

## Teaching English: Korean Culture and Context\*

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This paper is part of a co-project whose purpose is to examine the cultural context of the British and Asian English language classroom, and its influence on how and what their students learn, highlighting Korean learners of English and their educational culture and context. First, the issues related to Korean students, teachers, and contexts were discussed. Second, the implementation of English language education in elementary schools was reviewed. Third, an analysis was made on the in-service teacher training programs for elementary and secondary English teachers in Korea. Fourth, the issues were discussed concerning the native English speakers as classroom teachers and teacher trainers, their role and effectiveness and the necessity and the direction of education programs for them. Last, it was stressed that students' awareness for the global issues and their understanding of the English-speaking culture should be built for better communication.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Recently, English language education in Korea has gone through a drastic change in all the educational aspects including goals and objectives, instructional

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methodologies, evaluation, and teacher education. As communicative competence has emerged as the major goal of English language learning and teaching, educational institutions have incorporated English language classes in one way or another at all levels. These include public and private institutions, at levels ranging from the pre-school to college, and adult education. Many colleges and universities, in particular, require students to take three to twelve credit hours of conversational English classes. The shift in major teaching methods from the ever-dominant grammar-translation method to the communicative approach is also being made in the classrooms. However, these changes and shifts have brought a lot of confusion and frustration to the teachers, reinforcing the value of teacher training and re-training.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the current state of English education in Korea, and address some questions for the ELT professionals who deal with the Korean learners of English in and out of the Korean context and culture. Some of the major issues and concerns in current English language education in Korea will be discussed, including the following:

1. Korean students, teachers, and contexts: The role of the English language in college entrance exams in Korea and its influence on learners' motivation of and attitude toward learning English; Lack of teachers' English proficiency and confidence in English language instruction; and English as a foreign language environment;
2. The implementation of English language education in elementary schools;
3. Major characteristics of in-service teacher training program for elementary and secondary English teachers in Korea;
4. The issues concerning native English speakers as classroom teachers and teacher trainers: Their role and effectiveness; Developing team teaching strategies between foreign expatriate teachers and Korean teachers; The necessity and the direction of education programs for native English-speaking teachers; and
5. Awareness building regarding global issues, and understanding of the English-speaking culture for better communication.

## II. THE KOREAN ELT CULTURE AND CONTEXT

### 1. Korean Students, Teachers and Context

The major problematic factors in English language education in Korea include students, teachers, and contexts. First of all, it has been said that Korean students' motivation to learn English is dominantly instrumental (Choe, 1995, p. 145). In other words, their motivation is very test-oriented. If it is not tested, it's not worth paying attention to. They simply do not have spare time to do extra work that does not offer them extra marks. Even though the educational goal for teaching English specifically states that one should acquire communicative proficiency, the testing system does not complement it.

Second, Korean English teachers are over-worked and stressed out. Many of them lack communicative English language competence and confidence in their teaching ability (J. Park, 1995, p. 142). That is mainly because education and training that they received were not communicative competence-oriented. Besides, they were taught English mainly in Korean throughout their education so that it is only natural for them to copy their own teachers' or trainers' teaching methods and teach English in Korean (Lee, 1994, p. 55). Many teachers feel that they should start from the beginning, in order to meet the needs and expectations from the society they belong to. Some take it as challenging but others as frustrating and helpless.

Third, English learning or teaching context is not so productive. English is not spoken daily in Korea. The exposure to English is so limited that the knowledge and skills the students acquire in their classrooms cannot be reinforced nor retained. Some knowledge and skills of English are neither authentic nor functional. The type of the English language used by Koreans are called 'Konglish', which often causes problems in communication between Koreans and native speakers of English. Strickland (1995) states that Konglish appears to be a form of interlanguage, bridging the gap between students' incomplete knowledge of English and the native speaker standard. But that some Konglish is so formulaic and deeply ingrained that it proves to be especially resistant to correction. He claims that the second kind appears to be more than just a transitional form. It seems to be the result of systematic mislearning of the English language which students have now acquired. Sources of this mislearning include student texts,

dictionaries, study guides, and a misguided set of beliefs about how to go about learning a foreign language.

Above all, the linguistic and cultural gap between Korean and English are enormous. The phonological sounds and structure of the two languages, and the way each language is spoken are extremely different. Compared to these unchangeable learning conditions set by the nature of the two languages, however, the other set of problems look quite insignificant, such as: large classes of students of mixed ability, lack of facilities, equipment, textbooks and additional materials developed specifically for the Korean learners of English, et cetera. At least, the latter-mentioned problems can be modified or eliminated sooner or later by this nation's economic growth, and the Ministry of Education's (MOE hereafter) commitment to quality education.

## 2. Elementary School English Language Education

In spite of all the criticisms and apprehension related to English language education that were expressed for many years, English was adopted as one of the regular subjects in elementary education in Korea as of 1997, ahead of some of our neighboring Asian countries.<sup>1)</sup> It is taught twice a week for forty minutes per period, starting at the third grade level, in an effort to provide the future leaders with the skills needed to be internationally competitive, as well as to lessen the financial burden that parents take on when providing private English education for their children. According to Shin (1996), the total cost spent for English language learning outside of the classroom amounts to 3.4 trillion won, or about 39 billion dollars. Even after the recent economic crisis struck Korea, the cost does not seem to be lessened. It is also highly questionable whether teaching English in elementary school classrooms saves home economy or not as it is intended to. Y. Park (1998) suggested the result of his survey that many parents think it is

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1) Craig (1998) stated, "The MOE (in Taiwan) announced that English lessons would be included in the required curriculum at all of Taiwan's elementary school beginning in the 1999-2000 school year (China Post, 18 January 1998)." The Taiwanese media have reported growing concerns among both educational specialists and elementary school teachers over the question of training the large number of English teachers needed. On the other hand, in the year 2003, the MOE of Japan will begin English conversation classes in the nation's elementary schools as part of what the Ministry terms 'Education for International Understanding' (Takahashi 1997, p. 3).

necessary for them to provide their children with additional English lessons because learning English is very important for their children's future and the number of English lessons given at school is not sufficient.

It was maintained in many anecdotes, newspapers and magazines, as well as research papers that the traditional grammar and translation-oriented English language program in Korea failed to produce proficient English speakers at the secondary level, and that teaching English at the elementary level could, to some extent, solve the problem. Elementary English education has brought on a number of changes in the educational setting, teaching/learning environment, hopes, expectations as well as many problems and concerns.

It may be still early to evaluate the results of elementary school English language instruction after only a couple of years' practice. However, Y. Park (1998) claimed that in his survey conducted with about 1,500 children and 1,100 parents, 78.4% of elementary school children responded positively about their English classes and 68.2% parents responded that they were satisfied with elementary school English language instruction. A thorough, on-going evaluation should be made in order to improve the quality of English language education in elementary school and achieve its educational goals. Craig (1998) suggested that due to the similar sociolinguistic conditions surrounding the use of English, Korea's experience of elementary school English language instruction should be able to serve as a valuable guidance for educational language planners in Taiwan. Likewise, it is important for us to exchange ideas and resources with those nations that have similar educational culture and context to ours.

### **1) Major Characteristics of the Elementary School English Language Curriculum**

The English language syllabus developed by the Curriculum Planning Committee of the MOE states that the general objective of teaching English in elementary schools is to develop basic English communicative competence, or an ability to understand and express ideas and feelings in English (MOE, 1997). Teaching English in Korean elementary schools is based on the following principles: An emphasis is put on the basic English communicative skills, particularly the oral language skills of listening and speaking; Teaching oral language skills include teaching acceptable English pronunciation, intonation, and utterances; Written language skills, or reading and writing, are taught as a

subsidiary means for acquiring oral English skills: Receptive skills are taught first, rather than productive skills; Motivation and attitude are recognized as major factors for the success of English language education; Learning English should not hinder or impede learning Korean but serve as a useful means to develop Korean language skills.

Table 1 shows the major characteristics of the elementary school English language curriculum.

**TABLE 1**  
**Major Characteristics of the Elementary English Curriculum**

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1. Educational Goals
    - 1) Macro-goals
      - Children should be able to become familiar with English.
      - Children should be able to get interested in English.
      - Children should be able to acquire basic interpersonal communicative English skills.
    - 2) Micro-goals
      - Children should be able to understand basic spoken English.
      - Children should be able to read and understand basic written English.
      - Children should be able to speak basic English.
      - Children should be able to write basic English.
      - Children should be able to develop their Korean language skills by learning English.
  2. Contents
    - 1) Language functions
      - (1) Listening
        - To be able to listen to English in an appropriate manner.
        - To be able to listen and understand the English words and expressions about
          - ① describing simple ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
          - ② greetings and introducing people.
          - ③ asking for favors, making requests, giving commands, and making suggestions.
        - To be able to listen and understand the context and purpose of the English utterances.
      - (2) Reading
        - To be able to discriminate letters in the English alphabet and recognize words.
        - To be able to understand the relationship between spoken language and written language.
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- To be able to read and understand basic English words.
  - To be able to read and understand sentences in English of simple structures.
  - To be able to read in an appropriate manner: to read from top to bottom, and from left to right.
- (3) Speaking
- To be able to speak with correct pronunciation.
  - To be able to ask questions and provide answers about basic simple ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
  - To be able to greet, introduce, and thank people, and make apologies.
  - To be able to ask favors, make requests, give directions, and make suggestions.
  - To be able to carry on a simple, appropriate conversation in a given context, and for a specific purpose.
- (4) Writing
- To get interested in the English alphabet.
  - To be able to write the English alphabet.
  - To be able to use capital and lower case letters correctly.
  - To be able to write simple English words and sentences of basic structure.
  - To be able to use the rules of English punctuation correctly.
- (5) Communication
- The same topics and contents will be used but with differing levels of difficulty according to grade.
- 2) Language
- (1) Topics
- Select the topics that interest and motivate the students.
  - Select the topics in consideration of theme, situation, and task.
  - Select the topics in a sequential order.
- (2) Language
- Focus on the spoken language.
  - Select words and expressions that can help students discriminate the sounds and understand the meaning.
  - Use written English as a means of learning spoken English.
  - Use written English selectively according to the students' grade.
- (3) Vocabulary
- 100 words for third grade.
  - 100 words for fourth grade.
  - 150 words for fifth grade.
  - 150 words for sixth grade.
- (4) The maximum number of the words in a sentence
- 7 words for third and fourth grades.
  - 9 words for fifth and sixth grades.
3. Evaluation
- 1) Evaluate the students in such a way as to lower the students' affective filter.
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- 2) Test on what was taught using a testing tool which has high validity and reliability.
  - 3) Use a descriptive evaluation by observing the students' achievement in the classroom.
  - 4) Students' oral skills are tested in all four grades but their literacy skill is tested in 5th and 6th grades.
  - 5) Test results should be used for individual teaching and teaching plans. (J. Park, 1997b)
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## 2) Major Instructional Methodology

Large class of 40-55 students is often identified as one of the most troubling aspects of elementary education in Korea. The level of the students' English learning experience and proficiency varies from zero or very low, to very high. Many students are involved with private English studies such as learning from a tutor, attending private language institutes, working on the daily or weekly study worksheets developed by local publishers or English study material publishing companies. Teachers are encouraged to utilize ability group or small group activities as often as possible in order to solve the problems related to large class size or the classes of students with mixed ability.

The English language syllabus mentioned before suggests the following in regard to instructional methods:

- (1) Get children exposed to the natural English pronunciation by using audio-visual aids as much as possible.
- (2) Use English as much as possible for instruction and classroom activities.
- (3) Use small group or pair activities as much as possible.
- (4) Use as many instructional methods as possible in order to create a fun learning environment.
- (5) Encourage children to produce English but do not correct their errors.
- (6) Provide children with oral English input more than written English input.

J. Park (1997a) has suggested some instructional strategies in order to teach English effectively in an Korean elementary classroom, particularly for those teachers whose English proficiency is limited. Table 2 shows the major strategies.



**TABLE 2**  
**Instructional Strategies for the Korean Limited-English-Proficient**  
**Teachers of English**

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1. Pre-class Strategies
    - 1) Assess the students' background and needs.
    - 2) Set specific and realistic class objectives.
    - 3) Put content in a sequential order: moving from simple to complex.
    - 4) Plan everything in advance and in detail, and be ready to be flexible.
  
  2. In-class Strategies
    - 1) Use easy-and-meaningful class routines and classroom English: calendar activities, introduction games, TPR for the learned and new content, and songs.
    - 2) Use group activities: songs and games, jazz chants, student worksheets, asking and answering questions.<sup>2)</sup>
    - 3) Use audio-visual aids: real objects or the realia-toys, miniature-sets, classroom materials, equipment, pictures, and charts.
    - 4) Use the Korean materials (especially when the English materials are not available).
    - 5) Utilize students' own ideas and materials. If needed, ask them to bring their own things-food, clothes, and so on.
    - 6) Invite guests to share their experiences related to the English language and its culture (especially when you are not familiar with it).
    - 7) Pay special attention to the pronunciation, and the usage of the English loan words such as orange, banana, milk, cheese, pizza, cereal, bus, boy, Batman, and et cetera.
    - 8) Help students positively transfer their Korean learning experience to their English learning.
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### 3. Teacher Education

Before English was adopted as a regular subject of the elementary education curriculum in 1997, English was taught as one of the many extracurricular subjects. Teaching hours and teacher qualifications varied depending on the schools. Some English teachers taught English on a voluntary basis and some were chosen by the school principals. At some schools, parents or some other guests who had lived in the English-speaking countries or majored in English at the undergraduate or graduate level were invited as English teachers. Teacher training programs

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2) Y. Park (1998) has found out that elementary school children preferred class activities in the following order: ① playing games, ② watching videos, ③ playing BINGO, and ④ singing and chanting.

supported by the local Board of Education were offered twice a year during the vacation for 60 hours for those who were going to teach English. In 1991, the instruction hours for this teacher training program were increased up to 120 hours.

According to the teacher training plan for elementary English teachers developed by the MOE in 1991, the curriculum consisted of 46 hour language skill-oriented classes, 39 hour teaching methodology classes, 20 hours of foundation course, and 15 hour educational theory classes, for a total of 120 class hours. The English language skill-oriented classes include English conversation and writing. The teaching methodology classes include elementary English education theory, elementary English teaching methodology, English textbook analysis, teaching methodology for speaking and listening, producing and using teaching materials. The foundation course include English-speaking culture, English linguistics, Korean-English comparative studies, fables and children's literature. The educational theory classes include children's psychology, and micro teaching. However, the actual class hours and curriculum vary more or less depending on the local teacher training institution.

Since 1996, two different teacher training programs have been implemented: a general or basic teacher training program for those teachers who have never had any teacher training before; and an advanced or intensive teacher training program for those teachers who have completed a general teacher training program, or any other equivalent teacher training program before. Both programs run for 120 hours for about 20 days during the vacation periods. Some programs are offered after class during the semester. In general, intensive programs focus on improving the teachers' English language proficiency, offering more language skill-oriented classes which are mostly taught by native English teacher trainers.<sup>3)</sup> The MOE also conducted overseas training programs. In 1996, a total of 25,000 elementary school teachers received the 120-hour in-service training (18,800 in the basic program and 6,600 in the advanced program) and 700 teachers received 4-week overseas training. In 1997, the MOE set to train a similar number of teachers for in-country training programs, but to double the number of teachers in the overseas program (Kwon 1997, p. 173).

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3) According to Kwon (1997), the 120-hour training program designed by the MOE consisted of 84 hours (70%) for building teachers' communicative competence, 34 hours (28.3%) for English language teaching pedagogy, and 2 hours (1.7%) for others. However, the kinds of courses offered and the number of hours assigned for each course varied slightly according to the region, and individual training institution.

Teacher trainers or instructors at teacher training institutions consist of university professors, secondary school teachers, elementary school teachers, supervisors of local boards of education, and private institute instructors. Some are professional teacher trainers but others are not. More often than not, the curriculum is planned by those supervisors who work for the teacher training center or local board of education whose expertise is not English language education (Shin 1996). Like in any other educational areas, teacher education is the key to the success of English language education. In order to strengthen the teacher training program, those whose expertise is English language teacher education should be widely recruited and short-term and long term plans for nurturing them should be developed.

#### 4. Issues Concerning the Foreign English Teachers

The society's demand for the shift from the grammar-translation method to the communicative approach in language teaching has brought in a rapid, and large influx of native English-speaking teachers to Korean EFL classrooms. It is based on the myth that native English teachers can teach English better than Korean English teachers because of their language proficiency, and that any English-speaker can teach English. It is often claimed that it is more cost-effective for us to bring in the English-speaking teachers than to send all the Korean students to the English-speaking countries.

Among all the institutions, the Korean government played a leading role of bringing a large number of foreign expatriate teachers as teacher trainers and classroom teachers through the 'English Program in Korea (EPIK)'. About 1,000 native English-speaking teachers were invited from six major English-speaking countries to Korea in the years of 1996 and 1997. Some of them were well-qualified teachers with good educational credentials but others were not. The mandatory minimum qualification is a Bachelor's degree in any area. After they arrive in Korea, they attend a 2-week orientation program offered by Korea National University of Education, where all the screening and training is done, and they are placed at elementary and secondary schools in proportion to the number of students in 15 different cities and districts nationwide.

Some of these EPIK teachers are invited to teach at the teacher training programs conducted by the local Board of Education and/or Teacher Training

Center. Due to the economic crisis that has hit Korea recently, a number of them have left but still there are thousands of them throughout the nation, and they serve as teacher trainers. The teacher education institutions invite other native English-speaking teachers who teach at different educational levels, from elementary to university as teacher trainers, in particular, for those language skill-oriented classes such as English conversation and writing. Some are very efficient, competent and liked by the school teachers, while others are not. Moreover, the influx of expatriate teachers has created other issues and problems which result from lack of proper educational training and cross-cultural understanding.

Chung (1997) stated that the purposes of inviting native English speaker teachers are to promote Korean-English cross-cultural understanding on one hand, and to improve students' English communicative competence as well as Korean English teachers' English proficiency, and interactive English teaching ability on the other. In order to enhance the efficiency of these invited teachers, he suggests that we should develop the idea of 'team teaching' in which the Korean English teacher serves as a facilitator between the native English teacher and the students. However, the effectiveness of the expatriate English teachers is questionable and needs to be thoroughly examined. Goh (1995) claimed that the best English teachers (for Singaporean students) are Singaporean teachers, who understand their students and their peculiar use of English in the context of a multilingual and multicultural society. He also said that although the native speakers of English are valued associates in the teaching profession, they cannot provide the only language model for their students. The same argument can be applied to the Korean context as well.

Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, setting the conditions for learning (Brown, 1994, p. 7). Based on the solid understanding of the students' background and their needs and wants, the teachers should be able to set up the educational goals, develop the instructional strategies and materials, and evaluate the students' achievement, which requires professional education, training, and experience in the given area. Smith (1998) suggested the attributes of the best teachers of English in Korea: including proficiency in English; formal education in teacher training; real life experience using English across cultures; sincere desire to teach Korean students; and nationality.

There are certain roles and expectations Koreans set for the native English-

speaker teachers to play and meet: To provide the Korean learners of English with the natural, authentic English language and cultural input, and opportunities for real life encounters in English; to teach teachers how to improve their own English proficiency and how to facilitate their students' English learning; and to serve as their own language and cultural ambassadors, presenting and educating their own norms, values, and manners. However, these expectations cannot be fulfilled by all English speakers. This is the area of education in which only qualified teachers can fit. They are those who already have the attributes mentioned above or, if not, those who recognize their weaknesses and pursue their best to improve them through further education and training.

It may be too soon to discuss the effectiveness of the English education by the native English-speaking teachers. However, there have been formal and informal reports about the educational, socio-political, legal, and socio-cultural concerns and issues raised in and out of the classroom settings between these foreign guests and the different Korean host groups such as students, teachers, school administrators, and community members. These issues include the information gap between foreign teachers and the Korean students, power or comradeship issues between the foreign and Korean teachers, interpersonal or intercultural problems between the foreign teachers and school administrators, and the community.<sup>4)</sup> In short, the educational effect does not seem to be satisfactory, and the current state of English education is even more depressing and confusing than before.

It is believed that English language education by some of the English-speaking teachers is not ineffective mainly due to lack of their TESOL-related education or training, and experience, particularly for Korean learners, lack of understanding about the Korean language and its culture, and most importantly, lack of professional orientation or attitude. Teaching is making a difference in a person's thought, mind, and character. It does take a commitment, patience, and confidence

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4) An international symposium on the issues and concerns regarding native Speakers in ELT in Korea was hosted by Sejong University Language Research Institute in May 1997. The issues discussed include changing roles and effectiveness of native speaker teachers in ELT in Korea: Strategies to empower native speaker teachers: legal matters related to hiring process for foreign teachers (Sejong University Language Research Institute, 1997). This was the first formal forum where the socio-economic and pedagogical issues were discussed openly with university administrators, government officials, foreign teacher trainers, and scholars from Korea and Japan. More symposiums of this kind should be held in order to evaluate the current state of education and make plans to make it better.

rather than a cheap perception of teaching English as an easy means to earn money.

In spite of all the negative aspects mentioned above, we still need the native English-speaking teachers as our partners in order to achieve our educational goals. In order to improve the current state of English education in Korea, the following is suggested: First, a proper screening and hiring system with professional criteria should be developed and implemented in order to recruit qualified foreign and Korean teachers of English.

Second, an intensive pre- and in-service teacher training which provides teachers with practical knowledge and skills should be conducted, particularly for those expatriate English teachers who have little or no education, experience, and teaching proficiency in order to empower them, and for them to empower their Korean students in return. The teacher training program should include survival Korean language skills, the Korean culture including the customs, values, good and bad manners, the educational system and goals, the Koreans' expectations concerning the native English-speaking teachers and their roles, developing Korean-learner-specific TESOL curriculum, instructional strategies and evaluation methods, and Korean-learner-specific classroom management skills. Kim et al. (1997) suggested that those English-speaking teachers who serve as teacher trainers should be informed the following: major characteristics of Korea's English language education; the goals of teacher training programs; curriculum and content of the program; trainees' age, gender, English language learning and teaching experience, English proficiency; expectations that the training institution and the trainees have for the native English-speaking trainers; the Korean EFL classroom environment and student-teacher ratio; teaching materials and equipment that they can have access to; and the course objectives.

Third, their duties and responsibilities should be assigned based on their expertise, their background or experience, their interests and willingness, and personal characteristics. Finally, all and only things they deserve should be timely provided, including their status, salary, housing and other benefits, opportunities for improving their professionalism and more importantly, love and care. It can be said that all the foreign English teachers go through ordeals in many different aspects of their life in Korea. We should embrace them and help them get adjusted to our culture and society, and try to make world peace possible. After all, that is what language learning and teaching are all about.

## 5. Awareness Building for Global Issues and Understanding of the English-Speaking Culture for Better Communication

Language and culture are inseparable. When we define language teaching as making a difference in learner's value and attitude toward the target subject, Korea's current state of English language and culture instruction still seems to be at the very beginning stage. A lot of stereotypical ideas and prejudices against particular ethno-cultural groups of English speakers are still prevalent among Korean learners and teachers of English, showing a cultural insensitivity, using derogatory terms to refer to some particular ethno-cultural groups on one hand while offering extraneous hospitality to other ethno-cultural groups on the other (J. Park, 1997c, p. 137).

Several factors were pointed out to be problematic in teaching English-speaking culture in the Korean EFL classroom. First, several studies have suggested that teachers' lack of understanding about the importance of teaching culture, or lack of competence or confidence in teaching culture hampers effective culture teaching (Kim, 1996; Lee & Cha, 1999; Park, 1997c). Second, textbooks play a significant role in shaping certain ideas among the learners. In this regard, Ihm (1998) states that EFL textbooks, especially those published in Korea, show more biases than ESL textbooks. EFL textbooks lacked authentic cultural information about the American society. She suggests that in comparison of cultural groups by race, age, and gender with demographic sources, the Afro-Americans, females, and the elderly group were underrepresented in the textbooks. The biased and misrepresented materials will reinforce the wrong ideas that students have rather than eliminate them. Third, the class of students of mixed level of language proficiency and cultural experience was pointed out to make culture teaching difficult. Soh (1997) states that one of the difficulties in conducting the (culture) course lays in the heterogeneous student population in their English proficiency and the varying amount of exposure to the target culture. Lastly, an EFL environment and rare accessibility of authentic materials were suggested to be another difficulty of the culture course (Soh, 1997, p. 17). In order to get rid of these stumbling blocks in teaching culture, collaborative works should be done with textbook researchers, textbook writers, publishers, and teachers. In particular, those who deal with learners in a similar educational culture and context as in many Asian countries can greatly benefit through cooperative work with one another.

The goal of teaching culture is to help students to learn about the differences and similarities between the cultures involved and understand them, and to adopt the appropriate norms and values in the intercultural communicative settings (Lee & Cha, 1999 : Park, 1997c). And in the long run, culture education can show how foreign language teaching can lead to peace education, aiming for world peace (Park, 1997c; Soh, 1997) However, in order to achieve these goals successfully, the role of a teacher in foreign language classes is crucial in a sense that teachers transfer not only their knowledge and skills to their students but also, and more importantly, and in a more powerful way, their attitude, beliefs, and points of view towards the target subject. Damen (1987) pointed out that roles for the modern language teacher to teach culture range from counselor to participant observer to resident pragmatic anthropologist to mediator to fellow learner. He also suggested that teachers must develop special competencies as cross-cultural guides and intercultural communicators, including personal commitments to the development of expertise in the processes of culture learning, understanding and knowledge of the cultural patterns of those they teach, and understanding of their own cultural givens.

### III. CONCLUSION

I have discussed some of the major concerns and issues raised in Korean ELT culture and context in an effort to find out some answers. Helgesen (1997) has raised the following questions concerning EFL in Asia:

1. What do we as English teachers and students throughout the region have in common?
2. Why are our students studying English?
3. What about culture in learning English?
4. Are we moving toward an Asian methodology?
5. What role does "communicative" language teaching play?

Obviously, these cannot be answered in one study of this kind, but efforts should be made continuously until we find the necessary and sufficient solutions.

As discussed above, English language teaching in Korea is facing the biggest



challenge demanded by the time and society. Korean educators should be upfront runners to meet the needs of the Korean students but also through cooperation with the teachers, who teach other Asian students, they can achieve a higher goal. The co-presentation which I have given with my British and other Asian colleagues and for which this paper was written is certainly an endeavour that leads in the right direction and I hope more similar works will be done in the future.

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