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## Evaluation of a Communicative EFL Curriculum\*

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This paper examines the development of communication-based English language instruction in a Korean university context by evaluating a specific college English program at P University and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the college EFL curriculum of the university with respect to how closely it aligns with student and teacher perceptions of needs related to English. The study employed a quantitative survey method and qualitative interviews to examine what is taking place at P University, as a representative sample of the changing English landscape in Korea, and perceptions of the new curriculum. The results revealed that, overall, while students generally seemed to have somewhat negative opinions, teachers seemed to have somewhat positive opinions about the effectiveness of the new curriculum. Plausible explanations for this discrepancy are examined. Also, the analyses of the results revealed the possibility that the current communicative EFL curriculum may be not aligned well with the students' needs, due to several weaknesses of the curriculum itself and constraints inherent in the institutional system behind it. Based on the findings of this research, several major issues are discussed for effective implementation of a communicative EFL curriculum.

### I. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

With the advent of globalization and technological development, English has become a necessary tool of international communication in many areas such as education, business, politics, commerce, science, and technology throughout the world. Also, English has become the most widely taught foreign language in the world (Kachru & Nelson, 1996).

The widespread use of English as a lingua franca has had a significant impact on

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foreign language education, including English education in Korea. In the past, having a good command of English had many advantages not only in education but also in society, such as obtaining a good score on an exam or receiving respect from other people. Presently, especially since the late 1990s, because of the new government and educational policy emphasizing English and technology, accelerated globalization, and easy access to the Internet, English has become indispensable to almost every field in Korea, and the necessity of speaking and writing in English has increased considerably (Oryang Kwon, 2000).

The need for communication in English has played an important role in curricular restructuring not only for elementary school English but also at the college level in Korea. In Korea, English is generally a required course from the third year in elementary school through the first year in college. Basically, before entering a college or university, students have studied English for at least six years. In spite of this lengthy experience in English, students' low level of English proficiency has raised many concerns about English education in Korea, and a lot of attempts have been made to improve English language teaching to promote students' English ability for general communication and in their specific fields of study at the university level. Presently, many students at the college level want to learn English for communicative purposes. These students' needs for more communicative language skills have brought a radical change in the perception of effective English instruction and how to achieve it.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) refers to an approach to teaching a second language, which focuses on developing learners' communicative competence in the target language. Even though CLT has been regarded as an ideal teaching approach by many researchers and teachers (e.g., James F. Lee & Van Pattern, 1995; Yalden, 1987), and has been widely accepted as a dominant language teaching approach (Kachru, 1992; Phillipson, 1992), much research has reported difficulties with CLT implementation in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts because of several constraints, such as the national exam for college entrance, which still focuses on grammar and reading comprehension, large class sizes, and cultural mismatches (Anderson, 1993; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Gorsuch, 2000; Liu, 1999). Furthermore, English learners' resistance or reluctance to participate in class has been found to be one of the major obstacles to curricular innovations related to CLT in many EFL countries (e.g., Bern, 1990; Shamin, 1996).

Regarding the situation in Korea, an EFL country, the results of literature review indicate that most research on CLT has focused on teachers' perspectives, usually in middle or high school settings (e.g., Seonghee Choi, 1999; Li, 1998; Guilloteaux, 2004) or in elementary school settings (e.g., Yung-Suk Jung, 1997; Eun-Ju Kim, 1997; Dong-Hoon Lee, 2002). Little research, however, has been conducted on the students' perspectives of communication-based English instruction, and few attempts have been made to examine

Korean college contexts. Also, college English teachers' voices have not been heard before in Korea. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate current college EFL programs which use communication-based English instruction to determine the extent to which they are meeting their stated objectives and aligning with the needs and goals associated with them. The purpose of this study was to investigate the development of communication-based English language instruction in a Korean university context by evaluating a specific college English program at P University and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the college EFL curriculum of the university with respect to how closely it aligns with student and teacher perceptions of needs related to English. Specifically, the objective of this study was to investigate the quality of the changes taking place in university level English instruction in South Korea. By examining what is taking place at P University, as a representative sample of the changing English landscape in Korea, and perceptions of the new communicative program, this study aimed to identify insights and implications relative to university level English instruction in South Korea .

## **II. THE PRESENT STUDY**

### **1. Research Questions**

1. How do undergraduate students taking required English courses and their English teachers perceive the current effectiveness of college English instruction at P University?
2. What differences exist among P University students' perceptions of the current effectiveness of college English instruction based on the characteristics such as Gender, Academic field, and English proficiency level
3. What are the new communicative English curriculum's perceived strengths and weaknesses relative to addressing the perceived needs for English instruction?

### **2. Research Background**

Since the study explored specific reactions to a new communicative college English curriculum in South Korea, a brief review of some information about the English curriculum at P University would be helpful to understand the study and the discussion that follows in this section.

In order to meet social demands to produce college graduates whose command of English is high, the P University freshman College English course has changed its focus from the traditional emphasis on grammar and reading comprehension into a more

communication-based curriculum so as to develop students' communicative skills and language competence not only in their major field of study but also for the world outside the university, e.g., to help them in their post-university careers. Therefore, throughout the first year of the English course, everyday English is emphasized, regardless of students' major or field of study. All freshmen students are required to take the English course for two consecutive semesters. Since two English teachers (a native speaking English teacher and a Korean English teacher) teach the one-credit English course alternately, it is called "team-teaching." The native speaking English teacher (NSET) is responsible for developing students' speaking and writing skills, and the Korean English teacher (KET) is responsible for developing students' reading, listening, and cultural information. Grammar instruction is not included in the curriculum. Each KET teaches a class of 50-60 students. The class is split into two units, each taught by a NSET, who teaches nearly two hours a week. So the class meets one week with their NSET and another week with their KET.

In terms of instructional approaches, the NSETs generally have much freedom in employing various teaching methods, with no strict guidelines in the curriculum. They also evaluate students' in-class participations, such as pair work, group work and presentations. By contrast, the KETs do not have much curricular freedom. They are expected to cover cultural information, useful expressions for conversation, and to check listening and reading comprehension, all of which are almost equally distributed in the required textbook, over which they have no choice in the selection process. Although each KET can emphasize different areas and allocate class time differently, all the contents of the textbook are dealt with in the mandatory Computer-Based Test (CBT), which was developed by the Language Education Center at P University. The evaluation of the students' performance in the KETs' classes is based on the students' CBT results and attendance. All the students are required to take the multiple-choice CBT test every other week, and to obtain good scores (above 70%) on the tests to receive a "Pass" grade for the KETs' class. The evaluation of students' performance in the NSETs' classes is based on the NSET's assessment of the students' participation in class and assignments, and attendance. They have to pass both teachers' classes to earn credit for the English course requirement. Thus, even though it is one English course, it appears to have two systems, one for the NSETs, and the other for the KETs.

### 3. Data Collection

The participants of the study consisted of 504 college students and 18 English teachers at P University. The participants were surveyed regarding their views about English language instruction at P University. The survey instrument, Chou's Needs Assessment for

College English Instructional Innovation (1999), was developed based on Seels and Glasgow (1990), and was utilized to collect data for this study.

In order to enrich the findings of the study, structured and semi-structured interviews were also conducted with 12 student participants and 9 teacher participants. To establish validity and reliability (Ary et al., 1990), the instrument was field-tested on a group of students who were taking the college English course. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS). In addition, the information obtained from the interviews was content-analyzed and categorized according to emerging themes or categories, and was then subjected to by member-checking (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

### III. RESULTS

#### 1. Findings from the Questionnaire

In the questionnaire, ten statements that were derived from previous research findings were used to explore college students' and teachers' opinions regarding the current effectiveness of college English instruction. The ten items were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from "1" representing "Strongly Disagree" to "5" representing "Strongly Agree." Scores from these items were summated to provide a single measure of subjects' perception of the current effectiveness of P University English instruction. In the study, generally speaking, as shown in Table 1, while the students generally had somewhat negative opinions on the current effectiveness of college English instruction, with a mean score of 2.628 ( $M=2.628$ ,  $SD=.581$ ). In contrast, the teachers had somewhat positive opinions, with a mean score of 3.489 ( $M=3.489$ ,  $SD=.436$ ). In other words, compared with the students' perceived level of satisfaction toward the P University English instruction and curriculum, the teachers' satisfaction with the program was somewhat higher, indicating that the students were less satisfied with the current communication-based instruction and curriculum at P University.

When analyzing subjects' perceptions reflected in each item, as the above table shows, the students and the teachers had some interesting similarities and differences in agreement with each item. In terms of the similarities between the two groups' opinions, students generally agreed that college English should be taken as a required course as it is ( $M=3.44$ ), and that native speaking English teachers and Korean teachers' team teaching was helpful ( $M=3.32$ ). The teachers also agreed that college English should be taken as a required course as it is ( $M=3.78$ ), and that native speaking English teachers and Korean teachers' team teaching was helpful ( $M=3.50$ ).

**TABLE 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations (SD) of Subjects' Opinions**  
**about the Current Effectiveness of P University English Instruction**

Statements of Current Effectiveness of P University Instruction	Mean (SD)	
	Students (N=504)	Teachers (N=18)
S1. The courses are practical and useful for the students' career development.	2.39 (.937)	3.78 ( .732)
S2. Generally, English teaching/learning in the college class is satisfactory.	2.40 (.929)	3.67 ( .767)
S3. Audio-visual aids employed in class help English teaching/learning.	2.52 (.904)	3.78 ( .808)
S4. The English courses help students understand foreign cultures.	2.89 ( .928)	4.22 ( .548)
S5. The current English courses are designed to motivate learning.	2.23 ( .946)	3.39 ( .916)
S6. College English should be taken as a required course as it is.	3.44 (1.196)	3.78 ( .943)
S7. Two credit hours for the required freshman English courses are enough.	2.95 (1.121)	2.89 (1.183)
S8. Students do not need to attend a private language institution.	1.86 ( .850)	2.00 (1.085)
S9. The college English courses help students to develop communication ability.	2.26 ( .911)	3.89 ( .676)
S10. Native speaking English teachers and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful.	3.32 (1.047)	3.50 (1.505)
<b>SUM</b>	<b>2.628 ( .581)</b>	<b>3.489 ( .436)</b>

The biggest difference between students' and teachers' opinions is worthy of attention. Interestingly, while most teachers strongly agreed that the English courses helped students understand foreign cultures ( $M=4.22$ ), students disagreed to some extent with the statement ( $M=2.89$ ). That is to say, even though the English teachers believed that the students gained much understanding of foreign cultures through the English courses, it seemed that the students appeared to believe that the course was not beneficial to obtain information about English-speaking countries' culture, even though providing cultural information is one of the major objectives in the English course at P University.

The smallest difference was found from statement seven. Both students and teachers slightly disagreed that two credit hours for the required freshman English courses (one credit per semester) were enough (students:  $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=1.121$ ; teachers:  $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=1.183$ ), implying that they wanted to receive more credits for taking the English courses.

Furthermore, the ten statements were analyzed to identify any differences in levels of agreement with the current status of college English instruction based on the following characteristics: students' gender, their academic field, and the level of their self-evaluated

English proficiency. The dependent variables for all t-tests and ANOVAs were the response mean for each related survey item and the summated mean for all the ten statements. The results of the study revealed that, statistically, no significant differences were found in students' levels of agreement with general statements regarding current college English instruction. However, significant differences were found in several specific items, according to students' gender, academic fields, and proficiency levels. For example, comparatively speaking, female students, Business students, and low-level students tended to have somewhat negative opinions about P University English instruction. More about these differences will be discussed later.

## 2. Findings from the Interviews

Taking the students' gender, academic field, and English proficiency level into consideration, 12 participants from nine different colleges (College of Humanities, Social Sciences, Law, Medicine, Engineering, Education, Natural Sciences, and Human Ecology) were selected based on the surveys. Five native speaking English teachers and four Korean English teachers also participated in the interviews. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality.

### 1) Perceived Importance of Goals

Throughout the interviews, developing students' communicative ability both in English and in their major field of study was consistently found to be the most important goal for general college English programs in South Korea. In terms of the importance of goals, many interviewed students compared college English goals with high school English goals. For example:

My high school English program focused on just reading. But in college, we have to read professional books in English in our major field. Through college English courses, students should increase practical communication ability and develop abilities to express basic knowledge in their major field. (Jo, Kyeong-Mi: Female student, History, low)

A couple of students criticized the impractical nature of high school English programs, which they felt produce poor speakers of English. One interviewee expressed her strong opinion that basic conversation ability should be fostered in the general college English programs in South Korea:

Ideally, practical English should be learned in colleges. High school English was not practical and reading-focused. We cannot use what we learned in high school in our basic conversation. Because language is changing continuously, we have to learn how to use English according to different places or situations. (Hong, Hyun-Sook: Female student, Social Welfare, Low)

Generally, both the native speaking English teachers and Korean teachers believed that English should become a means to help students to cultivate their basic cultural knowledge as well as to cultivate students' communicative competence in the specific area of students' academic majors or professions.

The Korean teachers also talked about realistic goals for college English instruction in Korea. Some teachers stated different goals with respect to the current situation in Korea, such as not overlooking the necessity of prefatory qualifications required to get a good job. For example, one female Korean teacher expressed a regret regarding the unfavorable social demands to foster students' real English proficiency:

I've seen many Korean college students that have been studying English only for TOEIC tests. Most of them think good TOEIC scores are one of the necessary conditions for jobs. In some cases, some people have a poor command of English in spite of their high scores on the test. (Jeong, Min-Ji)

It can be inferred from the above Korean teachers' comments that the job market in the Korean society requires college graduates to have a good score on the TOEIC tests, rather than having a good command of English. Therefore, students seemed to spend much time in learning test strategies from well-known private lectures, and memorizing rules to get the "hang" of the test. Some students appeared to take the tests several times to gain familiarity with the test, which requires a considerable amount of money.

Test scores may still be valued in Korean society due to several reasons. First of all, TOEIC could be used as an official standard to judge students' future job prospects. When students in diverse majors, from diverse universities, apply for a certain job, it is really hard to evaluate them. GPA (Grade Point Average) used to be one standard, but not any more. Most students have a higher GPA, because professors tend to give good grades to them, hoping their graduates will have some future career advantages. Another possible explanation for using TOEIC tests to recruit college graduates is that there is a general assumption that higher scores mean higher overall proficiency in English. Some people who have a high score have a good command of English, but others do not. However, there is not enough evidence at present to show a direct relationship between the TOEIC scores and English proficiency.

Moreover, most of the native speaking English teachers put a strong emphasis on gaining confidence or reducing fear of making errors in English communication. Other goals or objectives mentioned by the native speaking English teachers were “to expose students to and thus make them more comfortable with cultures other than Korean” (Sally), and “helping students to prepare for studying abroad” (Michael).

## 2) Perceived Strengths of the College English Curriculum

### (1) Required and Two Types of Classes

Most of all, both students and teachers seemed to like the idea that the college English course was required. Considering the increasing significance of English, they agreed that college students have to develop communicative ability in English, not only for their study on campus but also for their future careers. Therefore, emphasizing students’ communicative competence in English is regarded as a strength of the new P University EFL curriculum. Moreover, the greatest strength of the program appears to be that two types of classes were offered intensively to the college students. For instance:

There’s no such good program like this. Students can expose themselves to English classes for three years from freshman to junior, and also to two types of teachers’ classes: native-speaking English teachers and Korean English teachers. It is a great opportunity. (Lee, Myeong-Hee)

Even though the whole college English program at P University is administrated for three years, this study focused only on the first-year curriculum, because freshman English is required in all Korean universities, and also the core of the first year college English program at P University emphasizes communication. Sophomore and junior classes are more reading-comprehension oriented. However, offering two types of classes alternately regardless of students’ majors or year of study appeared to be unique, and was drawing a lot of attention not only from the faculty, students, and administrators on campus, but also those outside the campus.

### (2) Native Speaking English Teachers’ Classes

Along with the above-mentioned strength, according to the students, another notable strength of the program was that it gave students a good chance to meet native speaking English teachers in class:

I like CBT and my native-English teacher’s class. It’s different from a high school class. It’s a burden for students to take several tests in a semester, but in

the long run, I think it helps me to improve my English. I enjoy my native-speaking English teacher's class because it's interesting and gives me a good chance to contact foreign teachers, which also gives me some confidence in using English with foreigners. (Lee, Seon-Young: Female student, Human Ecology, Intermediate)

The interviewed students seemed to enjoy taking native speaking English teachers' classes. For many students, it was their first time to meet a native speaker of English and to speak with him or her, because when they were high school students, they had Korean teachers for most of their English classes. Presently, a large number of colleges or universities in Korea are still administrating general college English courses which focus on reading comprehension taught by Korean teachers only. Unlike the native speaking English teachers at P University, Korean teachers are known to employ only traditional English teaching methods to explain sentence structure and grammar. In the case of P University, since the students had to be acquainted with both types of classes, the courses required students to do double the amount of work by completing assignments for both classes. Nevertheless, some students seemed to believe that the courses would be beneficial in the future, even though they were demanding. It seemed that, comparatively, P University students appeared to be happy with native speaking English teachers, because they could apply what they learned from the Korean teachers' classes to the native speaking English teachers' classes. However, several weaknesses of the program were discovered during the interviews, which will be presented below.

### 3) Perceived Weaknesses of the P University English Curriculum

#### (1) Mixed Ability and Limitation of Time

Both teachers and students discussed a number of weaknesses of the P University English curriculum. Among other things, most of the teachers mentioned a difficulty in motivating students because of students' differing levels of English language ability and the limitation of time. The student interviewees pointed out too large a gap in the students' proficiency level with both high proficiency and low proficiency:

Some students have a high proficiency in English. Students with low proficiency, like me, have no courage to participate in class or ask simple questions during the class for fear of being made fun of by others. Some students think the text is too easy. But for me it's difficult. I have to concentrate on the class well. That's the difference. (Oh, Soo-Jeong: Female student, Medicine, Low)

## (2) Large Class Sizes

Large class sizes were also noted by both most of the students and the teacher interviewees:

Always difficult with larger classes. ... Of course, a smaller class size means more individual attention to students. P University averages 30-35/class. Ideally, a limit of 30 students would be beneficial. Students must take 6 semesters of English at P University. The fact that each teacher has the freedom to construct a syllabus to his/her style leads to diversity in the students' education. (Daniel)

It's hard to make the class interactive because of large classes.

(Choi, Mi-Ra; Jeong, Min-Ji)

In terms of class size, even though the native-speaking English teachers' classes were smaller, usually consisting of about 30 students, the teachers wanted to have smaller classes to create a more interactive environment. In the case of Korean teachers' classes, the situation was even worse, consisting of 50 to 60 students, with different levels of language proficiency in one class, making classroom interaction especially difficult. Besides, the Korean teachers were too busy conducting lectures in class, because they had to keep up with the tight schedule, explaining all the details in the textbook for the required tests the students had to take in order to pass the English course.

## (3) Constraints of the Instructional Materials

Most of the students mentioned that the required text and course materials were too old and boring. The native speaking English teachers also expressed concerns about the required text. In addition, the course materials were not considered to be appropriate by the students. For instance:

Videotapes are too old. More foreign cultures should be introduced during the class. Instead of old videotapes, real life English such as a sitcom, for example, "Friends," can be utilized. (Kim, Young-Hee: Female student, Economics, High)

## (4) Ineffective Teaching Methods

The students also talked about the weaknesses of both native speaking English teachers' and Korean English teachers' classes by complaining about ineffective teaching methods:

Because native-speaking English teachers have different cultures or backgrounds, it's hard to communicate with them. I feel some native-speaking teachers don't care much about the students in class. They are not considerate enough. I don't like their teaching methods (Kim, Young-Hee: Female, Economics, High)

Korean teachers' cramming-style lecture should be avoided. I'd like to have a more comfortable relationship with my Korean teachers. Now, our relationship is too superficial. When I have questions, I want to be able to ask my Korean teachers freely. (Jeong, Mi-Ae: Female student, Human Ecology, Low)

Many students seemed to dislike the Korean teachers' emphases on a one-way lecture for test preparation approach:

One-sided lectures should be avoided. Various activities such as role-plays could be used more often. Korean teachers cover too much material in one class. We don't get anything in detail. That's just for tests. Quality is more important than quantity. (Choi, Joon-Seok: Male student, Business Administration, Low)

As the above quotations from the interviews show, both the students and the teachers expressed a desire to have more participatory or interactive classes as a suggestion. In terms of more suggestions for the program, overall, offering different classes according to students' proficiency level, having classes meet more often, and having smaller classes were the ideas recommended most by the students.

## **IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **1. Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness**

Regarding the subjects' perceptions of the current effectiveness of college English instruction at P University, a number of similarities and differences in the students' and the teachers' opinions were gleaned from the results of the study. The results suggest that even though the curriculum was designed to develop the first year students' communicative language ability, both teachers and students thought that the English courses were not sufficient to improve students' proficiency in English, and private lessons were necessary for students to obtain a good command of English. Why was the current P University curriculum perceived to be not so helpful for students to enhance their communicative competence in

English sufficiently? In this respect, an explanation could be offered through two assumptions. First, the P University English curriculum might not be entirely communication-oriented, despite its stated intentions. Second, even if it is communication-based, there might be several factors preventing effective implementation of the communicative curriculum.

Based on the statistical results, overall, compared with the students' perceived level of satisfaction toward the P University instruction and curriculum, the teachers' satisfaction toward the program was somewhat higher, indicating that the students were less satisfied with the current communication-based curriculum at P University. There may be several reasons that account for this discrepancy. One possible reason is that initially, both groups had different expectations or ideas regarding the effectiveness of the program. For example, even though P University English teachers presumably had tried to develop students' communicative competence by implementing communication-based instruction, the students might have believed that their proficiency did not improve much, or they did not really recognize their improvement because they might not have expected to improve through the current communicative methodology, particularly since this was an approach to English instruction they had not experienced previously. Perhaps they assumed that this curriculum would be as limited as the more structured one they had faced in the past. Or the teachers might have had more realistic expectations of the students' improvement over a relatively short period of time. Regarding the improvement, since no actual effect of the instruction was systematically measured in this study, there was no information as to how much the students actually learned or improved from the English course.

Another possible reason for the students' lower level of satisfaction might be that many ESL theories or ideas which are useful in Western countries, such as communicative teaching approaches, did not fit well in an EFL context like in Korea. There are still big differences between ESL and EFL. For example, in EFL settings, students have fewer chances to use what they have learned in communicative situations, especially with native speakers of English. Therefore, the participating students may not have had an enough opportunity to use English in everyday life and saw no immediate needs to speak English, resulting in minimal motivation or interest in the English course.

The third reason may arise from the different roles students have to take in the new communicative classroom. In a traditional Korean classroom, teachers lecture in front of the classroom, and students sit and listen to the lectures. Students do not have to express themselves or share their views, because students' participation is neither required nor desired. However, in the communicative language classroom, students' participation is essential to successful foreign language acquisition and learning. Therefore, students' role has changed from being passive listeners to active participants. However, since the freshmen students were used to being passive learners, as they had been for more than 12 years, from primary school to high school, it might be not have been easy for them to

change their roles during just one college English course.

The results also indicate that the students were not fully prepared to accept communication-based instruction. Why would these particular students be resistant to communicative teaching approaches, especially at the college level, when the students are beginning to anticipate their careers and might well need communicative ability in English to get or keep a job? One possible explanation would be that since these students were still freshmen, they may not yet have been convinced of the importance of English. Or they might want to enjoy their college life more, before studying English seriously for their future career. They had studied extremely hard to take the national CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) to enter university before graduating from high school. After the exam, Korean students tend not to study and try to indulge in their campus life, such as joining extra-curricular activities and making new friends. Therefore, the researcher's speculation is that if this new communicative curriculum were implemented in English classes for the fourth year students, i.e., those about to graduate, the results might have been different.

Furthermore, the discrepancy between students' and teachers' perceptions also might imply that college students' opinions were not properly reflected in the development of the college English curriculum and instruction.

## 2. Differences in Terms of Students' Gender, Academic Field, and English Proficiency Level

In terms of students' gender, generally, no significant differences were found between male and female students' opinions on the current P University English instruction, based on the t-test ( $p=.513$ ). However, on two statements, significant differences were found. For example, female students showed a significantly lower level of agreement than male students regarding S8 (Students do not need to attend a private language institution.) and S9 (The college English courses help students to develop communication ability.).

One possible reason for female students' lower degree of satisfaction with the quality of the communication-based P University program is that female students seem to be more motivated to improve their English proficiency and have higher expectations, resulting in their feeling more disappointed with the current program. Generally, since male students tend to join the army after finishing their first year course work at college, which is required for all men in South Korea, it is known that male students tend to study hard for all their courses when they return after all three years' military service. Therefore, as freshmen, male students' motivation and enthusiasm about studying all the subjects, including English, might be lower, compared with female students.

Concerning students' academic field, generally, no significant differences were found among colleges in levels of agreement with general statements regarding current college

English teaching ( $P=.101$ ). However, significant differences were found among colleges on two statements. Specifically, Business students revealed a significantly lower level of agreement than students in the Natural Sciences regarding S5 (The current English courses are designed to motivate learning.). Business students also revealed a significantly lower level of agreement than students in Engineering, Human Ecology, and Medicine & Pharmacy regarding S6 (College English should be taken as a required course as it is.).

About the students' academic field, the most interesting finding was the difference between Education students' more positive opinions than Business students' more negative opinions regarding the effectiveness of the P University program. The results could suggest that Business students' expectations toward the program were relatively higher than that of Education students.' Education students in Korea are generally hoping to become secondary school teachers after graduation, and in that career path, they may think that English will be of little or no importance to them since they will teach in Korean and with Korean language materials. Thus, they may not see any importance in speaking English. On the other hand, Business students may see immediate needs for and the importance of communication in English, because in their careers they may have a lot of opportunities to meet native speakers of English or people from other countries. Therefore, they tend to be more motivated to improve their speaking ability quickly, resulting in their feeling less satisfied with the current program. Although it's not proven yet, it is generally believed that Business students' English proficiency is higher than any other student group on campus, even the English majors. Aside from individual differences, while English major students tend to study English theoretically, such as studying syntax, phonology, semantics, and American/British literature, Business students are known to have more interest in real communicative ability in English.

Regarding students' English proficiency, generally, no significant differences were found among the three proficiency levels in terms of agreement with general statements regarding current college English teaching. However, significant differences were found among students' levels for two statements. Students at the intermediate-level revealed a significantly higher level of agreement than those with low proficiency regarding S6 (College English should be taken as a required course as it is.) and S9 (The college English courses help students to develop communication ability.).

The results suggest that intermediate-level students had more positive opinions and lower-level students had more negative opinions about the P University program. For example, students at the intermediate-level revealed a significantly higher level of agreement than those with low proficiency regarding the statement that the college English courses help students to develop communication ability. The reason may be that when a class size is too large and the student's proficiency level is diverse, it is customary for Korean teachers of English to focus on the intermediate level students. Therefore, while students at

the high-level might find the classes boring and lose interest in the class, students at the low-level might find the classes too challenging and lose confidence about class participation, resulting in both groups' lower degree of satisfaction with the current English instruction at P University.

### 3. Strengths and Weaknesses of the College English Curriculum

Most of all, both students and teachers seemed to like the idea that the college English course was required. Considering the increasing significance of English, they agreed that college students have to develop their communicative ability in English, not only for their study on campus but also for their future careers. Therefore, emphasizing students' communicative competence in English is regarded as a strength of the new P University EFL curriculum. Moreover, the greatest strength of the program appears to be that students have a good chance to meet not only a Korean English teacher but also a native speaking English teacher in class. Offering two types of classes is drawing a lot of attention from other colleges or universities in Korea, because the system is innovative and generating positive reactions.

Traditional college English courses in most universities in Korea used to focus on reading textbooks and were taught only by Korean teachers. Nowadays, several universities are trying to offer communication-oriented courses taught by native English teachers. However, as previous research shows (e.g., Cheongsook Chin, 2002), the native English teachers-only policy has not been very effective, and thus caused college administrators or teachers to try team-teaching or other types of integration or collaboration.

The idea of team-teaching seemed to be welcomed by the students. However, based on the researchers' informal observations, it appeared that even though P University students met both types of English teachers in class, the teachers did not have chances to meet each other. The teachers were in a different physical location in one building, with the native speaking English teachers on the eighth floor and the Korean teachers on the first floor in the Language Education Center at P University. They taught the same class alternately with a different syllabus and a different textbook. Thus, no actual team teaching or collaboration occurred. This seems to be a major weakness in the P University system.

Through the interviews with students and teachers, it was also revealed that P University's institutional structure did not provide a fair chance for the current curriculum to succeed. For example, the large class size and limited class time per week appeared to prevent the implementation of a genuine communicative curriculum. Other weaknesses pointed out by teachers were too large a gap in the students' proficiency levels and the constraints of the prescribed course materials.

The study corroborates Li's (1998) finding that class size is one of the major concerns among Korean teachers of English in teaching English. When teaching a large class, they may feel overwhelmed, particularly when trying to implement a communicative approach. As the teachers stated in the study, large class size not only makes classroom interaction difficult but also prevents teachers from paying attention to students' individual progress, needs, and preferences.

In addition, the mixture of students of different levels of English proficiency within a class makes it difficult for teachers to select a suitable teaching method suitable for all of them and to meet the students' diverse expectations or needs. For example, students with higher levels of proficiency tended to lose interest in classroom instruction and resort to alternative options such as private language institutes to improve their English proficiency. Moreover, as a couple of students stated during the interviews, students with low proficiency could not participate in class activities because they were afraid of being made fun of by more advanced students.

The results of the study also indicated that teachers' lecture-based instruction was perceived to have lots of disadvantages of developing students' communicative ability. Interestingly, through the interviews, it was found that both teachers and students wanted to have more interaction so as to create communicative classes. However, there were other constraints that hindered students' interaction, beyond larger class sizes and mixed levels of students' English proficiency.

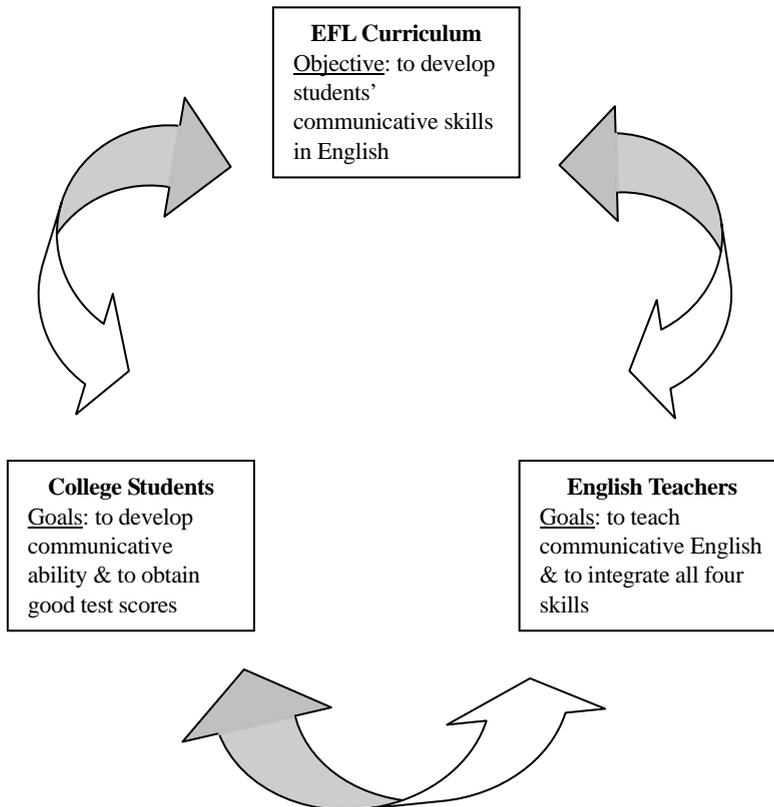
One possible factor seemed to be students' negative attitudes. Even though they recognize the importance of interaction for communicative classes, they seemed reluctant to actively participate in class, particularly in the Korean teachers' classes. Since they had many other assignments to complete, most of them seemed reluctant to do their homework for the English classes. Those students' unwillingness to participate may be partly explained by the low credit accorded the English course: one credit hour per semester. During the interviews, it was found that most of the students thought "it's just a one credit course for the semester. I have to spend more time in preparing for courses with more credits" (Park, Cheol-Soo: Male student, Physics, High). This situation minimized the status of the English classes and probably reduced students' motivation to prepare for and engage class activities seriously.

Also, Korean cultural perspectives on the classroom atmosphere in the language classroom may have inhibited students' active participation during the class. In a typical Korean classroom, teachers lecture in front of the classroom, and students sit and listen to the lectures. There's little or no student participation during class. Since there is little interaction between teachers and students, students are not used to expressing themselves or their opinions or sharing their views or experiences in class. Therefore, the students have to change their roles from being passive listeners to the active participants, which

may not be easy for the first year students who had been long accustomed to the traditional learners' roles inherent in the educational system in South Korea. However, in the communicative language classroom, it has been shown that learners' participation is essential to successful foreign language acquisition and learning (e.g., Anton, 1999; Guilloteaux, 2004; Takahashi, 1998). It is noteworthy that the present study showed that these students recognized the need for interaction in the English classroom. Finding ways to make the class more interactive in the Korean cultural context is a challenge requiring further study.

Overall, based on the previous discussions related to the study's findings through the surveys and interviews of both the college students and their English teachers at P University, the intended alignment of the three major components of the P University curriculum could be illustrated as follows:

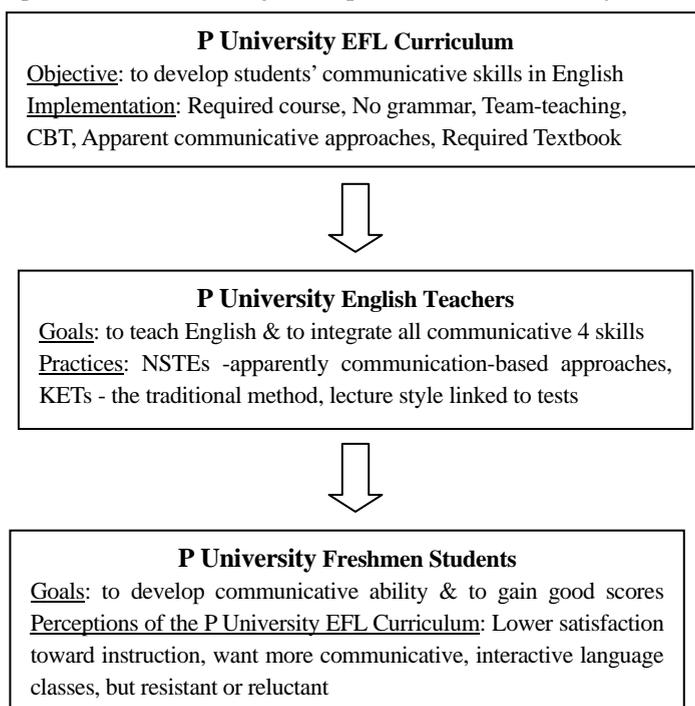
**FIGURE 1**  
Intended Alignment of the Three Major Components of the P University EFL Curriculum



The above model illustrates how the system is intended to operate. The three components are arranged in a circular fashion to capture the idea that they are supposed to interact with each other in roughly equal ways, that is, with each component shaping and being shaped by the others. However, the results of the study suggest that such a circular and interactive relationship between the three components doesn't actually exist. Instead, the components appear to operate in a hierarchical and essentially non-interactive way, as seen in Figure 2 below:

**FIGURE 2**

**Actual Alignment of the Three Major Components of the P University EFL Curriculum**



As the above figure shows, there is a separation between the components of the curriculum rather than a linkage between them. What are the causes behind this hierarchical arrangement? The current study has identified and discussed several factors that have worked against the communicative intentions of the new curriculum. As the actual alignment shows, students' lower level of satisfaction with the curriculum could be explained by the possibility that the P University curriculum may be not aligned well with the students' desires or goals as well as how many of the teachers would prefer to teach. In order for any kind of new curriculum to succeed, its major components need at least a

reasonable degree of alignment of the circular kind displayed in Figure 1. The idea behind the P University curriculum, which focuses on developing students' communicative ability, may be good, because it is congruent with the students' goals. However, the students generally appeared to believe that the current curriculum's objective of developing students' communication ability was not being met. This suggests that those responsible for implementing the curriculum seemed not to take into much consideration the students' opinions or needs, thereby resulting in a large gap between the students' perceptions and the teachers' perceptions, and the students' perceived importance of the goals and apparent practices operating in the language classrooms. Nor did the actual curriculum align well with what the teachers wanted. From the study, aside from weaknesses in the curriculum itself, several constraints have also been found, including P University's institutional constraints, social demands for more communicative English, conditions inherent in Korean culture, and the complications inherent in an EFL context. No matter how attractive or communicative the curriculum looks on paper, its day-to-day existence in pedagogical reality tells another story. If appropriate adjustments among the three components are made, the current P University EFL curriculum could assume the more circular, interactive relationship posited in Figure 1 and thus meet the goals and needs and both students and teachers.

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## APPENDIX

### The Survey Questionnaire

The following are 10 general statements that describe the current effectiveness of college English instruction at P University in South Korea. Please read each statement and circle the number of your answer that best corresponds to the level of your agreement. There are no correct or more correct responses, only *your* opinions. For each statement, use the following scale to share the degree to which you agree with each:

Scale:

1. Strongly Disagree (**SD**)
2. Moderately Disagree (**MD**)
3. Uncertain (**UN**)
4. Moderately Agree (**MA**)
5. Strongly Agree (**SA**)

The current effectiveness of P University English instruction	SD	MD	UN	MA	SA
1. The freshman English courses are practical and useful for the students' future career development.	1	2	3	4	5
2. In general, English teaching/learning in the college class is satisfactory.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Audio-visual aids employed in class improve English teaching/learning.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The college English courses help students understand foreign cultures.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The design of current college English courses can motivate learning.	1	2	3	4	5
6. College English should be taken as a required course as it is.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Two credit hours for the required freshman English courses are enough.	1	2	3	4	5
8. School is the only place for English learning. (Students do not need private language institution.)	1	2	3	4	5
9. The college English courses help students to develop communication ability.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Native and Korean teachers' team teaching is helpful.	1	2	3	4	5

### Demographic Information / Personal Background

The information you provide here will remain confidential. Please put a mark or fill in the blank

wherever appropriate.

(For Student)

1. am:

Male

Female

2. Academic Field/Major: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Overall English Proficiency (self-evaluation):

high

intermediate

low

4. Would you take college English courses if there weren't an English requirement?

Yes

No

(For Teacher)

1. I am:

Male

Female

2. I am a:

Native Speaking English Teacher

Korean English Teacher

3. Major: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Degree:

BA/BS

MA/MS

Doctoral Candidate

Ph.D.

Applicable levels: college education

Key words: EFL curriculum, communicative instruction, college English

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