfolio, and 55 personal email narratives). In order to increase the accuracy of these qualitative findings,

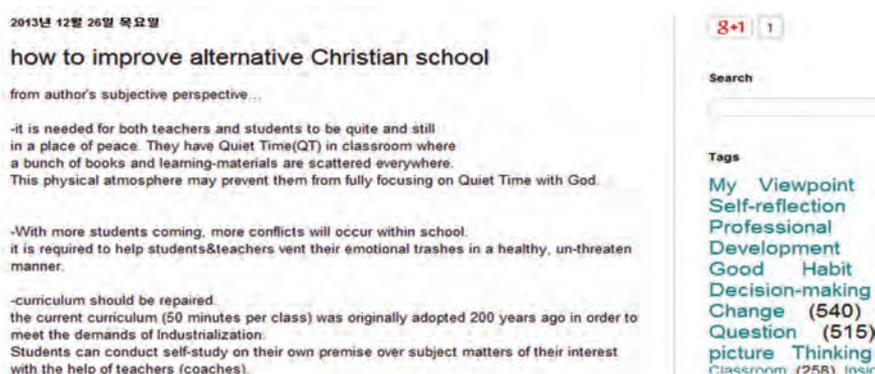


FIGURE 2. Screen shot of Mr. Lee’s reflective teaching journal in his e-blog.

the researcher repeatedly re-read the data and provided rich and thick description. Furthermore, in order to improve the validity of the coding process and the interpretation of the data, two peer debriefers (his non-native colleague with a Ph.D. degree and his native colleague with a Canadian background) who understood the context of the current study were selected. The debriefers offered constructive feedback on the researcher's data analysis by asking probing questions about the study and challenging the researcher with their assumptions.

## **Findings and Discussions**

This section discusses the recurring problems that Mr. Lee faced in his EFL alternative school context while pursuing his TPD. Then, it attempts to show how he has overcome these problems in a school with unfavorable TPD conditions and carried on self-initiated TPD.

### **What are the recurring problems that prevent a L2 teacher in an EFL alternative school context from pursuing TPD?**

#### ***Work Schedule Conflicts***

On becoming an English teacher in Korea, Mr. Lee realized that the school's demanding duties and responsibilities would keep him from engaging in reflective practice. For instance, he maintained constant contact with his former academic supervisor, Dr. K, as they were supposed to present a co-authored presentation at an international ELT conference in August, 2010. Unfortunately, Mr. Lee had to send his supervisor an email expressing his regret that he could not participate in the conference due to a schedule conflict, as noted below:

***Excerpt 1. Email message regarding a schedule conflict (July 2, 2010)***

Dr. K, the final examination is just over. Starting next week, I must participate in a "road march" with students for seven days. I feel no vacation is available here. . . . I can't make it to the conference on Aug. 4th to 8th because of a schedule conflict with my school duty. The student selection camp will be held from Aug. 4th to 7th in my school. . . . Personally, I am eager to attend the conference as we promised. But as a novice teacher, I still have a lot to learn here and should play a role as a member of this community. . . . What shall I do?

This statement is supported by the study by Lee (2009), which reveals that an alarming 97% of teachers perceive that a principle barrier to TPD in Korea is administrative management and non-teaching obligations. OECD (2009) also indicates that a primary reason for not practicing more TPD among membership countries is “conflict with work schedule” (47%). Notably, 73% of Korean teachers indicate that they are least likely to have received scheduled time for TPD. Just like most of Korea’s public high school teachers, English teachers in Mr. Lee’s institution are required to teach English and prepare their 12th-graders for the Korean College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) even during vacation time (summer and winter breaks). The traditional academic breaks in the school year are regularly used for additional study and test preparation due to the highly competitive nature of the academic school system in Korea. Additionally, teachers are asked to attend seminars, school events, and teacher training both during the school year and during academic breaks. Thus, it seems apparent that none of the factors mentioned here facilitate TPD.

### ***Disadvantages of a Boarding School***

To better achieve its educational goals, Mr. Lee’s alternative school was founded as a boarding school. Both teachers and students may benefit from a boarding school setting, but Mr. Lee claims it depends on one’s individual values or needs. For example, his boarding school is located in a remote countryside area of natural beauty, secluded from the distractions of a busy city boasting impressive facilities. Most teachers also seem to regard their work as a calling rather than a job, perhaps because they are approved for employment at this school only after agreeing with the school’s Christian philosophy and mission. Parents send their child to the school to be educated in the Christian manner both in small classes (12-15 students per class) and in the dormitory. The Christian philosophy is taught after classroom hours through exposure to school ideals and teaching with staff and faculty in the dormitories. However, Mr. Lee is often concerned that a boarding school setting might serve as a barrier for TPD activities as written in excerpts 2 and 3.

#### ***Excerpt 2. Journal entry regarding drawbacks of a boarding school 1 (July 2, 2010)***

Probably the biggest problem of working in a boarding school is the

difficulty in separating work from home life. Although I am living in school accommodation (approximately 300 meters) away from my pupils and official physical workplace, in many cases, I find it difficult to keep myself properly separated from external factors while in my housing unit. Even there, I feel I am still at school, making it hard to get relaxed and refreshed.

*Excerpt 3. Journal entry regarding drawbacks of a boarding school 2 (Aug. 22, 2013)*

I woke up to check KakaoTalk (popular Korean messaging service) messages while relaxing at home. One student hadn't shown up for attendance check by this time, so I was asked to do something about it. Later, it turned out that he was sleeping in his dorm room. That was 9:30 p.m. on Saturday. Nowadays, I feel strongly that such job-related issues spill over into my home life through this new technology.

As discussed above, a boarding school inevitably demands a greater level of pastoral care by placing teachers in a parental role for their students. Some of Mr. Lee's colleagues, who believe this task is their predestined vocation, might enjoy the atmosphere of this village-sized educational community. Mr. Lee, however, asserts that the facilities and subsequent issues often increase a teacher's stress, affect their well-being, and thus decrease a teachers' performance and students' academic achievement unless the teacher can independently manage the demands of such a teaching context.

*School Culture, Homogeneous Community*

Mr. Lee thinks of his Christian alternative school as a tightly-knit homogeneous community. This is mainly because nearly 100 faculty members, 300 students, and their parents all share the same religion, Christianity. It is a school policy to exclusively select Christian students and faculty. In the same manner, the curriculum and instruction are solely based on Christianity. This is possible because the school operates independently of the government and does not receive any financial support. This independence allows students and teachers to start every day with Bible study by reading the scripture and praying. It permits chapel services where students and faculty also come together twice a week (every Wednesday and Sunday) as a community of Christians to affirm their faith. It also activates several "spiritual-related programs" as

extracurricular activities. As a result of this community being so close-knit, Mr. Lee indicates how this working environment may play a negative role in promoting TPD.

*Excerpt 4. Journal entry regarding Mr. Lee's school culture (July 2, 2013)*

Today, I talked with one of my colleagues about TPD. He seemed unwilling to implement TPD because of lots of duties (e.g., preparing for a weekly sermon, preparing for classes and quizzes, coaching essays for 12th-graders, and attending various meetings) and lack of TPD time. He indicated that throughout the year, even during summer and winter vacation time, teachers are burdened with chorus and various other duties, which make it difficult for them to reflect, refine, and improve their teaching practices. He added that another barrier to implementing TPD can be school culture. Since most school leaders seem to have a very limited understanding of professional development for in-service teachers, they do not provide teachers with enough time and financial support for TPD. Rather, they are inclined to focus more on collective teamwork or spiritual seminars to reinforce its homogeneous culture. All teachers are required to attend all the activities because they must act together.

In excerpt 4, Mr. Lee suggests that the school culture may serve as a huge barrier to TPD. That does not suggest that his school ignores TPD. Instead, TPD is not placed as a top priority. He suggests that the leaders within the organization should be aware of the need and significance of TPD to balance the school's core values and make its teachers professionally up to date.

***Lack of Collaborative Learning***

Richards and Farrell (2005) highlight that two or more teachers working together are usually more effective than one working individually. Lieberman and Grolnick (1998) also support collaborative learning in that it “[provides] opportunities for teachers to validate both teacher knowledge and teacher inquiry” (p. 723). Likewise, Mr. Lee also claims that effective collaborative learning among school teachers is important for TPD in that teachers can interact with one another by sharing skills, knowledge, experience, and solutions to common problems they encounter in the same context. In excerpt 5, however, Mr. Lee points out the lack of collaborative learning among teachers in his

institution and acknowledges the importance of its collaborative TPD, as seen below:

*Excerpt 5. Journal entry regarding lack of collaborative learning (Nov. 2, 2012)*

I feel I am so limited with the way I teach. Nowadays, I always feel so exhausted after having faced so many intricate issues and challenges with students in the classroom. I wish I could consult with others who have wisdom and more experience about my situation. Yet, I can hardly find the time and space to collaborate with my colleagues. Today, one of my colleagues told me making time for teacher collaboration is crucial. I totally agree with him on that. But I simply don't know how to facilitate collaboration among teachers here with this hectic work schedule.

It seems that Mr. Lee feels a strong need to talk with other like-minded teachers about his classes in order to receive support, advice, and help from them. But he attributes his tight schedule to being the primary reason for his hesitation to approach others, as his time is as limited as theirs is. In addition, he acknowledges the need to protect the privacy of teacher's information, but creating an optimal collaborative atmosphere needs to be considered as teachers share their own life experiences. Lee (2009) indicates that teachers in Korean public schools are less likely to connect and collaborate with colleagues due to the influence of Confucian society. Traditionally, the teacher is regarded as an expert and father-figure, somewhat like "the independent omniscient being." As a result, 56% of teachers think they do not work well with colleagues. It shows that teachers in Korea may be less likely to collaborate with colleagues regardless of the school context. It is suggested that school support needs to be present for TPD to create such a culture of collaboration in a non-threatening environment.

So far, four main barriers to TPD have been discussed: (a) conflict with work schedule, (b) disadvantages of a boarding school, (c) school culture, and (d) lack of collaborative learning. Now, let us take a look at how Mr. Lee overcame such challenges through a self-directed TPD within this seemingly adverse TPD context.

## How Can a Teacher Overcome Such Challenges Through a Self-Directed TPD?

### *Reflective Journals*

A reflective journal is a continuous written work of “observations, reflections and other thoughts about things, usually in the form of a notebook, book, or electronic mode, which serves as a source of discussion, reflection, or evaluation” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 68). Mr. Lee used an e-blog to keep a reflective journal for four years. It contains events, incidents, and insights relevant to language learning and teaching (i.e., lesson plans, teaching skills, interactions with students, and students’ reactions). In excerpt 6, he describes some benefits of a reflective journal.

*Excerpt 6. Journal entry titled “Importance of Teaching Journal” (Mar. 8, 2013)*

For me, a reflective journal is like a ritual event that proceeds following a certain procedure. Before each class, I usually set specific goals and objectives to improve my teaching and myself. While teaching, I consciously try to observe my students, my teaching, and myself as a teacher. As soon as the class is over, I often sit in front of my notebook to write about whatever comes to my mind rapidly. I try to focus on particular events and incidents (e.g., teacher’s questioning strategies, teacher’s interactions with students, or learning strategies). Each week or month, I review (or reread) my journal entries and try to identify things to improve. Through this process, I can also be aware of my unique teaching style, strategy, and my methods of interaction with students. It is beneficial because I can look into myself and my class more deeply. I can also vent and express my own “authentic” feelings, thoughts, and insights about everyday teaching freely. I believe it will ultimately result in improving my instruction.

Here, Mr. Lee seems convinced that his teaching will improve through this reflective journal. His statement corresponds with the powerful effects of reflective journal writing on TPD studied by Johnson and Golombek (2011), who claim it can have a “transformative power” for in-service teachers of English. Excerpt 7 shows this specific benefit as a result of continuous reflective writing by Mr. Lee. It illustrates how

he succeeded in identifying one particular problem (i.e., a strategy of his corrective feedback) in his classroom and instantly made a decision to change it.

*Excerpt 7. Journal entry titled “50-minute English Class and Its Reflection” (Sep. 19, 2012)*

Once a week, I asked my students to write a personal essay utilizing the grammar points they had learned. After students submitted their journal entries, I offered them written corrective feedback (WCF). When I did that for a few weeks, I suspected my extensive linguistic feedback with commentary de-motivated my students, preventing them from further developing their subsequent essays. Over time, it seemed that they wrote less and less. Most of them seemed unable and unwilling to share their stories about the topic they had written about . . . . I realized they spent too much time on accuracy not fluency due to the influence of my WCF. Next time, I will handle one major issue (e.g., articles, plurals) instead of correcting every single error.

In this excerpt, Mr. Lee highlighted one particular incident during writing class and showed how he figured out his mistake and decided to correct it to refine his instruction. Obviously, he would not have noticed this, if he had not kept a reflective journal. So, it is suggested that the individual L2 teacher take responsibility for keeping a journal as it may help the L2 teacher become more aware of issues in the classroom and eventually resolve them.

***Teaching Portfolios***

According to Evans (1995, p. 11), “a professional portfolio is an evolving collection of carefully selected or composed professional thoughts, goals, and experiences that are threaded with reflection and self-assessment. It represents who you are, what you do, why you do it, where you have been, where you are, where you want to go, and how you plan on getting there.” In his reflective journal writing, Mr. Lee found that compiling a teaching portfolio helped him evaluate his past performance, gain a better understanding of himself as a teacher (e.g., strengths, skills, and accomplishments), and prepare for a future career.

*Excerpt 8. Journal entry regarding a teaching portfolio (Mar. 17, 2013)*

When making a teaching portfolio, I assembled all items to put into

it (e.g., copies of qualifications, publications, my resume, beliefs about teaching, the school curriculum, and my professional development activities). Then, I decided which to include and arrange coherently and meaningfully. Through this process, I got to know how I ended up here. . . . From then on, I have kept reviewing and updating my portfolio on a regular basis. The more often I refine it, the better I get to learn about myself as a teacher. . . . A teaching portfolio is like a map because it assists in planning and deciding my long-term goals or future improvement through reviewing it.

In excerpt 8, Mr. Lee acknowledged the importance of creating and managing a teaching portfolio. His initial motive to create a teaching portfolio was to set the stage for the secondary English teachers teaching contest held in Korea every May. He, then, found an electric template ([www.wix.com](http://www.wix.com)) to create and manage his own teaching portfolio. As he proceeded with making his teaching portfolio, he found it useful because he could “undertake a holistic assessment of his teaching” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 108). In particular, he mentioned that his portfolio helped him plan and decide the direction of his future career. So, it would be interesting to further research any positive consequence in the near future as a result of his teaching portfolio.

### ***Classroom Observations***

Classroom observation is an objective recording of what the teacher and students are doing and interactions between the teacher and students (Richards & Farrell, 2005). Mr. Lee implements two types of classroom observations: self-observation and peer observation. Self-observation is to gather information about “teaching practices objectively and systematically in order to better understand [his] teaching and [his] own strengths and weaknesses as a teacher through audio-recording or video-recording” (Richards & Farrell, 2005, p. 34). Peer observation, on the other hand, simply indicates how outside visitors (colleagues or parents) observe his teaching. Over the past four years, he invited students’ parents into his classroom once, and small and large groups of his colleagues three times. After each classroom observation, he took part in reflective sessions to evaluate his performance with follow-up actions. From Mr. Lee’s perspective, the benefits of the classroom observations are illustrated in excerpt 9:

*Excerpt 9. Journal entry titled “More Preparation Is Better” (Dec. 10, 2012)*

This week, I invited colleagues into my classroom (11th-graders with intermediate level) for class observation. I spent the whole weekend preparing for the class. Yesterday, I wrote a script based on this lesson plan to avoid possible mistakes. Even in a public spa, I practiced a rehearsal myself. This early morning, I checked my PowerPoint, video clips, white boards, and worksheets. I also tried to practice it again by applying some of these teaching materials to other classes (10th- and 12th-graders). After lunchtime, I took a walk around the school and visualized my would-be lesson. . . . Finally, the time had come. I was utterly nervous. In the actual peer observation session, I became disappointed because my students didn't respond as well as anticipated. I made some mistakes, too. Overall, however, I felt relieved to get it done. . . . [After the classroom observation] I reviewed the videotape three times. Each time, though, I asked different questions concerning my classroom lessons (e.g., teacher-student interaction, teacher's style or behaviors, and teacher's corrective feedback). With this information, I would meet and discuss with my colleagues about this class.

Here, Mr. Lee describes how implementing a classroom observation helps him engage in his self-directed TPD. Although he initially seems nervous at being taped and observed by others, he planned, practiced, and became more informed of his lesson along the way. Afterward, Mr. Lee kept reviewing his teaching video clip over and over to reflect and develop his teaching. At one school-based seminar, he shared with his colleagues about how this practice helped him better monitor and understand his language lesson (e.g., teacher's movement, teacher's voice tones, teacher's English pronunciation, students' reactions, students' questions, and teacher-student interaction). In other words, he can approach his teaching from different perspectives through a series of repeated review and reflections. In this case, the more often he reviews his performance, the better he can observe and become aware of his classroom situations.

*Student Surveys*

Conducting surveys or questionnaires helps collect information “on a particular aspect of teaching or learning” from students (Richards & Lockhart, 1996). Mr. Lee employs a “needs analysis” and “teacher

evaluation” as useful ways to collect data. At the beginning of each semester, for example, Mr. Lee administers needs-analysis surveys to investigate his new students’ learning styles, strategies, and motivations, thus devising and developing his course, curriculum, and learning materials. He also conducts and collects data through a teacher evaluation from his students at the end of the course. This data helps him reflect critically upon his teaching and gives opportunities to refine it. Specific benefits of students’ surveys and how they lead to his TPD are displayed below:

*Excerpt 10. Journal entry titled “Teaching Evaluation” (Aug. 2, 2012)*

I received feedback on my teaching from my students via a survey. The questions dealt with 1) evaluation on my teaching style, 2) evaluation on my teaching material, 3) evaluation on my assessment, and 4) evaluation on students themselves. Since I do not always receive positive feedback from students, it requires of me a great deal of courage and discipline. But I think it helped of me reflect on my own practice and get the answer I was looking for. It also allows me to identify my instructional strengths and weaknesses. . . . This time, my drawbacks associated with my curriculum and instruction turned out to be that 1) I should use more open-ended questions than closed, 2) I should praise students in class, and 3) I should focus more on intrinsic motivation than on extrinsic motivation.

In excerpt 10, Mr. Lee emphasized the necessity of administering a student survey (needs analysis) as it helps gather information about students quickly (e.g., students’ language learning experience, student learning styles and strategies, and student beliefs about English). Also, he noticed three specific areas of his instruction to be improved through a regular teaching evaluation. It has positive implications for TPD in that he can take advantage of this collected information to design the curriculum and lesson plans for the next semester. The fact that he was willing to utilize results of both a teacher evaluation and a student needs analysis indicates that he took advantage of them to improve himself as a teacher as well as to improve his classroom practices. It would be worth investigating how Mr. Lee actually transformed his instruction by implementing the student survey.

### *School-Based Seminars*

The word *seminar* is derived from the Latin word *seminarium*, meaning “seed plot or seed bed.” In other words, a seminar is a place or source of growth or development. According to the *Oxford-American Dictionary*, a seminar is also defined as “a short intensive course of study or a conference of specialists” usually offered by professional organizations in the form of academic instruction. As already discussed, L2 teachers in an EFL alternative school context find it difficult to follow a standard TPD model. In 2003, Mr. Lee initiated a school-based seminar “*D TEFL Seminar*” to operate as a combination of a site-based and self-directed TPD model. He defines this school-based seminar as a place where a group of English teachers within a school regularly meet to (a) discuss goals, issues, concerns, or experiences related to language learning and teaching and (b) to learn specific knowledge and skills for their professional development. Mr. Lee as head of the English department made an online announcement on this by-weekly school-based TEFL seminar to invite colleagues teaching different school subjects as shown in Figure 3.

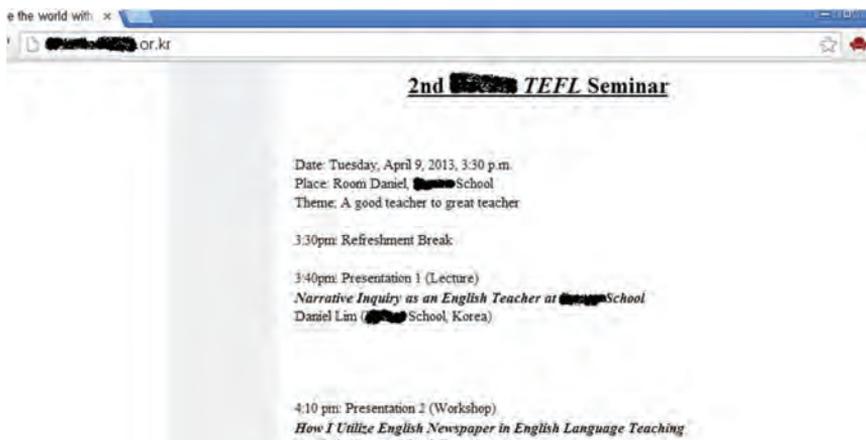


FIGURE 3. Screen shot of a website announcement for a school-based TEFL seminar.

*Excerpt 11. Journal entry titled “D TEFL Workshop” (Apr. 18, 2013)*

I have launched, planned, coordinated and implemented a bi-weekly “D TEFL Workshop” within the English Department twice a month

since Feb. 2013. I chose presenters (teachers) and let them distribute adequate and useful resources for the seminar participants in advance. After 30 minutes of presentation, participants could join group discussion, explore problems, and reflect on what has been learned. . . . Today, I invited colleagues of other subjects to the 2nd TEFL Seminar by making an online announcement on the school website. I hope this seminar can act as the place where not only English teachers but teachers of other subjects can meet together and address important issues concerning our curriculum and instruction where teachers can share and learn about more effective, interesting, and creative English teaching and learning methods which are optimal in my school contexts.

In the last sentence of excerpt 11, Mr. Lee highlighted the importance of acquiring hands-on skills and knowledge that can later be applied to the teacher's own classroom. It is expected that it may have a positive impact on students learning as teachers discuss issues related to their learners and learning. Aside from that, he also thinks novice teachers can learn many aspects about teaching through ample input from seasoned teachers (because three new teachers had joined the school's English department that year).

It is suggested that the most important aspect in implementing a school-based seminar is to choose and discuss an appropriate topic each session (e.g., problem solving or practical skills related to teaching and learning in the classroom), and develop and facilitate an appropriate sequence of activities (e.g., lecture, workshop, reflective practice, and refreshment time). This TPD action has significant implications as both presenters (teachers) and participants (colleagues) engaged in self-driven TPD during this school-based seminar. It is believed that the seminar would have proceeded even better if more cases or data regarding advantageous aspects of a school-based seminar had been introduced.

### ***Publication***

Mr. Lee took part in co-authored publication and independent presentation. In 2013, he would have liked to have submitted a paper to an academic journal, but he could not discuss his ideas and results directly with people whom he trusted and respected (i.e., former supervisor or colleagues) because of geographic limitations.

*Excerpt 12. An email entry from the editor-in-chief (July 3, 2013)*

We hereby inform you of the final decision for publication of your manuscript based on the three reviewers' evaluation. Result: revise and submit for reevaluation.

He regretted not receiving any advice from others in the field after he received the editor's decision about publication with enclosed referees' reports as shown in excerpt 12. Even though the journal declined to publish his paper as submitted, he discussed the result with his wife (a Ph.D. candidate), his former academic advisor (Dr. K), and his former colleague, and showed them the reports and editor's letter as described in excerpts 13 and 14.

*Excerpt 13. Journal writing regarding Mr. Lee's journal manuscript (Jul. 5, 2013)*

I was terribly shocked by the result of my journal submission. I candidly shared my ideas and emotions with my wife because I thought she might understand me. She is a Ph.D. candidate, writing her dissertation at this stage. She told me it is like a rite of passage for a novice researcher . . . . Afterward, I thought to myself my paper might not appear appropriate for this academic journal. Maybe I should try to send out the paper to other journals that are more oriented to actual teaching practices . . . . I also thought I didn't present something new, just discussing the past and the present situations of English education and teacher education in Korea.

*Excerpt 14. An email entry from his colleague (Sep. 11, 2013)*

Hi Mr. Lee, I've finally had a chance to look over your paper, and it seems to be a good start. But you are trying to do too much with it. You really did a small-scale investigation on reflective teaching. Focus on one thing: your research – you did a study on your own teaching.

Mr. Lee revised his paper to be resubmitted based on the referee's comments and his colleague's advice. Later, his academic advisor recommended that he submit his paper to another journal. Even though his paper was rejected, Mr. Lee took this as a learning opportunity to grow professionally. He reflected on his paper, sought advice from his wife, former supervisor, and former colleague. Mr. Lee submitted his work to an international journal again and got accepted after thorough

revision based on the comments from the reviewers and feedback from his colleagues. All these activities show how he grew professionally through engaging in TPD.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study attempted to explore recurring problems that prevent an in-service L2 teacher (Mr. Lee) in an EFL alternative school context from pursuing TPD and to provide insights for practical self-directed TPD suggestions through a self-study in order to overcome such challenges. Based on its findings, the repetitive problems that kept him from undertaking TPD were (a) work schedule conflicts, (b) disadvantages of a boarding school, (c) school culture (homogeneous community), and (d) lack of collaborative learning. In order to overcome such unfavorable TPD conditions, Mr. Lee pursued self-driven TPD by taking actions in the following six activities: (a) keeping a reflective journal, (b) compiling a teaching portfolio, (c) conducting classroom observation, (d) administering student surveys, (e) organizing school-based seminars, and (f) submitting a paper for publication.

However, a number of caveats need to be noted regarding the present study. First, the findings of this study cannot be generalized since it only examined one in-service teacher. With such a small sample size, the findings might not be transferable to other teachers in other contexts. Thus, more in-service teachers in the same or other contexts need to be investigated. Second, it needs more qualitative data to support the points. As discussed before, however, this approach seems plausible because little research to date has been done on L2 TPD in EFL alternative school contexts. Third, collaborative research with other specialists in the TESOL field also needs to be conducted. In this way, two or more teacher researchers, teaching assistants, administrative staff, or university professors could participate in this effort to promote TPD and approach this issue from diverse dimensions.

To conclude, I would like to propose the following suggestions for L2 classroom teachers, L2 in-service teacher educators, L2 pre-service teacher educators, and ELT policymakers. First, L2 in-service teachers need to share their lived experiences and have their voices heard by other colleagues, researchers, the general public, and ELT policymakers.

They do not have to provide solutions to the problems observed in the classroom. Rather, through narrative inquiry, classroom teachers can just observe, analyze, interpret, and present classroom practices to a wider public. Johnson (2006) claims that it is important to identify the “complexities of teachers’ mental lives” because “teachers’ prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and most importantly, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do” (p. 236). Unless the voices of classroom teachers get heard, ELT policies and teacher education may be implemented without a sufficient understanding of English teachers’ needs and real classroom contexts.

Second, L2 in-service teacher educators must take initiative in conducting teacher-researcher collaborative study as noted in Choi (2009). In order to “bridge the gap between theory and practice in the Asian EFL context,” researchers must become aware of the classroom situation in the first place (Choi, 2009, p. 42). When carrying out collaborative study with in-service teachers, in-service teacher educators or researchers should investigate EFL classrooms, including the curriculum, materials, tests, students, and teachers, to identify real issues in school settings, deal with them in teacher training programs, and eventually bring about changes in teaching practices.

Third, it is important for L2 pre-service teacher educators to notice the huge gap between pre-service teacher education programs and the real EFL classroom situation. When designing the curriculum, pre-service teacher educators should take into account how their “programs can bridge this gap more effectively and thus better prepare novice teachers for the challenges they may face in the first years of teaching” (Farrell, 2012, p. 438). Also, colleges of education should teach novice teachers how to engage in continuous reflective practice throughout their transitional period (at least the first three years of teaching) so that they can better deal with issues and problems when they enter the actual classroom context.

Finally, ELT policymakers require more collaboration with classroom teachers (Oda, 2009). Choi (2009) claims that “when the government plans a reform in education, they mainly rely on university professors (researchers) rather than on classroom teachers, often neglecting what works or does not work in the real classroom” (p. 34). Thus, more classroom-based action research is highly desirable. Also, more incentive should be provided for EFL teachers to engage in

professional development. It seems likely that unfavorable school culture and administrative chores will get in the way of TPD. Thus, policymakers need to come up with workable solutions in order to eliminate such hindrances and to meaningfully promote continuous TPD.

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## **What Is Your Secret for Professional Development? English Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions of Reflection Notes**

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This study examines the perceptions and attitudes of five English teacher candidates and five in-service language teachers regarding how writing teaching-reflection notes affects their professional development. Using questionnaires and interviews, the study demonstrates that the experience of writing reflection notes and engaging in reflective thinking has a positive influence on fostering English teachers' professional development. First, it helps pre-service teachers monitor the process of professional development. Second, it encourages in-service teachers to conduct action research. Third, it makes both pre- and in-service teachers become more responsible and autonomous learners in their teaching careers. Fourth, it enables both types of teachers to employ teaching-reflection notes for the purposes of continual professional development (CPD) in the future. In conclusion, this study provides some suggestions for implementing teaching-reflection notes in teacher preparation programs in order to foster pre-service teachers' reflective thinking and writing in the Korean context.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In order to facilitate effective English language teaching in EFL contexts, many elements such as language teachers' professional development, good teaching practices, and teaching methods should be considered. Among them, language teachers' professional development through reflective thinking and writing teaching-reflection notes play an important role in meeting students' diverse learning needs and desires (e.g., Lee, 2006, 2008; Shin, 2006). If we assume that the best teaching

practices emerge from considerations of specific teaching contexts, a language teacher's reflection notes serve to understand what really happens in the language classroom and as a starting point to understand students' diverse learning needs and difficulties with learning languages. Additionally, through teaching-reflection notes, English teachers are able to conduct action research related to their classes. Before they begin an action research project, writing teaching-reflection notes can serve as a beneficial prerequisite because the process can be a useful method for understanding EFL students' various characteristics and their features of learning English.

Thus, it is worth investigating the effectiveness of employing teaching-reflection notes for enhancing language teachers' professional development. In this study, the author surveyed the perceptions and attitudes of five pre-service English teachers and five in-service teachers regarding how reflection notes affect their professional development. Using questionnaires and interviews, the study shows that incorporating reflection notes while teaching and learning has a positive influence on both pre- and in-service teachers' professional development by fostering reflective thinking and writing in the Korean context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Language Teacher Professional Development

Heideman (1990) states that "the professional development of teachers goes beyond a merely informative stage; it implies adaptation to change with a view to changing teaching and learning activities, altering teacher attitudes, and improving the academic results of students" (p. 4). Thus, language teacher professional development is a process that leads to teacher candidates' improvement and empowerment. By repeatedly practicing this process, language teachers will take more responsibility for their teaching and become experienced in-service teachers who are dedicated to their teaching through endless self-reflection.

Richards and Farrell (2005) explain: "Strategies for teacher development often involve documenting different kinds of teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices; examining beliefs,

values, and principles . . .” (p. 4). Diaz-Maggioli (2003) defines language teacher professional development as “an ongoing learning process in which teachers engage voluntarily to learn how best to adjust their teaching to the learning needs of their students” (p. 1).

According to these arguments, teacher development is a continuous process of self-development with various dimensions of reflective thinking and writing. Through constant self-reflection, language teachers are able to review their teaching practices so that they can better understand students’ diverse learning needs and desires. If they fail to meet students’ learning needs, they might be ineffective language teachers in their respective fields.

Schulz and Mandzuk (2005) argue that effective language teachers “recognize the complexity of teaching, are thoughtful about their teaching practices, question their own assumptions, and consider multiple perspectives in order to make informed decisions about the learning needs of their students” (p. 315). Reflective thinking and writing enable language teachers to focus on developing effective teaching for their students. In addition, teachers are able to build a concrete teaching philosophy and construct good teaching practices through deeper self-reflection. By doing this, they will conduct action research in their language classrooms in order to apply pedagogical theories learned in teacher preparation programs to their language classrooms and specific teaching contexts.

## **Professional Development Through Reflective Thinking and Writing**

Beed, Ridgeway, Brownlie, and Kalnina (2005) argue that “the power of reflective writing to help pre-service teachers become thoughtful practitioners is evident when they engage in written reflection about lesson plans, common readings, experiences related to internships, and their own education classes” (p. 165). Lee (2008) also describes teacher candidates’ reflection in a similar manner: “Reflection enables teacher candidates to construct knowledge through asking questions, critiquing, evaluating, etc., helping them bridge the gap between imagined views and the realities of teaching” (p. 117).

These arguments indicate that reflective thinking and writing is a critical factor when fostering pre-service teachers’ professional

development. Without time for self-reflection, teacher candidates might think that theories are just theories, and they would be less likely to implement them in reality. Therefore, language teachers might not try to employ teaching theories and principles in language classrooms for their students if they do not have experience writing reflection notes.

Lee (2008) further emphasizes the importance of journal keeping. She argues that “Once teacher candidates are adequately prepared to write reflective journals, they should be encouraged to carry on with the reflective disposition during their teaching practicum, and more importantly, be supported during the process” (p. 135). She also highlights the teacher-educator’s role: “teacher candidates valued the instructor’s feedback as a powerful incentive to encourage them to engage in reflection through journaling” (p. 135).

Considering the above arguments, it is thought that keeping a reflective journal helps foster English teacher candidates’ professional development through self-reflection. Additionally, an instructor’s response journal plays an important role in guiding teacher candidates’ reflective thinking and writing because pre-service English teachers can take advantage of receiving insightful and meaningful feedback from their instructors. Under the appropriate supervision of instructors, teacher candidates can reflect on their work in order to sort out and pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses with teaching.

Diaz-Maggioli (2003) also states the importance of keeping a dialogue journal. He states that “dialogue journal writing helps extend interaction time between colleagues and is particularly suitable with teachers who have different levels of expertise or different needs. For foreign language teachers, dialogue journals can also provide an opportunity to practice and hone their writing skills in the target language” (p. 1). When in-service language teachers are keeping dialogue journals after teaching classes, they are able to revisit their teaching principles and techniques through self-reflection. It is also a helpful way to foster collaboration with peers and colleagues. When co-teaching and collaboration are needed, dialogue journals are used as a two-way communication tool for sharing teaching techniques, ideas, and tips in language classrooms. Therefore, maintaining dialogue journals enables teachers to watch and learn from their own teaching practices so that they are able to seek out which class methods and materials are effective for student language performance.

Finally, language teachers can provide and receive insightful

feedback from other teachers by exchanging reflection notes. Carroll and Tatsuta (2010) examine collaborative reflections on learning another language and assert that “we [language teachers] may also provide them with guidance about useful ways in which to structure their reflections by giving them a framework to support their reflective space. These supportive strategies are extremely useful, not only for novice reflective writers but also for more experienced researchers and teachers engaged in professional development” (p. 64). In short, language teachers need to collaborate with their peers and colleagues by sharing reflection notes containing reflective thinking and writing so that they can benefit from each other. Through this process, they can construct study groups or small teacher communities to enhance their lifelong professional development.

### **Using Reflective Thinking and Writing in the Korean Context**

A number of previous studies have investigated English teachers’ professional development through reflective thinking and writing related to the Korean context. Lee (2005) interviewed several pre-service teachers in order to determine the effectiveness of employing reflective thinking and writing. In the interviews, it was found that for one of the teacher candidates “reflections on pedagogical issues significantly increased during his teaching experience period. The increase in concerns regarding curriculum/content issues in the teaching period reflected his desire to give students more information within a given period of time” (p. 706).

In view of the comments from student-teachers’ interviews, it is considered that the process of reflective thinking and writing helps pre-service teachers become autonomous learners in their future professional careers. By doing this, pre-service teachers are able to observe their own progress of professional development.

Shin (2006) researched pre-service English teachers’ individual tutoring of learners of English language writing. Shin argues that “structured reflection on practical teaching experiences may help pre-service teachers to integrate their learning and analyze their actions to become more effective learners and teachers” (p. 325). Shin further states that “the writing journal entries seemed to help them to critically examine what they know, to evaluate their various roles as writing teachers, and to reflect on the socio-cultural and political nature of

teaching writing in English to speakers of other languages. There are numerous lessons here for teacher preparation and language learning” (p. 341).

These studies show that through reflective thinking and writing, pre-service teachers revisit the pedagogical theories, approaches, and techniques that they have learned, so they are able to employ and implement them in their language classrooms. Although there might be some practical obstacles to adopting concepts and ideas from textbooks and theories, teachers who continue to work on their reflection notes are more capable of analyzing and solving problems in their respective teaching fields.

Pre-service teachers receive invaluable benefits from writing reflection notes, and this process continues after they become in-service teachers. Thus, it is assumed that in-service teachers who are well aware of the importance of reflective writing and thinking can broaden their teaching knowledge and concepts in order to analyze students’ learning difficulties, abilities, and cultures. By practicing reflective writing and thinking repeatedly, these in-service teachers eventually will become well-organized teachers who understand and pinpoint students’ different learning levels and difficulties with learning second or foreign languages.

Choi (2011) examined the experiences of pre-service teachers and their teacher-educator while the pre-service teachers engaged in autobiographical writing through reflection notes. This study showed that “pre-service teachers were able to get a more profound understanding of their own experiences and inner awareness during their autobiographical writing” (p. 181). This study stressed that reflective writing requires conscious attention from pre-service teachers in order to apply reflection notes to their professional development. Additionally, autobiographical writing such as reflection notes encourages pre-service teachers to look back on their teaching demonstrations and experiences so that they are more conscious of their teaching and learning.

Song (2012) examined the effect of reflective activity on learning attitudes and academic achievement for prospective teachers. The results demonstrated that “the reflective activity group provided feedback that showed the highest academic achievement and the control group’s academic achievement was the lowest. These results indicate that reflective activity can positively affect learning attitudes and academic achievement for prospective teachers” (p. 227).

Although the context was not language learning and teaching, this

study's results imply that reflective activity such as reflection notes can have a positive influence on pre-service teachers' academic achievement.

Overall, analyzing language teachers' reflective thinking and writing by themselves or with peers will foster their professional development by monitoring their process of language teaching. Accordingly, they will become well-trained teachers and autonomous learners who are actively involved in local academic communities.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary aim of this study was to determine whether reflective thinking and writing can be a beneficial approach for fostering teacher candidates' and in-service teachers' professional development. In order to investigate teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding reflection notes, three research questions were devised:

1. What are in-service and pre-service teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards reflection notes?
2. What are the pros and cons of writing reflection notes in their teaching careers?
3. What components are important to conduct successful writing of reflection notes?

More detailed information concerning the questionnaire is presented in the Appendix.

## METHODS

### Participants

Five English teacher candidates at a university located in Korea participated in this study. Their major field of study was English Education in the university's Education Department. The participants included two male and three female students. As for year in school, three

students were juniors and two students were seniors. Background information for the pre-service teachers is summarized in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Background Information for Pre-service English Teachers**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Total Number: 5</b>	
Major	English Education	
Gender	Male: 2	Female: 3
Year in School	Junior: 3	Senior: 2
Age	22-27	
Teaching Experience	1 – 2.5 years (All have less than 3 years of teaching experiences)	

Five language teachers from various educational backgrounds also participated in this study in order to compare perspectives between the pre- and in-service teachers. To maintain confidentiality, all teachers in this study are described by a pre-service teacher number or an in-service teacher number. The in-service language teachers' educational backgrounds are briefly described in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Background Information for In-service Language Teachers**

	<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<b>Teaching Subject</b>	<b>Target Students</b>	<b>Gender</b>
In-service Teacher 1	2 years	English	Secondary School	Female
In-service Teacher 2	5 years	Chinese/English	Elementary to High School	Female
In-service Teacher 3	17 years	English	Middle School	Female
In-service Teacher 4	5 years	English/Spanish	ESL (Adult Learners)	Female
In-service Teacher 5	3 years	German/English	University Students	Female

## **Instruments and Procedure**

This study used questionnaires and personal interviews to understand pre- and in-service teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward employing reflection notes for their professional development. Before sending questionnaires via email, the author asked participants to take part in this research. Therefore, only teachers who agreed to do the survey took part in this study. Then, as a pre-questionnaire query, the author further asked the language teachers about their experiences writing reflection notes. Thus, only teachers who had experiences writing reflection notes participated in this study. After taking these considerations into account, the original fifteen teachers who had agreed to participate in the study were reduced to ten to were actually given questionnaires to complete. After finishing the questionnaires, two pre- and two in-service teachers were selected for personal interviews to clarify the meanings of their responses and to gain additional insight.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

From January through May of 2014, this study proceeded and collected teachers' diverse perspectives and opinions through questionnaires. After collection, data were categorized according to whether the participant was a pre-service or in-service teacher, format (written or oral comments), and whether the reflection note responses contained positive or negative themes within the Korean context. If a written comment was incomprehensible, the relevant participant was asked to provide clarification during a personal interview. To ensure participant confidentiality, the teachers' real names were substituted with in-service or pre-service labels in addition to an identifying numeral.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Survey Question 1**

***Given your experience of writing reflection notes, how would you define a reflection note in your own words?***

All language teachers briefly defined a reflection note in their own words. Through the questionnaires, this study tried to understand both pre- and in-service teachers' perspectives. First, are presented representative responses of the in-service teachers:

In-service Teacher 1: A reflection note is a review of oneself in a professional capacity.

In-service Teacher 3: It is an aid to improve my teaching, reflecting what went well as planned, what was missing, and what would have been better to have.

In-service teachers thought that a reflection note was mainly focused on monitoring themselves as language teachers while having their everyday classes. In the questionnaires, it was noticed that words such as *review* and *reconsider* were frequently used. Additionally, in-service language teachers mentioned that reflection notes helped them to express their own thoughts and beliefs by reviewing their language classes. Although the definitions of a reflection note varied depending on individual teachers' teaching experience, the core meaning of writing a reflection note usually was the same.

Second, pre-service teachers wrote a variety of definitions in their own words. Their responses included the following:

Pre-service Teacher 2: I want to define the reflection note as my diary. It is very effective to reflect on my teaching method and students' reaction to my class. Like my diary, I can read it whenever I want. In addition, by doing this, I can give feedback to myself.

Pre-service Teacher 3: It is an essential tool to make teachers aware of what they do for the students.

Pre-service teachers believed that they changed their teaching by themselves through the process of writing a reflection note, even though other teachers might have helped and provided feedback on their teaching practices. If pre-service teachers are not aware of their teaching weaknesses, a reflection note could guide them in recognizing problems with their teaching practices and in making corrections. Therefore, reflection notes are a good way for teachers to check and monitor themselves by engaging in reflective thinking and writing.

## Survey Question 2

*While writing reflection notes, did it affect your professional development through self-reflection in a positive or negative way? Could you explain why?*

Four pre-service teachers showed positive attitudes and perceptions of writing reflection notes. However, one student said that she could not identify the effectiveness of having reflection notes. Representative pre-service teachers' written answers are provided below:

Pre-service Teacher 2: It has positive benefits for me. Actually, there is no one to give feedback to me related to the quality of my class. So, it is hard to evaluate my teaching methods or skills. By writing reflection notes, it gives me not only an objective yardstick to judge whether my class is effective, but also encourages me in thinking that I can be a professional English teacher if I write reflection notes consistently.

Pre-service Teacher 3: I believe that it absolutely has positive effects on teaching. They [teachers] need to have time to pause and think back on how every aspect of the class went and improve their original plans to be far more appropriate for the students. In addition, writing reflection notes offers precious time to the teachers.

According to the teacher candidates' comments in their questionnaires, they were likely to employ reflection notes to foster their professional development. While writing reflection notes, they had some time to think about themselves as English teachers and consider their process of professional development. Additionally, they were able to realize their own strengths and weaknesses regarding English teaching in the classroom. Moreover, writing reflection notes helped them become more responsible pre-service teachers, eager to discover the features and characteristics of their future students' language development, conclusions similar to those of Shin (2003, 2006).

On the other hand, one pre-service teacher wrote:

Pre-service Teacher 1: I thought of doing it every month, but it might not work out well if we do this too much . . . [they may get

tired of writing it] . . . . When considering the hectic university schedule, it might not be possible to write reflection notes regularly.

It is important to consider the negative side of reflective writing from a pre-service teacher's point of view. Instructors who train pre-service teachers need to take a cautious approach because it might be burdensome for students who are managing a busy university schedule. Therefore, when considering the use of reflection notes as a class assignment, instructors should allow for appropriate preparation time in developing the class syllabus. A careful approach is also needed to avoid student loss of interest and confidence in dealing with class material and assignments.

In terms of in-service teachers' written comments, most of them showed positive attitudes towards writing reflection notes because they thought that it could make them become more professional language teachers. Some teachers' comments from the questionnaires are shown below.

In-service Teacher 1: It affected my development positively. A reflection note includes emotional responses to my professional identification, including self-confidence, feelings of adequacy, and effectiveness. Emotional responses greatly affect my professional performance.

In-service Teacher 4: I usually feel better after reflecting on lessons, because I like improving my teaching skill. Reflecting is an important tool in refining this skill. Additionally, if I have a lesson that was unsuccessful or confusing, reflecting helps me to identify problems areas in my lesson plan, delivery, or activities that I can adjust for next time.

According to the in-service teachers' responses, reflection notes allowed them to constantly reconsider their pedagogical philosophy, principles, and practices. By conducting teaching demonstrations, in-service teachers were able to pinpoint how to improve their teaching practices more effectively. Additionally, by writing reflection notes, they were able to employ teaching principles and theories that they had learned in in-service teacher preparation programs in real language classrooms, and determine how to modify them to facilitate their language teaching. In short, it was concluded that writing reflection notes

mainly had a positive influence on fostering both pre-service teachers' and in-service language teachers' professional development through self-reflection, conclusions similar to those of Lee (2006, 2008).

### Survey Question 3

*Are you willing to employ reflection notes for your CPD (continual professional development)? If so, could you explain why?*

This study further asked questions about the willingness to use reflective writing for the purpose of CPD. In their questionnaire responses, four pre-service teachers showed willingness to employ reflection notes for their CPD because it was a good method for recording their self-development and tracking the progress of becoming an English teacher. One teacher replied “no” to this question, so it was assumed that this result probably mirrored that of the second research question. One student-teacher’s comment that showed a positive reaction is presented below:

Pre-service Teacher 3: I will promise myself to write a reflection note for my classes. By doing this, I could see the positive change in the class atmosphere. When I did not do it, there were no changes and only boredom grew in the class.

Pre-service teachers showed a willingness to use reflection for CPD purposes, which suggests that this practice will be able to help them reflect throughout their future teaching careers after graduation. Once they recognize the benefits of doing reflective thinking and writing, they are willing to use it consistently. Therefore, it is thought that keeping reflection notes is a good way to foster pre-service teachers’ professional development. As for in-service teachers’ perspectives, their responses are presented below:

In-service Teacher 1: I am willing to employ a reflective note for CPD because I do not see any disadvantage to it.

In-service Teacher 3: Yes, because it leads me to be more attentive to what I am doing and more prepared for my classes.

This study noticed that writing reflection notes could make in-service language teachers become more autonomous teachers who are willing to experiment with their teaching practices in the language classroom. They appear ready to become teacher-researchers and enter academia in their professions. They will thereby be actively involved in developing their language teaching through conducting action research by themselves or working with colleagues and co-teachers, as suggested by Carroll and Tatsuta (2011). The responses to the third survey question indicated that the experiences of reflective thinking and writing could lead in-service teachers to think about how to enhance their professional development in their future teaching careers. Therefore, reflective thinking and writing were critical for their professional development.

#### **Survey Question 4**

***In order to successfully implement reflective thinking and writing through reflection notes in teacher preparation programs, what do you suggest?***

This study asked both pre- and in-service teachers to provide their thoughts and opinions on employing reflective writing in teacher preparation programs. There were various suggestions obtained from the questionnaires and interviews. In order to successfully implement reflective thinking and writing in teacher preparation programs, in-service teachers made the following points:

In-service Teacher 3: It is important to have specific criteria (standards, rubrics) to help reflect on teaching. It would be helpful to share one's reflection notes with other teachers and get some feedback from them.

In-service Teacher 4: I suggest it be made a requirement of the program, because if it is left optional, teachers will not do it. Teachers are just too busy, and something more theoretical like reflection often gets pushed to the back burner to focus on more pressing teaching needs, like the next day's lesson.

Most in-service teachers believed that classes using reflection notes should be a mandatory requirement for graduation. In addition, the program should provide clear guidelines and objectives as to why they need to take a reflection course. Furthermore, they believed that

reflection notes should not be limited to improving individual professional development because it could also be beneficial for teachers to actively share their reflection notes with each other. As we all know, the old saying is that “two heads are better than one.” These in-service teachers need to watch and learn while exchanging reflection notes in order to receive feedback from their peers and co-teachers.

Regarding the pre-service teachers’ perspectives, they asserted the following points:

Pre-service Teacher 3: If the reflection note can show a specific list of what to think about to improve the class, it would be helpful for teachers to save time. Saving time is the most crucial element to be considered because it would lead teachers to write the reflection note.

Pre-service Teacher 5: The reflection note parameters and expectations, as well as the benefits, must be clear before the teacher begins teaching, so that the best quality answers possible are generated. These should be shared with a mentor teacher or at least a classmate in the same program, who has seen the student teacher in action. In doing so, a meaningful discussion can emerge about the physical evidence of teaching and the reflective activity of writing the reflection note.

First, they mentioned that teacher preparation programs needed to provide clear guidelines such as samples of reflection notes for pre-service teachers so that they could immediately start writing reflection notes whenever their first opportunities to teach classes arose. Second, most pre-service teachers thought that reflection notes should be implemented in teacher preparation programs under the proper supervision of professors and academic advisors. By showing good samples of reflection notes written by senior student-teachers, it was easier for pre-service teachers to write down their perspectives whenever they conducted teaching demonstrations or voluntary teaching. Additionally, the pre-service teachers needed to be guided by respectable figures that always supported and encouraged them to write reflection notes. Therefore, in order to successfully employ reflective thinking and writing as part of a class assignment, the programs had to give clear guidelines to student-teachers to help reduce trial and error.

In short, through the process of making reflection notes, teacher candidates are able to document and record their progress in professional development through self-reflection. Therefore, it is considered that courses with reflection notes within teacher preparation programs enable teacher candidates to collect their own ideas, thoughts, and opinions about specific teaching contexts.

After the data were collected, the researcher sorted the data by advantages and disadvantages of using reflective thinking and writing through reflection notes. Table 3 summarizes the teachers' thoughts in terms of pros and cons regarding reflection notes in teacher preparation programs.

**TABLE 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Reflection Notes in Teacher Preparation Programs**

Advantages of Using Reflection Notes	Disadvantages of Using Reflection Notes
1. Tracking and monitoring the process of professional development	1. Time-consuming effort because of hectic university and teaching schedules
2. Encouraging language teachers to do action research while teaching classes	2. Reflecting and writing reflection notes regularly could cause teachers to focus on those areas in which the most dissatisfaction lies in regards to professional development opportunities.
3. Becoming more responsible teachers while reviewing their reflection notes	3. Ideas for professional development might not be applicable in certain specific teaching contexts.
4. Employing reflection notes for Continual Professional Development in future teaching careers	N/A
5. Raising self-awareness regarding the importance of professional development in order to meet their students' diverse learning needs and desires	N/A

When considering the advantages and disadvantages of implementing reflection notes in teacher preparation programs, this study concludes that reflection notes need to be implemented as soon as possible in order to foster teacher candidates' professional development through self-reflection. Writing a reflection note has more advantages than disadvantages according to pre- and in-service teachers' questionnaires and interviews.

Therefore, this study strongly suggests that teacher preparation programs in Korea implement reflective thinking and writing through reflection notes into regular curriculums to foster pre-service teachers' professional development effectively.

## CONCLUSIONS

Many researchers and practitioners worldwide have provided research evidence that reflective thinking and writing can be a useful method for fostering teacher candidates' and in-service teachers' professional development through self-reflection (Farrell, 1999; Lee, 2006, 2008; Shin, 2003, 2006). This study aimed to research pre- and in-service English teachers' perceptions and attitudes about writing reflection notes as part of their regular teaching routine.

According to the study results, a few study participants showed concerns about regularly doing reflective writing during the semester because of limited time or energy. However, most participants in the study showed positive perceptions and attitudes in terms of proceeding with reflection notes for facilitating their professional development. Therefore, it is suggested that if language teachers receive invaluable and insightful feedback through reflective thinking and writing, they would be willing to keep writing reflection notes for their continual professional development (CPD). Moreover, during this process, they could develop their teaching practices, and this could lead them to reconsider good teaching practices in the near future.

Furthermore, language teachers are able to employ reflective thinking and writing while doing teaching demonstrations or doing voluntary teaching. In this way, they are able to create a collection of reflection notes, which can be used as invaluable teaching resources and hands-on

materials for their professional development. They will have many opportunities to improve themselves through reflective thinking and writing, eventually leading them to become autonomous learners and teachers in their respective fields.

This study demonstrates that teacher preparation programs must emphasize the importance of reflective thinking, and reflection notes should be included as class materials and assignments in the regular curriculum. By doing this, teacher candidates will recognize the power of reflection notes, and they will be willing to implement writing them as part of their CPD. Additionally, in-service teachers can conduct action research when they want to experiment with critical pedagogy.

In conclusion, language teachers need to focus on students' learning needs because without understanding their objectives, teachers cannot fully assist students in meeting their goals. In order to achieve this, learning and teaching a language needs to be understood as a life-long journey. Language teachers must develop and reflect on their teaching by doing continuous self-reflection. In order to facilitate CPD, raising awareness through reflective thinking and writing in specific teaching contexts is key to developing on-going professional development.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since only one university's teacher preparation program in Korea was investigated, the results of this study cannot be generalized to apply to all contexts when considering the role of reflective thinking and writing through reflection notes in teacher preparation programs. The results might vary for different subjects and contexts. Future studies need to be carried out using more subjects from different areas of Korea and more contexts in EFL contexts such as China, Taiwan, and Japan. Moreover, interviewing or surveying instructors' who have already implemented reflective thinking and writing into their teaching could be another fruitful research direction. These instructors could give insightful ideas and opinions to researchers and practitioners in terms of establishing a standardized curriculum that successfully implements reflection notes in teacher preparation programs.

## THE AUTHOR

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

#### Directions

These questions are designed to research your perceptions and attitudes about having reflective thinking and writing through reflection notes in teacher preparation programs. All questions have an open-ended format, so please answer them specifically in English.

#### Could you briefly describe your educational background?

In-service / Pre-service teacher

Degree earned: ex.) BA English (English Education); MA TESL (TESOL)

Teaching Experience (00 Years):

Teaching Subject:

Target Students:

Gender:

#### Study Research Questions

1. Given your experience of writing reflection notes, how would you define a reflection note in your own words?
2. While writing reflection notes, did it affect your professional development through self-reflection in a positive or negative way? Could you explain why?
3. Are you willing to employ reflection notes for your CPD (continual professional development)? If so, could you explain why?
4. In order to successfully implement reflective thinking and writing through reflection notes in teacher preparation programs, what do you suggest?



## **Personnel Conflict Between Native English Teachers and Korean Management**

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The purpose of this paper is to successfully define the personnel management problems that are present between Korean managers and western workers. Due to the increasing immigration of western workers to Korea for business, this paper attempts to clearly define the underlying cultural factors that cause the differing expectations and behaviors of both the managers and employees. The identification of cultural aspects needed to provide a breakdown were based in part upon Geert Hofstede's (1991) Five Dimensions Model that identifies the main areas of cultural identity into five categories: power dominance, individualist vs. collectivist, masculine vs. feminine, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. By using this model to aid the framework of the study, a survey was constructed to (a) identify personnel conflict problems present in the workplace and (b) test whether these problems are caused by an authoritarian managerial style and/or poor communication. The target group identified for this survey was English teachers from western countries currently working in Korea. Each participant was asked to give an in-depth description of their working environment, manager, self description, and personal accounts of workplace conflict to provide a more precise insight into the views that western teachers have in regards to Korean management.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Imagine a recently developed country that has incurred rapid economic growth in the past 20 years and contains a predominately homogenous society structured according to Confucian teachings. Now,

what happens if the country mentioned above is confronted with a rapid influx of foreign workers who possess drastically different views of society and management? This is the scenario currently facing South Korea and foreign workers migrating to this small country. Recent reports have shown that Korea's number of foreign workers (1.5 million) has increased by seven times the number it was in the year 2000 (Seo, 2013). Now that Korea's business climate is seeing an increase in foreign involvement at an escalating rate, it is time to start examining proper methods of communicating with and managing these employees that choose to migrate here for work. For the purposes of this study, I will be focusing on the relationship between foreign English teachers who have migrated to Korea from native English-speaking countries (which according to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology accounts for over 8,500 people) and the Korean management staffs surrounding them (Yi, 2012). The objectives of the study will be to find out (a) how the relationship between teachers and management is viewed by foreign teachers, (b) what problems are caused due to cultural conflict within the workplace, (c) whether managers and teachers are meeting the expectations of their counterparts, and (d) how both sides can improve their working relationship.

## DEFINING CULTURE

It is never easy to analyze another culture and truly understand it from afar. From my own personal experience as an expat living in South Korea, I was unable to equip myself with the knowledge necessary to completely prepare for the situational changes that were to come prior to migrating to Korea. I spent the days preceding my travel by educating myself on Korean customs to help me easily adapt to the norms of the society that awaited me. However, one area omitted in all of the books I read was an in-depth explanation of why certain societal norms are inherent and how they affect personnel management.

Geert Hofstede, a professor of organizational anthropology and international management at the University of Limburg at Maastricht, has conducted numerous studies on "national culture" with the purpose of comparatively analyzing how we are all products of our society and defining which characteristics are inherent in different countries.

Hofstede is a world-renowned scholar who has been cited in many studies regarding culture conflict. For the purposes of this study, Hofstede's prior research (for example, Hofstede, 1991) will be used as an initial starting point to analyze and build upon the research that he has developed with my own goal of specifically identifying how national culture plays a role in personnel management conflict between foreign English teachers and their Korean management.

In order to understand Hofstede's analysis, we need to have a fixed definition of what constitutes culture. As characterized by Edgar H. Schein (1985), culture is "a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group" (p. 9), or as Hofstede describes it, "unwritten rules of the social game" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 4). In order to categorize the specific characteristics of a society, Hofstede uses a five-dimensional model comprised of power distance, individualism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance (long-term orientation has been a late addition to the cultural dimensions; however, due to its lack of relevance to our selected topic, it will not be included in this study). Each of these components is used to comparatively analyze Korea in contrast to the western societies that are home to foreign English teachers. They can also help show the differences between cultures and the potential contradictions in societal norms that lead to conflict. A brief overview of the four components of Hofstede's five-dimensional model (minus long-term orientation) can be seen in Table 1. Each of the four dimensions that are addressed in this paper will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**TABLE 1. Characteristics of High and Low Scores for Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions**

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions	Characteristics of a High Score	Characteristics of a Low Score
<b>Power Distance</b> – Measures the degree in which power is spread-out in the decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong hierarchy</li> <li>• Subordinates expect and accept direction</li> <li>• Autocratic management style is prevalent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lateral power structure</li> <li>• Employees expect to be consulted in the decision-making process</li> <li>• Ideal leader is democratic</li> </ul>

<p><b>Individualism</b> – Measures the degree to which society reinforces individual versus collective achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value standards are universal</li> <li>• Personal achievement is top priority</li> <li>• Task takes precedent</li> <li>• Relationships are loosely based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treatment varies depending on group statuses (in-group vs. out-group)</li> <li>• Team takes priority over personal goals</li> <li>• Relationships take precedent over task</li> </ul>
<p><b>Masculinity versus Femininity</b> – Measures the degree of assertiveness, lust for achievement, and quality of life within a society.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assertiveness is expected</li> <li>• Initiative is admired/encouraged</li> <li>• Focus is career-based</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assertiveness is undesirable</li> <li>• Employees conform without a will to stand-out</li> <li>• Focus is on quality of life</li> </ul>
<p><b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b> – Measures how societies regulate/control the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional need for a rule-based system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few written rules; liberty is encouraged</li> </ul>

\*Source: <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

Hofstede’s first dimension (power distance) focuses on the decision-making structure within the culture. Power distance can be thought of as the way that the members of society with lesser power in the decision-making process impact those who have more power. Power distance can also show the relevance that society assigns to people. For example, a high-power distance society, in this case Korea, has a strong hierarchy where all citizens have a place, usually according to age. Within this placement, lower-ranking members are expected to listen and obey higher-ranking members without resistance. A description of this phenomenon can be demonstrated by defining the Korean word *kwalli*. According to *NTC’s Dictionary of Korea’s Business and Cultural Code Words*, the exact definition of *kwalli* is “management Korean style.” To begin to understand *kwalli*, you need to first look at it in the form of this analogy: “One good way of explaining Korean *kwalli* in western terms is to equate it with the military, particularly the Marine Corps. The typical Korean corporation is a vertical structure with a precise chain of command from the top “general” down to ordinary “troops.” Anyone who dares to engage in *hakusang*, “going over a superior’s head,” is asking for trouble and better be doubly sure of his or her position”

(Mente, 1998, p. 215). In other words, Korea employs a management style that has a strict hierarchy where order is of the utmost importance. It is also important to note that this particular “power ranking” does not only apply to business, but to society as a whole. One of the major reasons for this is Korea’s strong Confucian influences. Confucianism is the oldest influence on Korean society in general and places extreme value on the respectful treatment of elders and requires a “loyalty to superiors” that obligates a strong willingness to accept orders from elders and refrain from any conflict (Tan, 2008, p. 9). Korea scores a high ranking on Hofstede’s power dominance spectrum for these reasons.

In contrast to Korea, the western countries (United States, United Kingdom, and Canada), which are home to the target group of foreign English teachers (South Africa has been omitted for this study), show a power dominance ranking that is on the opposite end of the spectrum. According to *What About the United States?* (n.d.), the United States has a power distance ranking much lower than that of Korea due to the society’s focus on “liberty” and “equal rights,” where even in the business realm hierarchies are “established for convenience, superiors are always accessible, and managers rely on individual employees and teams for their expertise. Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is frequently shared. At the same time, communication is informal, direct, and participative” (para. 5). Therefore, countries with lower power dominance put an emphasis on equality and favor more democratic approaches in decision-making. In the cases of Canada and the United Kingdom, both showed a slightly lower score than the United States for power dominance.

Hofstede’s next dimension of national culture evaluation is individualism versus collectivism. Key characteristics of individualism include universal standards that apply to all, focus on task over relationship within the business environment, aspirations to stand out for work achieved, viewing others as possible resources when conducting business, and the viewpoint that personal goals are more valuable than those of the group (Kim, 1999, pp. 229-230). Americans score very high on Hofstede’s individualism spectrum (91 out of 100) (*What About the United States?*, n.d.). Further explanation for this came with the reasoning that America is a very “loosely knit society” where people are free to enter and leave groups as they please. Folklore of the American society that is often idealized is that of the “self-made man.” The “self-made man” is described as an individual who is able to create

success for himself though careful planning and hard work without having to rely on other people (Bellah, 1985). Andrew Carnegie's anecdote of "pulling yourself up by the bootstraps" also personifies how America's view of individualism is celebrated.

Korea shows opposite tendencies regarding individualism. Korea's national culture shows strong characteristics of a collective society that includes differing value standards based on hierarchical status, group goals considered as more important than individual goals, and relationship and age together taking precedence over age for decision-making and promotions. An example of this can be found in the Korean workplace where a relationship style based on Confucianism is still the norm. Lower-ranking Korean company workers are always expected to respect higher-ranking members by following orders and are expected to not "make waves." Often in the company work environment, Korean workers are expected to stay at the workplace until the manager leaves for the day (this is especially applicable to junior members). Even in the case of employees completing tasks with mistakes or having to deliver bad news to superiors related to the company's achievement, it is common for employees to "lie low" and avoid disturbing management with the problem because the messenger feels shame for the impact on the company as a whole (Mente, 1998, p. 215).

Masculinity versus femininity, Hofstede's third dimension, is a little more polarizing due to the connotations of the titles for the dimension. The criteria for a masculine society are competition, assertiveness by its members, and a "winner take all" mentality. Individual goals for members working in a masculine society take precedence over group goals due to the individual's desire to gain personal achievement and a higher status. Femininity, which is the term Hofstede uses to label most Asian countries, refers to societies that place an emphasis on relationships and the welfare of the group. Korea was labeled as a feminine society due to the lack of assertiveness by subordinate employees and the focus on "fitting in" (as talked about with collectivism). A more recent study by researchers from Tenga National, a university based in Thailand, attempted to challenge Hofstede's research by surveying Korean citizens to reassess their societal standing regarding masculinity versus feminism. The results showed that in the workplace environment, Korea still showed a slight preference towards feminism; however, due to the rapid economic growth of the past 20 years and the increased influence of western countries on Korea's

management style, an increase in assertiveness has developed (Tzu Ting & Ying, 2013). In a comparison between masculine and feminine societies, it is important to clarify that masculine societies place priority on “performance and justice” as opposed to “trust and compassion” (Chang, 2003). Employees that exhibit an overt assertiveness in order to take control of situations (which is viewed as a positive leadership quality in the United States) would be viewed as rude in Korean culture.

The final dimension to address is uncertainty avoidance. Uncertainty avoidance refers to the measures that societies put into place in order to regulate the future. Hofstede explains uncertainty avoidance as a measure of “the extent [to which] a society or culture feel[s] threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions to try and avoid these” (*What About the United Kingdom?*, para. 9). In the cases of our three featured western countries, lower regulatory measures are a result of the societies being multicultural and promoting liberty. A key characteristic of the United States and Canada is that the culture represents a “curiosity to discover new things and to accept the differences in a society” (Chang, 2003, p. 568). Korea, like most Asian countries, possesses a high level of uncertainty avoidance. According to the Hofstede Centre, South Korea is “one of the most uncertainty avoiding countries in the world” and possess a strong “emotional need for rules” (*What About South Korea?*, para. 10). A downside to this, and one that has the potential to cause quite a bit of cultural conflict, is that societies that are high on uncertainty avoidance do not condone unorthodox behavior.

Hofstede’s dimensions provide a solid initial framework to build upon for the duration of this study (see Table 2 for Hofstede’s dimensions for South Korea, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom). However, criticisms of Hofstede’s work have been raised within the academic community claiming his studies assume “the domestic population is a homogenous whole” (Jones, 2007, p. 5) and that his work has become “too old to be of any modern value” (p. 5). Therefore, this study’s framework is designed to not only analyze which specific problems are most prevalent in the workplace and distinguish whether they are due to a conflict of cultural norms or other factors, but also to compare modern research to Hofstede’s work.

**TABLE 2. Hofstede's Dimensional Scores for Select Countries**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Hofstede's Dimensional Scores (out of 100)</b>
South Korea	Power Distance = 60 Individualism = 18 Masculinity = 39 Uncertainty Avoidance = 85
United States	Power Distance = 40 Individualism = 91 Masculinity = 62 Uncertainty Avoidance = 46
Canada	Power Distance = 39 Individualism = 80 Masculinity = 52 Uncertainty Avoidance = 48
United Kingdom	Power Distance = 35 Individualism = 89 Masculinity = 66 Uncertainty Avoidance = 35

Source: <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

## **STUDY FRAMEWORK**

In building upon Hofstede's prior research, a study was formulated to not only test certain aspects of Hofstede's research, but also expand upon it to the area of personnel management. Using Hofstede's dimensions model as a framework, a survey was constructed that focused on the area of cultural conflict with regard to personnel management. The target group for the survey was English teachers from western countries who were working in Korea. The survey chronicled their personal experiences and opinions of teachers in regards to how they are managed as employees, what expectations they have for a manager, what level of democratic management is present in their workplace, and what pressures they feel that are not present in the work environment of their home country. Although many of the teachers surveyed had extensive experience teaching English in Korea, they were asked to only evaluate

their current workplace in this survey and were provided with essay boxes if they wished to add past experiences.

**Hypothesis:** Authoritarian management practices and poor communication lead to a majority of the personnel management problems between foreign English teachers from western countries and Korean management.

The above hypothesis was formulated based upon the research conducted by Hofstede and Mente. Mente's (1998) description of "Korean management" and the role of Confucianism in Korean society, as cited in the literature review, describes the usual Korean manager as an autocrat and his subordinates as submissive. This contradicts the social norms that Hofstede has found in "individualistic" western societies, where managerial practices are more democratic due to the lesser power dominance and where employees strive to "stand out" and challenge authority due to individualist traits. Therefore, I believed that an autocratic managerial style would be one of the main contributors to personnel management conflict.

The second component of the hypothesis is communication. For the purposes of this survey, communication is identified in two ways. First, it is analyzed as the ability to explain thoughts and opinions verbally in English. In other words, is a lack of English speaking ability a core problem between managers and employees? Second, communication is analyzed as the willingness to share ideas and reasoning behind decision-making. Are foreign employees privy to information behind decisions being made, and are they included in the decision-making process? I hypothesized that both of these communication factors are the main hindrances in building a constructive employee-management relationship.

## **SURVEY PARTICIPANTS AND DISTRIBUTION**

This survey was distributed to and completed by 68 participants. The distribution of the survey was done through the assistance of English Programs in Korea (EPIK) and Dave's ESL Café ([www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)), who provided access to their membership for survey distribution online. Additionally, surveys were distributed manually to English teachers in the Incheon area (Korea). The range of experience of the native English

teachers working in Korea varied (Figure 1). The statistical breakdown of the experience of the applicants goes as follows: less than 6 months = 1 respondent (1%), 1 to 3 years = 23 respondents (34%), 3-5 years = 14 respondents (21%), and more than 5 years = 30 respondents (44%). The teachers also came from various types of schools: private language schools, public schools, universities/colleges, and community centers. The respondents were located in diverse areas throughout the country: rural areas, large metropolitan cities, and mid-sized cities.

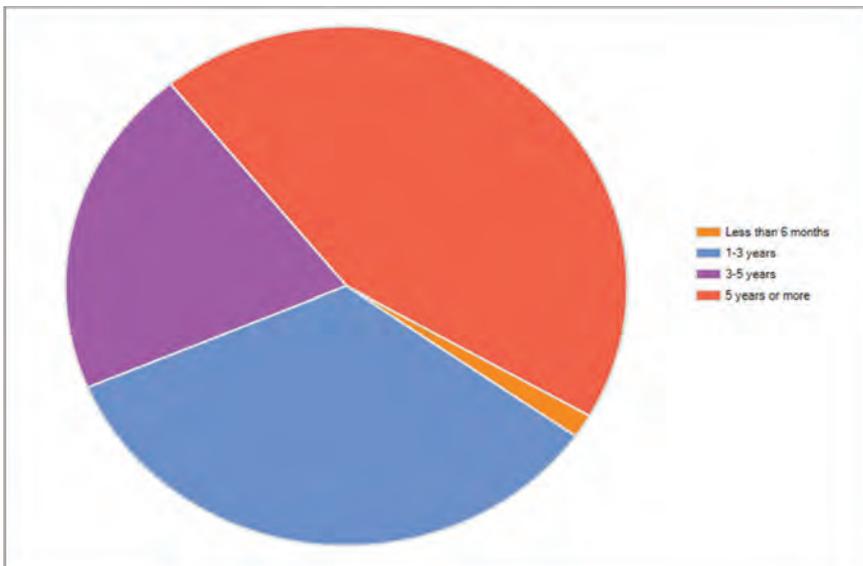


FIGURE 1. How long have you been teaching English in Korea?

The gender of the participants was divided pretty evenly to create a balanced approach regarding the analysis. The male to female ratio of respondents was 38:30. Also, the ages of the respondents were diverse with most of the respondents ranging between the ages of 25-34 years (a complete lack of teachers over the retirement age of 65 was present).

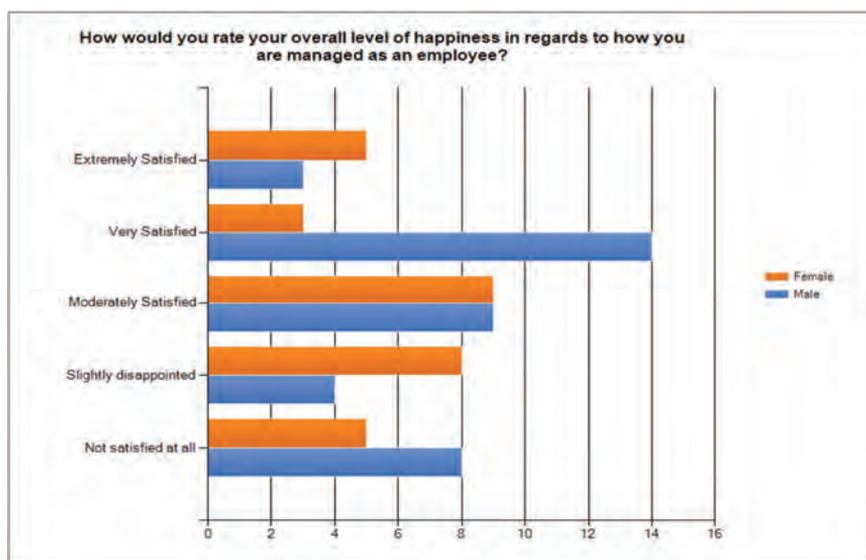
## RESULTS

The results of the survey proved to be useful in a variety of ways. A breakdown of the results was conducted in four parts. First, a look at

gender was conducted to see how males and females responded to the survey. Next, results were analyzed according to the type of institution where the participants were employed. Third, a breakdown of managerial tendencies was evaluated. Lastly, a breakdown of the results in relation to the hypotheses was offered.

## Gender

Due to differing gender roles in Confucian-based societies in comparison with our target group of western societies, an area of analysis for this survey was to see if either gender showed certain trends regarding personnel management. Some interesting results can be seen in the way participants responded to their level of happiness in how they are managed. The results of this can be seen in Figure 2. A higher percentage of females from our study showed a stronger dissatisfaction for the way that they are managed in the workplace. Women reported a 58% favorable rating to the way that they are managed while men showed a 68% favorable rating.



**FIGURE 2. Employee satisfaction:** How would you rate your overall level of happiness in regards to how you are managed as an employee?

Throughout the rest of the survey few differentiations between male and female employees took place, except in regards to the manager's strengths when dealing with employees. Over 40% of men surveyed marked "always treats employees with respect" as a managerial strength, while only 26% of women marked this as managerial strength. Also, nearly 30% of the male respondents said that they were involved in the decision-making process, which was nearly double the response of female employees.

Gender of the manager also seemed to be a determining factor in managerial practice. According to the survey, the strongest attribute of male managers was their respect shown towards employees (nearly 50% of respondents listed this as an existing favorable quality). However, this was marked as an area of strength for less than 25% of female managers. The highest rated favorable quality among female managers was their consideration of the needs of the teachers (reported by 37% of respondents), which was marginally higher than what was given to male managers (35%). Areas of weakness for male and female managers were very similar with both genders receiving condemnation for poor communication and lack of information when delegating tasks.

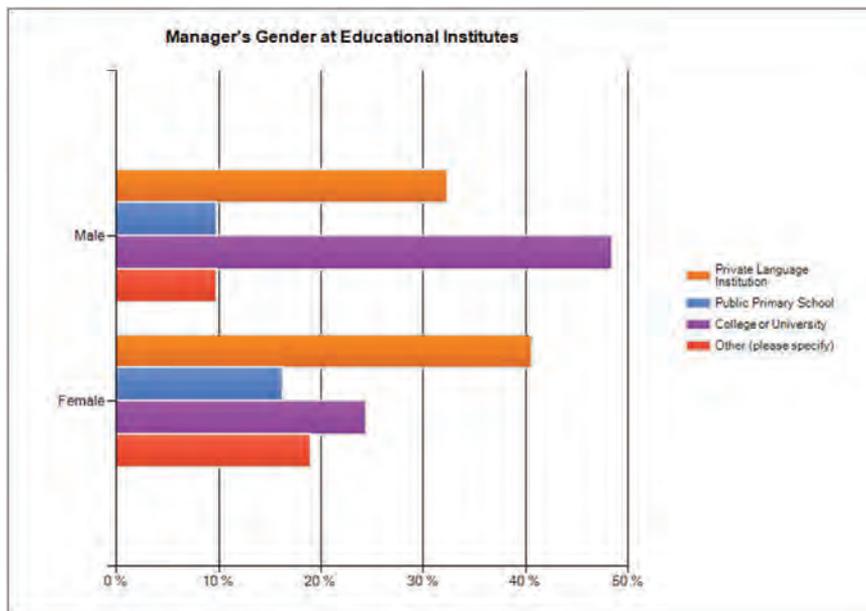


FIGURE 3. Gender of managers at educational institutes.

Additionally, women scored 30% higher than their male counterparts in regards to their lack of consideration for the workload given to employees. This was viewed as a managerial weakness in 40% of female managers and marked as a weakness for only 19% of male managers. This can also be better explained when looking at where male and female managers were employed. Figure 3 shows that a majority of female managers were present in private language institutes, where the working and teaching hours are much higher in comparison to other schools. In contrast, a majority of male managers were employed at colleges or universities, where the teaching hours for foreign language instructors are much lower.

### **Institutional Differentiation**

The three main types of English schools that were the focus of this study were private language institutes, public schools, and colleges or universities. A breakdown of employee satisfaction in how they are managed showed that public school teachers had a significantly higher satisfaction level in how they are managed in comparison to the other workplaces (see Figure 4). Private language institutes scored the lowest with 44% of respondents being disappointed or not satisfied at all with the way they were managed.

English speaking ability of managers was extremely high at colleges and universities. Public schools also had a majority of responses reporting an average or above average skill level for managerial English speaking ability; however, private language institutes showed the greatest diversity in their distributed range of managerial English language proficiency, ranging from equivalent to native speakers (16%) to pre-elementary (12%). When listing the weaknesses of managers, a majority of private language school teachers listed poor communication and lack of consideration of the workload placed on teachers as the biggest managerial weaknesses. Public school and college/university teachers reported lack of information when delegating tasks as the greatest area of weakness regarding personnel management.

In regards to democratic versus autocratic style of management, both private language institutes and colleges/universities showed a strong trend of autocratic management. A slight majority of public school teachers reported a democratic management style and also reported that

managers were considerate of stresses and needs of teachers (which was a minority response for the other schools).



FIGURE 4. **Managerial Weakness:** What do you feel are your manager’s greatest weaknesses in the area of personnel management?

### Managerial Tendencies

A majority of responses regarding managerial norms showed several trends (see Figure 5). Foreign teachers overwhelmingly felt that few incentives were put into place to increase their performance. Furthermore, an overall lack of communication when delegating tasks and poor communication proved to be a common theme among all English teachers. This lack of communication between the manager and English teaching employees also helps to explain why lack of involvement in the decision-making process was deemed as the most common personnel management problem (followed by poor communication ability).

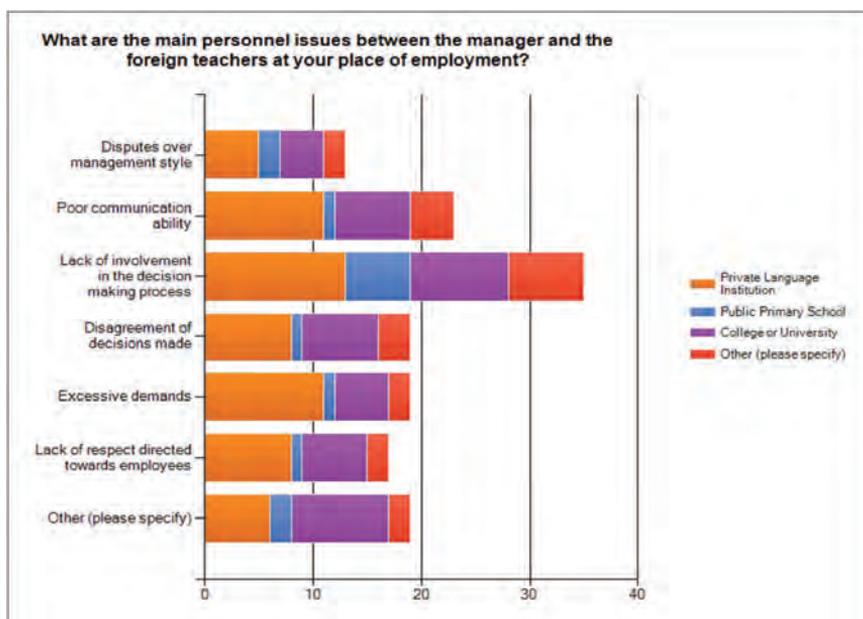


FIGURE 5. Analyzing common personnel management problems: What are the main personnel issues between the manager and the foreign teachers at their place of employment?

### Hypothesis Validity

To restate the original hypothesis, my presumed belief was that authoritarian management style and poor communication are the main problems relating to personnel management. In regards to the first half of that statement, authoritarian management was found to be present in a majority of workplaces. Furthermore, identified from a list of characteristics associated with authoritarian management (high motivation, harsh punishments, lack of employee input, micromanaging), lack of employee input was found to be a prevalent problem. Employees often felt that they were either not allowed an opportunity to voice their opinions, or their opinions were simply dismissed when given the chance.

Poor communication ability and willingness did prove to be a highly reported problem in multiple work environments. Private language academies especially reported poor quality of English language ability with managers. A lack of willingness to communicate was also an issue.

Many employees reported this as a key area of weakness; however, the cause of this lack of communication is not clear. Variables causing a lack of communication include lack of confidence when speaking English, inability to communicate thoughts effectively, and cultural norms that prevent certain kinds of manager-subordinate communication.

Excessive demands were extremely common in private language institutes. One of the main complaints for managerial weaknesses was a lack of consideration regarding the workload given to the teachers. This validates Mente's (1998) prior research regarding assignment of tasks by Korean managers and has proven to be one of the main personnel management issues.

## CONCLUSIONS

The survey results, along with the literature review examining cultural norms and defining Korean management style, proved to offer extremely valuable information for both Korean managers and foreign English teachers. In regards to what was explained in the literature review, Hofstede presented four dimensions (power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance) where conflicting cultural norms are apparent. The survey provided statistics that validated concerns that Hofstede proclaimed to be prevalent between western societies and Korea; however, not all criteria from the survey were applicable to each category. Power distance, for example, had a litany of supportive evidence for Hofstede's claims in this survey. As mentioned previously, Hofstede said that western societies had a democratic style of management that was common in most work environments where employees expected to have some role in the decision-making process. Korea was believed to have a strong hierarchy where decision-making power is consolidated at the top (this was reaffirmed by Mente's research). The survey conducted validated this assertion with lack of employee input during the decision-making process being seen as the most common problem.

The dimension of individualism versus collectivism did not show any particular areas of conflict in regard to personnel management in our survey, but the relationship between insider and outsider groups could prove to be a problematic area. More information is needed to find out

if foreign teachers are considered an “outsider” group within the workplace, and if they are, are they being treated unfavorably as a result? Additionally, a distinction needs to be made between a collectivist society and a democratic society. These two things often do not go hand-in-hand. As mentioned previously, Hofstede considered Confucian-based societies to be collectivist, but the strong hierarchy within society is not conducive to democracy. For example, the age structure, where elder citizens are given a higher status, does not allow for evenly distributed power between citizens. Older citizens generally are given the decision-making power while young members follow orders.

Hofstede’s element of masculinity versus femininity was partially validated within the survey. Hofstede described westerners as assertive, career-focused, and displayers of initiative. This goes against the norms of Korea; however, the “feminine” values present in Korea were not a major source of personnel conflict. The only area of possible conflict that was present was in the form of individual initiative not being praised or appreciated within the workplace in regards to suggestions to management.

Uncertainty avoidance, which is believed to be widespread in Korean society in the form of numerous laws and regulations that are in place, did not seem to be an issue in the realm of personnel conflict. The survey showed no signs of micromanagement or of excessive regulations. Multiple participants even commented on the vast freedom and absence of management in specific areas. (See Table 3 for a summary of these findings in comparison to Hofstede’s predictions.)

**TABLE 3. Comparative View of Hofstede’s Dimensions versus Survey Results**

Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions	Hofstede’s predicted conflict due to cultural norms	The survey findings of conflict due to cultural norms
<p><b>Power Distance</b> – Measures the degree in which power is spread-out in the decision-making process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consolidated power within Korean organization conflict with ideals of foreign teachers.</li> <li>• Western employees expect to be consulted in the decision-making process; Korean employees do not.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power within the schools is not unilateral, which denies teachers an opportunity to contribute in the decision-making process.</li> <li>• No communication is present for justification of decisions being made.</li> </ul>

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<b>Individualism</b> – Measures the degree to which society reinforces individual versus collective achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Differing standards based on position and nationality (outsider English teachers versus insider Korean management)</li><li>• Foreign teachers will form their own in-group, while Korean employees will do the same.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The differences between individualism and collectivism did not show any conflict trends in the survey.</li><li>• No in-groups or out-groups were reported.</li></ul>
<b>Masculinity versus Femininity</b> – Measure the degree of assertiveness, lust for achievement, and quality of life within a society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assertiveness of westerners in a Korean management environment will be viewed as disrespectful.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initiative is not rewarded with few motivational incentives in place for teachers.</li></ul>
<b>Uncertainty Avoidance</b> – Measures how societies regulate/control the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strict rule-based system will be present in Korean style workplaces.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This was not proven to be the case in the survey.</li></ul>

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In conclusion, this study was able to provide more precise insight into the views that western teachers have in regards to Korean management; however, this study does not show the opposing view of the role that foreign teachers play in workplace conflict. Additional research needs to be conducted, specifically in regards to seeking opinions from Korean managers, in order to find the most common causes of personnel conflict and how to compose the ideal work environment to ensure that employee relations are conducted at the optimal level.

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## **Activity Types in ESL Workbooks: A Content Analysis**

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There is no doubt that textbooks and their supplementary materials are an essential component of English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms (Litz, 2005), and a host of research studies have focused on English language teaching (ELT) coursebook evaluation. However, the assessment of workbooks that accompany them as a source of additional practice is relatively under-researched. The main purpose of the present study is to examine the content of workbooks of five internationally developed coursebooks to identify their activity types as well as their efficacy in providing sufficient practice for learners. Applying Nation and Macalister's (2010) framework, the researchers conducted an in-depth analysis of the activities included in all units of the workbooks of five widely used and popular coursebooks. Furthermore, a comparison was made between the activity types of elementary and pre-intermediate levels to determine whether a significant shift from guided to independent activities exists. Additionally, the specific order in which the activities are presented throughout the units was examined, and the obtained results suggest that guided activities are more frequent across all the coursebooks examined. More importantly, it was found that the activities in each unit are sequenced from guided activities to independent activities, indicating a significant shift from guided toward more frequent independent activities as the student progresses from elementary to the pre-intermediate textbooks. This understanding for teachers and program administrators is informative in not only selecting coursebooks and their subsequent workbooks, but also in understanding how the curriculum may need to be supplemented to provide a range of effective practice to learners.

## INTRODUCTION

Typically, coursebooks are prepackaged, published books used as the main tool of second or foreign language instruction, and they are often produced with different purposes. Some coursebooks are employed to address all language skills with other types focusing on a specific skill. Most coursebook packages contain a student's book, a teacher's guide, workbooks, audiocassettes or CDs, videos, and test materials. The English language teaching (ELT) market continues to be inundated with new and/or revised published series every year. As a result, a huge number of copies are sold and countless support services and programs are arranged to sustain this business (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994).

As Cunningsworth (1995) describes, most teachers use published teaching materials throughout their teaching career. To date, most researchers are unanimously of the opinion that textbooks and instructional materials used by language teachers are one of the most essential components of many English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms and are considered as a widespread constituent of teaching (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Litz, 2005). Focusing on the role of commercial materials in language teaching, Richards (1993) asserts that textbooks are being employed in many language programs and they are, in fact, "the hidden curriculum" (p. 1). Likewise, Richards and Rodgers (2001) consider coursebooks as indispensable components of the curriculum and believe that they define the contents of a particular syllabus.

Sheldon (1988) argues that textbooks not only represent "the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237), but when being used as instructional materials in language classrooms, they can also provide a number of worthwhile advantages. Likewise, Ur (1996) states that the most fundamental merits of coursebooks are as follows: (a) "They provide a clear framework in the sense that the teacher and the learners know where they are going and what is coming next as a result of which there is a sense of structure and progress." (b) "Mostly, they serve as a syllabus which includes a carefully planned and balanced selection of language content if it is followed systematically." (c) "By providing ready-made texts and tasks with possible appropriate levels for most of the classes, they save time for the teachers." (d) "They are the cheapest way of providing learning material for each learner." (e) "They are

convenient packages, whose components are bound in order.” (f) “They are useful sources of guidance and support, especially for novice teachers who are occasionally unsure of their knowledge of language.” (g) “They enhance learner’s autonomy by providing the learners with the opportunity to learn new materials, review, and monitor progress in a less teacher-dependent manner” (p. 184).

On the other hand, a number of researchers are not convinced of the arguments in favor of coursebooks and call into question their efficacy on the grounds that as preplanned teaching materials, coursebooks suffer from a number of potential pitfalls. Crawford (2002) points out some of these possible drawbacks to be the following: (a) “They fail to present appropriate and realistic language models.” (b) “They propose subordinate learner roles.” (c) “They fail to contextualize language activities.” (d) “They foster inadequate cultural understanding.” (e) “They fail to address discourse competence.” (f) “They fail to teach idioms.” (g) “They have a lack of equity in gender representation” (p. 81).

According to Tsiplakides (2011), selecting a suitable English coursebook is a complex task, owing to the fact that it is the coursebook that students often interact with most during the course. Therefore, coursebook selection can have a considerable impact on learners’ involvement, incentive to learn, and eventually their learning progress. As Richards (1993) argues, if we wish to determine the course objectives, the syllabus type, the course content, and the teaching/learning beliefs, we simply need to closely examine the coursebooks used.

Cunnigsworth (1995) suggests that coursebook selection involves establishing a sense of congruence between the materials and the context in which they are planned to be used. He further notes that although the coursebooks designed for a general market will not ideally meet the particular demands of a certain group of learners, the aim is to find the one most suitable for the objectives of the course, the learners’ needs, and the context in which it will be used. Making a distinction between two main types of materials evaluation, namely predictive and retrospective evaluation, Ellis (1997) argues that teachers can make decisions concerning the selection of coursebooks to be used as well as examine those already in use. Moreover, he contends that teachers can carry out a retrospective appraisal of the efficiency of coursebooks either based on their impression of the coursebook at the end of a course or by embarking on an empirical evaluation that contributes to the teachers’

professional development. In doing so, they can appropriately supplement the coursebook with additional materials.

As illustrated above, a host of research studies have focused on coursebook evaluation and considered the selection and evaluation of materials as an essential procedure in order to enhance outcomes for the learners who use them. However, there is a shortage of studies that focus on the value of the workbooks accompanying them. A quick look at the table of contents of a number of well-known edited volumes on materials development (Harwood, 2010, Tomlinson, 2008, 2013; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010) indicates that very few chapters, if any, have been devoted to workbook analysis. This is partly because workbook activities, more often than not, are considered as “extra” exercises to be done at home and are not given the attention that they deserve. The present study, therefore, was carried out to fill this void. Adopting Nation and Macalister’s (2010) framework of different activities (experience, shared, guided, and independent), this study aims to analyze different types of activities included in the elementary and pre-intermediate workbooks of five widely used coursebooks in Iran to identify the general trends followed in presenting material and to determine if there is a significant shift from guided activities towards independent activities when the level is raised from elementary to pre-intermediate. Additionally, the study aims to determine if there is actually one coursebook that is more progressive in its methods of material presentation through activities than others at the same level. In order to fulfill this goal, the present study aims to answer the following research questions: (a) Are the exercises presented in a balanced manner, and do they provide learners with both guided and independent activities? (b) Is there any significant shift in activity types from guided activities to more independent activities when the level is raised from elementary to pre-intermediate? (c) To what extent is there variation amongst the different published workbooks at the same level? Is there one workbook that is more progressive? Is there one workbook that actually shows a significant progression between elementary level and pre-intermediate level? (d) Are the exercises dynamic, and are they ordered in a logical way as students develop their English and move smoothly through the units? (e) Is there any justifiable rationale behind the specific order of activity presentation, and how can this inform classroom practice?

## DATA COLLECTION

### Materials

The elementary and pre-intermediate workbooks of five widely used ELT coursebooks available in many EFL contexts were selected and their exercises were examined to determine their order of appearance as well as their efficacy and balance in providing a range of activities to help learners improve their English language skills. The selected workbooks were *American English File*, *English Result*, *Interchange*, *New Headway*, and *Top Notch*. Their authors, year of publication, and publisher appear in Table 1.

TABLE 1. List of Workbooks Analyzed

Workbooks	Author(s)	Year of publication	Publisher
American English File (Starter A and 1)	C. Oxenden and C. Latham-Koenig	2009a and 2009b	Oxford University Press
English Result (Elementary and Pre-intermediate)	J. McKenna	2008a and 2008b	Oxford University Press
Interchange (Intro and 1)	J. C. Richards	2005a and 2005b	Cambridge University Press
New Headway (Elementary and Pre-intermediate)	I. Soars and J. Soars	2006a and 2006b	Oxford University Press
Top Notch (Fundamentals A and 1)	J. Saslow and A. Ascher	2006a and 2006b	Pearson Education

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study was Nation and Macalister's (2010) classification of activity types to examine the nature of exercises included in the workbooks. According to their model,

activities are divided into four major types: experience activities, shared activities, guided activities, and independent activities. Nation and Macalister refer to independent activities as “the ultimate goal of the other three” (p. 103). They further argue that each of these activities has its own pedagogic objectives as well as underlying learning principles, which will be examined below.

### **Experience Activities**

These activities make an attempt to keep a major part of the required knowledge for accomplishing the activity within the learners’ previous knowledge. As Nation and Macalister (2010) suggest, this can be done in a number of ways: (a) “The teacher, curriculum designer, or materials writer attentively aims to control the language, ideas, skills, etc., so that they will become familiar and easily recognizable for learners. Simplified or graded reading texts can serve as a means of achieving this purpose.” (b) “Previous lessons or activities within a lesson can provide the skills required to perform the activity. Warm-up and warm-down listening as well as speaking activities may be considered like this, which can help to create a lesson format that builds up to a final activity, or a set of activities, as the focal point of the lesson.” (c) “In order to make the subsequent activity less demanding, the teacher helps the learner to share and retrieve earlier experiences, which contribute to a lesson format getting ahead with teacher-led conversation or team work and ending with what otherwise might have been a perplexing task. For instance, the teacher may initiate a group discussion on a particular topic, and as subsequent activities, s/he can ask learners to provide the semantic map of the topic, or write and speak about it” (p. 100). In fact, due to the preparation and control that has preceded the tasks, experience activities enable learners to express their ideas with much more fluency. Generally speaking, experience activities are considered to be meaning-focused tasks that aim to reinforce fluency.

### **Shared Activities**

In order to foster learner achievement, shared activities involve learners working in groups in which they can carry out what they could not achieve by working individually. Nation (1989) describes four major kinds of group work as follows: (a) Learners engage in joint work and have equal access to the same information. (b) Each learner in the group has different information, yet a valuable piece of information that is

necessary to the completion of the task. (c) One or more learners have some specific information that others may need. (d) Learners try to share the same information while each has an individual task to complete.

As argued by Nation and Macalister (2010), since shared activities are usually completed in isolation, the teacher can insert them into any part of a lesson format. By providing a break from teacher-centered activities, shared activities allow for negotiated meaning-focused communication, thereby keeping all learners active and providing considerable amounts of language input and output. They also provide an opportunity for learners to work at a level beyond their normal level of proficiency. Nevertheless, shared activities may be somehow problematic when the learners' first language is the same. However, this can be minimized in a number of ways by making activity adaptations, clarifying the goals of the activity for learners, establishing monitoring procedures, and encouraging learners to participate in the activity by means of certain reward mechanisms.

### **Guided Activities**

According to Nation and Macalister (2010), guided activities require learners to perform already partially completed tasks. For instance, in completion activities, substitution activities, matching activities, repetition activities, and ordering activities, the teacher or the curriculum designer tries to provide part of what is needed, hence making the learners' task less demanding, and at the same time, minimizing the errors that learners are likely to make while doing the activities. In a substitution activity, for example, both the model and the items to be substituted for are provided. Thus, what the learners simply need to do is to put the items in the appropriate places and repeat the sentence.

Generally, guided activities involve language-focused instruction. However, where learners produce sentences according to a particular pattern that requires them to say things that are meaningful to them, for example, describing themselves, they may also lead to a form of meaning-focused activity. Some lesson formats are almost completely dominated by language-focused instruction to the unfortunate exclusion of meaning-focused activities. Nonetheless, this may be satisfactory if learners have many opportunities for meaning-focused language use outside the class. Most often, language-focused guided activities are used as a means of preparing learners for meaning-focused experience activities, and that is why they are mostly found early in a lesson.

Nation and Macalister (2010) introduce a very common format for teaching spoken language using the following steps: (a) The presentation of the model piece of language. The presentation may be meaning-focused, but providing a look at the purpose of the lesson as well as recommending items for learning and practice is the principal goal of the model. (b) The learners are involved in doing guided tasks based on the model to prepare for the next section of the lesson. (c) The learners are engaged in activities such as role plays or conversations that contribute to the meaning-focused production of language similar to the model.

### **Independent Activities**

Unlike the experience activities, shared activities, and guided activities, for which the source of support is external (i.e., support from previous knowledge for experience activities, support from other people for shared activities, and support that is inherent to the activity itself for guided activities), the source that underpins independent activities lies within the individual learners. Therefore, it is the learner's responsibility to work with no assistance or preparation. Learners should additionally be able to draw on their skills and make use of other resources to control their own learning. In fact, independent activities, which are the eventual objective of the other activities, tend to occur later in a course, and most commonly at advanced levels (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

The four types of activities described can all be used in a course, and including each of them in a lesson can cater to different course objectives. Since each type of activity makes use of a different set of principles, this paper carefully examines all four major activity types within the workbooks of five internationally distributed ELT coursebooks to investigate the above-mentioned principles in order to determine if they have been applied appropriately in materials development, particularly when it comes to designing workbook exercises. Nation and Macalister (2010, p. 102) have classified task types according to teaching technique for the four major language skills as shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2. Teaching Techniques for Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing Classified According to Type of Task**

Skill / Technique	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
<b>Experience</b>	Linked skills Listening to a graded reader read aloud	4/3/2 Ask and answer Best recording Expert groups Prepared talks Pyramid procedure Oral book reports Talking about a very familiar topic	Easy extensive reading Issue logs Linked skills Reported reading Speed reading course Reading a graded reader	Draw and write Project work Ten-minute writing Reading, discussing, and then writing
<b>Shared</b>	Ranking Strip story	Brainstorming Find the differences Split information	Pause, prompt, praise Paired reading	Group composition Peer feedback Reformulation Writing with a secretary
<b>Guided</b>	Dictation Information transfer Listen and choose Listening to pictures Picture ordering	Dictogloss Retelling Running dictation Substitution tables Surveys What is it?	Intensive reading Sentence completion True/false sentences Comprehension questions	Delayed copying Dictocomp Picture composition Blackboard composition
<b>Independent</b>	Note-taking Taking part in a friendly conversation Reading an unsimplified text	Giving a talk Telling a joke Taking part in an interview	Reading the newspaper Reading a novel Reading subtitles to a film	Writing a letter Writing an assignment

### Data Coding

To answer the research questions of this study, a broad statistical survey of all the workbook exercises across the two proficiency levels of elementary and pre-intermediate was carried out. According to the defined characteristics for each set of activities, which have been elaborated on in the theoretical framework section above, the exercises included in each of the workbook units were categorized as belonging to one of these four groups: experience, shared, guided, and independent exercises. In this way, the frequencies of each activity type were calculated in all units of the workbooks independently. Moreover, in order to obtain a clear picture of the dominant pattern of occurrences of these activity types, the number of occurrences for each of the activities

in the workbooks as a whole was counted and the data obtained from this procedure was tabulated in Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. In order to show how the coding system was applied, examples from the corpus are given below.

### **Experience Activities**

Early in the unit, learners are introduced to some house/apartment advertisements through which they learn the names of the different sections of a house (e.g., *living room*, *dining room*), as well as the furniture and appliances located in them. At the end of the unit, learners are required to write their opinion about the pictures of different pieces of furniture listed in the previous exercise. In fact, this activity builds on their previous knowledge about furniture and encourages them to express their ideas about the concepts with which they are already familiar (Saslow & Ascher, 2006a, p. 42).

### **Shared Activities**

Learners are supposed to ask their friends about different activities that they can or cannot do (e.g., cooking, playing baseball, painting, ice-skating, singing, and playing the guitar). In fact, this activity engages learners in meaning-focused communication through which they have the opportunity to interact with their friends, ask different questions, and at last get to know their friends' abilities (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 2005a, p. 60).

### **Guided Activities**

Learners are provided with a scrambled conversation and are required to put the sentences in the correct order. Also, they are supposed to match the imperative instructions about different signs (e.g., "No Smoking," "Leave your pets outside") to the pictures or simply complete a conversation using the words given in parentheses (McKenna, 2008a, pp. 46-48). In these sorts of activities, learners are involved in doing partly completed tasks.

### **Independent Activities**

Learners are required to describe, for example, a terrible day they have had. They are to explain what has happened and what has gone wrong that day (Richards, Hull, & Proctor, 2005a, p. 58). In this activity, the learners draw on their own skills in order to convey the intended meaning and develop the ability to talk about their real experiences.

## DATA ANALYSIS

In order to ensure that the findings were reliable, Cohen's kappa coefficient was utilized to calculate the presence of each category of activity using two independent inter-raters. Cohen's kappa coefficient, a statistical measure of inter-rater agreement for qualitative analysis of data was selected as the results are viewed as a more reliable measurement than simple percent agreement calculation, since Cohen's kappa coefficient takes into account agreement that may be occurring by chance.

## RESULTS

This study aimed to identify the proportion of each type of activity (experience, shared, guided, and independent) in five workbooks of internationally developed ELT coursebooks at two levels: elementary and pre-intermediate. To this end, the results obtained from the data analysis phase (each workbook independently and all workbooks as a whole) are tabulated as follows:

**TABLE 3. Individual Elementary Workbooks**

Coursebook	American English File		English Result		Interchange		New Headway		Top Notch	
	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.
Experience	3	2.7%	16	4.5%	15	11.1%	11	6.7%	15	17.6%
Shared	0	0%	1	0.2%	5	3.7%	3	1.8%	3	3.5%
Guided	106	97.2%	280	82.3%	91	67.4%	127	77.9%	52	61.1%
Independent	0	0%	44	12.5%	24	17.7%	22	13.4%	15	17.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>99.9%</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>99.5%</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>99.9%</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>99.8%</b>

Most notable in Table 3 is that all textbooks had a high number of guided practice activities, with *American English File*, having the most with 97.2% being guided practice. *English Result* had the next highest, with 82.3%. Then *Interchange*, *New Headway*, and *Top Notch* following with 82.3%, 67.4%, and 77.9%, respectively. Except for *American*

*English File*, independent activities were the next most frequent activity type. *Interchange*, *New Headway*, and *Top Notch* lead with 17.7%, 13.4%, and 17.6%, respectively. The next most common activity type was experience activities with *Top Notch* having the most with 17.6%. *Interchange* had 11.1%, while *New Headway*, *English Result*, and *American English File* had 6.7%, 4.5%, and 2.7%, respectively. Shared activities had the least presence in the elementary textbooks. *Interchange* had 3.7%, while *Top Notch*, *New Headway*, and *English Result* had 3.5%, 1.8%, and 0.2%, respectively. *American English File* had none.

**TABLE 4. Elementary Workbooks as a Whole**

Activity Type	No. of Occurrences	Frequency
Experience	60	7.1%
Shared	12	1.4%
Guided	657	78.7%
Independent	105	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>99.7%</b>

As a whole, the salient activity type in the elementary workbooks was guided practice activities (see Table 4). Except for *American English File*, independent activities were the next most frequent activity type. Experience activities were present, but very low in number. Shared activities had little to no presence in the elementary workbooks.

**TABLE 5. Individual Pre-Intermediate Workbooks**

Coursebook	American English File		English Result		Interchange		New Headway		Top Notch	
Activity Type	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.	No. of occurrences	Freq.
Experience	4	2.6%	1	0.5%	8	4.8%	6	3.7%	9	6.5%
Shared	0	0%	1	0.5%	3	1.8%	2	1.2%	3	2.1%
Guided	108	72%	163	85.7%	134	81.7%	128	81%	100	72.9%
Independent	38	25.3%	25	13.1%	19	11.5%	22	13.9%	25	18.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>99.9%</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>99.8%</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>99.7%</b>

Most notable in Table 5 is that all pre-intermediate textbooks still had a high number of guided practice activities, but they had relatively decreased allowing for more of other types of activities. *English Result* had the most guided practice activities with 85.7%. *Interchange* had the next highest, with 81.7%. Then *New Headway*, *Top Notch*, and *American English File* followed with 81%, 72.9%, and 72%, respectively. As with elementary-level workbooks, independent activities were the next most frequent activity type with *New Headway* having 25.3%. *Top Notch* followed with 18.2%, while *American English File* had 13.9% and *English Result* had 13.1%. The next most common activity type was experience activities with *Top Notch* having the most with 6.5%. *Interchange* had 4.8%, while *New Headway*, *American English File*, and *English Result* had 3.7%, 2.6%, and 0.5%, respectively. Shared activities had the least presence in the pre-intermediate textbooks. *Top Notch* had 2.1%, while *Interchange*, *New Headway*, and *English Result* had 1.8%, 1.2%, and 0.5%, respectively. *American English File* had none.

**TABLE 6. Pre-Intermediate Workbooks as a Whole**

Activity Type	No. of Occurrences	Frequency
Experience	28	3.5%
Shared	9	1.1%
Guided	633	79.2%
Independent	129	16.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>99.9%</b>

As a whole, the salient activity type in the pre-intermediate workbooks was guided practice activities, followed by independent activities (see Table 6). Experience activities and shared activities had an increased presence compared to the elementary workbooks, but still ranked in third and fourth place.

Examining both elementary and pre-intermediate workbooks together, the results in Table 7 reflect the independent analysis of each workbook type. Guided practice activities are the most frequent with a presence of 80.2% across both levels of workbooks. Independent activities follow, comprising 14.2%. Experience and shared activities follow with a 4.4% and 1.0% presence, respectively.

**TABLE 7. Elementary and Pre-Intermediate Workbooks as a Whole**

Activity Type	No. of Occurrences	Frequency
Experience	88	4.4%
Shared	21	1.0%
Guided	1570	80.2%
Independent	279	14.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>99.8%</b>

Figure 1 reflects the presence of the different types of activities across both levels of textbooks, showing for each the similarities in their presence. Only small differences in the presence of each type of activity are visible between each workbook, slightly increasing from elementary to pre-intermediate.



**FIGURE 1. The Trend in Activities at Two Levels: Elementary and Pre-Intermediate**

## DISCUSSION

First, to determine if the exercises are evenly distributed, providing learners with both guided and independent practice, the general results of the data analysis were examined as represented in Tables 3 to 7. It can be seen that both the elementary and pre-intermediate levels of workbooks mainly focused on providing learners with guided activities. The results of this study indicate that guided activities, with 80.2% of total occurrences, are the most frequently occurring activity type, which

can be considered as the most dominant language teaching practice used in the selected workbooks. The second most prominent activity type is independent activities, with a 14.2% rate of occurrence. This is followed by experience activities (4.4%), and finally, shared activities with the least frequent occurrences (1.0%) in the workbooks examined.

The observed proportion of occurrences for each of the activities can be accounted for by considering a number of factors. By examining the results of the study in detail, it can be concluded that most of the activities in each of the analyzed workbooks aimed at reinforcing the learner's grasp of language skills by presenting a wide range of guided activities in which the learner was asked to complete partially completed sentences based on a model in a controlled activity, rather than asking the learner to produce open responses to posed questions. Keeping in mind that the learner's level would be elementary, most of the activities focus mainly on reinforcing the linguistic, rather than communicative, competence of the learner, aiming at teaching grammatical form and lexical items, while reinforcing accuracy.

However, it is worth mentioning that the communicative approach is mainly comprised of two successive stages of pre-communicative and communicative activities (Littlewood, 1981). Pre-communicative activities are concerned with providing learners with partial control over linguistic forms through an emphasis on the production of accurate utterances. As a matter of fact, these workbook activities serve as a preliminary stage for communicative activities and aim at preparing learners for future communication. The order of progression is thus from controlled practice towards a creative use of language. The second stage, namely communicative activities, fosters spontaneous and personalized production, with a focus on meaning, while building upon the skills acquired by learners in the previous stage.

According to the foundations discussed above, the distribution of activities seems reasonable in the sense that most of the activities serve to develop linguistic competence through implementing guided activities, thereby drawing the learner's attention to language forms. Nevertheless, regarding the next set of activities, namely experience activities, it is necessary to consider the fact that inasmuch as experience activities aim at building upon the learner's previous experience and what the learner already knows, they are effective in providing the learner with new opportunities to practice language points more fluently so that the learner will feel confident enough to express his/her own ideas. Concerning the

last activity type, shared activities, it is necessary to bear in mind that, since most workbook activities are assigned to be completed as homework, there are not enough opportunities for the learner to be fully engaged in a meaningful give-and-take of information with a partner, as would occur in class. Therefore, the learner is not able to capitalize on this shared knowledge when doing these activities individually as homework.

With regard to the second research question, namely, whether there is a significant shift from guided to independent activities when the workbook level is upgraded from elementary to pre-intermediate, the results, illustrated in Figure 1, suggest that there does not seem to be a considerable change in activity types. A comparison between the workbook activities of these two levels indicates that the dominant types of activities are still guided activities followed by independent activities for each workbook type. Therefore, as shown in Figure 1, the general trend in activities at both levels is more or less the same, and in some cases there is a large degree of overlap between them. This indicates that there is not any substantial shift from guided to independent activities. Hence, the activities included in the analyzed workbooks do not foster much learner autonomy, at least not at these two levels.

Third, by examining the frequency of occurrences for each of the activity types listed in Tables 3 and 5, it is understood that almost all of the workbooks have leaned toward establishing more independent activities when the level is raised from elementary to pre-intermediate. However, this variation is not significant (i.e., only 1%), and as illustrated in Figure 1, there is some overlap in most cases. Nevertheless, a point worth mentioning is that if a comparison is made among the workbooks analyzed in this study, the only significant observation is a strong progression from one *American English File* workbook to the other. In fact, the frequencies reported in Tables 3 and 5 indicate that there is a progression from (0%) independent activities at the elementary level to (25%) at the pre-intermediate level. This implies that when the level is raised, the activities included in this workbook provide significantly different opportunities for learners to extend their knowledge and develop a more complex command of language.

Bearing in mind the principles discussed in answering the first research question, described above, the fourth research question can be addressed to identify whether the exercises included in each unit are dynamic and whether they are sequenced in a logical order. In order to

do this, each unit was thoroughly analyzed based on the order of presentation of the activities in it. The results suggest that the activities were sequenced in each unit from easy to difficult. This means that, at first, the activities intended to build upon what the learners had already learned in the classroom (beginning with experience activities) and then move smoothly from simple activities toward more demanding ones (e.g., independent activities). An example would be asking the learner to complete the missing parts of several sentences with the correct prepositions of direction (i.e., *across from*, *next to*, *behind*, *on the corner of*, etc.), which serves as a guided activity. Later in the unit, the learner is asked to identify the locations of certain buildings on a map. Finally, the focus of the activity changes, and the learner is expected to draw a map and write directions to their home, which is regarded as a sample of an independent activity. Thus, as seen from the above example, activities in the workbooks begin with simple tasks and finish with free production on the part of the learner.

As for the final research question, namely, whether there is a rationale behind the specific order of presentation, it was found that in all cases the activities are arranged from simple activities to more complex ones. Hence, it could be concluded that there is a lot of emphasis on purposeful development from existing knowledge toward extension of different language skills and enabling learners to negotiate for meaning in unrestrained situations. In fact, by starting with easier activities that are in most cases guided, learners are provided with the opportunity to consolidate what they have comprehended. As a next step, the learners are required to express their ideas in an almost open-ended manner and operate appropriately in real-life circumstances, which can be considered as the final stage of the learning process.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study aimed at evaluating the workbooks of five internationally developed ELT coursebooks at two levels; elementary and pre-intermediate proficiency. Adopting Nation and Macalister's (2010) model of activity types, the main purpose of the study was to identify how different activity types are distributed across the selected workbooks. Furthermore, the study aimed to determine whether there is

a significant shift from guided activities to independent activities when the workbook level moves from elementary to pre-intermediate to determine which workbook series is more effective in developing learner proficiency and autonomy over the other workbooks at the same level. Also, this study investigated whether the activities are presented in a logical, well-balanced manner and whether there is any rationale behind the specific order of presentation. In order to answer these questions, an in-depth analysis of the activities included in each unit of each of the selected workbooks was carried out, and the results were tabulated to provide a clear picture of the prominent type of activities in each workbook independently at each level and in all the workbooks at one level as a whole. The results suggest that in all cases guided activities are the most frequent type of activity, bearing in mind that the two levels of workbooks analyzed were elementary and pre-intermediate. This can be explained by considering the fact that during the initial stages learners are led to predominantly focus on acquiring accurate forms of the language, as opposed to fluency. As a result, they need to be provided with different guided activities in order to reinforce what they have learned, extend their language skills, and eventually master the linguistic points of language. However, learners need to go beyond these exercises and proceed to become more involved in communicative activities that are fundamental in enabling them to negotiate for meaning in real-life situations, once the basic language forms have been acquired.

Moreover, it should be acknowledged that there is a direct relationship between materials evaluation and adapting materials. Thus, as McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara (2013) suggest, teachers can change or adjust various parts of a coursebook/workbook formally (by writing a revised version of the exercise) or informally (by making transitory decisions in the dynamic environment of the classroom). In fact, by recognizing the long-term as well as short-term needs of learners, teachers would be able to think on their feet and make use of a host of adaptation techniques (e.g., adding, deleting, modifying, simplifying, reordering), thereby maximizing the appropriate use of teaching materials in certain contexts.

Textbooks are vital tools within ELT, and textbook selection can be a complex process. The textbook industry is a multi-billion dollar industry, and there are a wide range of textbooks available. This research has analyzed five popular ELT workbooks, used in Iran, Korea, and throughout the world. Understanding how each textbook is structured,

and which have more guided practice and which have less, informs teachers' and school administrators' decisions on workbook selection. Korean ELT tends to focus on grammar instruction and more controlled or guided practice activities within the curriculum to build accuracy for standardized tests. Knowing which of these textbooks may best suit a focus on accuracy through the types of activities within the workbook assists in selecting an appropriate textbook. Additionally, understanding where there may be weaknesses in each workbook allows teachers and program administrators to appropriately supplement the workbook with additional materials or adapt the existing workbook activities.

It is hoped that this research fosters further investigations into workbook activity design. For example, it would be beneficial to examine Korean published workbooks that are commonly used. Additionally, an investigation of students' perceptions of different activity types at different proficiency levels could serve to inform future textbook selection. Learners are the benefactors of the workbook, and therefore, there is a need for an investigation of insights gained from learners who use these materials by conducting a survey or interviews concerning the efficiency of different workbooks across different proficiency levels.

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## **Culture Teaching in English Language Teaching: Teachers' Beliefs and Their Classroom Practices**

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The interrelationship between language and culture is not a new debate, and the integration of culture teaching into language education has been discussed for decades. However, the integration of culture teaching into English language teaching (ELT) varies from one place to another. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore English language (EL) teachers' beliefs about culture teaching in ELT and their classroom practices in Vietnam. The study employed a questionnaire and conducted semi-structured interviews to collect data from 38 EL teachers who were teaching English at a foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City. The results showed EL teachers had positive attitudes to culture teaching and believed that culture teaching plays an important role in ELT. Yet, a mismatch was found between EL teachers' definition of the objectives of culture teaching and their actual classroom practices. These preliminary findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of the current practice of culture teaching in ELT so that the quality of ELT can be enhanced, in Vietnam specifically, and in other similar contexts.

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is no doubt that the English language (EL) has become an international language, a *lingua franca*, as people use it for cross-cultural

communication with others around the world. In Vietnam, the EL has been in great demand for everyone since Vietnam opened its door to the world. This has resulted in a strong wave of English language learning (ELL) nationwide. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners of all ages have a strong desire to learn English as a means of communication. However, according to Le (2007, p. 1), despite the fact that a lot of EFL learners have developed good linguistic competence, they still face communicative difficulties arising from a lack of sociolinguistic competence. In addition, they are not fully aware of the fact that each language differs in its ways of expressing feelings and constructing messages since the classes frequently do not pay much attention to (inter)cultural elements in ELL. Consequently, learners usually transfer their native language expressions inappropriately to the target language. This result must be in part the EFL teachers' responsibility because language teachers undeniably play a vital role in helping language learners acquire a language effectively (Wolfson, 1989). Pragmatic competence is also a part of learning to communicate in the target language. Moreover, research on teachers' beliefs has shown that teachers' beliefs play a critical role in their teaching as well as the kinds of thinking and decision-making that underlie their classroom practice (e.g., Richards, 1998; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Trappes-Lomax & McGrath, 1999).

Thus, this study aimed to explore EL teachers' beliefs about culture teaching in ELT and their classroom practices at a particular foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. In order to achieve these objectives, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What beliefs about culture teaching in ELT do EL teachers hold?
2. How do these EL teachers define the objectives of culture teaching?
3. How do they incorporate culture teaching into their ELT?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It is widely admitted that culture is so sophisticated that it is one of the most difficult words to properly define, so there are multiple definitions of culture. Each definition addresses a perspective of culture,

but each of the definitions seems to reflect and offer insights into the complex phenomenon of culture. For the purpose of this study, the following operational definition is used:

Culture is a concept referring to ways of acting, believing, valuing, and thinking which are shared by members of a community (social group) and which are transmitted to the next generation. A culture is dynamic and open to change as a result of a change in living conditions or through contact with other cultures. (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000, p. 22)

This definition has two parts. The first part contains a traditional and holistic conception of culture, which the authors used at many points in their paper, for example, “. . . both learners’ first and target cultures . . . are put under scrutiny in the language class so as to make visible the differences which can potentially prevent the two cultures from relating successfully” (p. 3). The second part draws on a more recent discourse about a dynamic and contextual concept of culture. This definition stresses that “culture is not a static, monolithic construct. It is dynamic, and both creates and is created by every attempt to communicate” (p. 5).

The relationship between language and culture has been widely investigated and confirmed by many researchers. Galisson (1991) states that language and culture are naturally bound up with each other, and that trying to separate them is artificial. It is Galisson who uses the compound word *langue-culture*, and he also talks about *langue-culture-source* and *langue-culture-cible* [language-culture-target] (Galisson, 1994, p. 95). Other researchers also confirm that language and culture are closely interwoven or inextricably interrelated and interdependent, or that culture is language, and language is culture (e.g., Brøgger, 1992; Roberts et al., 2001). Clarifying the connection between language and culture, Roberts et al. (2001) argue that language is never culturally neutral and “cultural learning *is* language learning, and vice versa” (p. 5), and they use the expressions “language-and-culture learning” (p. 6) and “language-and- cultural practices” (p. 55). What is more, Brown (2007) claims that “[a] language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p. 189).

As the strong relationship between culture and language has been

confirmed, it can be inferred that culture plays an important role and should be included in language education. Damen (as cited in Graves, 2001) defines culture as “the fifth dimension” of language teaching in addition to the other four language skills. Furthermore, Kramersch (1993) asserts that culture is not just a fifth skill, or even an aspect of communicative competence, but the underlying dimension of all one knows and does.

Since culture plays such an important role in language teaching (e.g., Byram, 1997; Fantini, 1997; Kramersch, 2013), incorporating culture in language teaching seems almost inevitable. Teaching cultural differences along with the structural and typological differences of the language is vital because it helps learners prevent misinterpretation caused by the confusion of cultural differences. The aim of language teaching, according to Byram and Risager (1999), is to develop both linguistic and cultural competence inasmuch as linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners. Language learners need to be aware of the culturally appropriate ways to interact within the culture, which often go beyond linguistic rules as the norms to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone are often imbedded in cultural values.

However, the role of culture in English language education is not always well acknowledged. This results in the negligence of integrating culture into English language education. Gonen and Saglam (2012) point out that “teachers in different classrooms in different parts of the world still ignore the importance of teaching culture as a part of language study” (p. 26). That is, teachers endeavor to promote only their learners’ language proficiency instead of endowing them with cultural competence in order to function appropriately in multicultural situations. A further point is that many English language teaching programs do not offer courses in culture. This often leads to failure in English language learners’ interaction with others from different cultural backgrounds since their lack of cultural competence causes misunderstanding in cross-cultural communication. The reasons behind teachers’ not including culture in English language education have been that they are “more interested in practical aspects of communication” (Onalan, 2005, p. 217); teachers feel they do not have enough time to talk about cultural elements in their teaching practices due to the overcrowded curriculum (e.g., Gonen & Saglam, 2012; Hong, 2008), and teachers do not know how to incorporate culture into the language classroom because they lack

adequate training in how to incorporate culture into their teaching practices. They also do not know how to measure the learners' cultural competence or changes in their attitudes as a result of culture teaching (Gonen & Saglam, 2012).

Previous studies have shown that research on culture teaching in ELT has been done in different contexts in an attempt to understand teachers' culture teaching. Among the many scholars (e.g., Han, 2009; Han & Song, 2011; Gonen & Saglam, 2012; Karabinar & Guler, 2012; Önalın, 2005) involved in culture teaching, Sercu, Bandura, Castro, Davcheva, Laskaridou, Lundgren, Garcia, & Ryan (2005) carried out a research project on "foreign language teachers and intercultural competence" to understand what foreign teachers' perceptions are regarding the teaching of intercultural competence in language education and their classroom practices. They reported that the majority of foreign language teachers taking part in the study fell into two categories in terms of cultural teaching practices: excluding culture and including culture. Their findings showed that teachers tend to be intercultural competent and are "clearly willing to teach intercultural competence, yet in actual teaching, they appear not to move beyond a traditional information-transfer pedagogy" (p. 170).

In 2009, Han investigated Chinese teachers' perceptions of culture teaching in secondary schools in order to explore teachers' beliefs about the nature of culture and their classroom instruction. The findings on school teachers' perceptions of culture/intercultural teaching in language teaching showed that teachers gave definitions of culture that were problematic at a school level. This could be due to the educational background of the teachers and their life experiences in general, and the fact that their understanding of culture commonly refers to folklore, food, festivals, and facts (including factual knowledge of history and geography). In other words, small "c" culture (p. 293). Moreover, the results also suggested that teachers were currently teaching cultural awareness to increase the interest of students in learning the language. The teachers believed that the ultimate objective was to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. However, the teachers were not entirely comfortable with the teaching of culture in the language classroom because the teachers themselves might not fully grasp the meaning of culture. Gonen and Saglam (2012) investigated culture and culture teaching in different contexts of foreign language teaching in Turkey. They found that although there were some

differences about which aspects of the target culture to prioritize, teachers were generally aware of the importance of teaching culture, and they integrated culture into the foreign language classroom. Moreover, the teachers' foremost objective to teach culture was to develop an openness and tolerance towards the target culture. This was in accordance with what culturally responsive teachers did in the classroom.

This brief literature review indicates that foreign language education should not avoid the integration of culture teaching into its teaching process in order to help to develop learners' (inter)cultural competence. However, teachers' beliefs about culture teaching play an important role in this process. Furthermore, it has been determined that research on culture teaching in the context of Vietnam has not been much explored.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Subjects and Research Setting**

The subjects of the study were 38 EL teachers, 23 of whom were Vietnamese teachers of English (VTEs; 60.5%) and 15 who were native English teachers (NETs; 39.5%). All of the EL teachers were qualified with a university BA degree in TESOL, an MA degree, or a TESOL/TEFL certificate. They were all teaching General English at a particular foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, which offers a variety of programs such as English for Children, General English, Communicative Business English, TOEFL iBT, IELTS, and TOEIC preparation. Each program has many levels from elementary to advanced, and each level has two or three modules lasting six or nine months, respectively. This center possesses a variety of facilities. Each classroom is equipped with an air-conditioner, a liquid crystal display (LCD) television, and a computer with access to high speed Internet. All materials are digitalized for teachers to use on a computer. The number of learners in each class ranges from ten to no more than 20, and all of them are roughly at the same level.

### **Instruments**

The instruments employed in this study were a questionnaire and a

semi-structured interview. Regarding the questionnaire, there were two parts: the first part asked about EL teachers' basic information; the second, which was adopted and adapted from the CULTNET project (Sercu et al., 2005) and Han's research (2009), consisted of three questions and 37 close-ended items. The total reliability, calculated by Cronbach, was .823.

**TABLE 1. Questionnaire Content**

Question	Five-Point Scale	Content
1 (7 items)	Strongly disagree / Strongly agree	Teachers' beliefs about culture teaching in ELT
2 (8 items)	Not important at all / Very important	Teachers' definitions of the objectives of culture teaching in their ELT context
3 (12 items)	Hardly ever / Almost always	Teachers' activities for culture teaching

With respect to the semi-structured interview, eight questions were designed in accordance with the research questions in order to cross-check the information stated in the questionnaire.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

First, 50 copies of the questionnaire were distributed directly to the subjects by the academic manager of the center. Of these questionnaires, 38 (23 VTEs, 15 NETs) were returned. Classroom observations were then conducted in four different classes, each of which was observed once for one hour. Then, class observations (two VTEs and two NETs) were taken into account. During each class observation, a structured observation checklist was used, and the note fields were filled out. Finally, with their permission granted on the questionnaire to be interviewed, nine EL teachers (five VTEs, four NETs) were invited to have informal face-to-face interviews. Each interview lasted between ten and twelve minutes. All of the interviews were audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis.

In order to analyze the quantitative data from the questionnaire,

descriptive statistics were used. The qualitative data from the interviews were all transcribed, coded, and put into themes.

## FINDINGS

### EL Teachers' Beliefs About Culture Teaching in ELT

As can be seen from Table 2 (Question 1), the total mean scores of EL teachers' beliefs about culture teaching in ELT is 3.22 (out of 5), and the means scores for VTEs ( $M = 3.22$ ) and NETs ( $M = 3.24$ ) are quite similar. This means that both VTEs and NETs thought positively about culture teaching in ELT inasmuch as they believed that it was important to include cultural information in ELT, that learners could use English appropriately with the target language culture, and that culture teaching should be included at different levels.

TABLE 2. Teachers' Beliefs About Culture Teaching in ELT

Category of Teachers	N	M	SD
VTEs	23	3.22	.36
NETs	15	3.24	.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>.36</b>

This information was supported by the participants' comments in response to the interviews. Most EL teachers believed that culture teaching was an important component in ELT and that it played an important role in their ELT. They commented as follows:

“ . . . it is very important because it helps learners understand and use English better . . . ” [VTEs 2 & 3, translated]

“ . . . in some ways, culture is very important . . . ” (NETs 1 & 2)

“ . . . culture is definitely important in ELT, and I think my job here is to help my learners become global citizens . . . ” (NET 4)

VTEs also acknowledged that language and culture were interrelated and that cultural awareness was an indispensable skill that learners should possess. For example, VTEs 4 and 5 argued,

“ . . . because culture and language cannot be separated, it is very important to teach it to learners. Therefore, culture teaching plays an important role in my teaching . . . ” [VTE 4, translated]

“ . . . cultural awareness is very important because it is considered one of the skills in language teaching and learning . . . ” [VTE 5, translated]

Furthermore, EL teachers commented that culture teaching “can be taught at any level” (NETs 1, 2, & 4). They also emphasized that “as for beginners, cultural information should be briefly introduced, but for advanced learners it should be extensively introduced” [VTE 3, translated], so they always tried to include cultural information in their ELT:

“ . . . whenever I encounter a piece of cultural information, I always try to understand it by searching on the Internet or asking colleagues for help. . . ” [VTEs 1, 2, 4, & 5; translated]

“ . . . I include almost any piece of cultural information in the textbooks I am using . . . ” (NETs 1, 2, & 4)

Nevertheless, some EL teachers thought that it was not important to include cultural information into ELT. They stated,

“ . . . I don’t see any benefits to including cultural information in my teaching. It doesn’t help learners learn English much except for making the lessons more interesting . . . ” [VTE 1, translated]

“ . . . I don’t think it is useful for students . . . ” (NET 3)

In another aspect, EL teachers shared that they sometimes encountered difficulties in incorporating cultural information into their ELT. Two of the most common difficulties were “time limitation” [VTEs 1, 2, 4, & 5; translated] and “inaccurate cultural information in the textbooks” (NETs 1 & 3).

## **EL Teachers’ Definitions of Objectives of Culture Teaching**

Regarding the teachers’ definitions of objectives of culture teaching (Question 2), 8 possible objectives (“not very important” to “very important”) of culture teaching randomly appeared in the questionnaire

in three aspects: the cognitive dimension, the attitudinal dimension, and the skills dimension. The results in Table 3 show that EL teachers defined the objectives of culture teaching rather differently in terms of order of importance. Specifically, VTEs set the skills dimension (M = 4.17) as the most important objective of culture teaching among the three dimensions while NETs defined the attitudes dimension (M = 4.37) as the most important objective of the three. This can be interpreted as showing that the VTEs believed that culture teaching should develop the learners' skills of interpreting documents in the target culture, as well as aiding learners in acquiring new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices. Meanwhile, the NETs believed that culture teaching should develop the learners' curiosity towards, openness to, and readiness to accommodate other cultures.

**TABLE 3. EL Teachers' Definitions of Objectives of Culture Teaching in the Order of Importance**

Ranking	VTEs (n = 23)			NETs (n = 15)		
	Dimension	M	SD	Dimension	M	SD
1	Skills	4.17	.65	Attitudes	4.37	.89
2	Attitudes	3.91	.85	Skills	4.22	.64
3	Cognitive	3.90	.50	Cognitive	4.05	.38

However, the qualitative data gained from interviews did not back up this information as it was found that most respondents supported the objectives of culture teaching in the cognitive and skills dimensions. For example, VTEs 2, 4, and 5 said,

“ . . . it helps learners understand English more and use it better and more appropriately . . . ” [VTEs 2, 4, & 5; translated]

NETs 1, 2, and 4 also shared the same viewpoint on this issue; they offered,

“ . . . culture teaching helps learners understand the language and avoid misunderstanding people from another culture . . . ” (NETs 1, 2, & 4)

## EL Teachers' Classroom Practices

Question 3 included eleven possible cultural teaching activities that were arranged on a 5-point scale (“hardly ever” to “almost always”) and were structured in three aspects (the cognitive dimension, attitudinal dimension, and the skills dimension). It is shown in Table 4 that both VTEs and NETs seemed to employ activities for culture teaching somewhat similarly. They both primarily used activities to enhance cultural knowledge ( $M = 4.47$  for VTEs;  $M = 3.21$  for NETs).

**TABLE 4. EL Teachers' Teaching Activities for Culture Teaching in the Order of Frequency**

Ranking	VTEs (n = 23)			NETs (n = 15)		
	Dimension	M	SD	Dimension	M	SD
1	Cognitive	3.47	.64	Cognitive	3.21	.70
2	Skills	3.30	1.16	Attitudes	3.10	.89
3	Attitudes	3.09	.79	Skills	2.84	.99

Sharing about activities for culture teaching during the interviews, EL teachers stated that they employed activities related to the cognitive dimension most frequently during their teaching:

“. . . I often give learners culture exercises to do at home so that they can understand the language better . . .” [VTE 2, translated]

“. . . it depends on cultural aspects. I can use pictures, photos, explanations, body language, or I can invite a native English teacher to class . . .” [VTEs 3, 4, & 5; translated]

“. . . I explain cultural information and show pictures. . . . I talk about my own culture . . .” (NETs 1 & 2)

## DISCUSSION

The findings have indicated several significant points. First, most of the EL teachers (both VTEs and NETs) had positive attitudes on culture teaching in ELT, were aware of the important role of culture, and believed that language could not be taught without including its cultural

dimension. This finding may be attributed to the viewpoint that “language and culture are closely interwoven or inextricably interrelated and interdependent” (Roberts et al., 2001). However, some EL teachers did not think that culture teaching was very important in ELT. One of the possible explanations for this may derive from seeing the language as a communication tool that does not have anything to do with cultures (Risager, 2007, p. 166). Alternately, they may have viewed English as an international language that “belongs to no single culture, then it would seem that it is not necessary for language learners to acquire knowledge about the culture of those who speak it as a native language” (McKay, 2000, p. 7). Consequently, those EL teachers might aim to develop only language knowledge and skills in their learners. This might cause learners to use English inappropriately and lead to misunderstandings or communication breakdown in cross-cultural communication due to their lack of cultural competence.

Cultural competence, in contrast, can help learners to interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures. Moreover, it was realized that the difficulties that affected VTEs’ and NETs’ willingness to include cultural teaching in their ELT were “time limitation” and “inaccurate cultural information in the textbooks.” These difficulties may drive VTEs and NETs to focus more on language knowledge and skills than cultural awareness in their ELT. This finding is in alignment with previous studies done by Gonen and Saglam (2012) and Hong (2008), who found that teachers feel they do not have enough time to talk about cultural elements in their teaching practices due to the overcrowded curriculum. It also agrees with Crooks and Arkaki’s (1998) finding that difficult conditions and heavy workloads have a powerful impact on the pedagogical decisions that teachers make.

Second, VTEs and NETs defined the objectives of culture teaching rather differently. VTEs chose the development of cultural skills as the most important objective of culture teaching, but NETs opted for the development of cultural attitudes. This finding may imply that EL teachers have different perspectives on the objectives of culture teaching in ELT. VTEs may believe that focusing on developing cultural skills in learners more than cognitive and attitudinal dimensions could help learners to interact appropriately and effectively with other people from different cultures. In contrast, NETs may think that enhancing learners’ openness, curiosity, and readiness to accommodate other cultures could play a more important role in multicultural interactions than skills and

cognitive dimensions. However, there was some confusion between the quantitative and the qualitative data in EL teachers' definitions of their culture teaching objectives. This may infer that EL teachers could lack knowledge on culture teaching in ELT, resulting in uncertainty in setting up the goals of culture teaching in their ELT. This finding is supported by an earlier study carried out by Gonen and Saglam (2012), who concluded that teachers do not know how to incorporate culture in the language classroom. This is because they may lack adequate training on how to incorporate culture into their teaching practices, as well as how to measure learners' cultural competence and changes in their attitudes as a result of culture teaching.

Third, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative studies revealed that EL teachers most often employed cognitive activities of culture teaching during their teaching time. This may mean that EL teachers tried to pass cultural knowledge onto learners most frequently. This finding may be attributed to the fact that transmitting cultural information to learners would not consume much time in comparison with developing cultural skills or raising the cultural attitudes of learners. Another possible explanation may be that EL teachers focused on the activities about which they were highly knowledgeable.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that the EL teachers believed that culture teaching played an important role in ELT. Their classroom practices, to some extent, corresponded to their beliefs since those EL teachers who believed in the importance of culture teaching tried to integrate culture teaching into their ELT at any level, and vice versa. However, there was a mismatch between the EL teachers' definitions of objectives of culture teaching and their cultural teaching activities as VTEs primarily defined objectives in the skills dimension while NETs tended to define objectives in the attitudes dimension. However, in reality, they both attempted to enhance the learners' cultural information the most often.

The findings of this study have a number of implications. First, there should be regular training sessions or seminars related to this topic in order to help EL teachers gradually understand how to define culture and cultural/intercultural awareness, and how to integrate culture into ELT.

Moreover, they need to understand why they should integrate it, for what purposes, and with what benefits. Second, EL teachers should have opportunities to be exposed to different kinds of culture teaching activities and provide learners with cultural information and knowledge that are suitable for the learners' language proficiency levels and age. Third, in order to deal with the time limitations, EL teachers should be required to decide what cultural information to introduce briefly and what cultural information to introduce extensively during their teaching. Regarding the inaccurate cultural information in the textbooks, EL teachers should be supplied with additional cultural materials related to the textbooks in order to have more references about the cultural contents. Fourth, EL teachers should be reminded that including the target culture does not mean imposing the target culture values or changing the learners' value systems. It would be ideal for EL teachers to create a classroom atmosphere in which there are questions and discussion about the target culture, as well as comparisons between the learners' own culture and the target culture in order to develop attitudes of openness and tolerance toward other people and cultures, and to promote an increased understanding of the learners' own culture.

However, this study still has its limitations as the study was conducted with a small sample size in a single context. Therefore, it is suggested that further research should be carried out with a larger sample size including different contexts in order to be able to generalize the findings and triangulate the findings.

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## **The Dynamics of Language Teacher Belief in Relation to Institutional Context: An Activity Theoretical Approach**

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The purpose of this study is to expand on our present knowledge of teacher beliefs in general and particularly to investigate the relationship between teacher beliefs and the context in which teachers work. Specifically, the study addresses the role of context, which has been inadequately theorized in previous studies investigating teacher beliefs. Focusing on the experiences of a single teacher in a college English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom over the course of a 16-week semester, we examined his beliefs about teaching and learning, and the context in which they occurred, using activity theory as a framework for analysis. The results of the study imply that context has a significant effect on the formation and transformation of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The results show how apparent contradictions between departmental expectations and classroom practice can create opportunities to incorporate new tools and explore various teacher-student roles and divisions of labor in the classroom.

### **INTRODUCTION: TEACHER BELIEFS – WHY AND WHENCE?**

For teachers, and rational human beings in general, a causal relationship between belief, thought, and action is usually expected. Summarizing classic work in the area of teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) refers to evidence of “a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, and classroom

practices” (p. 326). Similarly, Kagan (1992) suggests teachers make pedagogical decisions based on a belief system, which “constrains the teachers’ perception, judgment, and behavior” (p. 74). Teacher beliefs are conceptually important for an understanding of teachers as rational decision-makers who act in accordance with a coherent set of values.

One step removed from a connection solely driven by rational considerations, studies exploring the reasons behind teachers’ beliefs suggest that they may arise for pragmatic reasons. According to Kagan (1992), teachers develop a set of pedagogical beliefs in response to the “uncertainty and ambiguity” (p. 79) inherent in classroom teaching. Kagan suggests that because of the complexity of the task and the demand on teachers to make on-the-spot evaluative decisions pertaining to their teaching methods, student learning, and classroom procedures, teachers rely on a system of beliefs to make sense of their classroom experience and to guide their practice.

What teachers’ beliefs are, where they come from, and how they change is clearly an important area for understanding teaching and teacher development in general, and is a substantial area of research. Previous studies investigating the construct of mainstream (not language teacher-specific) teacher beliefs have focused on the belief-knowledge distinction (Fenstermacher, 1994), the hierarchical structure of beliefs (Phipps & Borg, 2009), the collective nature of teacher beliefs (Breen, 2001), and processes of teacher conceptual change (Gregoire, 2003; Kubanyiova, 2012). At the same time, many observers have commented on the characteristically static nature of teaching overall (e.g., Cuban, 1993), even though the educational research community continues to produce multitudes of studies about how to change and improve teaching. Thus, questions about change in teacher beliefs, in the face of a general lack of change in practice, are important to attempt to connect educational research with educational improvement and professional development. In the area of second language teaching as well, classroom practice shows more evidence of its static nature than change despite vast amounts of research and, in many cases, governmental-level policy shifts.

This paper addresses the dynamics of second language teacher beliefs in relation to institutional context, as this is a growing area of interest and value. Recent studies of language teacher beliefs (LTB) include the investigation of how LTB affect teaching decisions (Mak, 2011), the impact of in-service teacher education programs (Borg, 2011), and the influence of beliefs and socio-educational factors on classroom

practice (Nishino, 2012). In addition to being a particularly important topic, the investigation of LTB can inform pedagogical innovation by generating “grounded alternatives to the ‘accepted wisdom’ of language teaching methodology emanating from certain academic traditions” that are removed from the actual context of teaching (Breen, 2001, p. 472). On the other hand, Crookes (2011) claims that, in many cases, “language teachers have never been presented with any formal orientation to a major area of relevance for developing statements of values or beliefs” and if asked to outline the pedagogical beliefs that guide their practice, “might not have adequate sources to turn to” (p. 1127) outside of institutionally sanctioned models and approaches.

Besides formal sources and the possible wisdom of teaching traditions, the working contexts of teachers is arguably an important matter bearing on teacher beliefs. If working conditions are poor, this is likely to limit how teachers draw on, express, and develop their views (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999). Adopting a socio-cultural perspective on the development of and change in LTB is one way in which researchers can examine teachers’ beliefs and, consequently, classroom practice. This study describes how a language teacher’s beliefs changed, or did not, over the course of a semester with the particular goal of exploring how to theorize context as a key factor in LTB.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Socio-cultural Perspectives on Classroom Activity: An Alternative View of Context**

Early work in the study of contextual factors influencing LTB include a focus on how teachers account for pedagogical choices in relation to context (Nicholson, 1996), effects of accumulated experience on teachers’ beliefs (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999) and additional factors that influenced teacher planning and classroom management decisions (Woods, 1996). These studies began to explore the complex connections between teacher beliefs, institutional and departmental level designations of best practices, and the procedural aspects of planning and implementing classroom learning activities. Contextual factors have been theorized as interfering with teachers’ abilities to translate their beliefs

into lesson planning and course content decisions (Burns, 1996), preventing teachers from drawing on research findings (Crookes & Arakaki, 1999), and influencing teachers' choice of motivating styles (Reeve, 2009). Some of these studies utilized what Niewolny and Wilson (2009) term the "container view" of context, which "tend[s] to see context as having little to no perceived effect on the action contained; context is viewed as a background or stage on which action unfolds but is not really necessary to understand the action" (p. 32).

One major perspective that allows us to move beyond a container view of context is Activity Theory (Leontiev, 1981). In this approach, activity is defined as a system of relations encompassing individual subjects, their goal-directed actions, and the tools used to mediate the internalization of communal norms and externalization of individual thought. Tools may be real objects like textbooks, class syllabi, dictionaries, and computer programs used in classrooms to mediate student learning. Tools may also be psychological and exist internally as objects of thought such as concepts, theories, or approaches to teaching. According to Kaptelinin (1996), tools are "carriers of cultural knowledge and social experience" (p. 109), and through their specific modes of operation developed through previously determined usage, "shape the way people act and, through the process of internalization, greatly influence the nature of mental development" (p. 109). In other words, the psychological tools that we internalize are dependent upon practical, social, and interactional needs, and these needs may develop and change across time and institutional settings.

In Leontiev's (1981) model of the activity framework, the production of an activity fundamentally involves a subject and an object. Applied to educational activity, subjects can be teachers, students, or a group of individuals engaged in activity, the object of which, from a sociocultural perspective, is both the reproduction of knowledge and transformation of thought through interaction. Here, the object is not a physical object, but rather an objective, purpose, or goal. Therefore, the object of activity can be defined as a specific outcome that motivates activity or, as Gallego and Cole (2001) define it, "the problem or topic that compels the subject into engagement" (p. 96). In the classroom, objects are usually shared, with individual subjects holding variable orientations to a common objective such as improving the grammatical accuracy of their writing. Shared objects are transformed as they are interpreted across differing subject roles (teacher, student, administrator, researcher/observer) and

through interaction with other subjects, classroom rules, and available tools. The analytic function of the activity framework directs the researcher's attention to examining interactions between individual components of the activity system "while simultaneously capturing the situated activity as a whole" (Johnson, 2009, p. 79).

In Engeström's (1987) work, the activity framework, rules, community, and division of labor are the basic categories used to define the context in which specific actions and operations are planned and executed. In the field of second language instruction, despite changes in how language and language teaching and learning have been conceptualized, the basic structure of language teaching activity within most institutional settings has remained static. Classrooms are usually organized according to an accepted division of labor with clear teacher and student roles. However, the extent to which classroom divisions of labor are negotiable and how the negotiation occurs is influenced by the beliefs of the participants, including teachers and students, as well as administrators, curriculum developers, and course designers, who make up the larger community of ESL practitioners.

In an activity system, rules may be unspoken communal rules that provide the general framework for interaction among people occupying certain roles. These could include, for example, who is allowed to speak and when. Or rules may be explicit and directly stated in a course syllabus, outlining specific rules of classroom interaction, learning outcomes, student competencies, and grading procedures. It should be noted that the difference between the two rule types is a matter of interpretation, since explicit rules are often based on interpretations of communal norms and institutional standards, as well as on issues of power and agency in classroom settings where explicit rules are often stated and upheld by the teacher.

Motive is the label given to how the socio-cultural assumptions inherent in an activity setting became manifest in the selection of actions and operations by individuals to be utilized within that particular setting. Hence the motive for activity should not be understood solely in terms of the biological maturation of the organism nor as a result of individual thought processes. Instead, motives must be understood in terms of individuals' formation of goals and the selection of operations appropriate to their realization occurring within the context in which they were intended for use (Wertsch, 1985). Lantolf and Genung's (2002) analysis of institutional power and language learning success concludes,

“Motives and goals are formed and reformed under specific historical material circumstances. As these circumstances shift, motive and goals . . . shift as well” (p. 191).

From an activity perspective, teacher beliefs do not initially originate within the individual, but rather from learned communal norms embodied in concepts derived from particular approaches to organizing teaching and learning activity. Being able to communicate with others and act according to implicit norms and rules that organize group behavior is equivalent to becoming a member of a community of practice (Rogoff, 1995). Within particular communities of practice, select concepts act “as objects of attention and desire, as models and ideals to be emulated and attained, as instruments to master . . . making them into the very substance of their practical and mental interactions with other people” (Jones, 2008, p. 79). Wells (1999) characterizes the process of appropriation of cultural artifacts (a category that includes both real and conceptual tools) as a three-stage process of transformation. First, modification of the learner’s own cognition occurs; then, the tool or concept itself is transformed as it is used and assimilated into the activity. Finally, when the reconstructed artifact is externalized and used to mediate subsequent actions, the activity itself can be transformed, resulting in changes “in the way in which the artifact is understood and used by other members of the culture” (Wells, p. 137).

The application of the activity framework to classroom practice also exposes contradictions that may emerge between individual goals, collective motives, and outcomes of classroom activity. “Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems” (Engeström, 2001, p. 609). These tensions may emerge due to a multitude of processes: teachers incorporating new objects, tools, or roles that conflict with other elements of the activity system; adopting new methods for achieving previously established goals and objects; and changes in activity that conflict with adjacent activity systems. Examples of these are conflicts between personal and professional activity, or individual and institutional motives. As such, contradictions act as a powerful catalyst for teacher conceptual change within the process of internalization of communal concepts and practices, and the construction/externalization of new tools, roles, and patterns of interaction. If activity theory is an accurate depiction of social reality, or at least a useful heuristic for research, then we would expect contradictions to play a large role in LTB change as well.

## Language Teacher Beliefs Based in Activity Theory

Previous research in second language situations incorporating an activity perspective has explored classroom language learning activity and the motives of individual participants (Lantolf & Genung, 2002), as well as teachers' abilities to balance compliance with institutional demands against personal pedagogical beliefs (Olson, 2009). More recently, a handful of studies have applied the activity framework to the study of language teacher beliefs specifically. Kim (2011) investigated teacher responses to curricular reform in South Korea, and Tasker (2011) looked at collaborative teacher professional development activity.

Kim's (2011) study focused on a seventh-grade English teacher and her response to government mandated curriculum reform in South Korea. The teacher expressed resistance to implementing reform policies for several important reasons including a lack of confidence in her own English proficiency (believed to be a prerequisite for effective communicative language teaching), perceived "insincerity" of students when engaged in communicative tasks, and uncertainty if the mandated communicative language teaching techniques and textbooks were beneficial or relevant to student language learning in the exam-oriented setting. In cases of conflict between teacher beliefs and curricular reform efforts, we would expect some change in classroom practice and teacher beliefs, especially if teachers are provided with the tools to initiate such change. However, in this case, Kim concluded that change did not occur because there was "no supportive community to scaffold [the teacher's] learning and/or teaching" (p. 237).

Tasker's (2011) study of three EFL teachers in the Czech Republic focused on teacher attempts to confront limited student improvement and a perceived lack of student responsibility for their own language learning. Collaboratively, the participating teachers attempted to understand and redirect student learning through the development of new mediating artifacts. According to Tasker, "the dialogic process of teacher reconceptualization of student responsibility, triggered by a collective exploration of a contradiction between teacher and student expectations for English language learning" (p. 220), resulted in the transformation of how teachers conceptualized student learning. These two studies exemplify how an activity theory perspective allows the researcher to productively theorize the role of context in cases of teacher belief change, and of failure to change.

Overall, examining the current perspectives on language teacher beliefs and their relationships to both those of other teachers and to institutional contexts, it seems important to further explore the development and change in beliefs as affected by such contexts. If teacher beliefs drive teaching, but are themselves subject to any, let alone substantial, fluctuation as a result of a teacher's employment context and his/her peers, this is therefore important for understanding teacher development and classroom practice. Activity theory has particular potential to focus inquiry on key elements within institutions and aspects of beliefs shared by institution members. In addition, it has a built-in disposition to emphasize change and institutional improvement through engagement with contradictions (Engeström, 1987).

## **METHOD: THE CASE STUDY**

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). This case study was bounded by the time in which the study occurred, the institutional context, and one specific teacher. As such, it constitutes a snapshot of institutional policies and procedures reflecting the overall mission of the institution and the department during the time of the study. Based on Nardi's (1996) recommendation that the investigation of activity systems focus on a broad spectrum of interaction with a long enough time frame to understand teacher and class objectives as they unfold, this study focused on a 16-week, semester-long course. A 16-week semester unit was selected because it was an institutionally constructed artifact providing a time frame within which both student and teacher goals were constructed and evaluated.

Crater Community College's (CCC) campus, located in an urban center in the western region of the United States, was where the study was conducted. At the time of the study, CCC had nearly 650 international students (roughly 7% of the total student population) from 53 countries enrolling in various programs of study. The course selected for the study was, a 16-week, for-credit ESL academic writing course designed to serve both international and resident immigrant students.

Students enrolled in the course were allowed to simultaneously enroll in other credit courses at the college and begin working towards their degree.

The ESL department at CCC consisted of eleven full-time faculty with relevant graduate degrees and international teaching experience. The department designed and taught all courses utilizing a content-based approach, and department teachers' understandings of content-based language instruction were consistent with long-standing positions such as that of Brinton et al. (2004, p. 5): "the integration of particular content with language teaching aims . . . the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter with second language skills."

In addition to following a content-based approach to course design, the department had developed its own conception of curriculum, known in-house as the "opportunities model." According to the opportunities model, underlying curriculum and classroom instruction was a prescribed "learning cycle" in which learners were provided with opportunities to receive input in English, produce written and spoken output, participate in interactions, and get feedback from teachers and peers on their work. According to the model, opportunities also had to be provided by the teacher for students to understand how to learn best and how to study language more efficiently.

## DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS

The data collection procedure was conducted in three parts, occurring over the course of a 16-week academic semester, and consisted of bi-weekly observation of classroom activity; teacher interviews conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester; and an initial description of context and departmental objectives relying on document analysis. All interviews and classroom observations were audio-recorded, and then transcribed and labeled for later analysis. Data analysis focused on comparing teacher descriptions of classroom activity, observed practices, and data gathered on departmental and institutional expectations of teaching and learning behavior. There was an ongoing dialogue between the principal author and the teacher participant that increasingly gained depth over successive meetings. The collaborative discussions were a result of incorporating new classroom activity events

selected by both the teacher and researcher from observed classroom practice, which were used to elaborate on the participating teacher's individual sense of pedagogical concepts and how they were connected to classroom activities. A constant comparative approach (Charmaz, 2006) was used to construct a picture of the teacher's beliefs in combination with an in-depth description of the context as new data were incorporated over the course of the semester-long study.

### **Author Positionality**

Similar to the participant (i.e., teacher) selected for the present study, the principal author possesses a graduate degree, has experience teaching English in a foreign country, and for five years prior to the study, taught ESL writing courses at CCC. This background positioned the author as an insider already possessing a general orientation to institutional requirements, departmental perspectives on learning and curriculum, and the types of approaches teachers were using in their classrooms. In fact, the author had observed one particular teacher's class several times when first employed at CCC in the process of being inducted into the teaching position. It was through these observations that the author was introduced to the departmental opportunities model and the learning cycle approach to teaching and learning. The author's rapport with the participating teacher was excellent, and therefore both participant and researcher were willing to reflect openly and carefully on teaching practice, including teaching practices that contested departmental norms. The relationship was a peer relationship; thus, power asymmetries between researcher and participant (Talmy, 2010), including differences in status, social class, and age, were limited.

### **The Teacher: Roles, Beliefs, and Course Goals**

In this section, the focal teacher and his initial views of the course at the outset of the semester are described. The teacher is a Caucasian male in his early forties. He began teaching in the 1990s, working part-time at several university ESL programs; in 2001, he began his current job teaching ESL courses at CCC. He had been teaching at CCC for 10 years at the time of the study. Although he had taught the same courses and the same content for ten years, he indicated that he liked

to experiment with new approaches and do things differently every couple of years.

During the period of this study, the teacher divided the course content into four topics related to the semester's content theme of environmentalism. He used the program-mandated textbook readings together with an online quiz to introduce topics related to food, goods and services, housing, and carbon consumption (carbon footprint). Since he had taught this particular ESL course many times before, he had most of the course already planned before the semester began. Towards the beginning of the semester, the teacher stated that because the overall course structure was already in place, he did not "have to create anything or be creative," which allowed him to "focus on grammar, language level, and other things." He believed that his students were motivated by the interesting course content and were therefore able to "see that they can learn and make progress."

The teacher explained that his ideal role in the classroom was as a resource who could "confirm or disconfirm [student] hypotheses" about the language and their understanding of course content. Several classroom activities that he had designed allowed him to attempt to fulfill his ideal role as a teacher, serving as a resource for students, but he stated that overall his principle role in the class had been reading student papers and editing them. He believed it was important for him to "correct all the errors so (students) know where they are," but also believed that this function was not a "good role for the teacher" and ideally preferred students to be "exploring" the language on their own. In addition, he stated that he was spending too much time correcting errors on students' multiple essay drafts. He believed such attention to grammar correction was necessary because students continually made the same grammatical errors and the overall clarity of their writing was not improving.

The learning cycle approach requires that students have the opportunity to produce extensive written and spoken output in order to receive feedback. Thus, the teacher aimed to create an environment where students could "safely take risks" with their developing language and progress through the learning cycle, while also meeting the departmental requirement of producing twenty pages of revised texts.

The teacher had found, in the past, that giving students grades on their essays early on in the course changed their attitudes and their interaction with other students, especially when they had lower

proficiency and their grades were low. He did not want to penalize students for weak writing initially because he believed it was not fair to expect them to be good writers at the beginning of the semester. Improvement was more important. Instead of focusing on giving grades, the teacher saw student papers as opportunities for providing feedback and decided to use an “accuracy formula” as a tool to communicate with students about their progress. The accuracy formula provided a number telling students exactly the percentage of error-free sentences in their papers. At the beginning of the semester, the teacher was confident that the accuracy formula was “gonna be enough to get [students] to see where they are or at least make them aware of how far they have to go.”

Overall, the teacher’s goal for the ESL course was to have students improve in their ability to listen, speak, write, and interact in English. The overall goal of student improvement was further divided into two objectives: (a) students understanding the process of the departmental learning cycle and (b) the development of accuracy in student writing. As a consequence, feedback from the teacher and from peers was an essential tool in students’ development of language and for maintaining student interest in learning and improving their English.

### **Beliefs: Context and Change**

In this section two aspects of the teacher’s classroom activity are discussed and the beliefs he held associated with the planning and implementation of the classroom activity. First, the teacher’s implementation of the learning cycle approach as a way of clarifying his purpose with regard to his planned classroom actions and operations is described. Here, the teacher accepted the department’s model, and his views did not change over the course of the semester. Second, the teacher’s attempt to re-conceptualize feedback on student writing is described, incorporating the teacher’s own needs and experiences in conjunction with departmental expectations.

### **The Learning Cycle**

The learning cycle was the main theoretical tool utilized by CCC language teachers to emphasize the process of learning as a student-learning objective and draw students’ focus to this. The individual components of the learning cycle, summarized by the teacher as “do work, get feedback, rehearse, and make progress,” were explicitly

presented by him to students at the beginning of the semester, using a series of PowerPoint presentations created by the ESL program director. The teacher used several tools to monitor student understanding of the learning cycle model. Students completed daily written reflections, which they handed in at the end of class. The teacher believed that for most students the goal was often “to get the information at any cost,” which conflicted with the course goal of improving different literacy skills through focusing on the process of learning. The teacher provided the following example describing how students often chose the easiest or quickest solution to conveying information when working in groups with their peers:

They will show their paper to their partner . . . They'll read the sentence or they'll memorize the sentence, and they'll explain it, but if their pronunciation is off, or if their listener has a weaker vocabulary, or if there's just words they don't know, the listener won't understand, and so instead of working that out through listening and speaking strategies, they just show the answer and say, “Here it is” . . . Or they write it down for them.

The teacher wanted students to understand that the purpose of classroom activities was not to get the correct answer but to interact in English, and specifically to provide peer feedback to other students through the use of clarifying questions when breakdowns or difficulties in communication occurred. According to the teacher, and consistent with classroom observations, students responded positively to collaborative peer revision group activities following the process of the learning cycle and, over the course of the semester, became more engaged and more focused on improving their language while working in small groups with classmates.

### **In-Class Feedback**

Starting at the beginning of the semester, the teacher had questions about feedback, and was concerned about students’ limited improvement and increased departmental demands for providing feedback. Prior to the period of this study, the teacher’s position on feedback on ESL writing was more or less consistent with what Truscott (1996) calls “a widespread, deeply entrenched belief that grammar correction must be part of writing courses” (p. 327). However, the teacher had also

experienced comparatively little success with his feedback practice. As a way to address his own questions about the effectiveness of teacher feedback on student writing, he decided to use the accuracy formula as a way of providing feedback to students on their grammar errors and to show improvements in written clarity in a more objective way. The accuracy formula had been developed by him in conjunction with the ESL program coordinator the previous semester as a tool to talk with students about the accuracy of their language, as a way for teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching, and as a possible substitute for letter grades on student papers.

In the teacher's class, several actions were related to his objectives for student progress: utilizing both feedback and the accuracy formula as tools. First, starting at the beginning of the semester, which was a change from his previous practice, he gave students limited feedback on their assignments. Instead of the teacher "figuring out what the student needs and trying to correct it for the student or decide if you're going to try to lead them to the answer," he simply checked to see if whole sentences were correct or not. This was partly due to departmental demands for increased student written output outlined in the course competencies. Instead of correcting all student errors, which took time and had a negligible impact on student progress in the past, the teacher began to mark whole sentences as incorrect without specifying what the individual errors were. Here the teacher was challenging a common departmental practice of providing more explicit types of error correction as feedback on multiple drafts of student papers (and challenging a default setting in the field).

Once the process of giving feedback had been simplified, it took much less time to correct student work, and the teacher began giving "feedback" on everything students wrote. The purpose of student group work activity also changed as a result of changes in the feedback students were receiving. He began experimenting with group grammar correction and peer editing of student papers. In one recurring classroom activity, students were assigned to small groups and asked to discuss their recently corrected drafts. Students had to find the errors in the marked sentences by communicating with group members and asking the teacher questions directly. As a result of the teacher only providing limited feedback by checking sentences as correct or incorrect, it was up to the students to figure out their own errors and how to fix them. According to the teacher, several student groups understood the purpose

of the peer feedback activity, discussing grammar and interacting with each other in English, while other groups simply traded papers with little discussion or sat quietly reading their own papers. Regardless, the teacher believed the activity was a success and received positive comments from students during class and in student's weekly reflection papers.

They really like (correcting each others' papers in class). A lot of students write in their weekly reflections how helpful it is. Learning from other students in the group is helpful and reading other students' papers and looking at their errors is helpful to learn more about grammar and trying to go through the process of figuring it out themselves.

At the end of the semester, the teacher remarked that the accuracy formula was, at one level, very effective as a way to communicate with students about their errors, and at another level, effective for him to reflect on his own teaching practices, particularly the success or failure of correction and feedback on student writing accuracy. However, accuracy scores on student writing increased only slightly during the semester (from 18% to 20%, on average).

## DISCUSSION

Several preconditions are necessary for teacher belief change to be initiated. First, in complex classroom activity systems, belief change does not occur without teachers being cognizant of contradictions and/or limitations of their present practice, even when change is mandated by authorities (cf. Kim, 2011) and teachers are given the possibility to "learn to know and understand what they want to transcend" (Cole & Engeström, 1993, p. 40). In addition, teachers must have models and tools available that offer possible solutions to the contradictions they are confronted with. In this way, "new qualitative stages and forms of activity emerge as solutions to the contradictions of the preceding stage or form" (Engeström, 2011, p. 609). Alternatively, it is also possible that teachers may resist change when there are no apparent contradictions within the current activity system. For example, South Korean language educators resisted curricular and conceptual change despite access to

advanced communicative teaching models and tools, while the object of high-stakes grammar testing remained in place (Kim, 2011).

In this study's teaching context, the composition and direction of actions and choice of tools were rooted in conditions emerging from particular demands of the institutional setting and perceived teacher-student roles and responsibilities. These conditions directed the teacher's classroom actions towards accepted practices within the departmental framework of the learning cycle, but also resulted in actions and operations initiated by the teacher to confront contradictions apparent in the classroom activity system.

The initial contradiction that prompted change in this teacher's case was between the consistent lack of improvement in the accuracy of student writing in previous semesters of the course and the course objective of students' language development utilizing explicit feedback on student written work. In addition, the teacher was having difficulty balancing demands for providing explicit feedback on an increasing amount of required student writing with his own free time. The teacher's response was to adopt a new tool and change the way he provided feedback to accommodate both departmental requirements and his own teaching objectives. According to Engeström (2011), "When an activity system adopts a new element from the outside, it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (e.g., the rules or the division of labor) collides with the new one. Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts but also innovative attempts to change the activity" (p. 609). As a result of the teacher changing his feedback practices through the accuracy formula, subsequent changes took place in the classroom division of labor leading to further changes in teacher and student roles. Overall, students were asked to be more involved in the process of finding and correcting their own errors and the errors of their classmates, resulting in classroom actions in which students were encouraged to work together to identify and correct errors in their written work, and explore language on their own. As a result, the teacher was doing less reading and editing of students' papers and structuring class activities so that he could perform in a manner that was closer to his ideal role as a resource, answering student questions as they arose. According to Engeström (2011), the transformation of activity that compels conceptual change "is driven by an expansive reconceptualization of the object and the motive of the entire activity. But such transformations are both initiated and

implemented in daily work actions, in deviations from the prescribed course of actions and in mundane innovations” (p. 608).

In the case examined here, the teacher had already taken the first steps towards changing his own beliefs about the effectiveness of feedback on student writing. However, the conceptual framework of the learning cycle, which provided the blueprint for the overall organization and goals of classroom activity, were never openly questioned. Perhaps because the changes he made still fit well within the boundaries of the learning cycle and general course object of improving language accuracy. Whether or not the deviations and innovations he implemented regarding feedback on student writing will eventually contribute to a transformation of teaching and learning activity within this particular context depends upon a multitude of factors often beyond the control of individual teachers, including access to real and conceptual tools that enable change; colleagues’ willingness to collaborate on pedagogical innovation; and teachers’, students’, and administrators’ willingness to accept doing things differently.

Backhurst (2009) concludes that activity theory can be divided into two strains: Vygotsky’s original conception of a “fundamental explanatory category that is the key to understanding the nature and possibility of mind” (p. 205) and the further development of activity theory as a method for analyzing activity systems with the objective of facilitating both understanding and practice embodied in Engeström’s research on expansive learning and organizational change. Several recent criticisms have been aimed at this second strain of activity theory regarding its cohesion with the philosophical roots of the first strain (Avis, 2009) and its usefulness as a data-generating and interpretive framework (Backhurst, 2009). In this final section, we discuss several criticisms relevant to the application of the activity framework to teacher beliefs and educational contexts in general.

Unlike other types of analyses rooted in Marxist social theory, Avis (2009) recognizes activity theory as a framework transcending mere description of capitalist social relations and their reproduction by including the possibility of transformation of individuals and institutions. Teachers, in response to contradictions between their current beliefs and practices, “begin to question and deviate from established norms” (Engeström, 2001, p. 137), and then the possibility of “a deliberate collective change effort” (p. 137) emerges. According to Avis (2009), even if collective change efforts are successful, if connections between

local practices and larger social structures are not addressed, transformation remains “located on the terrain shaped by those who have power to determine the change agenda” (p. 152).

One way to address the relationship between individuals, institutions, and larger social structures within the activity framework is to examine the primary contradictions that initiate change in teacher actions and beliefs. Although contextual factors such as institutional requirements and poor working conditions are generally believed to interfere with teacher development, in our study, asking questions about current and ideal teacher roles and the classroom division of labor resulted in a discussion about the work duties the participating teacher was required to perform, the amount of hours required to perform his job effectively, and the pay he was given. One of the reasons that the teacher initially began to openly question and change his feedback practices was the need to complete schoolwork during unpaid personal time. Thus, systemic contradictions should not necessarily be seen as roadblocks to development, they can act as an impetus for teacher solidarity and large-scale change of teaching practices as well.

Backhurst’s (2009) critique is aimed at the activity framework as a research tool. According to Backhurst, the activity framework only has explanatory value when applied to certain activity types that have “a reasonably well-defined object, a pretty good sense of desirable outcomes, a self-identifying set of subjects, [and] a good sense of what might count as an instrument or tool” (p. 206). In addition, Backhurst warns activity researchers to beware of relying on “given, stable, structural” frameworks when the goal is to understand “dynamism, flux, reflexivity, and transformation” (p. 207). As shown in this study, the activity framework is a good fit for investigating the context of formal classroom activity and the investigation of individual teacher thought and actions within larger object-oriented activity systems. The activity framework is particularly suitable for illuminating change or lack of change in teacher thinking and practices within certain contexts, “even when those changes differ from case to case” (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999).

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teacher beliefs and the context in which teachers work. The study addressed the role of context, which has been inadequately theorized in previous studies investigating teacher beliefs. By examining the experiences of a single teacher in a college ESL classroom over the course of a 16-week semester, the study showed that context has a significant effect on the formation and transformation of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning. The results revealed how apparent contradictions between departmental expectations and classroom practice can create opportunities to incorporate new tools and explore various teacher-student roles and divisions of labor in the classroom through the use of the activity framework. However, additional studies are needed to investigate how teacher beliefs about teaching and learning differ both within and between different activity systems across a variety of institutional contexts.

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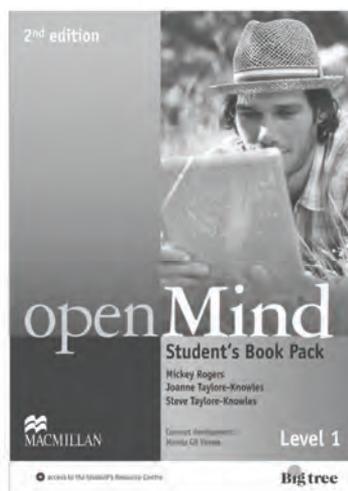
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