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Elementary English Education in Korea: Curriculum and Teacher Training

WonKey LEE, PhD (李旼基)
(Seoul National University of Education)
wkl@snue.ac.kr

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FYI

The National Curriculum System

- **A strong national curriculum system.** All the educational activities at schools are defined and conducted according to the national curriculum.
- **The national government plans, invests in, and assesses the country's education.** The elementary English curriculum belongs to the national curriculum, and it applies to all parts of the country.

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1. Before the NC of Elementary English (1980~1995)

1.1 Background (Two Presage Policies) (前兆)

1) The Nationwide Middle & High School English Listening Test **via Radio Broadcast** **全國中等學校 英語聽解能力評價 (since 1983)**

- Used as high school entrance q. data from **1986**
- Listening test was included in **1994** in the Korea College Scholastic Ability Test(**大入修學能力試驗**)

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2) Elementary English as an extracurricular activity (**特別活動**)

- **In early 1980's**, the government encouraged to run a variety of extracurricular activities
 - to ease the inflexibility of the NC
 - to foster a balanced development of students **by allowing them to have a variety of activities and experiences other than school subjects.**
- Elementary English **as an elective, extracurricular activity** continued to be taught until the mid 1990's.

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2. Construction of the NC of Elementary English (1995)

- GATT → WTO (1994): a strong motivation
- Instigated a fierce competition among countries
- Globalization policy to cope with the new developments
- Modern science and technology have made startling progress → knowledge and information-based society “know-where”

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- English has become the most important means of **creating, storing and disseminating** knowledge and information in the world. (知識情報 生産, 貯藏, 流通 手段) (*paradigm)
- Considering all these points, the government finally decided to introduce English into the elementary school curriculum in 1994.
- Created the NC of elementary English in 1995
- Started elementary English teaching in 1997

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2.1 Pros and cons on E.E.E.

(pros)

- No one can stem the tide of **globalization**.
- Necessary to secure the **quality of life**, and **international competitiveness**.
- Contribute to reducing the gap between individuals, regions and socioeconomic classes, by providing a national education to all students.
- Students from low-income families or remote regions can also **equally receive English education** provided by the national curriculum.

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(cons)

- Young students may **overly admire Western cultures**, depreciating their own (sense of national identity)
- **National language education** may be weakened due to the inclination to English education.
- **Parents' excessive desire** to do better than others may cause them to rely on private sector education, and incur financial burdens.
- The **English divide** may deepen because well-off parents will pay a lot more money for English education than ordinary parents.

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2.2 Construction of the NC of E.E.

- The objective of elementary English education was and is **to get students interested** and **to foster confidence** in English, and **to develop basic English communication ability**.
- In 1995, the first version of the NC of elementary English was constructed to be taught from 1997.
- *This calls for the preparation of textbooks and teachers.*

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3. Implementation of the NC of Elementary English (1997)

3.1 Textbooks and Video/ CD-ROM aids

- Textbooks and a teacher's guide and a CD-ROM aid (**NS pronunciation, teaching methods, games and materials, and assessment tools, etc.**)
- **to secure the minimum level of teaching quality** (even less well-trained teachers can follow or mimic the CD-ROM.)
- **to be used as a teacher training tool** (if teachers keep using it, they will be implicitly trained in language, and teaching methodology.)

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3.2 Initial teacher training

- The problem was that there were few elementary English teachers ready. → a 120-hour basic teacher training. Asked to teach English relying on the video aids.
- *In education, we can't wait until all the necessary conditions are fulfilled. We just start even with insufficient preparations, making efforts to fulfill the necessary conditions.*

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4. Evaluation of the Past Elementary English Education

4.1 Positive effects (since 1997)

- + People have become more **open-minded**, with more **globalized attitudes** fostered.
- + People have become **more interested** in English as a global language.
- + People's English proficiency have **generally enhanced**, even if not very highly

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4.2 Adverse effects

- The biggest challenge = the teachers' lack of English proficiency, and insufficient training
- Teachers were not familiar with teaching only spoken English (listening and speaking).
- They themselves had mostly learned written English by the grammar-translation method.
- Many of the teachers had to heavily rely on the video (CD-Rom) aids.

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1) Private sector education flourishing (私教育)

- Spoken English-focused teaching is particularly **susceptible to attrition**. Often children cannot recall one week what they learned in the last week.
- Learning outcomes do not accumulate. This has caused parents to want their children to get private tutoring.
- Private sector teachers teach **more difficult, more advanced English** than the school schedules, centering on written English. They were not familiar with spoken English, either. (先行學習)
- As a result, private sector education takes away students' interest in and attention to school teaching.

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2) Lack of continuity between EEE and MSE (連繫性 不足)

- Elementary English education was heavily inclined toward the **teaching of spoken English**.
- **Too great an inclination** toward spoken English **caused a big gap** between elementary English teaching and middle school English teaching, where reading and grammar, vocabulary are a lot more emphasized.

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3) English divide

- Achievement gaps and opportunity gaps were widened and deepened **between regions** (big cities, provinces, remote areas) and **between social groups** (haves and have-nots).
- This English divide has become a very hot **socio-political issue** and is often talked about by politicians. → Last government's PSEERP

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5. The Status Quo of Elementary English Education

- In 2,000, the then-president was determined to **modernize all the classrooms** with high-tech equipment such as computers, very high-speed internet, monitor screens, etc. The class size was reduced to a maximum of 35 students per classroom.
- President Lee Myung Bak enforced a Public School English Education Reinforcement Policy (PSEERP), to transform 'high-cost low-outcome' English education.

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- Efforts include;
 - 1) Increasing English teaching hours (1→2 for 3,4 graders; 2→3 for 5,6 graders)
 - 2) Reinforcing pre-service and in-service teacher training
 - 3) Employing instructors of English speaking (to intensify teaching of speaking) (英語會話專用講師)
 - 4) Reinforcing the teacher employment (教師任用考查)
 - 5) Employing a TEE accreditation system
 - 6) Employing native-speaking English teachers (EPIK program)
 - 7) Operating the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) program
 - 8) Utilizing IPTV for English education, etc.

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6. Current and Future Direction of Elementary English Education

6.1 Spoken-English emphasized

- to have students equipped with basic English communicative ability. Listening and speaking are a lot more emphasized than reading and writing in such learning tasks as: Listen and Repeat/ Look and Speak/ Role play/ Game/ Task/ Sing/ Chant/ etc
- to rectify the traditional grammar & reading centered teaching at schools

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6.2 Learner-centered (學習者 中心 授業)

- For whom do schools exist?
- For whom do teachers exist?
- School exists for students, not for teachers.
- School education is all about **making students achieve the objectives** of the NC, and teachers are helpers in the whole process.



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6.3 Level-based (水準別 授業)

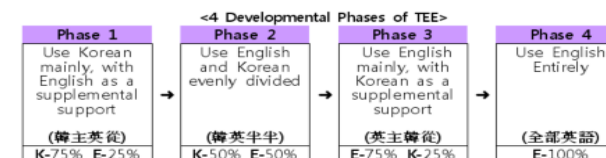
- Teaching is all about taking all the students to the destination of achieving the curriculum objectives.
- If teaching is learner-centered, teaching should also be level-based, **because all the individuals are different in every aspect. Learners are all different in learning as well.**
- The prevalent private tutoring causes gaps between students in achievement. → this also calls for level-based teaching.

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6.4. TEE policy implemented

- To increase exposure and use opportunity of English within the given conditions, a TEE policy is employed.



- Korean English teachers are usually **in phases 2, and 3**. In phase 3 and above, they can teach speaking of English effectively

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6.5 SMART Education

- In 2011, a new concept and method of education
- 1) **S**elf-directed — active involvement in learning
 - not knowledge transfer, but exploring to learn/ instigating intellectual curiosity
 - 2) **M**otivated — interaction-encouraged
 - discussion and presentation encouraged
 - 3) **A**daptive — according to students' level and aptitude
 - clear objective and check achievement
 - 4) **R**esource-enriched — a variety of necessary resources
 - experience and exploration
 - 5) **T**echnology embedded — necessary and appropriate hardware and software - utilizing multimedia

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7. Elementary English Teacher Training

- The national curriculum system presupposes teacher education **should be done by the government**, not by the teachers' individual efforts.
- All teacher training programs are directed to meet two necessary conditions for learning English in Korea: exposure to English and use of English.

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FYI

- **Elementary education** is meant to develop and foster the foundation of essential nature of human being (fundamentals of human nature)
- Whole person development rather than specific knowledge education
- Pupils are young and immature in every aspect.
- Homeroom teacher system (elementary school)
- Departmental teacher system (secondary school)

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- **English-specialized teacher** in elementary school (初等學校 英語專擔教師)

- 1) Secondary English teacher license holders (recruited)
- 2) Elementary teacher license holders (recruited)
*1), 2) work on contract, 4 years in one school)
- 3) Elementary school teachers (apply to teach English only)
*Homeroom teachers can also teach English
[1)+2)→ 40%, 3)→30%, homeroom T →30%]
- REOs and local school principals can choose
- Perceptions are different.

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7.1 Pre-service teacher training

- **10 national universities of elementary education**
- Now fully prepared to produce English language-competent teachers.
- The teacher employment test consists of;
 - **500-word essay test for 10 subjects**
 - **English oral interview (5 min. about teaching plan)**
 - **English teaching demonstration (15 minutes)**

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7.2 In-service teacher training

- 1) Ministry of Education-led programs
 - In-Korea training (after-school courses, seasonal courses, 40, 80, or 120 hours)
 - Overseas training (for up to 2 years to help obtain an overseas **master degree**)
 - 5 month in-Korea training plus 1 month overseas training (**5+1**) + 3 plus 3 program (**3+3**)

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2) Regional Education Office-led programs (17 REO's in Korea)

Use their own training institutes, or commission TT to nearby universities

- In-Korea training (a variety of seasonal courses, general, advanced courses)
- Overseas training (depending on the REO's budgets, the course duration varies)
- **Self-regulated course** (Teachers choose any on-line or off-line courses offered by private institutes, and get part of the fees reimbursed)

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3) TEE (Teaching English in English) programs

- English as a medium of instruction → increase of exposure and use (**the TEE certification system since 2008**)
 - * to replace the NSs (costly, underqualified)
- Certified TEE teachers are regarded as a competent English teacher **who can teach English in English**. Some incentives (opportunities of overseas training, of teacher-trainer, get some credits for promotion)
- [Elementary English teaching materials¥\(JL\) TEE assessment rubric.hwp](#)

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4) EPIK program

- English native speaker teachers are invited from overseas and given some initial training, and then assigned to **provincial or remote area schools**.
- They are usually involved in;
 - co-teaching with a Korean teacher,
 - assisting a Korean teacher's solo-teaching,
 - team-teaching
 - solo-teaching

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5) Instructors in oral English (英語會話專用講師)

- Instructors(講師) vs Teachers(教師)
- More oral English instructors are to be needed due to the increase of elementary English class hours and **level-based teaching** in middle and high schools (英語會話專用講師)
- If they work in elementary schools, they are English-specialized elementary school teachers. (初等學校 英語專擔教師)

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6) TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea) program

- In 2008, a **presidential scholarship** by which overseas Korean U. students whose obligation is to teach English language as an assistant teacher **or at after-schools in provincial or remote areas.**
- Recruited through overseas diplomatic offices
- 4 weeks intensive training on English teaching methods and understanding Korea

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7) Fostering an English-friendly environment

- (1) Building more English libraries
To motivate learners to take an interest in reading (**books, magazines, films, audio tapes, video tapes, DVD, English experience programs**)
- (2) Building more English-only classrooms
 - English experience room in elementary schools (英語體驗室)
 - English-only zone in middle, and high schools (英語專用教室)

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(3) Strengthening After-school programs (since 2006)

- To counter the **English divide, education divide, achievement divide** between the haves and the have-nots, between the rich areas and the poor areas, between big cities and provincial areas. → **to combat the possible polarization of society (兩極化)**

Demographic trends:

- two income households → No parent to take care of children at home.
- an increase of single parent families
- a tendency towards low childbirth → aging society

To meet these changes and needs, after-school programs need to be expanded.

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(4) English-only broadcasts (EBSe)

- EBS English-only programs are on air (available by internet), launched in April 6 2007 to reduce the English divide.
 - skit-providing type
 - model-teaching type

(5) ICT-based English education

- computer, internet, web (online)
- UCC (user-created contents)

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Examples of actual classroom teaching

[Elementary English teaching materials¥11 \(JL\) 6-2 scrambled sentences \(Ahn Durumi\) 6' 26''.mp4](#) (video)

[Elementary English teaching materials¥12 \(JL\) 6-3 telepathy sentence \(Ahn Durumi\) 5' 52''.mp4](#) (video)

[Elementary English teaching materials¥8 \(JL\) 5 past sentences \(Bang Eunhye\) 3' 14''.mp4](#) (video)

[Elementary English teaching materials¥15 \(JL\) 6 From Head To Toe \(storybook\) L R W.pptx](#)

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8. Conclusion

- E.E.E is part of the whole elementary education.
- The goals for learning English in a non-English setting are often closely related to the community's *overall process of modernization* (Dubin & Olshtain 1986:7).
- We learn English because we need it for our purposes, not for its intrinsic value or beauty.

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- A man who does not know a foreign language is ignorant of his own. (Goethe)
- A man who does not use his MT properly cannot do well in learning a foreign language, because he thinks mostly with his MT.
- When we teach, we need to have in mind 'the economic principle' (經濟原則)
 - low cost, high outcome (低費用 高效率),
 - NOT** high cost, low outcome (高費用 低效率)

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- The best teaching method is to teach so that students learn best.
- In ELT, remember the principle of **Use it, or lose it.**
- Even if students study English hard, they will not be able to communicate in English with few opportunities of using it in the process of learning it.

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Finally,

#1. Elementary school teacher's role: priming water.



- Teacher should be an **educator** rather than an **instructor**. (語源)

(*e+duca = draw out) (*in+struct = put in knowledge)

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#2. Elementary school teacher's attitudes

- Most of the teaching contents come from other countries and cultures.
- The environment, context from which the foreign contents originate **are different from our own**.
- Transplanting vs Grafting
(移植) (接木)
- Should try to graft foreign contents in our own context (soil).

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A team teaching video

- [Elementary English teaching materials¥16 full class \(Han Sunae\) team teaching \(39' 58''\).MP4](#)

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Thank you very much!!