Teacher-learners’ Beliefs about Proficiency Goals and Teaching Methods for Korean Secondary English Education*

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This study aims to explore English teacher-learners’ beliefs about proficiency goals for Korean secondary English education and their intended teaching methods to accomplish the goals. In a qualitative format, with a questionnaire and a question guide, 20 students in a graduate school of education were interviewed. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for underlying patterns. Finalized patterns underlying the teacher-learners’ goal beliefs and teaching methods are (1) prevalent study perspectives, not use perspectives in identifying the proficiency goals; (2) prioritizing explicit grammar knowledge in proficiency building; (3) preference for a teaching-centered English class regardless of teaching methods; and (4) teacher qualities identified more with text/grammar analysis skills than with English skills. Pro usage and pro teaching are identified as overarching themes in contrast to the prevalent pro use and pro communication of the communicative language teaching principles. The teacher-learners’ lack of consideration of students’ actual English practice/use is noted as well. Based on the findings, the study suggests secondary English curriculum restructuring with consideration of the future teacher candidates’ negative reaction to the current pro-communication policies. Reinforcing English language training for teacher-learners in teacher education programs is also suggested.

I. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the year 2009 recruitment, Education Board teacher recruitment examinations will include more strenuous screening of English teacher candidates’ ability to

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use the language such as their ability to write logical text in English. This policy change reflects the concerns Korean society has exhibited over its English proficiency in global society and the overwhelming expense paid to the English education business in the private sector. Influenced by the grammar-translation method, Korean English education has not specifically aimed for English proficiency in its classrooms. More recent secondary English curriculums, under the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) influence, began to emphasize the ability to use English. However, for a variety of reasons, secondary English classes have not shown significant changes toward CLT. The recent societal attention to English proficiency started to hint the dissatisfaction over the English education system, which has not been successful in producing functional English users (hankooki.com, 2006, August 16). The new policy of offering elementary school English from the first grade exhibits, as much as the new teacher recruitment policy, this new awakening in Korean society to the importance of the ability to use English in the globalized world.

However, it is common knowledge that, even in the midst of this changing time, the majority of secondary English classrooms are busy with grammar analysis and translation as usual. The national curriculum stipulates communicative competence building as its goal. Yet, the teachers do not seem to pay attention to the curriculum guidelines, and are not teaching communicative English stating that CLT is not realistic in Korean secondary schools (Guilloteaux, 2004; Jung-Won Hahn & In-Jae Jeon, 2005; Li, 1998; Liu, Gil-Soon Ahn, Kyung-Suk Baek & Nan-Ok Han, 2004). The teachers’ limited knowledge in principal theories and teaching techniques of CLT (Guilloteaux, 2004), their concern over their English proficiency (Li, 1998), among others, were cited as the reasons for not implementing CLT.

On the other hand, there may be a new breed of English teachers on the way, who have been exposed to different ways of approaching English learning around school. This group of teachers may have been exposed to the attitude change that has been going on, however slowly, in Korean society toward English learning. They may view English teaching in secondary school differently, and may be more able to handle teaching English communicatively than their predecessors. How these future teachers view English and its learning and teaching can have a significant impact on the future of Korean English education. Whether the CLT principles engraved in the curriculum are becoming a new reality in the secondary English classrooms depends on their action. As it is claimed in the teacher education literature, the fate of any educational policies is very much in the hands of the teachers who make teaching decisions of their own according to their professional and personal judgment (Bailey, 2006; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Markee, 1997).

Thus, this study investigated teacher-learners, future English teacher candidates, on their understandings of Korean secondary English education. The teacher-learners were inquired of their beliefs about proficiency goals for Korean secondary English education and their intended teaching methods for the goals. Applying a qualitative study format, this study
attempted to make an in-depth description of the teacher-learners' thoughts and beliefs.

II. BACKGROUND

1. Secondary English Proficiency

The national curriculum for secondary English stipulates that English should be taught to build the ability to use the language for basic communication in everyday affairs and on general topics. And it adds as specific goals that the learners should have the awareness of the need for communication through English, should be able to use information in English, and should learn about other cultures as well as learn to introduce Korean culture to others in English (Gyoyukinjeokjawonbu, 2007).

As a way of promoting better communicative abilities in the secondary English classroom, the teachers are asked to conduct classes in English and create English classrooms as the place where English is heard and used. However, in reality, Korean is the predominant medium in Korean secondary English classrooms (Seonghee Choi, 2000; Guilloteaux, 2004; Li, 1998; Liu et al., 2004). Liu et al. (2004) report that the average amount of English spoken in the classrooms is around 32% of the total number of words spoken. The number seems higher than observed in some secondary English classrooms by student teachers during their practicums. The student teachers describe secondary English classes as grammar analysis and translation with occasional communicative activities if a native speaker teacher is present (personal communication). Jung-Won Hahn and In-Jae Jeon (2005) report on secondary school teachers’ reluctance to apply a CLT method in the classroom in spite of their positive perception of it. The authors point out the education system and English proficiency of both the students’ and the teachers’ as the factors hindering the implementation of the method.

As evidenced in the policy change in the teacher recruitment, English teachers’ language proficiency is considered critical for successful English education. Nevertheless, teacher’s ability to use English does not seem solely responsible for learning-inducing English classrooms. A testimony can be found in the English dilemmas in countries where learning the language is intricately connected to being educated and making a success. Cleghorn and Rollnick (2002) describe the way African secondary schools are pushed to use English as an instructional language for all classes, dictated by the countries’ needs to rebuild their foundation and take part in the international community. In these classrooms the teachers are near native speakers, yet many of the students are from rural areas where English has

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1 Following Freeman (2001), the term, teacher-learner is used for an individual who is learning to teach.
never been part of the people’s lives. These students evidently fail in school since their lives outside school do not provide reasons to acquire English, which, in turn, makes learning English in school hard, and consequently makes them fail even in other school subjects. Japanese problems with secondary English education, reported by Gorsuch (2000), reveal a similar English dilemma with a different face. The main issue in this case is lacking English input around English classrooms, which can be construed as the natural result of the country being foreign to English and its culture, similar to the situation in Korea. Secondary school English teachers in this study are said to oppose CLT, which is recommended by the national curriculum. The main reason for opposing CLT is that the teachers see the method as obstructing efficient teaching of English. The teachers are said to argue for teaching correct English through clear explanation and demonstrations.

Mandatory policies for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) seem to face many obstacles unless learners are historically and geographically close to English speaking countries as in Sweden and the Netherlands. People in these countries are described as fluent English users living very close to English media and culture (personal communication). English learners from these countries may reach the competency of “sophisticated skills of argumentation and persuasion,” needed to compete in the changing global society (Warschauer, 2000, p. 519). For this level of English proficiency, its teaching and learning may need to stem from real needs and motivation felt by entire society, not just from education protocols or policies.

2. L2 Teaching Methodology

Since CLT became the favorite over the Grammar-Translation method or the Audio-Lingual approach in second language teaching, the words such as ‘comprehensible input,’ ‘learner-centeredness,’ ‘meaningful interaction,’ and ‘context’ (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982; Long, 1981; Savignon, 1991) are omnipresent in discussions on second language learning. These constructs point to ‘learner-initiated meaningful learning’ similar to natural first language learning. For more pinpointed and time-efficient learning, explicit grammar teaching is suggested (Doughty, 2003) on the acknowledgment that the due course language acquisition takes cannot be interrupted (Pienemann, 1989). Larsen-Freeman (2001), with her “grammaring” argument, claims that grammar teaching needs to be approached in three dimensions of form, meaning, and use. She argues that grammar work should not be the typical form practice only but with accompanying meaning and use, then it can be practiced the same as the four language skills even if it is done consciously.

The socio-constructivist view of language learning pictures L2 learning as a societal endeavor with other people (Bruner & Ratner, 1978, cited in Fosnot, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). While acknowledging the language learner’s role in constructing language, this
perspective advocates the notion that “social interaction is central and fundamental to language acquisition” (Gersten & Hudelson, 2000, p. 85).

Among the socio-constructivist understandings of language learning (Atkinson, 2002; Gee, 2004; Valdés, 2004), Gee (2004), in his argument for sociocultural learning, contends that language learning is all about ‘cultural models’ learning. Gee asserts that the learner does not learn a general or generic form of language, but learn “a specific form of language (specific social language)” triggering “associated cultural models” (p. 24), situated in a particular context with particular users of the moment. Gee argues that L2 learning should be learning to enact “a specific socially-situated identity” and to engage in “a specific socially-situated activity” (p.13) through language with the cultural model of the discourse community, “the big picture” (p. 20) in the background.

An attempt to promote learners’ sociocultural competence in L2 learning is found in Savignon and Sysoyev (2002), who tried out teaching Russian learners of English strategies to participate in L2 social and cultural situations. Miller (2004) reports on her involvement with migrant and refugee ESL learners in Australia. With the understanding that knowing the Discourse, i.e., ways of words of the community, which enact the ‘right’ socially-situated identity and activity, is the key, she attempted to coach her learners to become “real players of the Discourse game” in the community through learning English (p. 143).

In sum, language learning means learning the rules of putting words together, at the same time, learning the rules of relating to other people through the words. These occur in the learner’s head, out in the situation, and between the two, simultaneously, and various teaching models may lead the learner to the mastery of these rules.

3. The Effect of Teacher Beliefs about Proficiency Goals

In a study of Korean secondary English teachers’ use of English in class, Liu at al. (2004) conclude that the teachers do not use enough English, and do not follow educational policies coming from outside. In relation to the educational initiative of ‘English classes conducted through English,’ the teachers self reported to have used English words average 32% of the total amount of the words uttered in class. The authors estimate that a typical teacher would use around 10%, too low considering the initiative. The reasons for not using English in class were (1) the teachers’ own difficulties with English, (2) the students’ poor ability in general to comprehend class work contents given in English, and (3) the need to conduct class in Korean for class management. The teachers did not seem to agree to the national policy recommendation, and they conducted their classes the way they considered appropriate. Other studies with Korean English teachers (Guilloteaux, 2004; Jung-Won Han & In-Jae Jeon, 2005; Li, 1998) found similar reactions to CLT in secondary
Previously mentioned Gorsuch (2000) study on Japanese English teachers is, again, about secondary school teachers’ following their beliefs against a national educational policy. The Japanese high school teachers are described as adamant in their personal and professional beliefs about teaching English mainly through language analysis, not conceding to the national policy of CLT. The teachers’ beliefs about teaching ‘correct’ English to the student are cited as the main reason for going against CLT backed up by L2 acquisition research. The teachers’ apprehension over their communicative English proficiency is said ranked third in their list of the reasons. In relation to non-native teachers’ teaching decisions, Medgyes (2001) discusses the significance of English proficiency in the decision making process. Citing his previous research results, Medgyes claims that due to insecurity over their proficiency, non-native teachers are reluctant to implement more communication-centered work, and prefer formal study of language, which does not pose the danger of unpredictable language situations.

Sarroub’s (2001) report, however, shows that teachers do not oppose educational initiatives invariably. In the study of a foreign language program in the state of Nebraska, the author shows a case of teachers’ accepting a new educational policy wholeheartedly. The state foreign language committee proposed to teach its students foreign languages in a partial-immersion program, and provided its teachers with a work plan developed in detail, “the standards.” The teachers accepted the standards that came with specified goals and action guidelines for syllabus development. Once a rapport was established, the teachers put in extra hours and efforts to prepare for classes compatible with the standards, which they referred as “a guideline,” “a backbone,” or “a unifying concept” (p. 504).

Schulz (2001) study on US and Columbian L2 teachers’ attempts to put CLT into classrooms shows similar teacher aspiration to go forward with prevalent theories in the filed even in unfavorable circumstances.

According to Johnson and Golombek (2002), teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about teaching are largely constructed out of their past experiences of learning and teaching. Furthermore, how teachers use their knowledge in the classroom is “highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work” (p. 1). In the vein of socio-constructivism, which regards language learning as a result of much expertise guidance, the “technical-rational view of teaching,” which perceives language learning mainly as a personal endeavor of “aptitude and effort” may need to be “re-sourced” (Freeman, 2004, p. 193). The teacher is requested to view teaching as mentoring, and is expected to coach the learner through the complex process of analyzing the language and experiencing it in communication.
III. METHOD

This study was carried out in the principle of qualitative study through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. An on-spot survey on anticipatory proficiency goals for secondary English education was used to initiate the participants into talks on their beliefs about the goals and teaching methods.

1. Participants

Twenty students enrolled in a graduate school of education majoring in English teaching participated in this study. Out of the twenty, five participants were in their 5th, last semester of the graduate program, two were in the 4th, and the rest, thirteen were in their 3rd semester at the time of the interview. The participants had their undergraduate studies in English related majors or minors, and were training to earn the permit for secondary English teaching. These teacher-learners, two males and eighteen females had various teaching experiences from elementary school part-time teaching to teaching at private English institutes, to private tutoring. Their English proficiency as in standardized test scores was not inquired due to their reluctance to reveal the information. One participant attended middle school through college in an English speaking country.

2. Data Collection

The interviews were scheduled throughout the year 2006, and the teacher-learners were interviewed individually by the researcher after they completed their teaching practicum. Each interview lasted for the average of one hour in the range of 46 to 97 minutes. One interview was tape-recorded, and the rest were digitally recorded.

The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format with a proficiency goal questionnaire and a six-item conversation guide. At the onset of the interview, the teacher-learners were given the questionnaire (see Appendix) inquiring their anticipatory proficiency goals for Korean secondary English education. The questionnaire, developed with the ACTFL proficiency guidelines as a reference, was prepared mainly to assist the teacher-learners in the interview in verbalizing their beliefs about the proficiency goals. It had four proficiency level statements for each of the four language skills; from ‘proficiency to carry out every day businesses’ to ‘proficiency to participate in social events or discussions on broad social issues.’ To provide more specific ideas about each proficiency level suggested, actual language using situations arranged in the same proficiency level orders were added in the questionnaire.

Once the teacher-learners completed the questionnaire marking for the proficiency goals,
the interview was initiated going over the markings, and then proceeded to a conversation on the ways to teach the future secondary English classes for the proficiency goals chosen. The conversation was led by a six-item conversation guide: (1) class work contents; (2) roles for the teacher; (3) proportion of instruction through English; (4) needed proficiency level for English teachers; (5) capability of conducting classes for the anticipatory proficiency; and (6) personal ways to study English and present proficiency level.

The interviews were carried out as a conversation between the teacher-learner and the researcher, both interjecting questions and comments freely on any given topics. The 20 interviews of total 20 hours and 40 minutes were transcribed verbatim by an assistant.

3. Analysis

The analysis consisted of several stages of multiple readings of the interview transcripts and categorizing emerging patterns. The analysis was based on the principle of qualitative study of seeking the universality resides in a particular case (Erickson, 1986) and seeking transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of emerging patterns into other similar contexts. The first stage readings found the following overall themes: (1) the teacher-learners’ having difficulty in identifying proficiency goals from the language use perspective; (2) their negative reaction to implementation of CLT in the classroom; and (3) their positive perception of strong teaching.

With the themes as a guideline, another set of readings resumed, and through which any themes revealing in the data in connection with the overall themes were identified. Some examples of the themes at that level were ‘opportunities for English use and study,’ ‘class work,’ ‘study materials,’ ‘grammar explanation,’ and ‘teacher’s English proficiency.’ Through subsequent readings, these themes were collapsed into four categories: class work; teacher roles; English use behavior; and English study behavior. Through the ensuing reading, the data were examined again and marked with any pertinent categories of the four, and then with each category as a heading, the data were catalogued for the next level of readings.

From the next level of readings overall patterns emerged, and at this stage the emerged patterns were formed into clear statements (from the teacher-learners’ view point) for feedback from the teacher-learners. Total eight statements were formed:

1) The goal of secondary English education should be building communicative competence.
2) The present ‘English for tests’ has insignificant influence on proficiency building.

Communicative competence building comes on the strong basis of structural understanding, and explicit study of grammar and vocabulary should have priority over communication-oriented work in class.
3) The present textbooks are not suitable for carrying out the work described in the previous statement, and they are particularly lacking in eliciting the learners’ interest in English study.

4) The main role for the Korean secondary English teacher is a class provider with given English input, not necessarily an input provider.

5) The traditional ‘knowledge giver and receiver’ relation between the teacher and the student is not desirable; however, the teacher needs to have firm control over the entire classroom.

6) The teacher should be equipped with appropriate English proficiency to provide proper classes and deal with students’ questions, and my present English ability needs improvement to reach the level.

7) Setting up realistic English proficiency goals for the entire secondary students may be difficult.

With the feedback on the statements gathered via e-mail, the patterns of the teacher-learners’ beliefs about secondary English proficiency goals and teaching methods were reshaped finally into the following five patterns:

1) Prevalent study perspective, not use perspective in deciding the proficiency goals
2) Priority of knowing grammar explicitly for communication
3) Preference for teaching-centered English class regardless of teaching methods
4) Teacher qualities identified more with text/grammar analysis skills than with English skills
5) Weak consideration of actual English practice/use (for students)

The overarching themes of the five patterns were identified as ‘usage’ and ‘teaching’ in contrast to ‘use’ and ‘communication.’

IV. FINDINGS

1. Usage, not Use

While the teacher-learners exhibited a range of anticipatory proficiency goals on the questionnaire\(^2\), they showed one strong tendency of deciding English proficiency goals in terms of the possibility of study to reach the goals in Korean context. Along with it, they

\(^2\) The responses to the questionnaire were not statistically calculated for this paper on the basis that the responses were reflected in the ensuing talk, as it was the intention of using the questionnaire in the interviews.
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stressed the importance of explicit knowledge of ‘necessary English grammar’ and other formal properties of the language for better communication ability.

1) Proficiency Goal Setting from Study Perspectives

The teacher-learners described their choice of goals as ‘ordinary ability to carry out everyday businesses, not too professional.’ However, to the question of ‘Whether having a discussion on a current political issue reported in the newspaper is an everyday business or too professional,’ the teacher-learners had various responses. Even with this individual variation, the majority of the teacher-learners indicated somewhere around the first three levels in each skill as the proper goal level for secondary English education. Unlike this range in anticipatory goals, each individual teacher-learner’s criterion for deciding the proper goals was from the same, predominant study perspectives even though the questionnaire was presented in use perspectives, as in “What should one be able to do with English when he completes secondary school English education?” The teacher-learners expressed difficulties felt in approaching the goals in terms of use when reminded of the question, and mentioned that it was hard to imagine the situation, for example, any Koreans calling businesses for information in English. Throughout the proficiency goal discussion, the reference point was ‘if they could learn it in high school.’

It should be possible to handle a specified topic of one’s interest. It might be hard to manage conversations on various social issues even if current. They should practice more oral skills than written ones (in high school). (MJ3)

Another teacher-learner had a different set of goals in mind, yet her approach was based on the same study perspective.

The reading skill can go higher than speaking since we do a lot more of reading at school. We do not do too much writing, but it can be learned at school as well. (JH)

The teacher-learners were unable to imagine the kinds of everyday English use in Korea in any general or particular contexts beyond giving directions to some visiting foreigners on the street. For the level of ‘conversations on specified topics,’ their initial reactions were “Such is the college level” (WS), and “Until one’s job is decided, one would not know the kind and level of English one would need to use” (EK).

3 The participants’ names are initialized.
The reaction that anything over the everyday greeting level should be tried and learned at college level was dominant among the teacher-learners. They were not convinced even at the suggestion from the questionnaire: An ordinary Korean high school student/graduate attends a fan meeting for a famous international star, and communicate in English with the star and other participants. They seemed to consider high school only a preparation stage for college, and think a good English user should be a college graduate.

This understanding was extended to thinking that it would not be necessary to expect every high school graduate to be able to use English since Koreans would not need English to take care of everyday businesses. UE contended by pointing out that not everyone would work in a company where the work should call for communication in English. Some teacher-learners had the argument that at high school level English learning should be about preparation for future use.

I think we need to learn the base of English in high school. Then once we leave school and become a working member of society, we can learn any specific contents such as vocabulary whenever needed and put them into the base we built in high school. (EK)

It may seem commonsensical that the teacher-learners approached the goal from the study point of view. The fact that ordinary Koreans seldom use English for communication in Korea probably affected the teacher-learners’ decision making on the proper proficiency goal level. Even though the national curriculum specifies the goals of communication for secondary English education, the majority of secondary English teachers do not follow the goal guidelines as observed by the studies (Guilloteaux, 2004; Liu, 2004). Likewise, the teacher-learners seemed to dismiss the goals. Naturally, the teacher-learners could not make their own minds for the proper proficiency goals from the use perspective. Even though general English at college is not pursued as strongly as English in high school, ability to use English seems to be left to college education to foster.

Where English is not used for general communication, setting up goals for the general population of English learners may be impossible if not approached from the ‘study’ point of view. This, subsequently, can influence one’s attitude to English learning and use, as it seemed to be the case with the teacher-learners.

2) Prioritizing Explicit Grammar Knowledge

The one, clearly emerging theme in this discussion on secondary English proficiency goals and teaching methods was the importance of knowledge of grammar and other formal language properties in learning and using English. The teacher-learners insisted that
students in Korean EFL context should have explicit understanding of English grammar and its usage. They particularly differentiated this grammar knowledge from the grammar traditionally taught in English classes, which is arranged in advance by a syntactic syllabus and studied mainly for discrete-item tests. HeJ described her belief in knowing core English grammar to put into real use when needed.

These days, studying English myself, I realize that I pay more attention to the real usage of grammar pieces. I used to accept grammar as explained typically in the grammar book, like that ‘should’ we talked about (in a class previously). Now, (since after the explanation of its specific meaning as ‘a strong suggestion’) I see why that ‘should’ is used in the particular spots in anything I read. I see the present perfect used here and there is exactly where it should be (as I know now through clear and specific explanation with drills), and so on. I’m clear about the meaning and function of these grammar pieces. (HeJ)

The provision of a grammar explanation of explicit analysis and clear positioning in a proper context made HeJ appreciate even grammar drills in the English classroom. Most of the teacher-learners were still aggressively studying English, and they had long experience of rote learning of grammar pieces of unclear meaning and functions. From those experiences, the teacher-learners contended that the most fundamental base of accomplishing English proficiency had to be knowing the meaning and function of grammar and other necessary former language properties. They seemed to believe that such knowledge could be formed when given explicit explanation and clear demonstrations with examples in context. The teacher-learners insisted that the grammar knowledge they were seeking was the kind directly applicable to real communication, and different from the old grammar analysis.

Grammar explanation should come in example sentences. The ones typically used in the grammar books wouldn’t do. We need to have usage samples from real texts. We need to present the text to the student, and have them actually see how any particular grammar piece is used in the context. Need to show real contexts. (ES)

HU revealed similar understanding coming from her own experience as a learner.

When we have to make sentences to talk (at the institute), it can actually be very easy …but we think about relative pronouns and things…. We cannot go about it any other way but ‘this is a complex sentence with ‘that’ and we need
to use this…” Now I know, with only a subject and a verb, I can say the thing I wanted to say. But, then, we could not help trying to figure it out first within the entire grammar book in our head. (HU)

HU’s argument points out the problem of teaching/trying to learn the entire analysis of English grammar incompletely with some typical sentence samples. The teacher-learners rejected this type of English grammar knowledge, which they considered good only for tests.

The grammar in the high school textbooks is very difficult. Most of the students do not know that level. The reading texts in the textbooks are like expository essays. The contents of the textbooks are not everyday easy stuff, and the structure used is a high level as well. (JY)

JY stated that high school textbooks were not following the traditional syntactic syllabus; nonetheless, they were continuously trying for “completion of English grammar.” English classes and teachers, JY continued, would force the students to study the grammar presented in the textbook even though they could process only so much. As a result, according to the teacher-learners, Korean students’ grammar learning in secondary school might be entirely incomplete, and test scores, even high ones and even ones from well-established standardized tests, would reflect something other than the actual proficiency of the score holder. The teacher-learners stressed that grammar presented in class should be the one the student could understand, learn, and put into use later when needed.

As much as they opposed the current grammar instruction in secondary school for its rote nature, the teacher-learners were against the idea of building implicit knowledge of English grammar through CLT in the classroom. For these teacher-learners, the implicit knowledge was another kind of ‘incomplete grammar.’ JM contended that students would be exposed to mostly incorrect grammar pieces in communication activities, and they would not be sure whether they had the grammar right. In the EFL classroom context, JM continued, it would be hard to reach the correct grammar through the activities to communicate their meanings, for the learners could make their meanings crossed even with many grammatical errors which could not be corrected easily without clear corrective coaching.

By the same token, the teacher-learners opposed the attempt for ‘English only for English classes.’ They argued that for effective analysis and explanation of grammar, Korean should be used considering the English proficiency of both the teachers’ and the students’. The teacher-learners conceded that the students should be exposed to much spoken English in the classroom. However, they added that grammar study should be done first, for the students
should know about English (YJ). To make English grammar and other usage explicit for the students to learn, this group of teacher-learners strongly recommended grammar explanation be contextualized in real sentences and situations when presented to the students (MJ). ES laid out probable grammar work for this purpose as in ‘teacher’s and students’ co-analysis of texts on topics and themes of students’ interest, and application of this analysis to real situations represented in sentence/paragraph samples.’

All in all, the teacher-learners believed in explicitly knowing English grammar and other core language usage, which could be directly applied to language use. Their illustration of the content and role of grammar study in the classroom seems to coincide with what Larsen-Freeman (2001) argues with her ‘grammaring.’ The teacher-learners assigned the utmost importance to explicit grammar learning, while suspending any other learning of English that might occur in communication activities. It is obvious that these teacher-learners were not approving the CLT motto of ‘learning by doing’ at least for Korean secondary school learners. Subsequently, the teacher-learners seemed to disregard the idea of providing opportunities for language use in the classroom. They have not seen it happening in the real classroom, and would not concern themselves with the matter. They were, rather, preoccupied with ways to conduct English classes to teach grammar meaningfully without resorting to communicative activities.

2. Teaching, not Communication

As the teacher-learners saw knowing English grammar explicitly as the most fundamental in secondary English education, the English classroom they projected was about grammar and its teaching. Contrary to the CLT position of putting learning before teaching, the teacher-learners in this study were much into the action of ‘teaching.’ In other words, the method the teacher-learners believed in for more effective L2 classroom was active teaching regardless of class work formats or contents.

1) Teaching-centeredness

The classroom described in the teacher-learners’ talk about their future teaching can be called a teaching-centered classroom. This classroom can be described as teacher-centered in the end, yet it signals distinctively the thinking that ‘teaching should occur first for learning to happen.’ Teaching was the precursor of learning, according to the teacher-learners. They were against the saying, “Let learning happen,” a theme in CLT and the Krashenian motto, ‘Language will emerge.’ The teacher-learners did not seem to believe in the ‘CLT creed’ especially with Korean secondary students in the Korean context.
The English education with the old grammar-translation failed because it was nothing but feeding grammar analysis for memorization. Now we’re reacting in an extreme way. We’re at the other end. It’ll take some time to gain the balance. Now, things are for communication-centered approaches. But we’re learning EFL, and we mostly start learning English in middle school. For our situation, we cannot expect something like ‘English will burst out through communication,’ or ‘Other countries tried that and were successful, so we do it that way.’…It’s nonsense. (EK)

EK argued that communication-centered English teaching had not been possible in Korean secondary school in general, so what the teacher could do in class was teaching the text provided in the textbook, that is, analytic reading without proper explicit grammar explanation but with very mechanical analysis. The teacher-learners were sure that to be able to use the language, learners should know grammar explicitly with its subtle meaning in various language contexts. Therefore, grammar practice with mechanical analysis for rote learning was the last thing the teacher-learners envisioned for their English classes. The teacher-learners spoke from their experiences: They were frustrated for being unsure of the properness of the grammar they had learned and were using for communication purposes. They literally accused the old system, i.e., the classes and the teachers, of not ‘teaching’ them grammar, but giving them some mechanical textbook grammar analysis.

The rationale the teacher-learners put forward for insisting ‘teaching (grammar explicitly) first’ was that Korean situation is not for natural learning as contended by some second language acquisition theories. As the teachers in some Korean English teacher studies (Seonghee Choi, 2000; Guilloteaux, 2004; Li, 1998), the teacher-learners cited secondary students’ low proficiency in general as the reason for not relying much on communication activities and other implicit ways to teach grammar (JHe). The fixed secondary school English syllabi, discrete-item tests, and lacking class hours were also mentioned as their arguments against implicit ways of teaching grammar. The teacher-learners saw these factors as tying the teachers’ hands in considering the communication options in secondary English classrooms.

The teacher-learners seemed convinced, naturally, that good instruction to make the students understand the grammar was the way. However, these teacher-learners were against the one-sided teaching, typical in the teacher-centered classroom. JS revealed her thought speaking about a class she had observed during her teaching practicum in a high school.

(The teacher was doing the ‘read, analyze, and translate’ reading single-handedly) I think even in regular reading work with text (not a communication activity), the
teacher can divide students in groups and assign them cut-off pieces of the text to work themselves on the structure and the content. I thought the text was easy enough for the students to handle. It was just one paragraph, one page. There were just a couple of sentences with relative pronouns. Other than that, just vocabulary problems. There, I think, he could have involved the students in the work. But he did it all by himself. (JS)

‘Teachers doing everything’ was not what the teacher-learners were thinking of for their ‘teaching-centered’ classrooms. HJ, with an activity as an example, described how the class should provide for students’ active involvement.

It is not likely that the teacher teaches everything, and then students get that completely. Yet, if the teacher does not teach (leaves students on their own), classes become uncontrollable. The teacher should prepare lessons and teach (conduct) classes by them. If it’s a (student-centered) activity, the teacher circling around the classroom (during activities) is part of teaching…They monitor... But, what happens usually is that the teacher is in the center and the students are looking at her for teaching. I wish things went differently for that matter. Students might look at the teacher when she explains things. But it shouldn’t be like ‘the teacher brings in some contents (to teach) and just pours them out on the students.’ The teacher should prepare lessons for classes; some for direct teaching, and some for students’ work on their own. (HJ)

The teacher-learners seemed to blame for their not-so-successful learning as students the traditional teacher-centered classroom as much as the mechanical grammar analysis. They criticized the teacher-centered way for putting the students in the passive position by “simply giving them the grammar they were to learn” (JY). The old way was to blame for not allowing the student time and opportunities to react (HR) as well as not teaching them to do the translation applying grammar but giving them the translation (HU). In YH’s interpretation those classes were a series of one-man shows where the teacher did all the talking and the students did not understand what the shows were about. As a way of avoiding all such meaningless teacher-centered classroom scenes, the teacher-learners suggested the teacher being a conductor of the class as if it were an orchestra (Brown, 2001). In this classroom the teacher has complete authority, and by this authority she allows students to do their roles for their independent work, of course, under her fully developed blueprint of the lesson.

The emphasis on teaching in this context is as much in contrast with teaching the one-sided, teacher-centered class as found in Gorsuch (2000) with Japanese teachers, as it
is with teaching the communication-centered class. Medgyes (2001) reports that non-native teachers hold more onto non-communicative, teacher-centered teaching when they are self-conscious over their language proficiency. However, this teaching-centeredness the teacher-learners advocated seemed beyond the kind of teaching where the teacher is mainly a knowledge transmitter. The teacher-learners were for authority as the mastermind of the class, who, according to her plan, would allow students initiative to pursue learning on their own. Classrooms, they contended, in which the teacher had no authority and could not control, would not induce learning (MJ) especially with students of low English competence (JHe) and of various proficiency levels (MJ). They imagined themselves as the head of a well-controlled classroom where the teacher is equipped with the necessary knowledge and would dispense it in the way most positive to students’ learning.

This quest for authority did not seem to stop at teaching methods. The teacher-learners asserted that the content of English work at school, mostly from the textbooks, needed change for their classrooms. They pointed out that the textbooks did not do the job of reflecting the students’ interests and needs. Consequently, they argued, the teacher as a person who could perceive students’ needs firsthand should have say over materials, syllabi, and even the curriculum.

In sum, the teacher-learners contemplated ways to teach “correct” and “useful” grammar knowledge, believing that students’ analytic awareness of grammar is the better means to untangle the Korean English learning dilemma. They contended that the teacher should teach actively while managing classes with authority looking over the whole process.

2) Teacher as a Text/Grammar Analyst, not an Input Provider

As they emphasized explicit grammar knowledge for true communicative competence at the end, the teacher-learners counted as the most important quality of an English teacher the ability to “give clear explanation and correct answers to students’ questions” (JHe). They also considered significant the ability to present prescriptively how each necessary element of grammar works in the language. In that vein, HeJ called the knowledge the teacher should have “immeasurable,” for giving satisfying explanation could not be easy.

The posture the teacher-learners envisioned as their future role seemed a text ‘interpreter,’ not necessarily a text ‘provider.’ They had expressed their wish to be heard in producing class work materials; however, it was not, by any means, wanting to produce themselves English text to be used in class. Instead, they wished to have the liberty to select materials themselves, so that they could start the job of preparing the materials to provide a satisfying class. They would analyze, explain, give samples, model, answer questions, and make sure that the students would learn everything worthy to learn from the materials.
As the teacher-learners projected, when the classroom is not a place to try out language for communication, it does not necessarily require teachers with near-native proficiency or native speakers. The teacher-learners claimed that the desirable English teacher in the Korean context could not be a native speaker, or who would not understand the mechanism of the Korean context of English learning and the Korean secondary school. A Korean national who “knows a lot about English” (JHe) and naturally sees quickly the areas where the student might have problems is the one, most suitable, according to the teacher-learners. JH contended that if a teacher could not manage to answer questions about English in class, the student would begin to doubt the legitimacy of the teacher. In such a circumstance, the student would not take the teacher seriously, and any good activities or native-like oral proficiency could not compensate for this mistrust. JH asserted that when a teacher did not have native-like fluency, which would not be most fatal in the secondary classroom they argued for, she could convince her students that their teacher was “good enough in English” to be their teacher by practicing to build good intonation and pronunciation, as long as she could support them with good explanation and correct answers.

The teacher-learners agreed that having near-native proficiency is desirable for English teachers in any kind of classrooms. Yet, they seemed to conclude that such level of proficiency would be unreachable for most Korean English teacher candidates, and they figured that they could make up as a reliable text interpreter by improving in the areas of English structure analysis through study. It is not clear if the teacher-learners were stressing the analyst-teacher role because they were self-conscious over their English proficiency as Medgyes (2001) pointed out. Roughly, the teacher-learners who appeared more fluent seemed more positive about being the input provider even though as a group they all identified themselves as needing improvement to become the teacher they were describing as desirable and did not exhibit confidence over being the input provider.

On their estimate of the secondary school teachers’ and teacher-learners’ English proficiency being insufficient for CLT, the teacher-learners added that those who had such proficiency would not teach schools (HJ), but work in businesses (HU) which would be more prestigious than teaching. The teacher-learners’ reading of the kind of English proficiency Korean society asked of the secondary school English teacher was not the one of English users’ whose talk and writing could be used as English text for class. This reading of the teacher-learners’ seemed to sustain their notion of a “good” teacher for secondary English classrooms, or vise versa. In the Korean reality of English education, it may be natural to land a conclusion that the teacher for the secondary English classroom does not have to be an input provider, but a good English text and grammar analyst.
V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Twenty teacher-learners’ beliefs about proper proficiency goals for Korean secondary English education and subsequent teaching methods can be categorized as pro usage and pro teaching in contrast to pro use and pro communication of the prevalent CLT principles. The teacher-learners were clear on their position of ‘active teaching of explicit grammar for better communicative competence building in the student.’ While accepting communicative competence as the goal for secondary English education, the teacher-learners were not sure of proficiency goal levels for secondary English in terms of use. The teacher-learners seemed to side with the understanding that secondary school English would not be for language use (practice), but for study. Moreover, according to their opinion, CLT could not be implemented effectively in Korean secondary classrooms. Instead, the teacher-learners asserted the priority of knowing core grammar and other English usage, which can be delivered through strong teaching-centered methods and aggressive instruction. Consequently, the teacher-learners did not see the English teacher in secondary school as a person who should support the students with English input through English practice (use). Rather, they saw the teacher as a person who could analyze and explain grammar and input for a better learning outcome.

Korea being an EFL environment where English communication is not often needed around people in general, ability to communicate in English is a skill one seldom uses even if one has it. Yet, this condition does not exempt Koreans from the burden of having to have the ability to use English in the globalized world. Subsequently, Koreans are required to possess the skill, however difficult it may be, for future use. Learning by doing rarely happens as a result, and people, including the teacher-learners, begin to doubt the possibility of its happening in Korea. The teacher-learners in this study were trained under the CLT principles of second language teaching/learning. However, they seemed to have taken the theoretical training selectively guided by their own English learning experience and influenced by the societal stance on English learning. They put students in the center as CLT principles promote, at the same time, they hold onto the teacher-mastermind stance believing in ‘teaching.’ As a result, the teacher-learners create the vision of the teacher providing well-pruned knowledge suitable for the students with hopes that this knowledge transmitted with the students’ consent can bring positive results. The teacher-learners seem to have left out the understanding agreed by most L2 learning theories: Knowledge of grammar cannot be meaningfully stored in the learner for later use without real use at learning in the first place.

Communicative language teaching may not be the answer to every L2 learning situation. Yet, one cannot argue that language learning does not have to involve practice, that is, use. At this, the ‘usage over use’ position of the teacher-learners’ raises a question: Where could
the secondary school students practice English to achieve the proficiency level the teacher-learners themselves indicated as needed? The teacher-learners seemed to assume that college should take up the responsibility of providing English skills learning for incoming students. This attitude of the teacher-learners’ may be reflecting common understanding Korean society seems to have of English and its learning: English is an important and hard to learn skill which is not ordinarily accessible. Therefore, English skills cannot be learned through general education in secondary school, but takes costly extra study outside. This sentiment can be sensed from the teacher-learners’ comment: English proficiency being an impressive skill, one who has it would not teach schools, for being a teacher does not yield the prestige the skill promises. If future secondary English education continuously dismisses actual English practice at school, English proficiency has to be continuously an expensive skill to acquire and a prestigious ability to possess.

This study is with twenty teacher-learners from one educational institution. By that token, the result needs to be interpreted with a limitation, and cannot be applied to educational situations in general. In that context, this study brings up several points that may apply to future Korean secondary English education and teacher education.

First, the secondary English curriculum goals need to be realistically restructured. Its goals for building proficiency, which, in turn, is requiring the teachers to speak English in class regardless of particular classroom conditions, incapacitate the whole process and everybody involved. An assessment should be made of who needs what kind of English proficiency to build, and a detailed multi-level secondary English curriculum should be constructed accordingly. This way, secondary English classrooms may actually become English practice (use) sites for potential learners of constructive needs and motivation.

Second, English curriculum restructuring needs to pay attention to the new generation English teacher candidates, who react to the prevalent trend of CLT with a critical eye. They are firmly grounded on their own English learning experience of ‘what works and what does not’ and have potential to become an ever-assertive teaching force for/against government educational initiatives.

Finally, to ensure communication-fostering secondary English classrooms, English, as an instructive medium, needs to be forced where it is most practical, at English teacher training. Along with theory and methodology courses offered in English, teacher-training programs need to reinforce courses in English skill training. And teaching permits should be issued only to the ones who successfully finish mandatory hours of English skill training in the program with passing grades.
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APPENDIX

Questionaire

What should be the proficiency goals for future secondary English education for communication? Mark all levels applicable.

A. Final proficiency goals for secondary English education

**Speaking**
- Carry out an everyday friendly conversation (    )
- Carry out a conversation on popular social events/issues (    )
- Have a conversation/give a talk on specified issues with personal interest (    )
- Have a conversation/give a talk on broad social issues (    )

**Listening**
- Understand an everyday friendly conversation (    )
- Understand media reports on popular social events (    )
- Understand a talk on specified issues of personal interest (    )
- Understand a talk on broad social issues (    )
Reading
Understand personal letters/ memos, notes for everyday matters (   )
Understand written news reports on popular social events/issues (   )
Understand written material on specified issues with personal interest (   )
Understand written text on broad social issues (   )

Writing
Write notes, memos for everyday matters (   )
Write about personal opinion on popular social issues (   )
Write about personal opinion on specified issues with personal interest (   )
Write critically on broad social issues (   )

B. Final proficiency goals in terms of actual use

Speaking
Have a conversation with friends (   )
Take care of every day businesses--shopping, visits to doctor’s office/ school,
Housekeeping related matters, traveling (   )
Have an informal conversation on current news (   )
Talk on the phone with friends (   )
Call offices /businesses for information (   )
Join fan meetings for favorite entertainers (   )
Join discussions on social issues (   )
Participate in a question session at a talk by a famous author (   )
Give a talk on one's specialty area (   )

Listening
Listen to public announcements (   )
Listen to songs (follow along) (   )
Watch TV (   )
Watch movies (   )
Attend a talk by a famous author (   )
Attend a talk by an academic (   )
Reading
Read personal letters (    )
Read notes, public announcements (    )
Read newspapers/ magazines/ information on the internet (    )
Read novels (    )
Read college-level educational materials/non-fiction publications (    )
Read professional publications (    )

Writing
Write letters to friends (    )
Write notes, memos (    )
Write business letters (    )
Write formal reports (    )
Write for newspaper opinion sections (    )
Write professional reports (    )

Applicable levels: secondary and tertiary
Key words: proficiency goals, teaching methods, teacher education, teacher-learner beliefs

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