



Teachers' Voices: Obstacles to Communicative Language Teaching in South Korea

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Abstract

Using focus groups and semi-structured interviews, data were collected to investigate Korean in-service English teachers' attitudes toward the appropriateness and possibility of adopting a communicative language teaching approach within the South Korean secondary school system. The data revealed that many teachers are in favor of CLT, however various obstacles stand in their way of classroom implementation. This study first addresses the six prominent constraints that teachers reportedly face when trying to use CLT approaches, and examines why these difficulties are negatively affecting the possibility and appropriateness of communicative language teaching being applied. Several of the problems articulated suggest that the communicative approach may not currently be appropriate for Korean secondary English classes; therefore, possible solutions to these problems are suggested, as well future directions that may make communicative language teaching more suitable in the South Korean context.

Key Words: Communicative Language Teaching, South Korea, Language teacher education, in-service teacher training

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Introduction

Since its inception in the late 1960s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has grown in popularity and has had widespread adoption in ESL countries (Li, 1998). However, when policies and curricula have shifted to CLT in EFL contexts researchers have been quick to find a gap between policy and practice (Nunan, 2003). There is widespread documentation of teacher difficulty and/or resistance to CLT largely stemming from a lack of local contextual appropriateness and local contextual constraints (Bax, 2003; Incecay & Incecay, 2009; Liao, 2006; Menking, 2001). Some of the most common obstacles reported have been; grammar based examinations (Li, 1998), the context of the wider curriculum (Burnaby & Sun, 1989), lack of trained teachers (Anderson, 1993), too much preparation time required (Chau & Chung, 1987), and learner resistance (Shamin, 1996).

For the last 20 years, South Korea has been pushing for the implementation of CLT through changes to National Curriculum objectives, and in-service teacher training programs promoting its widespread usage. However, CLT continues to fail to gain extensive implementation into public school secondary classrooms, and Grammar Translation and Audiolingual methods continue to be the dominant methods used across the country (Cho, 2010; Choi, 2008; Whitehead, 2016; Woo, 2001).

As teachers are the ones at ground level, they are the ones who experience the obstacles and difficulties first hand. In order to understand the gap between CLT policy and practice in South Korean secondary classrooms, it is crucial to give in-service teachers a voice in regards to the contextual constraints and difficulties that they face in its implementation. This study aims to do just that by examining 1) the reasons why CLT may be failing to take hold in South Korean secondary classrooms from the teachers' perspective and 2) what can be done to support and/or facilitate the implementation of CLT in the future.

Literature Review

The Origins of Communicative Language Teaching

As defined by Richards & Rodgers (2001), Communicative Language Teaching is an approach to language teaching rather than a method. It began in the late 1960s at a time when language teaching ideas, methods, and practices were shifting from traditional focuses on grammar and vocabulary to communicative uses of language. Educators began to notice that students were able to produce sentences accurately in lessons, but were unable to do the same when they entered authentic situations outside of the classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In an attempt to rectify this problem and make language learning more ‘real’, CLT was born. According to Howatt & Widdowson (2004, p.326), “the notion at the heart of the ‘communicative movement’... after 1970 was the conviction that language teaching should take greater account of the way that language worked in the real world and try to be more responsive to the needs of learners in their efforts to acquire it.”

Since its introduction, CLT has spread and developed into the current dominant approach to language teaching worldwide (Knight, 2007).

The Communicative Approach

Over the course of time, ‘communicative’ has become somewhat of an umbrella term covering a wide variety of different classroom techniques, drills, and activities. Due to the dynamic variables in the implementation of communicative techniques, there is no single definitive model (Markee, 2001; McGroarty, 1984), therefore; many different approaches and techniques tend to fall under the label of communicative. Brown (2007, p.241) offers a definition of CLT based on the following four interconnected characteristics:

1. Classroom goals are focused on *all* of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence
2. Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes

3. Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use
4. In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to *use* the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts

Innate to CLT is the fundamental belief that being able to communicate requires more than just knowledge of the language itself (linguistic competence), it requires knowing when and how to say what to whom (communicative competence). Thus, communicative approaches focus on what individuals can do with language rather than what they know about language. Canale & Swain (1980, p.160) provide a concise summary of the four components of communicative competence as:

Grammatical competence - The mastery of the language words and rules

Discourse competence - Creating cohesion and coherence in speaking or writing

Sociolinguistic competence - Understanding the appropriateness of utterances in social settings

Strategic competence - Using communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication and to enhance the effectiveness of communication

CLT in the Korean Education System

Since 1945, when national guidelines for teaching English were first introduced in South Korea, the curriculum and objectives have changed seven times (Jeong, 2001). However, it was only in 1995 that the curriculum began to recommend a focus on communicative competence and communicative language teaching in the classroom (Development Committee of the Sixth Curriculum for High School English, 1992). A summary of the history of the 7 different national curriculum periods is provided in the following table adapted from Jeong (2001).

Figure 1*History of National Curriculum Changes to English Education*

Curricula	Periods	Characteristics of Contents	Teaching Methods
English Syllabus	Oct.1945 - July. 1955	Grammar, Composition, Reading, 5 basic patterns of sentences	Grammar Translation Method
The 1 st Period	Aug. 1955 – Jan. 1963	Standard American English, parts of speech, usages	Grammar Translation Method
The 2 nd Period	Feb. 1963 – Aug. 1973	4 English skills, Grammar Dialogues	Audiolingual approach, Contrastive analysis
The 3 rd Period	Feb. 1973 – Nov. 1981	Spoken English language, Grammar pattern practice/ drills	Audio-visual approach, Lab booths
The 4 th Period	Dec. 1981 – Feb. 1987	English structures, Letters and sounds	Phonics approach
The 5 th Period	Mar. 1987 – Oct. 1992	Spoken English language & Grammar/ Transformational Grammar	Eclectic approach, Cognitive approach
The 6 th Period	Nov. 1992 – Feb. 2001	Communicative functional expressions	Communicative language teaching
The 7 th Period & Revised 7 th Period	Mar. 2001 – Mar. 2009 March 2009 –	Communicative expressions & Structures	Communicative approach, Task-based learning

In 1992, The 6th National Curriculum was implemented and aimed to replace the dominant use of Grammar Translation and Audiolingual methods in English language classrooms in South Korea by introducing a communicative focus in English language learning and teaching (Choi, Park & Kim, 1986; Shin & Kim, 2014). This curriculum, divided language functions into comprehension (listening and reading), and production (speaking and writing) which were to be taught separately (Development Committee of the Sixth Curriculum for High School English, 1992). The curriculum was labeled ‘communicative’ because of its increased focus on developing productive skills and improving communicative competence (Jeong, 2001). The curriculum clearly stated that CLT should replace other traditional methods in English classrooms and that the goal of English teaching is “to develop the learners’ communicative competence in English through meaningful drills and communicative activities” (Li 1998, p.682). This curriculum was in effect for over 9 years before the 7th National Curriculum was introduced in March 2001, with the following aims:

“...to focus on survival English and practical English based on the **communicative approach**; (1) fostering the ability to use English, (2) utilizing **task-based learning**, (3) devising instructional techniques appropriate for open education, (4) cultivating a patriotic sentiment and a view of the world, and (5) the realization of learning and teaching English according to **proficiency levels**.” (Jeong, 2001, p. 6).

As detailed by Choi et al. (1997), the revisions implemented in the 7th National Curriculum responded to the criticism of the 6th National Curriculum being too focused on fluency, leading to a lack of grammatical accuracy in learners’ speech and writing. Developers, therefore, tried to rectify this problem by including linguistic forms to complement the communicative functions in hopes of fostering a better balance between accuracy and fluency (Kwon, 2000). This 7th National Curriculum, therefore, has become known as a ‘proficiency-based’ curriculum (Jeong, 2001).

In 2009 revisions to the 7th National Curriculum were implemented; however, only slight changes to the English portion of the curriculum were made. Thus, the current objectives of the English curriculum in South Korea as outlined by KICE (2008) are as follows:

“The goal of the Curriculum is to cultivate the basic ability to understand and use English in everyday life. Moreover, it is to present a correct perception of foreign cultures in order to develop our own culture and introduce it to other countries. In order to achieve this, the Curriculum must first build a basis to promote the interest and confidence in English for students who are to receive life-long education. Second, we must foster the ability to communicate in everyday life and about ordinary topics. Third, we must foster the ability to understand diverse foreign information and make full use of it. Finally, by understanding foreign cultures, students may more properly understand our own culture and acquire a correct perspective.” (p. 43)

With all of the major changes to curriculum in the past 20 years promoting communicative approaches in the public system, one would expect to see CLT in action in classrooms all over Korea; however, based on various reports (Lee, 2014; Li, 1998; Moodie & Nam, 2016) and my own personal experiences as a teacher and teacher-educator in South Korea, this does not seem to be the case.

The Study

Background: Research context

With the current ‘proficiency-based’ curriculum in effect, this study set out to investigate in-service teachers’ perspectives of CLT and its implementation into their classrooms upon the completion of a one-month CLT focused training program. This training program was of significance to the study as it concentrated on showing in-service teachers how to implement CLT into their classrooms while providing them time to practice communicative techniques in various mock lesson settings.

In the training program, CLT approaches were promoted and practiced in three core module classes: Speaking, Reading & Writing and Microteaching. Trainees rotated between the three core modules a total of twelve times during their training. In their lessons, trainees were actively involved in lessons and activities run by their instructor, themselves or their peers. The

core modules aimed to provide an even balance between understanding, teaching and participating in communicative classes. At the end of each lesson, trainees participated in a reflective discussion focusing on the appropriateness of the activities in their teaching context, and how the activities may be adapted for implementation into their own classrooms. Each core modules' focus on CLT is explained in more detail below.

Reading & Writing Module. In the reading and writing module, trainees explored how to plan and teach engaging reading and writing lessons. Trainees were involved in demonstration lessons provided by their instructor as well as their peers. Trainees were also asked to create a lesson plan by carefully selecting, adapting, rejecting and supplementing reading and writing activities from public textbooks. A strong emphasis was placed on using communicative activities in post-reading activities and extension activities i.e. group discussions, group script creation, and role-plays.

Speaking Module. In the speaking module, trainees were involved in teaching and participating in multiple communicative activities. Through active participation and practice using communicative techniques, the aim of this module was to increase trainees' awareness and comfort in CLT. After each activity, a discussion took place as to how trainees could adopt and adapt what they have learned to their teaching environments.

Microteaching Module. The main focus of the Microteaching module was to develop trainees' language teaching skills through reflective practices. Trainees were required to create a reading and writing, or speaking lesson, in pairs, or groups of 3. The lesson that trainees developed for their practicum was based on selecting, adapting, rejecting and supplementing material from a public school textbook chapter in order to make it more communicative. Immediately after teaching their lessons, trainees were involved in a feedback session with their instructor and peers. At this time, trainees discussed the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching approaches, teaching techniques, and their lesson plan.

With the in-service teachers receiving substantial training and practice with regards to CLT throughout the one-month program, this study set out to examine their views of its implementation

into their classrooms immediately after training was completed. The following research questions provided the basis for this study:

1. In what ways do Korean In-service Secondary English teachers feel that it is possible to implement or apply CLT in their classrooms?
2. What obstacles are hindering the implementation of CLT into secondary English classrooms in South Korea?

Research Methods & Participants

This exploratory qualitative study initially collected data during post-session feedback focus-group discussions, and major trends were recorded in the form of personal journal entries. As trends began to surface, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to further explore the emergent phenomena.

Focus Groups. Over the course of 2 years, data were collected from unstructured focus group discussions that were conducted post-training. The purpose of these focus group sessions was to elicit trainees' general feedback for the training course in regards to the content and activities they had experienced in each module, as well as, to gather their suggestions for future improvement of the program. An unstructured discussion format was specifically chosen to maximize flexibility in responses, as discussed by Dörnyei (2007), and to encourage trainees to speak freely and completely the opinions they possess, as outlined by Berg (2001). A focus group format was selected to allow for participant interaction with each other resulting in more in-depth and insightful responses (Dörnyei, 2007).

A total of 10 groups of 8 Korean in-service secondary English teachers participated in the study. Participants for the focus groups were recruited through a voluntary sign-up sheet posted during the last week of the training session. Prior to each focus group session, participants were briefed on the details of the study and written informed consent to participate was then obtained. Sessions were recorded via written journal entries that summarized the major issues and suggestions elicited from each group.

Semi-structured Interviews. Focus group data showed a general trend of teachers feeling unable to use any of the CLT approaches and/or activities learned during training because they reportedly did not fit their context. This trend was further investigated through single session semi-structured interviews. In line with Dörnyei (2007), a semi-structured interview format was used to further investigate the general trends that emerged in initial collection by allowing the respondents to go beyond the questions in order to elicit depth and breadth within the data. The open-ended structure of the interviews allowed for initial guidance in questioning while allowing interviewees to elaborate further on the issues under investigation. The interviews specifically focused on eliciting specific contributing factors may be resulting in the inconsistency between the Korean Ministry of Education's push for CLT and lack of classroom implementation by teachers.

Interviews were conducted over the course of two, one-month, Korean in-service English secondary teacher training sessions. These training sessions were separate from one another and were not the same sessions used to collect focus group data. A volunteer sign-up sheet was posted requesting participation in the study, and prior to each interview, participants were briefed on the study and informed consent was collected. A total of twelve participants volunteered and were interviewed face to face, individually as follows: 4 female middle school teachers, 1 male middle school teacher, 3 female high school teachers, 2 male high school teachers and 2 female supervisors who were previously high school teachers. Interviews were scheduled and conducted immediately following the completion of the training course in order to obtain immediate and relevant feedback.

Participants were asked the following open-ended questions:

1. Are you in support of the communicative approach to language teaching? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel that it is possible and appropriate to use a communicative approach in your classroom? Why or Why not?
3. What changes do you feel must be made in order for CLT to be appropriate and possible in your classroom?

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed constant comparative analysis procedures as outlined by Charmaz (2006) and Tracy (2012) focusing on emergent themes. The data from the journal entries and interviews were initially analyzed separately as the data analysis process began with the summary of major trends found in the end of course feedback journal entries. The semi-structured interview data were then coded using primary-cycle coding procedures, outlined by Tracy (2012). Secondary cycle coding procedures were then used to organize the data into emergent themes which involved the critical examination of the preliminary codes in order to organize the data into interpretive concepts (Tracy, 2012).

Results & Discussion

During the focus group sessions, it was noted that a pattern emerged where trainees often challenged the heavy focus on communicative language teaching of the training program. Although participants generally tended to be in favor of CLT and understood the reasons for the training program focusing on the communicative technique; they expressed that this type of approach (CLT) was not possible or appropriate in their context due to various obstacles beyond their control. The major trends that emerged from focus group data are summarized in the following table.

Figure 2

Oral Feedback Summary

Trainees said ...	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8	Class 9	Class 10	Total
communicative activities/ games do not reflect what they are able to do in their real class.	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	1	17
the CLT activities they learned were too difficult to adapt to their real situations.	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	1	1	0	19
some activities were not applicable to their classrooms	1	2	2	2	3	0	1	1	2	1	15
need more chance to practice activities that fit their real situation	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	12

Overall, respondents felt that CLT did not fit the context of current classrooms and therefore the training did not reflect reality for them.

The obstacles affecting the implementation of CLT were investigated further through semi-structured interviews where six prominent issues emerged.

Figure 3

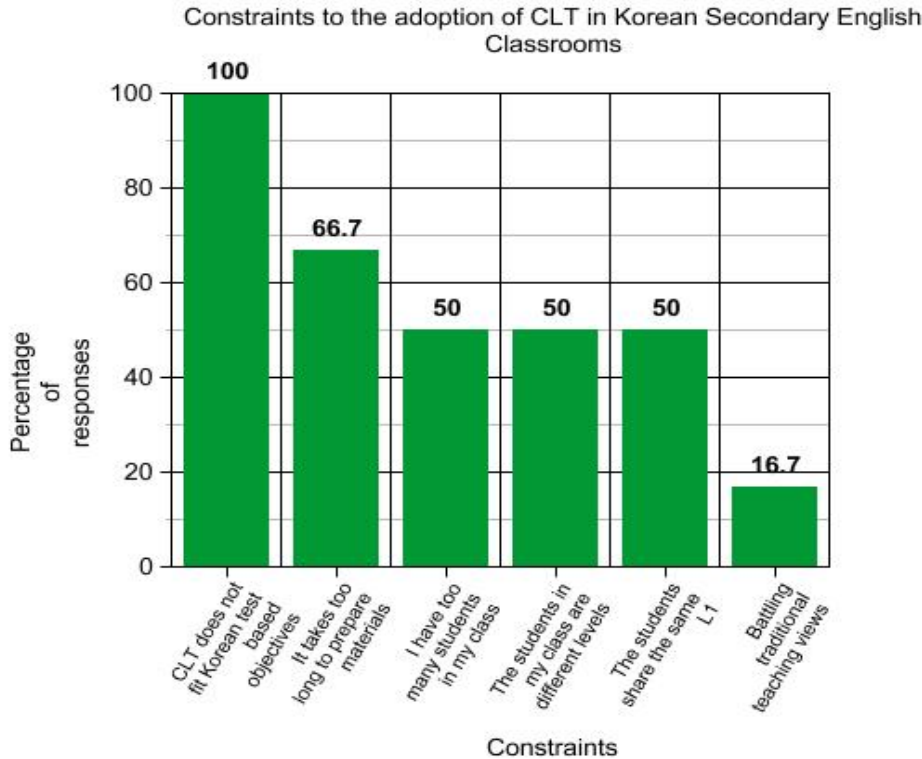
Prominent reported difficulties

- 1) CLT does not fit Korean test based objectives.
- 2) It takes too long to prepare communicative materials.
- 3) There are too many students in one class.
- 4) The students in a class are different levels.
- 5) The students in class share the same mother tongue.
- 6) Other teachers complain of noise, disorganization and poor teaching ability due to traditional teaching beliefs.

All twelve interviewees agreed on the need for helping students develop communicative competence through CLT techniques, but they also expressed that the constraints noted above obstructed them from doing so. The following chart illustrates the percentage of responses for each constraint.

Figure 4

Percentage of Interviewee Responses



Due to these obstacles, none of the interviewees felt that CLT was appropriate in the current context. The referenced constraints are discussed in further detail in the following sections.

Constraints to the implementation of CLT

In the following section, a discussion of each of the six dominant constraints expressed by interviewees is further expanded. Background information and excerpts taken from the interviews are referenced and provided verbatim in Appendix A to exemplify the points being discussed. Each participant is referred with a pseudonym for anonymity purposes.

The perception that CLT does not fit Korean test based objectives. When asked, “What changes do you feel must be made in order for CLT to be appropriate and possible in your

classroom?” all interviewees responded that major changes need to be made to testing objectives in order to make CLT possible and appropriate for their classrooms.

Obtaining a high score on the College Scholastic Ability test (CSAT) continues to be the main motivating factor for secondary students to learn English. The score that students receive dictates the universities students for which they are eligible. This ultimately decides the future career choices available to them, therefore, performance on a single English examination can make or break a student’s future.

Although curricular changes have been made to promote CLT, a discrepancy still lies between the objective of communicative approaches and what is being tested. As stated by Richards & Rodgers (2001), the emphasis in Communicative Language Teaching is on the processes of communication rather than the mastery of language forms. The same cannot be said about the CSAT, as it continues to focus on grammar and the receptive skills (listening, reading) with little or no attention paid to the productive skills (speaking, writing). With the current testing criteria used in the English portion of the CSAT, students do not need high communicative competence in order to score well.

As this score holds such a crucial role in deciding future success and stability, it is the main motivating factor for students, and the main objective for teachers. The impact of this examination has left teachers no choice but to teach to the test, resulting in the continued use of more traditional approaches to teaching such as Grammar translation and Audiolingualism, and a disregard for CLT. Teachers repeatedly verified this in the follow-up interviews (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 1).

Solutions to the perception that CLT does not fit Korean test based objectives. The government was in the process of the implementation of a new testing system which was to be the first test to include speaking and writing portions. The National English Ability Test (NEAT) was to be comprised of four sections, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, speaking and writing. The full implementation of the test was planned for 2015, however, due to various obstacles and resistance from various stakeholders the new system implementation has been put off indefinitely (Whitehead, 2016). This major change in testing focus would have finally added support and rationale for the use of more communicative approaches (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 2). Changes to testing objectives are crucial if CLT is to be seen as appropriate and

practical for Korean secondary English classrooms. However, changes in testing objectives are just a starting point in addressing the various obstacles to CLT in secondary classrooms. Additional obstacles lie in the materials and textbooks that teachers are required to teach.

The perception that CLT takes too long to prepare materials. Textbooks in Korea are becoming increasingly communicative but are still far from perfect. If teachers are to implement CLT, a lot of time is required to adapt textbook activities for effective classroom use. Teachers in Korea are mired in additional work such as administrative duties, preparatory paperwork, and special events preparation. After teaching and they have a hard time finishing all of their required duties as well as preparing for class. This heavy workload drains teachers' motivation to try different methods. Following the un-adapted textbook is easier and more practical as many interviewees indicated (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 3).

Solutions to the perception that CLT takes too long to prepare materials. In order to battle this reported constraint, the Korean Ministry of Education, administrators, material writers, publishers and teacher trainers must work together. In order to reduce additional lesson preparation time, it is important for the Ministry of Education to supply teachers with appropriate textbooks that contain the supplementary material and support for CLT. With the appropriate communicative materials, teachers would not be burdened with time-consuming effort of trying to make non-communicative materials, communicative.

It may also be the job of teacher training programs to focus on the reality of the situation and to help teachers make non-communicative materials more communicative. If pre and in-service training programs spend time working with current materials and showing teachers techniques and activities that can immediately supplement the content they are teaching, teachers may find a more time efficient and practical way to do so.

Finally, administrators must be supportive and understanding, and give teachers the appropriate time needed to establish communicative lessons and adopt CLT into their classrooms. By addressing the perceived lack of time to prepare CLT lessons, teachers may be more convinced that CLT is plausible in their classrooms. However further reported complications exist in classroom demographics and environment.

Classroom constraints. The classroom demographics and environment do not make it possible to easily adopt CLT (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 4). The perceived classroom difficulties that teachers face when trying to use CLT can be broken down into 3 components: The number of students in class, the difference in level between students, and the fact that students share the same mother tongue.

Too many students in class. Presently, due to economic reasons, secondary classes average 35-40 students per class. Teachers often refrain from using communicative activities because the noise disrupts surrounding classes and teachers find it hard to set up, manage and monitor the students. Teachers felt that CLT activities requiring group or pair interaction does not match the current dominant classroom setup of traditional rows. Teachers often complain that they do not have enough space in the classroom, and rearranging the classroom to suit CLT is time-consuming and noisy (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 5).

Teachers also find it very hard to monitor and control so many students when they are engaged in communicative activities (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 6).

Solutions to having too many students in class. One solution to the problems above is already being implemented throughout schools in Korea. Special “English Zones” are being created, which are areas specifically designed to suit more communicative approaches to teaching while taking into account the large numbers of students in class. These “zones” include bigger classrooms with tables and chairs that are easy to rearrange in order to suit specific activity set-up needs. They are also placed away from other classrooms to account for the higher level of noise created in communicative classrooms. These new facilities will make it much easier for teachers to arrange and manage more communicative classes.

For teachers who do not have access to an “English Zone”, a routine must be made where students arrange themselves according to the teachers’ preferences before a lesson starts, and returned its original state when it finished. Students can do this during the break time between classes. The teacher must choose a design or arrangement that works for the class which facilitates communication, classroom management, and monitoring.

A possible solution to students being off task is assigning communicative work outside of the class. For example, pen-pals or chat pals could be set-up with classes from other countries.

Teachers could have students interact with their pal a certain number of hours every month with a specific task linking to the topics in their textbooks. This interaction could be logged or recorded as part of students' evaluation. This sort of contact results in authentic communication, and through it, cultural awareness can also be raised. Although this requires much time to organize and prepare students suitably, greater use of internet and voice over internet protocol should be encouraged. To do so, publishers and material writers, along with the Korean government's digital education initiatives, need to support this.

The students are all different levels. Another difficulty reportedly faced when using CLT in large classes is the lack of consistency in student ability. In the same class, teachers have students that are near-native fluency and students that are unable to read. If activities are run with mixed level groups, often lower level students are unable to successfully participate, which creates frustration in them as well as for the higher-level students. If activities are run with groups divided according to level, the activity must be graded according to student ability, which adds a great deal of work to the teachers' already heavy workload. This can also lead to embarrassment or gloating depending on which group a student is put in to. Many teachers feel that communicative activities are too difficult for students, and too much work for the teacher; therefore, they give up (see appendix Interview Excerpt 7).

Solutions to different level students. One possible solution to this problem has already been implemented by some schools, in the form of streaming. By creating leveled classes, communicative activities can be adjusted to suit the specific abilities of the students. Streaming students requires the cooperation of administrations, extra time, and changes in testing to work effectively; however, not all schools are able to do this yet.

A solution for the schools that are unable to implement streaming could be to strategically group students so that higher-level students can assist lower level students. Mixed level classes can actually help students be more communicative as it replicates the type of situations students might encounter in a real-world situation. This environment would involve the stronger students helping the weaker students to produce a scaffolding effect in which lower students may be able to complete an activity that if done individually, would be too difficult (see Vygotsky, 1978).

The students share the same L1. Teachers find it very hard to motivate students to do an activity in English when it is much easier for them to do it in Korean. The fact that everyone in the class shares the same mother tongue, including the teacher, adds difficulty to the possibility of using communicative activities. The teacher constantly has to circulate to coach and motivate students to use English in the activity. Some highly motivated and more proficient students do try to use English as much as possible but the majority of the class does not (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 8).

Possible solutions to students sharing the same L1. A possible solution to this problem is to set up a positive incentive for students to use English. This may be something as simple as setting up a long-term reward system. For example, every time the teacher hears a group working in English they receive a point. A collection of a certain number of points can lead to things like an added participation point in their grade, exemption from homework or other additional benefits. Setting up an incentive provides extrinsic motivation which helps to counterbalance students' intrinsic motivation to use their mother tongue. This proposed solution would fall in line with Nation (2003) who contends that language use in the foreign language classroom needs to be maximized wherever possible, by encouraging its use and by using it for classroom management, but it is also important to note that research has shown that the L1 in the class is sometimes okay and even good.

As Cook (2001) states "Treating the L1 as a classroom resource opens up ways of employing the L1... [Such as] for the students to use as part of their collaborative learning and of their individual strategy use. The first language can be a useful element in creating authentic L2 users rather than something to be shunned at all costs" (p. 402). The use of L1 facilitates scaffolding (see Bruner & Ratner, 1978) as well as the ability to explain instructions to one another, check understanding with their peers, as well as prepare for activities before engaging in them. It is the job of the teachers to foster the benefits of L1 by using communicative ideas and strategies that promote L2 learning with help from L1. Some examples of this would be to get students to explain the activity to each other using their L1, or to give them time to prepare for the activity in their L1 before engaging in using their L1. Thus, positive encouragement to use the L2, while maintaining respect for the learners L1 is crucial. Forcing learners to use the L2 by utilizing negative reinforcement or implementing strict rules may be met with resistance.

Traditional teaching beliefs. The final major obstacle reported was the inconsistency between traditional and contemporary teaching beliefs. Although the Ministry of Education continues to push for communicative methods, Korea is still deeply rooted in Confucian educational beliefs (Robertson, 2002), which tend to overrule new advances in teaching approaches. In Confucian belief, a teacher and student relationship is that of master and disciple. This kind of relationship requires absolute obedience and respect from the student, and knowledge, wisdom and exemplary moral behavior from the master (Lee, 2001). Confucius believed that study without thought is wasted effort, and thought without study is dangerous. He saw learning as a process of observation of some type of subject matter followed by reflection. For him, learning was a highly personal and therefore an individual activity. It is the teachers' job to provide the absolute model and the students' job to follow.

Traditional teaching views continue to dominate the Korean education system where teachers must be in control of the students at all times and are the center of attention (Robertson, 2002). This is in direct conflict with the teacher and student roles in communicative approaches as proposed by Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Richards & Rodgers (2001). They state that in a communicative classroom, the teacher facilitates communication by establishing situations likely to promote meaningful and authentic use of language. The teacher should initiate situations that result in student interaction. Therefore, the teacher acts as facilitator, co-communicator, and presenter of part of the lesson (linguistic accuracy) rather than the single authoritative figure. Students are the communicators in the classroom and are seen as responsible managers of their own learning rather than empty jugs ready to be filled.

Due to the drastic differences in roles and duties, CLT is not appropriate from a traditional perspective. Teachers who follow this type of approach may be thought of as lazy, rebellious, and disrespectful resulting in being classified as a poor teacher by those with more traditional teaching beliefs (see Appendix A Interview Excerpt 9).

Balancing traditional and contemporary teaching beliefs. It is crucial to the success of any new teaching approach in Korea, to educate all stakeholders (i.e students, parents, supervisors, principals, vice-principals) as to how different techniques can and should be used. Most of the criticism of CLT comes from a lack of understanding how it works, therefore, teachers who are not familiar with this style of teaching may find it offensive. Providing appropriate information

and training will help to reduce criticism based on traditional teaching values alone, and help to create support in the progressive movement towards more communicative approaches in secondary schools across Korea.

Conclusion

This study has examined Korean in-service English teachers' perspectives towards the implementation of CLT in their current classroom context upon the completion of a one-month CLT focused teacher training program. The results of this study suggest that the successful implementation of CLT relies on various contextual obstacles being addressed. First and foremost, the misalignment between the university entrance testing (CSAT) objectives and national curriculum objectives. As formerly mentioned, the university entrance exam is the main motivating factor for Korean secondary school students to study English, and as a result, teachers are put under intense pressure to assist students in obtaining high scores. So long as the test fails to focus on communicative competence, so will teachers.

Since test driven objectives influence, or even control English education in Korea (Whitehead, 2016), the only practical solution is the implementation of a new testing construct with proficiency/competency-based objectives. Proficiency-based testing aims that align with the National Curriculum objectives of communicative language teaching would finally support the use of communicative approaches in secondary classrooms. Unfortunately, although initiated, these new directions have yet to take hold.

Although the biggest constraint to the usage of CLT in Korean secondary classrooms seems to be linked to the testing system, other obstacles were also found to be present. This may simply be due to the lack of understanding, and a failure to adapt the approach to fit the Korean context. An important point to keep in mind is, 'The selection of methods and materials appropriate to both the goals and context of teaching begins with an analysis of socially defined learner needs and styles of learning' (Savignon, 2001, p.16-17). There must be more contextual research done into how to effectively implement CLT into the realities of current Korean English classrooms. Those being very large classes, with mixed abilities, who share the same L1. In other words, it is important to consider the following questions when considering CLT in South Korea: What does the successful implementation of CLT entail in Korean classrooms? Which activities work best?

What are the best techniques to promote the use of L2 and avoid the use of L1 in communicative activities? If these types of questions can be answered, by mapping CLT onto the Korean context, and giving teachers a practical model that they can work with, many of the classroom obstacles that they have reported may be resolved.

All in all, it is essential that the communicative approaches being implemented in the future are shaped by what is happening within the Korean English education context and specifically take into account the motivation driving students to learn and teachers to teach. Although this study has not given an exhaustive list of the obstacles teachers face with CLT, it has highlighted some major issues that must be addressed. If the current situation persists in South Korea, the implementation of CLT will continue to be met with challenge by all of those involved with it.

Limitations

As this study has focused itself on examining in-service teachers' views towards the implementation of CLT in public secondary English classrooms in South Korea, it has failed to account for additional stakeholders' perspectives on the issues at hand. In order to provide a deeper understanding of the matters, further research would have to be conducted from additional perspectives i.e. the students, curriculum developers, administrators. Additionally, this study only collected data from in-service teachers in a single-province. Additional research needs to be done with teachers from other provinces in order to know exactly how widespread these reported issues are. Finally, the implementation of the suggestions to the reported obstacles provided in this study would not guarantee the success of CLT in secondary classrooms in South Korea as various other unreported obstacles may exist, and various other factors may be at play that are affecting its overall applicability.

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Appendix A

Interview Excerpts

Interview Excerpt 1

“The current Korean college entrance exam (CSAT) supports Grammar Translation Methods. There is no need for communicative practice... just memorization and translation. Teachers learned GTM in order to teach to the test and therefore are reluctant to move away from it.”

(Minji, High School Teacher)

Interview Excerpt 2

“I have been waiting more than ten years for this change... I am a supporter of communicative language teaching as I know how important being able to use language is... We really promote communicative techniques strongly at our training center but... it has been hard in the past to convince our trainees of the importance and effectiveness of this style of teaching. Trainees have constantly complained that they are unable to use this method because they have to teach to the test... Now that the test is changing, I feel refreshed and I feel that with this change, teachers will be pushed to use more communicative techniques.

(Soo, Teacher Training Supervisor of Curriculum and Development (former high-school teacher))

Interview Excerpt 3

“CLT puts too much pressure on teachers. Designing new activities and materials is a burden and no fun! To make or break the use of CLT seems solely up to teachers’ sheer will.”

(Gina, High School Teacher)

Interview Excerpt 4

“This approach (CLT) does not really reflect Korea's reality where classes are mono-lingual and 35-40 students share one English teacher, on top of whose levels are mixed.”

(Seung Min, High School Teacher)

Interview Excerpt 5

“It takes a lot of time and effort to reorganize the desks before and after every class especially with so many students... Students complain about having to move their seats before class and moving them back after class...”

(Gayoung, High School Teacher)

Interview Excerpt 6

“A lot of the students are not used to group work or pair work so they think of it as play time... while I am circulating and helping out one group other groups are off task”

(Mijin, Teacher Training Administrator (former high school teacher))

Interview Excerpt 7

“With such diversity in levels in the same class, not everyone has the ability to participate in communicative activities. It is better to do activities that everyone can learn from... it seems like communicative activities only suit the higher level students”

(Jo, Middle School Teacher)

Interview Excerpt 8

“I have to constantly remind students to speak in English... the problem is a lot of the students do the activity in Korean and finish the activity really fast... this totally messes up the activity... it also makes me really tired!”

(Heejae, Middle School Teacher)

Interview Excerpt 9

“After taking part in a teacher training course in Canada I was really motivated to try out communicative activities in my classroom... but the truth is... It only lasted for two weeks...”

teachers in surrounding classrooms would hear a lot of excitement and noise in my classroom and thought I had lost control. In the classroom, students were not used to this style of class and complained that I was lazy and the lessons lacked focus. All of this complaining really made me lose motivation to try new techniques.”

(Minsu, Middle School Teacher)