IN THE MIDST OF ELT CURRICULAR REFORM:
AN ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS’ AND STUDENTS’
EXPERIENCES IN SOUTH KOREA

A Thesis in
Applied Linguistics
By
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the extent to which the communicative language teaching (CLT)-based English curriculum reform in South Korea is being experienced at the local level after a decade long efforts of Ministry of Education. The study specifically focuses on the extent to which teachers understand the curriculum and implement it in their own classrooms. The study also explores students’ perceptions of their teachers’ classroom instruction under the current reform.

Activity Theory (Leont’ev, 1978, 1981), more specifically, Engeström’s human activity system model (1987, 1993, 1994, 1999a) is used as the theoretical framework for this study in order to capture the dynamic relationship between the institutional, social, and individual factors. With the premise that every human activity system is fundamentally unstable causing various contradictions (Engeström, 1987, 1993, 1999a), the study identifies contradictions that emerge as participants engaged in English teaching and learning and the way they resolved the contradictions that existed.

The participants were two middle school English teachers and seven students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall interviews in addition to relevant documents. Data analyses were conducted primarily through a grounded content analysis following ethnographic traditions (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Erickson, 1973) and through content analysis for document data. Engeström’s human activity system model was also applied to the data to capture current activity systems and their inherent contradictions.

The overarching contradiction identified in the study is grounded in the growing sensitivity of the need for the curricular reform while at the same time the observed
institutional inertia that maintains the status quo of the South Korean English education system. Most salient was the influence of the exam-oriented institutional and social atmosphere described by all participants as defining English learning as what would be on the school exams. Coupled with the participants’ beliefs about language learning and teaching and their ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 2002) based on their prior schooling experiences, the government’s CLT-based curriculum had little impact on the observed activity systems. Based on the findings, the study presents implications as well as suggestions for South Korean policy makers, English teacher educators, and English teachers.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Statement of Purpose

English education in South Korean public schools has undergone significant changes since the introduction of the so-called 6th curriculum. The Ministry of Education announced the introduction of English as a subject area in the elementary schools and the communicative approach as a method of instruction. The introduction of a series of new policies placed considerable pressure on the existing English educational system (Kwon, 2000). In 2001, when the first generation of elementary school students who learned English as a school subject entered junior high school, the 7th curriculum was launched. The curriculum formally adopted performance-based tests and classes divided by students' proficiency levels for the first time. Along with an emphasis on the development of students' communicative competence, the Ministry of Education proposed a Teaching English through English (TETE) policy. Since the communicative approach was still novel to most South Korean teachers of English and the level of English language proficiency of many Korean teachers was low, this new policy was perceived to be extremely challenging for many teachers to implement (Choi, 2000, Kwon, 2000).

It is against this historical backdrop that this study of South Korean teachers’ perceptions of and practices in these English language educational policies is set. While there are many factors that lead to the success of curricular innovation, the role of teacher has been cited as most critical (Bailey, 1992, Fullan, 1993, Karavas-Doukas, 1998, Kennedy, 1988, Li, 1998, Markee, 1993, 1997, Richard, 1998, White, 1987). Since the

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1 The formal name of the South Korean Ministry of Education is ‘The Ministry of Education and Human Recourse Development.’ However, the term, ‘the Ministry of Education’ is used throughout this paper.
success of curricular innovation rests largely on teachers’ roles as curriculum implementers, research into how teachers of English in South Korea understand current educational reforms and how they carry out their teaching practices under such policies is important. Not only will it tell us how teachers understand and act within such mandates, it has the potential to enable teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers to more effectively implement curricular innovations.

Unlike previous studies of EFL curriculum innovation at the national level (Choi, 2000, Harrison, 1996, Karavas-Doukas, 1995, 1998, Kim, 2002, Li, 1998) that have largely ignored the role that particular institutional contexts have on how individual teachers make sense of curriculum innovations, the present study focused on the complex relationships between teachers’ understandings of and practices within the new curriculum in their own instructional contexts. The fundamental questions here are how teachers construct their perceptions and practices within these curricular mandates and, at the same time, how these same perceptions and practices serve to simultaneously construct the contexts from which they are derived. This view is predicated on the belief that teachers’ perceptions and practice are fundamentally social, historical, and situated (Engeström, 1994, Freeman, 2002, Freeman & Johnson, 1998, Johnson, 2006, Sakui, 2004).

In addition, so far, few studies have examined students’ roles in the implementation of curricular innovation, and only a few have examined college students’

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2 The concept of 'context' in this study is not limited to "the reduced form of environment or cause" (Lave, 1988. Zuckerman, 1993, as quoted in Cole, 1996, p.137). The concept of 'context' is compatible with the concept of 'activity system' in this study (Engeström, 1993; See the Theoretical Framework section for the explanation of activity system). In the framework of an activity system as a context, "the combination of goals, tools, and settings (including other people and what Lave, 1998, terms "arena") constitutes simultaneously the context of behavior and ways in which cognition can be said to be related to that context" (Cole, 1996, p.137).
experience with communicative approaches to English language learning (Chen, 2003, Rao, 2002, Savignon & Chaochang, 2003). Given that students are the ultimate target of curricular innovation, the present study incorporated students’ understanding of their teachers’ instructional practices under the curricular reform efforts.

As a lens to understand South Korean teachers’ and students’ perceptions of and practices under current curricular mandates and the relationship to their instructional contexts, this study used activity theory as the primary theoretical framework (Engeström, 1987, 1993, 1999a, Leont’ev, 1978, 1981). Activity theory proposes that human cognition is not embedded within persons themselves, rather, it emerges during human actions in which artifacts, persons, objects, and others are mediated and mutually influence each other (Cole & Engeström, 1995). Therefore, understanding teacher’s perceptions and practices within the contexts in which they work is important because their perceptions are products of their actions within these contexts and vice versa.

In particular, Engeström's (1987, 1993, 1999a) activity system model was adopted for the present study (Figure 1 in chapter 4). This model defines the components that shape human actions and cognition that emerge and are situated within an activity system. Using this model, the researcher sought to understand teachers’ and students’ perceptions and instructional practices within the context of Korean curricular reform. Specifically, this was accomplished through an examination of each component of the activity system which included but was not limited to, how teachers' actions are constructed, what kinds of artifacts play a role in achieving their goals, what motives drive certain actions, and what kinds of rules their communities of practice follow.
The participants of the study were two South Korean junior high school teachers of English who were teaching the 7th grade. In addition, the current study included seven students selected from these teachers’ classrooms. In order to understand the ideologies embedded in the English language educational policies in Korea as well as the interface between the mandated curriculum and teachers' perceptions of it, various documents such as curriculum manuals and classroom artifacts were also collected and analyzed.

Interviews were conducted to undercover teachers’ understandings of two curricular policies, communicative language teaching\(^3\) and teaching English through English (TETE), as well as their perceptions of English teaching and learning in general. Videotaped classroom observations along with stimulated recall interview data were collected in order to identify the ways in which their instructional decisions and practices are influenced by these curricular mandates. Next, the participating students from each teacher’s classroom were shadowed and interviewed to uncover their perceptions of their teachers’ instructional practices. Students were also shown videotaped excerpts of their teachers’ instructional practices and asked to recall how they experienced those practices.

These procedures were designed to understand how Korean English language teachers understand the current curricular reform policies, specifically communicative language teaching, how the teachers construct their instructional practices under the influence of these policies, and how students experience their teachers’ instructional practices. Three research questions this study addresses are as follows;

1. What are Korean English teachers’ perceptions of current curricular innovations?
2. In what ways do these curricular innovations impact Korean English teachers’

\(^3\) The policy is articulated in terms of “communicative activities to improve learners' communicative competence” in the 7th English curriculum manual at junior high school level (Lee, 2002).
instructional practices?

3. How do students experience their teachers’ instructional practices?

1.2. Historical and Contextual Background

The learning of English in South Korea has long been regarded primarily as a means of getting high scores on university entrance exams. This is due mainly to the fact that English, as a subject, is considered to be of relatively greater importance compared to other subject areas. Because the content of the entrance exam is mainly grammar and translation, English teaching methodology has long been grounded in the grammar-translation approach and audiolingualism. The result of this history has been poor speakers of English in Korea (Chosun Ilbo, 2000, The Ministry of Education, 1998).

As English becomes the lingua franca, an inability to communicate in English has been reported to be a major problem in the fields of business, politics, science among others (Chosun Ilbo, 2000). As a result, the 7th South Korean presidential administration highlighted the importance of English language study when it began a "globalization" campaign aimed at enhancing South Korea's rapid economic growth and internationalization (Ministry of Education, 1997, as cited in Jung and Norton, 2002). As a result, English became even more important for personal and professional success in Korean society. Getting a good job and being promoted within a South Korean company has come, at least in part, to depend upon one’s English ability (Ko et al., 2006, Nunan, 2003). Furthermore, students proficient in English possess an advantage when applying to university. At enormous expense, Korean parents now send their young children to English speaking kindergarten classes with the hope that they will become proficient
speakers of English (Nunan, 2003). Many parents also decide to send their children to schools in English speaking countries at an early age in spite of the enormous financial burden and parental sacrifice (Ko et al., 2006, Nunan, 2003). In Korean society today, English has come to be regarded as a must-have ability in order to succeed.

This nation-wide fever over learning English, fueled by a growing capitalist ideology, stimulated specific changes in the English educational policies of South Korea. In an effort to compensate for outdated English educational policies and in order to redesign current pedagogical methodologies, the Ministry of Education of South Korea introduced the communicative approach in the aforementioned 6th curriculum (Kwon, 2000, Li, 1998, Nunan, 2003).

This 6th curriculum had many important effects. Compared to previous curricula that were based on either grammar-translation or audio-lingual methodologies, the introduction of the communicative approach posed a significant challenge for English education in South Korea. More specifically, the concept of ‘communicative competence’ as the ultimate goal of language learning was quite novel to teachers. Textbooks were revised with the goal of improving students' communicative competence (Sim, Moon, Park, & Kwon, 1998). However, South Korean teachers of English expressed their concerns over implementing the communicative approach; various institutional constraints such as large class size, lack of materials, and the washback effect of the entrance examination were mentioned as the reasons for their concerns (Choi, 2000, Li, 1998).
Despite these concerns, the Ministry of Education continued to revise the curriculum and in 2001 launched the 7th curriculum\(^4\). The goals of communicative language teaching were further refined with junior high school level students being expected to;

1. be interested in and confident in the English language and cultivate basic (language) ability to communicate, 
2. be able to communicate fluently about everyday lives and general topics, and 
3. be able to understand diverse foreign information and foster the ability to use it, 
4. be able to recognize the value of and have a positive attitude toward South Korean culture by understanding other cultures.

(Ministry of Education, 1998, p.29)\(^5\)

To meet these goals, the Ministry of Education revised the textbooks in accordance with the principles of the communicative approach, and the college entrance exam toward assessing English language learners’ communication skills, for instance, expanding a listening comprehension section (Cha, 2000).

In the process of implementing the 7th curriculum, a Teaching English through English (TETE) policy was also proposed by the Ministry of Education. According to this policy, teachers are required to use English throughout their lessons, in other words, beyond using language needed merely for the purposes of instruction (Lee, 2001, Liu et al., 2004), to developing English language learners' practical communicative abilities.

\(^4\) In 2006, the Ministry of Education proposed the revised 7th curriculum in which revised and more detailed guidance for proficiency-based class was made. However, there is no change in the tenet that the communicative approach is the primary instructional method. (The Ministry of Education, 2006)

\(^5\) In this paper, original Korean statements appear first by being followed by their English translations. Some phrases or statements that are more relevant are typed in bold.
Recently, the South Korean Ministry of Education decided to teach English from the first grade in elementary school reflecting a nation wide interest in learning English in South Korea (Lee, 2006)\(^6\). Also, it announced that every middle school in South Korea will have had a least one English native speaker teacher by 2010 (Lee, 2006).

As such, a lot of changes have been occurring in South Korean English Education. However, what actually happens in classrooms as a result of the curricular reform and the policies that followed has hardly been examined. With this historical background, the current study examines how teachers perceive these imposed curricular reform policies and the extent to which they implement them in actual classrooms. This study also investigates how middle school students, as the final recipients of the curricular reform efforts, experience their classroom English language learning.

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\(^6\) English has been taught from the third grade in elementary school in South Korea since the announcement of the 6th English curriculum.
Chapter 2
Review of Relevant Literature

2.1. Introduction

2.2. The Context of Curricular Reform

Fullan (1991), based on Levin’s (1976) study, points out three forces that effect educational reforms: natural disasters, external forces, and internal contradictions. While natural disasters are physical environmental factors, external forces and internal contradictions can be regarded as sociocultural factors that effect educational reform. While external forces are defined as those coming with, for example, influxes of “technology, values, and immigration” (ibid. p.17), internal contradictions occur as a community adapts to various external forces. In most cases, internal contradictions appear as ideological conflicts or value changes, while adaptation to external forces occur in particular contexts due to demands placed on educational settings. Interestingly, the time in which Levin identified these factors is much different from the 21st century in which external forces move from one place to another at a very high speed due to technological advancements and globalization. As external forces increase, so do internal contradictions, demanding new solutions to the internal contradictions in many fields, including education.

In a similar vein, Cooper (1989) maintains that social change generally accompanies language changes. “The appearance of new social and cultural patterns of behavior among specific groups within a society or within the society as a whole” (p.64) can cause language policy to change. Beside social changes, Calderhead (2001) describes two additional reasons for educational change: the first comes from “dissatisfaction with the products of the existing educational system,” and the second is that education tends to be “linked to notions of future national property” (p.777). In other words, the goal of education is to produce a competent workforce that will ensure leadership in the world
economy, politics, science, and other fields. When the current educational system fails to achieve this goal, an alternative education system is often proposed.

The current English language curricular reform efforts in South Korea can be understood in the light of these explanations. In the midst of rapid globalization, South Korea’s dependency on other countries has dramatically increased. In this climate, the English language has become the lingua franca. Thus, in order to compete in the global economy let alone in other fields, English language skills are believed to be essential. Such views are evident in the national discourse of government and industry but also evident in the public’s values of and attitude toward English in South Korea (Chosun Ilbo, 2000, Lee, 2006a, 2006b). In this milieu, public school English education in South Korea has been criticized and is under enormous pressure. Most importantly, public school English education has failed to produce a competent English speaking workforce (Chosun Ilbo, 2000, Ministry of Education, 1998). Such dissatisfaction laid the groundwork for the current English language educational reform movement.

Yet, even with the creation of the 6th and 7th curriculum, implementation at the national level has not been as simple or as easy as many policy makers envisioned. As is common with top-down curricular reform movements, discrepancies between the policy makers’ intentions and the practitioners’ understandings of the policy have frequently led to ineffective implementation or no curricular change at the level of the classroom (Block 2002, Choi, 2000, Harrison, 1996, Karavas-Doukas, 1995, 1998, Li, 1997, Morris, 1984, Sakui, 2004). That is, policy makers’ naïve expectations about curricular innovations led to time, energy, and money spent on designing the innovations, but very little attention was paid to the process of implementation in the past (Fullan, 2000, Karavas-Doukas,

Among them, Markee (1994) defines curriculum innovation as “a phenomenon that involves managing developmental changes in the design, implementation, and maintenance of teaching (and/or testing) materials, methodological skills, and pedagogical values that are perceived as new by individuals who comprise a formal (language) education system” (p.1). Markee’s point is that curricular innovation should be regarded as novel to the relevant community members for its successful implementation. Along with this, he argues, development of materials and their use with appropriate methodological skills should follow. Most of all, in order for a curricular reform to be fruitful, community members should develop “new value systems and pedagogical belief” (ibid. p.20) which appreciates and adopts the new materials and methodologies developed.

In the case of the current curriculum reform in Korea, the changes in textbooks can be regarded as the use of new materials while group work or learner-centered activities are examples of methodological skills to be adopted. Most importantly, along with visible changes in materials and methodologies, changes in the educational values embedded in the new curriculum must be accepted by all participants for successful curriculum innovation implementation. Only when there is a balance among these three components, Markee concludes, will curriculum innovation be successful. His suggestions are noteworthy in that they can guide more feasible curriculum changes not only in the South Korean context but also in other contexts. It also suggests that changes
in an education policy, materials, or teaching skills do not guarantee successful curricular reform, projecting the importance of human resources in terms of what they value and what they believe.

Teachers are the most critical human resources in curricular reform efforts and Fullan (1996) points out the continuing professional development of teachers is a key for successful educational reform. He mentions that while teacher education is the “worst problem,” it is the “best solution” for successful curriculum implementation at the local levels (1998, p. 1). Fullan also warns that if teacher education in curricular reform efforts is not accompanied by changes in the institutional conditions in which teachers work, it is impossible to expect teacher education programs to establish new ‘norms or practices’ that will result in the fundamental transformation of teachers and their teaching practices. As such, changes in context and human resources cannot be viewed as separate matters because both are intricately connected for the fruitful implementation of any curricular reform.

2.3. The Impact of CLT-based Curricular Reform on Classroom Instruction

Several studies have been done regarding the influence of CLT-based curricular reform on English language learning classroom. Researchers have examined classrooms, both in terms of how teachers implemented newly imposed curricula and what impact it had on their instructional practices (Carless, 2001, Harrison, 1996, Hiramatsu, 2005, Karavas-Doukas, 1995, 1998, Liu et al., 2004, Morris, 1984, Sakui, 2004, ). On the other

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1 What Full (1996) means with changed ‘institutional condition’ is that schools are “(1) professional learning communities for the teachers, where they value what it is that they are doing together, they work at it, and are skilled at it; and (2) are focusing on the performance and learning of students and on improved pedagogy” (p. 499).
hand, other have examined the impact of curricular changes based on teachers’ self-reports (Choi, 2000, Kim, 2002, Li, 1998).

Karavas-Doukas (1995) examined the implementation of communicative approaches to English language teaching in secondary schools in Greece. She conducted a study of 14 different teachers’ classroom practice, observing each teacher on a single occasion in which she focused on the teachers’ roles during the lesson. Based on her observations, she concluded that the teachers had not implemented more communicative approaches, but rather were teacher-centered, acting as an “authority, transmitter of knowledge and evaluator of students’ language” (ibid. p.57). She concluded that the implementation of more communicative approaches in the Greek secondary schools was unsuccessful. Subsequently, she interviewed all 14 teachers and asked them to identify the factors hindering their use of communicative approaches. According to the interviews, teachers reported having negative attitudes toward the new textbooks, lack of teacher education programs, theory-centered teacher education programs, teachers’ lack of understanding about the curricular innovation, and students’ preferences for private language institutes.

Based on these results, she concluded that the importation of CLT methodologies neglected to recognize the educational context of Greece, where teachers and students had long been socialized into competitive, teacher-centered, and explicit grammar-based instruction. In addition, the lack of communication among the stakeholders involved in the curricular implementation, for example, the curriculum developers, foreign language advisors, teacher trainers, and teachers, was cited as being responsible for the failure of this curricular innovation.
The contribution of this study is that it created a space for the views of teachers to express their struggles with the processes of curricular implementation. However, it does not provide a comprehensive picture of how teachers attempt to work within curricular reform initiatives.

Harrison’s (1996) research looked at the impact of curricular innovation in Oman, after the Omani government’s decision to shift to a communicative syllabus. By comparing data from before and after this curricular innovation, Harrison explored whether the new curriculum had positively influenced pupils’ English language learning at the elementary school level. He collected data from various sources, including interviews with supervisors, teachers’ opinions as expressed in teacher meetings, and his own classroom observations.

In interviews with eight supervisors who were familiar with the pre-and post innovation contexts, half maintained, based on their classroom observations, students’ overall English fluency had increased after the adoption of the new curriculum. However, the data from the teachers’ meetings found that teachers were unsure as to whether there had been significant changes in learners’ English fluency. This is interesting because differences in perception between supervisors and teachers may also be a reflection of discrepancy between administers and practioners.

Harrison also observed two teachers’ classrooms before and after the curriculum innovation and accompanied textbook changes to see if teachers’ and learners’ verbal behaviors had changed. Using Brown’s Interaction Analysis System (BIAS) (Brown, 1975), in which both teachers’ and students’ verbal behaviors in a classroom examined, Harrison found variable changes in one teacher’s verbal behavior compared with what he
observed two years before. For instance, in one teacher's class, the amount of class time devoted to lecture decreased, whereas the time spent reacting to pupil responses increased. Also, the amount of class time in which students spent responding to the teacher’s questions and directions significantly increased. On the other hand, however, the other teacher, who had more experience than her counterpart, showed no significant changes in her verbal behavior both in terms of quantity and quality. Subsequently, no significant improvements were found in her students’ verbal behavior in the latter teacher’s class.

Harrison concluded that the detected change was the result of the Omani government’s new policy. Therefore, he argued that the Omani government’s curriculum innovations had an indirect impact on learners’ speaking ability but only as mediated through teachers’ verbal behavior during instruction.

Harrison's study is interesting in that it actually examined the impact of a particular curricular innovation on the verbal behavior of teachers and students in language classrooms. Also, this study clearly pinpoints the importance of the teacher's role in implementing any curricular innovation. That is to say, when there are changes in teachers’ instructional practices, students may have opportunities to change how they learn language in a classroom setting.

At the same time, his study provides a basis upon which further research can be built. That is, although it attempts to objectify behaviors through the use of the BIAS observational scheme, it captured an etic perspective, similar to Karavas-Doukas’s study. An emic approach, in which the teachers and students are given the opportunity to relate
their own understandings of the curricular innovation is valuable in providing a fuller picture of the effects of the implementation process.

Finally, Harrison defined the concept of change narrowly, only in terms of increased verbal behavior. However, the concept of change might also include why the behavior has changed or not and its overall impact on students’ English language proficiency. By examining the reasons and rationales for changed or unchanged instructional verbal behavior, a more in-depth understanding of the curriculum impact on local contexts is possible.

Carless (2001) reported on a case study in which an elementary school teacher implemented a government-initiated curriculum successfully in her class in Hong Kong. The Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC), in which instruction is task-based and work toward specific classroom goals, was proposed in 1994 by the Ministry of Education in Hong Kong. Data were collected using an attitude scale, classroom observations, and, three interviews with the teacher, before, during, and after each classroom observation. The study concluded that the TOC policy had a positive impact on the teacher’s language teaching practices since the teacher was found to adopt the main features of TOC. From the interviews, Carless attributed the primary reason for the positive impact to the teacher’s positive attitudes toward the new curriculum. Since the goals of the new curriculum were compatible with the teacher’s teaching philosophy and professional training, the innovation was positively perceived and implemented by the teacher. Moreover, institutional support, for example, the principal’s support for the new curriculum also enabled this teacher to successfully implement the curricular innovation.
Therefore, Carless argues that teacher attitudes, training, and understanding of the innovation are three critical factors for successful curricular innovation.

Carless’ study is valuable because it utilized interviews and observations over a longer period of time within a unique instructional context. In addition, unlike Harrison’s study in which the forces for change were not examined and unlike Karavas-Doukas’ study where the instructional contexts were not fully considered, this study is based on in-depth descriptive data of the teacher’s perceptions and practices in her own particular context. Like the other studies reviewed above, his study reiterates the importance of the teacher in implementing curricular innovations.

### 2.4. The Role of Teacher in Curricular Reform

#### 2.4.1. Teacher’s belief system

As shown in the Carless (2001) study, teachers’ perceptions, particularly their attitudes toward curriculum innovation, play a crucial role in the implementation of a new curriculum. By defining a teacher’s belief system as the interactive combination of a teacher’s beliefs, attitudes, and values, Pajares (1992) points out that “the potent affective and evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them (knowledge and beliefs) a filter through which new phenomena are interpreted” (p. 325). Therefore, a teacher’s belief system can be a “predictor” of a teacher’s classroom behavior (p. 311). In a similar vein, Richards (1998) points out that not only are teachers’ attitudes critical for successful implementation of curricular innovations, but also teachers’ “values, expectations, and assumptions” are important as well (p. 66). As such, many different affective aspects of
teacher cognition constitute a teacher belief system, and its influence on a teacher’s instruction is undeniable under any curriculum reform effort.

In addition, both Pajares (1992) and Richards (1998) argue that teachers’ belief systems cannot be viewed only as a personal but also as a social and contextual process. Richards calls for attention to the importance of teachers’ belief systems within the social contexts in which teachers have been socialized as students and where they find themselves working as teachers. Pajares (1992) also argues that without an understanding of the context in which teachers work, research on teacher’s beliefs is limited to an abstract level. Thus, the context-specific nature of teachers’ belief systems should be considered in research on teaching, and for this study, in the context of curricular reform.

Another relevant point Pajares makes is the unchanging nature of teachers’ belief system. By arguing even “when conceptual change takes place, newly acquired beliefs must be tested and found effective, or they risk being discarded,” he highlights the inert nature of teachers’ belief (p.321). He further contends that “changes in beliefs follows, rather than proceeds, change in behavior” implying the emergence of consciousness from human activity (p.321, italics are added). Consistent with this, Fullan (1982) suggests, “the relationship between [teacher’s] beliefs and behavior is reciprocal – trying new practices sometimes leads to questioning one’s underlying beliefs; examining one’s beliefs can lead to attempting new behavior” (p. 247).

When the above argument is applied to the context of curriculum reform, teachers whose belief systems are inconsistent with what a curriculum policy imposes are likely to be resistant or indifferent to the curriculum mandates. Changes in teachers’ perception and teachers’ behaviors will occur only when such changes are perceived as effective and
fruitful within the context in which they work. If this is the case, policy makers must be responsible for creating a supportive network in which teachers come to question their current beliefs and are open to adopting new instructional practices that are consistent with curricular reform efforts.

The examination of teachers’ belief systems can provide a more comprehensive understanding of why a teacher’s implementation of a curriculum mandates occurs in certain ways but not others. By connecting English language teachers’ beliefs to the South Korean institutional and social contexts in which they have come and continue to function, this study recognizes the crucial role that teachers’ beliefs plays in shaping their practices within the context of curriculum reform.

2.4.2 Teacher Knowledge

In addition to teachers’ belief systems, teacher knowledge is to central to understanding the role of teachers involved in curricular reform. Without understanding how teachers learn how to teach and how they construct and use their knowledge about teaching and learning, it is difficult to understand how large scale curricular reform may impact upon their instructional practices.

Freeman (2002) asserts that teacher knowledge cannot be viewed separately from the contexts in which teachers teach. Also, by saying “knowledge in the classroom is widely networked; it brings together past experience and future goals within the context of present activity and interaction” (p. 9), he calls attention to the importance of understanding the various experiences that make teachers who they are. By the same token, Johnson (2006) questions the prevailing premise that there is or should be a
uniform knowledge based for language teaching that is separated from “the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where L2 teachers learn and teach” (p. 245). Teacher knowledge is understood to be at “the intersections of experiential and expert knowledge” (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p. 734). That is, when teachers come to recognize, articulate, and transform what they do in their own unique instructional contexts (experiential knowledge) through the lens of expert knowledge they are exposed to in seminars, workshops, or teacher education programs, they become active theorizers and make decisions about what and how best to teach based on the unique circumstances in which they are teaching (Johnson, 2006).

For example, Sakui (2004) found that expert knowledge alone had little impact on teachers’ classroom practices under curricular reform. In a case study of CLT-based curriculum reform with English teachers of secondary schools in Japan, she interviewed twelve Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in secondary schools and observed three of those teachers among the twelve teachers for a year. The findings revealed that in spite of the teachers’ ability to articulate and agree with what the government expected in terms of the communicative approach, the teachers’ lessons remained teacher-centered and grammar-oriented. Only when the teachers did team teaching with their native speaker counterparts were some communicative activities used in their lessons.

Sakui’s analysis shows the convergence of both personal and social factors. Similar to the finding of Carless’ (2001) study, Sakui found that teachers’ personal beliefs and attitudes toward CLT had a significant impact on their instruction. Because the teachers believed that grammar was central in language learning, it was legitimate for
them to focus on teaching grammar. Also, even though teachers seemed to understand the basic principles of CLT, there were no noticeable changes in their actual teaching practices.

Sakui’s research reconfirms the importance of teachers in the implementation of mandated curriculum. Calling for changes in the nature of professional development for teachers, her study reveals that teachers are not passive recipients of educational policies or theories imposed on them. Rather, as Sakui recounts, “teachers are not transparent entities who fulfill curriculum plans and goals as prescribed by their authors, but who filter, digest, and implement the curriculum depending upon their beliefs and environmental contexts” (ibid. p.155). In addition, she points out the interwoven nature of both personal and sociohistorical factors by reminding us that teachers’ beliefs and knowledge cannot be understood separately from the institutional and social contexts in which they emerge and operate.

2.5. Students in CLT-based Curricular Reform

While a large number of studies have focused on teachers’ perceptions of CLT-based curriculum innovation, several studies have began to pay attention to students and how they experience these innovations (Chen, 2003, Rao, 2002, Savignon & Chaochang 2003, Shamin, 1996,). Whereas some studies found that students preferred the communicative approach (Savignon & Chaochang, 2003), other reported students’ resistance (Chen, 2003, Rao, 2002, Shamin, 1996). Although it is important to recognize that any curriculum reform efforts have been filtered through teachers to students,
understanding students’ experiences can provide crucial insights for understanding curricular reform efforts.

Savignon and Chaochang (2003) conducted a survey of 174 college students in Taiwan and asked about their experiences as language learners in secondary schools. They found that students remembered most of their English learning classes as “form-focused” and decidedly negative. The students preferred “meaning-based” approaches where they had chances to actually use English. This finding is significant in that students appear to prefer more communicative approaches to language learning. Despite their lack of exposure to “meaning-based” approaches, they longed for an approach that was different and what they believed to be more natural.

However, Chen’s study (2003) focused on students’ resistance to the communicative approach revealing both social and personal factors as shaping students’ experiences in communicative language classes. Chen followed the two quietest students in an English as Second Language (ESL) writing class in an American college, and conducted in-depth interviews that revealed both students’ reserved personality and their socialization through their schooling in Japan and Korea made them very reticent to participate in communicative activities, such as group discussions or collaborative tasks. In addition, the study uncovered the students’ anxiety about oral participation as a key factor in their ways of participating. Chen contended, “interwoven affective, linguistics, and sociocultural factors contribute to the students’ infrequent participation” (p. 271).

This study suggests that the competitive and exam oriented Asian schooling contexts where few cooperative or communicative tasks are found left students feeling uncomfortable with the communicative approach. As found in Rao’s (2002) and Hu’s
(2002) studies, different educational expectations – for example, when silence is regarded as a virtue- socialized students into being passive in the language classrooms. By examining how Korean middle school students experience CLT-based curricular reform, the current study may help us develop a more profound understanding of why CLT-based curriculum may be challenging to implement.

2.6. CLT-based Curricular Reform in South Korea

Within the South Korean curricular reform effort, two studies examined teachers’ perceptions of the communicative approach (Li, 1998, Choi, 2000), while two others dealt with teachers’ perceptions and practice regarding the Teaching English through English (TETE) policy (Kim, 2002, Liu et al., 2004).

Li (1998) surveyed and interviewed 18 Korean English language teachers in secondary schools about the feasibility of CLT in South Korea. He collected data through questionnaires and follow-up interviews a year before the implementation of the 6th curriculum innovation, in which the communicative approach was first introduced.

Findings showed that teachers’ English language abilities were most frequently mentioned as a perceived obstacle to implementing CLT. In addition, their lack of training in CLT, and lack of strategic and sociolinguistic competence were also mentioned. Contextual issues within the educational system, specifically large classes, grammar-based examinations, and lack of support were mentioned as well. Additionally, students’ low proficiency, lack of motivation, and their resistance to class participation were perceived as other obstacles to implementing CLT. This study was the first to explore the adoption of CLT in South Korean public school contexts. However, given
that this study was conducted before the 6th curriculum was implemented, it only captured teachers’ preconceptions of the feasibility of implementing the 6th curriculum.

In 1998, Choi (2000) distributed questionnaires to 97 junior high school teachers in Seoul, Korea in order to understand teachers’ perceptions and practices regarding the implementation of the communicative approach. Unlike the teachers in Li’s study, it was found that teachers expressed positive beliefs about CLT overall and supported the communicative approach. Also, the results showed that their instructional goals were compatible with the principles of CLT in terms of teaching the four skills communicatively.

Yet despite these positive attitudes, self-reports about their teaching practices, indicated that they spent more time teaching reading skills suggesting that in practice they did not emphasize the four skills areas equally or communicatively. Given that reading comprehension is an important skill to pass university entrance exams, the researcher concluded that the ‘washback’ effect of these exams is most likely the reason that teachers continue to focus on reading skills at the expense of the other skills areas. Thus, despite their positive attitudes toward CLT, these attitudes were not realized in their actual practices. Accounting for the discrepancy between their beliefs and practices, most teachers pointed to both personal and contextual factors, such as large classrooms, a lack of authentic materials, and their own low proficiency in oral English.

Examining the TETE policy as a part of 7th English language curriculum innovation, Kim (2002) explored whether factors such as school, gender, academic major, teaching experiences, and the frequency of classroom English use, had an impact on teacher’s anxiety level and whether the teachers believed there were beneficial effects
of using English to teaching English. Questionnaire data were collected from 14 elementary, 5 middle school, and 34 high school teachers. Most teachers reported that those who used more English in the classroom felt less anxious about the TETE policy and believed there were, in fact, beneficial effects on learners and themselves. On the other hand, teachers cited learners’ low motivation and unfamiliarity with English as the language of instruction as inhibiting their use of English to teach English.

Most recently, Liu, Ahn, Baek, and Han (2004) examined Korean high school teachers’ use of English under the current curriculum. They audio taped and transcribed one lesson from 13 teachers and analyzed how much English was used, categorizing English use according instructional functions. Similar to Carless (2001) and Sakui (2004), they found that teachers’ beliefs about using English had a significant influence on the extent to which they actually used English; namely, teachers who had positive attitudes toward the policy with the belief that more use of English will help students to learn English had a tendency to use more English during instruction. This result again highlights that teachers’ beliefs have a tremendous impact on the extent to which they are willing and able to implement mandated policies.

While Liu, Ahn, Baek, and Han’s study (2004) examined actual classroom discourse in South Korean English language classrooms, it failed to account for the dynamics of how teachers’ socio-historical biographies and professional contexts, other than their positive attitude toward the policy, influenced their classroom practices. Instead, it limited itself to counting the occurrences of English utterances according to their instructional functions without recognizing particular discourse features, such as
what and why certain utterances occurred or what resulted from the use of such utterances.

2.7. Summary

The research reviewed here on curricular reform highlights general issues such as the driving force behind curriculum innovations and factors that lead to successful curriculum reform to specific issues such as curricular reforms built around a CLT-based philosophy of learning language. While the importance of teachers’ beliefs in implementing CLT-based curriculum is critical, teachers’ language proficiency also plays a vital role in the implementation of curriculum mandates.

In the South Korean context, it is apparent that teachers are often reticent to implement the CLT-based curriculum even though they may have positive attitudes toward it. Additionally, when teachers are confident with their level of English proficiency, they tend to use more English and feel less anxious about the TETE policy. Students on the other hand, are both receptive and resistant to communicative language instruction (Chen, 2003, Rao, 2002, Savignon & Wang, 2003, Shamin, 1996).

Even though this growing body of research provides invaluable information regarding CLT-based curricular reform effort, much of it is based on teachers’ self-reports without attention to how teachers’ instructional practice shape and reshape their perceptions of CLT and their instructional activities. Given that any new curriculum reform must be implemented in such a way that enculturates both teachers and students into new ways of participating in the new social practices of teaching (i.e.; CLT) and given that teachers and students influence each other as the members of same community,
only when they are viewed together in the context of their activities, is it possible to see how curricular reforms are understood and shape the nature of English language teaching in South Korea.

Therefore, this study examines teachers’ and students’ perceptions of and practices under the current curricular mandates in order to better understand how the co-construction of human perception and action and their inseparable relationship with the contexts within which they function are working to shape school English language instruction in South Korea today.
Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

In order to examine teachers’ perceptions and practices within the context of curricular reform in South Korea, this study used activity theory as a theoretical framework. Activity theory is compatible with the goal of this study because the theory states that human cognition and human actions are interdependent in their development and cannot be considered outside the contexts in which they occur (Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Thus, the goal of this study is to examine the dialectic relationships between English language teachers’ perceptions, practices, and their contexts, by examining how they perceive the current curriculum and how their instructional practices reflect their perceptions, and the role of socio-historical contexts in the construction of teachers’ perceptions and practices.

In addition, as Thorne (2004) maintains, the purpose of activity theory is “to define and analyze a given activity system, to diagnose possible problems, and to provide a framework for implementing innovations” (p.18). That is, looking into certain human practices from an activity theoretical perspective provides a holistic view of various human practices as well as the human agency within these practices, while also helping to find inner contradictions in these practices, and ultimately determining possible solutions for decreasing or removing such contradictions (Engeström, 1993, 1999a, Rohrer-Murphy, 1999, Thorne, 2004).

The human activity system model (Engeström, 1987, 1993, 1999a, 1999b) was adopted as a primary framework to understand teachers’ perceptions of their practices and teaching practices in their contexts. Engeström’s model is based on the primary
tenets of activity theory (Leont’ev, 1978, 1981). First, this theory, having its theoretical root in socio-historical theory, maintains that human activity is fundamentally artifact-mediated and goal-oriented. While people pursue goals utilizing various artifacts, human’s cognition is situated and developed through human activities. Also, human activities have been uniquely constructed in societies through their histories. Thus, secondly, activity theory emphasizes the social and collaborative nature of human activities. That is, with the emergence of the ‘division of labor’ in communities, human beings do not function individually or independently from others, but they mediate and are mediated by other human beings and social relationships, as well as by various artifacts (Engeström, 1999a).

As a way to depict how individual activities are interwoven with other individual activities and thus how and where individual thinking emerges in contexts, Engeström (1987) suggests a model of a collective human activity system as follows.

**Figure 1. An Activity System Model (Engeström, 1999a, p.31)**

Each component of a human activity system is explained as follows (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, 1998);

“The subject refers to the individual or sub-group whose agency is chosen
as the point of view in the analysis. The object refers to the ‘raw material’
or ‘problem space’ at which the activity is directed and which is molded and
transformed into outcomes with the help of physical and symbolic, external
and internal mediating instruments, including both tools and signs. The
community comprises multiple individuals and/or sub-groups who share the
same general object and who construct themselves as distinct from other
communities. The division of labor refers to both the horizontal division of tasks
between the members of the community and to the vertical division of power
and status. Finally, the rules refer to the explicit and implicit regulations, norms
and conventions that constrain actions and interactions within the activity
system.”

By adding three more components of the human activity system to the basic
triadic representations of human actions, Engeström succeeds in visualizing the social
and collaborative nature of human activities. In particular, the notion of ‘division of
labor’ illustrates how individual actions are incomplete without the collaboration of other
members in the same activity system. In a language classroom, for instance, teachers
cannot function without students, but when teachers and students participate in activities,
the language classroom performs its basic function.

‘Rules’ in the model illustrate how human activities are tuned to and controlled by
explicit and implicit rules, some of which have been ritualized throughout history (Cole
& Engeström, 1995). And these rules sometimes control human actions while achieving
certain goals either by constraining or utilizing certain behavior. For instance, one
socially situated and historically constituted rule in the Korean classrooms is to sit quietly
and listen to what teachers say. Yet, in the context of curricular reform, this rule is
contrary to the basic tenets of the communicative approach where students are expected
to be active participants, thus exposing a major contradiction within this activity system.

In addition, as inferred from the multidirectional arrows in figure 1, each
component in the activity system influences the other either directly or indirectly. For
instance, if teachers change their goal for an activity which results in the choice of a
different artifact, this may also require a change in the rules and divisions of labor within
that community. Moreover, these dynamic influences occur among different activity
systems. As is the case with English curricular reform in South Korea, the government
(one activity system) imposed a new curriculum that language teachers are supposed to
follow in their classrooms (another activity system). Thus, human actions and activity,
which may seem to be independent on the surface, are actually intertwined, influenced
by, and influence each other.

Based on his model, Engeström (1999b) suggests that situated activity systems be
the unit of analysis. By examining any situated activity system as a whole, it is possible
to observe and analyze certain phenomena in integrated ways (ibid. p.172). For instance,
when examining teachers’ perceptions and practices, as will be the case in this study,
other components will be considered simultaneously, since teachers’ perceptions and
practices are constructed and reconstructed by all components of the activity system.

By taking the activity system as the unit of analysis, we can overcome two
different limitations that Engeström (1999a) notes in previous research of human
cognition and behavior. First, this approach can serve to prevent research from becoming
an "individual biology” (p.26) in which the narrow focus comes at the expense of a
broader picture of the fuller context being captured. This is achieved by recognizing and
considering the collaborative relationships among the components of the activity system. In addition, by focusing on human agency as the subject of the activity system it is possible to prevent the research from becoming an overly general cultural story which can potentially neglect individual contributions toward the construction of that context. That is, the activity system as the unit of analysis enables us to identify the indivisibility of human activity from the functional activity systems (Thorne, 2004).

Besides observing all of the components within the activity system, the concept of history is also a very important explanatory tool for a better understanding of the present manifestation of an activity system. Because an activity system contains the results of all previous activity systems that have influenced it, history is represented in the current activity system (Cole & Engeström, 1995). Thus, in this study, the teachers' history of learning and teaching as well as the history of educational policies in Korea will enable us to better understand how English language teachers' current activity systems are constituted.

Another important concept in activity theory is that of ‘inner contradiction’ which is defined as the “clash between individual actions and the total activity system” (Engeström, 1987, p. 31, italics are original). Engeström (1999a) mentions the importance of studying inner contradictions by pointing out the unstable and unpredictable nature of human action. He also points out that finding “disturbance, innovation, and contradiction” (1999b, p.177) is useful in that it can reveal to us the status quo of the target activity system as the first stage in resolving any contradiction that the activity system may be facing.
Contradictions are regarded as a precondition for the study of activity (Leont'ev, 1981, cited in Engeström, 1987). In order to highlight the importance of contradictions in human activities and cognition, Leont'ev (1981) argues that, if a study doesn't deal with inherent contradictions, it is the same as studying the "psyche of abstract man," an idealized individual in which the psyche is static and no contradictions exist (p.255). However, since it is unavoidable that humans experience contradictions, such an approach is untenable. Ilyenkov (1982, pp.82-83, cited in Engeström, 1987) points out that universally accepted norms or rules actually originate as exceptions or deviations when they originally emerge. Thus, this is how history has evolved. Therefore, examining contradictions exposes both the explicit and implicit norms of a present activity system as well as predicting its future.

Engeström explains that contradictions within an activity system are inevitable since human activity is not stable or consistent in nature. As a rationale for identifying the contradictions in an activity system, Engeström (1993) notes:

If (an ideal type of an activity is) imposed upon concrete data from “top down,” they tend to eliminate multivoicedness and contradictions, thus rendering transitions and development incomprehensible. Development can be understood by tracing disruptions, troubles, and innovations at the level of concrete modes of the activity, both historical and current. The analysis of such data [concrete modes of the activity] leads to hypothetical identification of the internal contradictions of the activity system. Such a hypothetical model is actually a depiction of the activity system at the level of ideal types—only this time the inner contradictions are built into ideal-typical model from “bottom up.”

(pp. 71-72. italics are added)

That is, the examination of a specific activity system at the local level is expected to contribute to an understanding of what can be missed from a context-free analysis of an activity system from a higher level. Identifying the contradictions of an activity system thus can provide an in-depth understanding of the activity system. This is possible
because examining the contradictions from the concrete level of the activity system reflects the voices of the participants within the system. Furthermore, contradictions are important to examine because “the solutions to the contradictions of the preceding stage of form” (Engeström 1987, Internet) can cast new forms of activity, that is, changes in the activity system (Engeström, 1993).

Engeström (1987) posits four levels of contradictions: primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary. First, a primary inner contradiction is a conflict which occurs within each component of an activity system. Engeström argues that this primary contradiction constantly exists in each component of the activity system. For example, teachers may experience a latent tension between their roles as educators who cultivate students’ healthy and desirable personalities with their roles as knowledge transmitters whose focus is to improve students’ test scores.

Secondary contradictions can be found between the components of a human activity system. Engeström (1987, 1993, 1999a) notes that they are the key for depicting an activity system and the force of change within an activity system. Secondary contradictions generally occur when “a strong novel factor” (Engeström, 1993, p.72) is infused into any component of an activity system. This novel factor becomes “the moving force behind disturbances and innovation, and eventually behind the change and development of the system” (p.72). In other words, as an activity system tries to resolve

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1 It is necessary to admit that the relationship among the contradictions is much more complicated than stated here. That is, although they are discretely stated in this paper, their influence on each other is multilateral rather than unilateral. For instance, it is impossible to state that a secondary contradiction and a primary contradiction are independent of each other. Rather, the contradictions mutually influence each other in an activity system, implying the constantly moving and thus unstable nature of the activity system.

2 Although agreeing with the argument, this study mainly focuses on primary contradiction within the subject of the activity system since it is the primary focus of the current study.
the secondary contradictions it confronts, the activity system evolves into a new form. In this sense, secondary contradictions are critical to understanding an activity system.

A third component is tertiary contradictions which arise when another activity system which is “culturally more advanced” (Engeström, 1987), such as the government, prescribes a new objective—“a novel factor”—for another activity system. Engeström (1987) concluded that a new object can “still be subordinated to and resisted by the old general form of the activity” as a result of the contradiction. In other words, if the novel factor does not cause secondary contradictions, tertiary contradictions may occur between the two activity systems resulting in resistance by or subordination to the existing form of the activity (Engeström, 1987).

Finally, quaternary contradictions occur between a central activity system and its neighbor activities. For instance, when a teacher is not satisfied with an in-service teacher training program and reacts by rejecting the content of the program, it causes quaternary contradictions between the central activity system where the teacher functions as a subject and subject-producing activity system, namely, the in-service teacher education program.

Engeström’s four layers of contradiction can be applied to curricular reform as a way to illustrate their power as an explanatory framework. If curricular innovation is imposed on teachers, it may lead to changes in teachers’ instructional activity systems only when it causes secondary contradictions in teachers’ activity systems and thus when the participants (teachers) of the system tried to resolve such contradictions. However, if

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3 Engeström (1987) also mentioned that the neighbor activities systems sometimes become the central activity system. This is true that when a teacher experienced an in-service teacher program, s/he becomes the subject of the activity system of the program as a participant. However, due to the limited access to the teachers’ neighbor activity systems; it was impossible to deal with this contradiction in the current study.
the curriculum does not spark secondary contradictions or the efforts to resolve them, the curricular innovation will stay at the level of a tertiary contradiction, and the result may be resistance or giving a new name to the old practice. Following the notion that contradictions are a crucial force for change in human activity systems (Engeström, 1993, 1999a, Lantolf & Thorne, 2006), Engeström’s (1987, 1993, 1999a) layers of contradictions can be used to analyze the dilemmas teachers experienced under curricular reform efforts.

Identifying such contradictions can be done through the close observation of an activity system. In observing an activity system, it is neither possible nor productive to focus only on the physical actions, neglecting the language used within the system. Language is an important resource for research in that it enables us to identify how participants understand the contradictions they face in an activity system. Building on this idea, Engeström (1999b) also points out that examining voices from the people who are involved in an activity system is needed because, through their voices, it is possible to determine the different social language they create and thus to confirm any inner contradictions expressed through their actions and discourse.

In this study, the language teachers and students used both in interviews and the classroom helped expose the contradictions they consciously or unconsciously feel, face, and try to overcome or ignore. At the same time, by examining their language in tandem with their situated actions in their institutional and social context, the researcher expects to overcome the limitation of being focus only on “situations of ‘pure talk’” (Engeström, 1999b, p.170) in which broader contexts such as social or political milieu are not of interest.
Chapter 4

Methods

4.1 Research Design

4.1.1 Methodological Framework

According to Yin (2003), a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p.13) emphasizing the importance of the context in which a phenomenon occurs in certain ways but not in others. Given that the interest of the present study is in examining participants’ situated understandings of and practices under CLT curricular reform, a case study approach is compatible with the goals of this study overall.

Following the primary features of a case study within qualitative research, the natural setting is taken as a source of data, participant’s perspectives and their meanings are focused on, and finally, data are analyzed inductively (Creswell, 1998, Maxwell, 1996). In this study, the researcher visited the school where the teachers and students are located (natural setting), observed what they were doing and listened to their voices (participant’s perspectives) and identified their activity systems by examining their language in tandem with their instructional and actions (inductive analysis). That is, by examining the events and actions in participating teachers’ and students’ activity systems, it was possible to infer how they carry out their practices and how their practices influence their perceptions and vice versa as well as the influence of teachers’ and students’ social-historical contexts on their perceptions and activities.

Specifically, the current research followed a “multiple-case” design (Yin, 2003). Yin argues that multiple-case studies can either “(a) predict similar results or (b) predicts
contrasting results but for predictable reasons” (p. 47). In this study, for instance, the two participating teachers are functioning in the same school system at a macro-level. At the same time, however, the differences that emerged between the two teachers enable us to predict some contrasting experiences in the process of curricular reform implementation. The cases of seven students also provide a more comprehensive depiction of the English learning classroom as an activity system. In this sense, a “multiple-case” study design provides a more diverse and enriched picture of participants’ experiences of curricular reform.

4.1.2. Site

The site for this study was a co-ed public junior high school, located in an industrialized city in a province of South Korea. The school was a relatively new one that had opened two years before the research was conducted because of increasing student population in this area. The school had only seventh and eighth grade at the time of data collection. The seventh grade became the focus of the current study.

The rationale for the grade selection was based on the fact that the phase-in of the Ministry of Education’s 7th curriculum, and thus the new textbooks, began in 2001. Due to the incremental implementation plan, the new curriculum was introduced in the seventh grade of junior high schools in 2001, and it was being implemented in the eighth grade of junior high schools in 2002. Therefore, the seventh and eighth grade teachers were more involved in the curricular innovation at the junior high school level than teachers who taught the ninth grade at other junior high schools.
The seventh grade of the school consisted of six male classes and four female classes in separate classrooms. The average number of students in each class was forty. The students were taking twelve mandatory classes – Korean, ethics, social studies, math, science, home economics, English, Chinese, computer, physical education, music, and art. Among them, English classes met four times a week.

Interestingly, the school had a tracking system for all of its English classes¹, something which was proposed under the new English language curriculum. Under this system, when the students take an English class, they are grouped as either high proficient or low proficient learners according to test scores and are placed in either a high-proficiency or low-proficiency class. However, in this school, these proficiency levels were flexible rather than fixed, meaning that if a student who was placed in a low proficiency class received high enough scores on an mid-term exam to pass the threshold score for the high proficiency class, he or she could move to the high proficiency class and vice versa ².

4.1.3. Participants

4.1.3.1. Teachers

Since the school had only the seventh and eighth grades at the time of the study, only four English language teachers were teaching at the school. Among them, two female English language teachers in this school agreed to voluntarily participate in the current study. Both of them were teaching the seventh grade. One teacher was

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¹ The tracking system was being conducted in English and math class in the school.
² The threshold scores for high-proficient classes were varied depending on classes.
responsible for all the low proficiency classes whereas the other teacher was teaching only high proficiency classes. The profiles of the teachers are summarized in table 1.

**Table 1. Information of the Participating Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Teaching Grade</th>
<th>Teaching Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mi-Ra</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>Seventh grade</td>
<td>Low-proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hee-Won</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Seventh grade</td>
<td>High-proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mi-Ra, as an old-timer, had much more teaching experience as well as more professional education than Hee-Won. At the time of the data collection, she also belonged to two Korean English teachers’ organizations in which she had been actively involved in designing teaching materials for local middle school English teachers. During the latter part of this study, she became in charge of a project in which a group of English teachers developed a series of task-based lessons using technology.

On the other hand, Hee-Won, as a novice teacher, had been teaching English in schools for only two years and six months. The current school was her second school, and her first school was a small middle school in a rural area where she taught for only one year. Although she was also a member of a teacher’s organization, she did not consider herself to be an active participant. At the time of data collection, she had not participated in any official professional English education program sponsored by the Ministry of Education.

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3 Teachers’ names are pseudonyms.
4.1.3.2. Students

Four students from Mi-Ra’s class and three students from Hee-Won’s class were observed and interviewed to uncover their perceptions of their teachers’ instructional practices. Students, who gained the researcher's attention during the 'gaining access period', were recruited to participate voluntarily. During the first week of classroom observations, the researcher carefully observed the level of each student participation during classroom activities (active vs. quiet). Then, she initially selected twelve potential participants who represented a balance of active and quiet participants, male and female, and high and low proficiency. When the researcher asked the twelve students whether they wanted to voluntarily participate in the study, eight students expressed interest in being involved and became the participants of the present study. Given that the researcher was interested in observing certain groups of students, “purpose sampling” (Creswell, 1998) was employed. Table 2 provides the brief summary of the student participants.

Table 2. Information of Student Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Class Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hay-Jung</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Low-proficient</td>
<td>Active → Quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ji-In</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Low-proficient</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min-Ju</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>High-proficient</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soo-Hyun</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>High-Proficient</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sung-Woo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Low-proficient</td>
<td>Quiet/Resistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 However, one student quit participating soon after his agreement. Therefore, data from him is not included in this study.
5 Pseudonyms are also used for student participants.
4.2. Data Collection

In order to answer the research questions addressed in this study, the following data were collected: curriculum documents, interviews with teachers and students, classroom observation, and the stimulated recall interviews with teachers and students.

4.2.1. Documents

In order to understand the social, historical, and institutional motivation and ideologies of the current curricular reforms, various documents were collected. The main documents included both the 6th Middle School English Curriculum Manual in which communicative language teaching is introduced for the first time as the medium of instruction in Korean English education and the 7th Middle School English Curriculum Manual which is currently being implemented. Then, the guidebook, ‘Classroom English,’ which was published and distributed by the government on the Teaching English Through English (TETE) policy, was examined to determine the government’s expectations for teachers’ use of English in the classroom. Two official documents related to the current curriculum and TETE policy were also collected. Finally, the newly designed English language textbook and teacher’s guide book used by the participating teachers were examined along with the mid-term and final-term exams administered in the school during the research period.
4.2.2. Interviews

4.2.2.1. Interviews with Teachers.

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participating teacher during the seven weeks of the observational period. The first interview was conducted with each teacher during the period of "gaining entry" (Maxwell, 1996, p.66). In the interview, the researcher asked the teachers to articulate their teaching philosophy, their own learning histories, their attitudes toward learners, their beliefs about language learning and teaching, and their perceptions of their current teaching contexts (See Appendix A for the interview questions).

The second interview was conducted several days after the first and the teachers were asked about the current curricular reform efforts. For this purpose, four prompts taken directly from the 7th Middle School English Curriculum Manuals were presented, and participants were asked to react to these prompts as well as answer other questions regarding these policies (See Appendix B for the interview questions). The purpose in using prompts to initiate our conversation about these policies was to encourage participants to situate their comments within the actual policies and hopefully generate less ‘abstract’ talk about these policies.

Two more interviews were performed to gain additional information about the questions that arose during the observational period. Some other questions regarding certain teaching practices or perceptions were asked in informal interactions between the teachers and the researcher. All of the interviews were conducted in Korean since the teachers felt more comfortable speaking Korean. The average time of each interview

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6 These short interactions are called “short interview” in this study.
was around fifty minutes. The researcher transcribed all of the interview data verbatim and translated the data into English.

4.2.2.2. Interview with Students

Interviews with seven students were conducted individually to obtain their histories as English language learners both in and outside of classrooms and their general perceptions of their current instructional context (see Appendix C for the interview questions). Follow up questions based on the first interview were presented to each student during the stimulated recall interviews. The interviews were also performed in Korean since the English language ability of the students was insufficient to communicate with ease. Each interview lasted for around forty minutes. Once the interviews with the students were completed, the interviews were also transcribed verbatim and translated into English by the researcher.

4.2.3. Classroom Observations

Before observing teachers’ classrooms, the researcher was present in each teacher’s classes for one week. The purpose of such shadowing was to 'gain entry' and it was hoped that teachers and students would become both familiar with and thus less aware of the presence of the researcher. During this period, the researcher also tried to “establish rapport” (Maxwell, 1996, p.66) with the teachers and students through personal conversations and chatting.

After the week long ‘gaining entry’ period, the researcher observed two classes for each participating teacher where the participating students were placed. In other words, a total of four different classes were observed, and two out of the four classes
were Mi-Ra’s low-proficiency classes while the other two were high-proficiency classes taught by Hee-Won. One of each teacher’s observed classes was a female class and the other one was a male class. Each lesson lasted forty-five minutes.

The participating students as well as the teachers were the foci of the researcher’s observation. During the observation, she also recorded almost all of the lessons with both an audio-cassette and a video camera. Then, one recorded lesson per week was selected for the stimulated recall interview. During all observations, the researcher also took field notes.

The researcher observed and recorded sixty-six lessons from both teachers, excluding those during the first week of ‘gaining entry’. Among all of the recorded classroom data, nine lessons that were shown to both the teachers and the students later for the stimulated recall interview were transcribed in detail for analysis.

4.2.4. Stimulated Recall Interviews

Post-observation interviews were conducted using Stimulated Recall Procedures (SRP) (Calderhead, 1981). The purpose of SRP is to get information about the participants’ classroom decision making as well as their interactive thoughts while they are engaged in instructional activities (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 19). First, the teachers and researcher watched each tape soon after the recording was done. While watching the videotape, the teachers were asked to explain their instructional decisions and considerations as well as whatever they wanted to talk about regarding the lesson they were watching. In addition, the researcher asked questions about the video taped lessons. Four stimulated recall interviews were conducted with each teacher. The Korean
language was used and each interview lasted more than one hour. All stimulated recall comments were also audio and video recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

One stimulated recall interview was conducted with each of the participating students except Min-Ju and Sung-Woo with whom two stimulated recall interviews were carried out. The students watched the same videotaped classroom excerpts that their teacher watched and completed the stimulated recall interview in a similar fashion. Since the students rarely initiated comments, the researcher often asked them to describe how they were experiencing the instructional practices captured in the videotaped excerpts and to describe what they learned from those activities. All student-generated recall comments were audio recorded and transcribed. The stimulated recall interviews are summarized as follows in Table 3.

**Table 3. The Summary of the Stimulated Recall Procedures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Date</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 29, 2002</td>
<td>Mi-Ra (SRP I)</td>
<td>Hay-Jung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 8, 2002</td>
<td>Mi-Ra (SRP II)</td>
<td>Sung-Woo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 12, 2002</td>
<td>Mi-Ra (SRP III)</td>
<td>Sung-Woo &amp; Yoo-An</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 20, 2002</td>
<td>Mi-Ra (SRP IV)</td>
<td>Ji-In</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 30, 2002</td>
<td>Hee-Won (SRP I)</td>
<td>Min-Ju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 5, 2002</td>
<td>Hee-Won (SRP II)</td>
<td>Soo-Hyun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 13, 2002</td>
<td>Hee-Won (SRP II)</td>
<td>Won-Jae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 19, 2002</td>
<td>Hee-Won (SRP IV)</td>
<td>Min-Ju</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. Data Analyses

4.3.1. Document Analysis

In order to describe what the South Korean government’s perspectives are regarding communicative language teaching, the researcher conducted a content analysis (Holsti, 1969, cited in Merriam, 1998) of the curriculum manuals along with other documents. Namely, the curriculum manuals and documents were read meticulously and repeatedly, and statements related to the topic of communicative language teaching were underlined, carefully analyzed, and categorized according to converging themes.

4.3.2. Activity Theory and Grounded Content Analysis

A complete data set was created for each participant (teachers and students). These included all interviews, video/audio taped classroom instruction, field notes, and stimulated recall interview data. Next the researcher carefully read each data set using Engeström’s human activity system model (1987, 1993, 1994, 1999a). The purpose of this procedure was to identify the essential components of the activity system. At the same time, in order to substantiate the origins and complex nature of each component of the activity system, the researcher conducted a grounded content analysis of each data set for each participant. In order to do this, the researcher followed the principle of ethnographic semantics (Spradley, 1979, Spradley & McCurdy, 1989) in which the meanings that people give to their verbal expressions are the primary focus of the investigation. The goal of the grounded content analysis was to understand the participant’s perceptions and experiences as they do within the contexts in which they
occur. To develop an understanding of these data, the researcher followed the procedures of the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998, Glaser & Strauss, 1967, and Goetz & LeCompte, 1981). As each data set for each participant was read, it was coded according to the themes and patterns that emerged. Once identified, similar themes and patterns were coded into tentative conceptual categories (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998; Erickson, 1973). Throughout the interactive process of data reduction, verification, and further data analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the following themes emerged from each teacher;

**Table 4. Summary of Teachers’ Beliefs and Perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding of Self</th>
<th>Hee-Won</th>
<th>Mi-Ra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Self as novice</td>
<td>- Self as an old-timer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Pre-service teacher education as impractical</td>
<td>- Pre-service teacher education as impractical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>In-service teacher education as food for thought</td>
<td>- In-service teacher education as impractical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Teaching goal and vision as fundamental for instruction</td>
<td>- Teaching philosophy and goal as the rationale for instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Conflicting beliefs about the English language learning</td>
<td>- Belief about grammar as prerequisite for communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding of Context</th>
<th>Hee-Won</th>
<th>Mi-Ra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Maintaining student motivation as object</td>
<td>- Students as rationale for instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Textbook as necessary evil</td>
<td>- Textbook as legitimate knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>School exams as the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

49
The grounded content analysis of each student’s data set rendered several conceptual categories that were common among all student participants. They were (a) beliefs about language learning, (b) attitudes toward language instruction, (c) the personal and social dimensions of classroom participation, and (d) school exam as real learning. These categories are present in each student’s story and crucial to understanding the students’ schooling and socialization experiences that influenced how they participated in the activity system. They also illustrate how students’ goals and interests were closely related to their perceptions of their teachers’ instruction under CLT curriculum reforms.

Overall, the grounded content analyses enabled the researcher to not only explore the origins and complex nature of each component of the activity system but also to describe any contradictions that emerged within the activity system. Additionally, these analyses helped to explain how each participant resolved any contradictions within the activity system and what those resolutions meant in terms of the implementation of CLT-based curricular reforms.

These understandings and the inner contradictions within the activity system that emerged from the data analyses illustrate how teaching and learning practices are dialectically interwoven with other components in these teachers’ and students’ instructional realities under the influence of the CLT curricular reforms. Additionally, it is also possible to identify where and when teachers’ and students' situated perceptions
emerged and are reflected in their verbal as well as physical actions during classroom activities.

4.4. Ethical Issues

In order to minimize the teachers’ concerns about participating in the study, only the researcher and her academic adviser had knowledge of the teachers’ identities. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identities. Also, the researcher asked them to express their concerns whenever they had any, and the researcher did her best to take these concerns into account. Participating students’ identities were also kept secret, using pseudonyms. If students felt any uneasiness, they were free to withdraw from the study.

4.5. Trustworthiness

In order to increase the credibility of the study, information about curricular reform in South Korea was collected from different points of view (Maxwell, 1996, Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). That is, the researcher collected data from teachers as key informants, but, at the same time, students, and the government’s position as instantiated in the curriculum manuals. Additionally, in terms of “multimethod triangulation” (Patton, 1990, p.245), not only interviews but also observations of the teachers and students as well as field notes were collected.

The researcher recorded the classroom activities with an audiocassette and video camera, and then transcribed the data verbatim to use them. In order to increase the validity of the interpretations, the researcher also received feedback about her interpretations from the participating teachers during the interviews. Additionally,
teachers were asked to check the researcher’s interpretations of the data as ‘member checks’ (Maxwell, 1996).

Given that the interviews and some of the classroom practices were conducted in Korean, the researcher translated the Korean language into English. In order to ensure the credibility of the translation, an individual with a native-like level of fluency in both languages checked the content and language choice of the translation.
Chapter 5

Findings: Curriculum Manuals

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the contents of the Middle School English Curriculum Manuals\textsuperscript{1} issued by South Korean Ministry of Education and two government-issued documents received by the participating teachers were analyzed. The primary purpose of the content analysis was to examine how the government, as a policy maker, perceives, defines, and further elaborates communicative language teaching (CLT) in these documents. Since “it[the communicative approach] has no monolithic identity, and no single model of CLT is universally accepted as authoratively” (Li, 1998, p.698), the officially sanctioned characteristics of the communicative approach in the South Korean context were identified through this process. Along with defining these features of CLT, it was also possible to uncover policy makers’ expectations for middle school English language instruction.

The content analysis revealed the following five categories that characterize the government’s view of CLT: 1) criticism of existing teaching methods, 2) the development of communicative competence, 3) communicative activities, 4) English as a classroom language, and 5) learner-centered language learning. These categories along with further elaborations provide a portrait of CLT as defined by the South Korean government.

\textsuperscript{1} This study examined both the 7\textsuperscript{th} curriculum (1998) and the 6\textsuperscript{th} curriculum (1994). Along with the 7\textsuperscript{th} curriculum which is currently being implemented in South Korea, the 6\textsuperscript{th} curriculum (1994) is worthy to examine in that it adopted the communicative approach to South Korean English education for the first time and in that the 7\textsuperscript{th} curriculum clearly states that it follows the pith and marrow of the 6\textsuperscript{th} curriculum (The 7\textsuperscript{th} Middle School English Curriculum, 1998, p. 2).
5.2. Criticism of the Grammar-Translation Method

As background for the introduction of CLT, the curriculum manuals devote quite a lot of space to the rationale for the adoption of CLT. One reoccurring theme over the curricula is the disappointment expressed for previous English language instruction based on structuralism.

Based on structuralism, traditional (English) teaching methods focused on teacher-centered instruction, concentrating on the rote memory of grammar and grammatical terms. Based on the experience that the traditional teaching learning methods were not helpful for (learners') communicative competence, it is a big move in English education to hold back the traditional teaching learning methods as much as possible but rather to lead to learner-centered teaching learning methods.

(The 6th Middle School English Curriculum, 1994, p.38)

More specifically, the manual points out the limitation of the traditional grammar-translation method due to a washback effect:

For a long time, our English education has been criticized since it has overtly adhered to the grammar-translation method, become a tool for moving up to a higher education, trained students to pick up right answers from multiple choices and has overtly focused on language usage, but not on language use.

(ibid, p.38)

Implying few changes occurred after the 6th curriculum reform efforts, a similar concern is expressed in the 7th Middle School English Curriculum (1998):

To date, English education (of South Korea) has focused on grammatical or structural competences, resulting in the negligence of the other aspects of language learning...

(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum Manual, p.19)
The prevalent tone in the above excerpts is that English education in South Korea has focused on the structural aspect of the English language resulting in the teaching of grammar and translation. As one reason for the popularity of the structural approach to English education, the entrance exams which focus on grammatical knowledge and reading comprehension is mentioned. As a result, Korean English language learners are good at grammar (language usage) but poor at its application (language use). The 7th curriculum points out the same problem from a different perspective; that is, teaching English mainly through written forms rather than spoken has led to weak oral language abilities among learners:

So far, our English education has spent too much time on teaching knowledge about the English language from the beginning level through written forms of the language, but not teaching it through spoken language. Another weakness of our English education is teachers’ lack of spoken language ability, resulting in not being able to teach English in English during classes, and thus overcoming this weakness is the task our English education is currently facing.

(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, p.9)

Here, the curriculum also states that the previous approach to English education is related to teachers’ low spoken language ability. Since teachers are not proficient speakers of English, teaching English through the English language is challenging for them. In order to overcome these weaknesses in Korean English education, CLT is presented as a necessary alternative.²

² A similar rationale for the adoption of the communicative approach appears in the 6th Middle School English Curriculum as read on the excerpt on pages 58-59 of this paper.
The introduction of the communicative approach in English Education is a practical reaction to the previous English education where students experienced trouble in competent communication although they were knowledgeable of the English grammar. (ibid. p.18)

Here, the curriculum essentially admits that Korean English learners’ difficulty in developing competent English communication skills is the result of the past instructional practices. Therefore, given that students have had little opportunity to “develop the ability to use language to get things done” (Nunan, 1988, p.25) in the existing grammar-translation English learning classes, the Ministry of Education adopts CLT and sets learners’ communicative competence as a fundamental goal of English language education in South Korea.

5.3. Communicative Competence as a Learning Goal

Complying with the utmost goal of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Berns, 1990, Canale & Swain, 1980, Li, 1998, Nunan, 1988, Richards & Rogers, 1986, Savignon, 1997), learners’ communicative competence is proclaimed as one of the two major goals in the current Middle School English Curriculum of South Korea.

The development of communicative ability as a goal of English education is not new in South Korea. The improvement of English communicative ability actually has been a stated goal in the field of language education in South Korea since its fourth curriculum, which was proclaimed in 1981 (the 6th Middle School English Curriculum, 1995, Kim, 2002). However, the introduction of the concept of communicative

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3 The other manifested goal of Middle School English is “다른 하나는 외국 문화를 올바르게 수용하여 우리 문화를 발전시키고, 외구에 소개할 수 있는 능력을 가르는 것이다 (The other [goal] is to improve the capacity of understanding and accepting foreign culture in right ways, as a tool for developing our own culture, and for introducing ours to other countries) (The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, p.14).
competence and the movement toward functionally-focused English language instruction are new and thus noteworthy in the South Korean English education. These changes are succinctly depicted in the Foreign Language Curriculum Model suggested in the 7th Middle School English Curriculum (1998)⁴:

**Figure 2. The 7th Foreign Language (English) Curriculum Model**

![Diagram of the 7th Foreign Language Curriculum Model](image)

As outlined in the model, communicative competence is the eventual goal of English language learning. Whereas the stated goal of English language learning in the 6th Middle School English curriculum was the development of ‘communicative functions’⁴

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⁴ This model was also used as an interview prompt with teachers.
(Refer to the Appendix D for the model), the 7th curriculum expands these goals by setting up a more integrated concept, that is, communicative competence, as a goal in the curriculum. The current model also shows that both spoken language and written language skills are equally important to improve learners’ communicative competence, implying the need for a balance among the four language skills. Placing communicative activities next to communicative competence, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of such activities in developing learners’ communicative competence.

In defining the concept of communicative competence, the current policy accepts the well-known categorizations proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman (1990) by stating, “의사소통 능력이 무엇인지에 대해서는 학자마다 정의가 조금씩 다르지만, Canale and Swain (1980)과 Bachman (1990)의 의사소통 능력의 정의에 접근하고 있다 (Although the definitions of communicative competence are different by different scholars, [we think] that Canale and Swain’s and Bachman’s classification is closest to its meaning)” (The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, p.19).

Both Canale and Swain’s and Bachman’s work are meaningful in that they tried to succinctly and specifically define the concept of communicative competence. Resultantly, their categorizations have been frequently adopted as instructional goals in the field of the second/foreign language education. Their categorizations are especially notable in the South Korean context since components other than linguistic competence

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5 Although the four skills are separate in the model, the curriculum indicates that they are interwoven. (ibid. p.18)
6 For the further elaboration this issue, see the section of ‘Communicative Activities’ in this chapter.
7 Canale and Swain (1980) divide the communicative competence into four: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. On the other hand, Bachman introduces three subdivisions of the communicative competence: language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanism (The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, p.19).
are embraced and presented as a legitimate part of language use and further as outcomes of language learning.

The 7th curriculum emphasizes the complexity of language learning due to these different components of language by stating, “이들의 모형을 보면, 외국어를 학습한다는 것은 단순한 문법적 능력의 습득보다 훨씬 복잡하고 광범위한 일이어서 (From these [Canale and Swain’s & Bachman’s] models, it becomes clear that learning a foreign language is rather a complex and long term project than an acquisition of simple grammatical skills)” (ibid, p.19).” Thus, the current curriculum again emphasizes the boundaries of language are not limited to grammatical competence, instead highlights a broader conception of language and language learning.

In order to embrace pragmatic aspects of language use, the curriculum argues for the necessity of direct instruction in specific communication strategies, something which has never been explicitly mentioned in past curricula. In the section on teaching methods, the curriculum actually proposes the teaching of communication strategies:

For an effective communication, (instruct learners) to frequently use various communication strategies in appropriate ways… there is an effort to overcome the deficient knowledge, and it is called the strategic method. For instance, [the cases include] how to cope with situations when you cannot think of certain words, how to continue the conversation while (you) organize your thoughts, and what [you] can do when [you] cannot understand what [your] interlocutor said. Theses communication strategies are paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, guessing, and shift in style. These (communication strategies) belong to strategic competence. (The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, p.86)
Based on the assumption that there is no ideal speaker or listener who has perfect communicative competence (Hymens, 1972, cited in Berns, 1990) and that language learners’ communicative competence is inconsistent because of various factors (Berns, 1990, Savignon, 1997), the curriculum suggests that people need to prepare themselves for unexpected situations when communicating with others and therefore teaching strategies to language learners can help them engage in English communication with others. Unprecedentedly, the above statement elucidates the pragmatic aspects of language by paying attention to discourse and encouraging teachers to focus beyond the sentence level during the language instruction. In other words, the curriculum clearly regards language not as a static object of learning but as a tool for dynamic interaction.

Additionally, the 7th curriculum (1998) mentions sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence. While explaining the importance of learning culture which is part of the sociolinguistic and discourse competence, the curriculum distinguishes ‘big Culture’ from ‘little culture’ based on Brooks’s (1975) categorization:

‘little c’문화습득의 중요성은 문법적 능력에 외에 학습자의 사회언어학적 능력, 담화능력 등을 중시하는 의사소통 접근법의 등장과 함께 인식되기 시작하였다. 자신의 의도하는 바를 어떻게 효과적으로 전달할 것인지 하는 문제는 원어민들이 특정 상황에서 어떤 언어적 행동과 반응을 보일 것인지를 관심을 기울이게 하였고, 이로 인해 ‘little c’ 문화습득은 외국어 습득의 필수적 요소가 되었다.

The importance of ‘little c’ started being embossed with the appearance of communicative approach in which a learner’s sociolinguistic and discourse competence is valued. The issue of how [nonnative] speakers effectively convey their intended meanings has made [people] pay attention to the native speakers’ linguistic behavior and their reaction in particular contexts and, on account of this, the acquisition of ‘little c’ has become the essential part of foreign language acquisition.

8Following Brooks (1978), the curriculum defines ‘big C’ as “문학, 고전 음악, 무용, 건축, 예술 작품 등 어떤 문화에서 가장 훌륭하고 대표적인 산물만 뽑아 놓은 것 (the most outstanding and representative product of a civilization such as literature, classical music, dance, architecture, and art works)” On the other hand, ‘little c’ is characterized as “인간생활의 모든것, 곤 일상 생활에서 나타나는 사회 구성원들의 전반적인 행동과 언어적 행동, 태도, 신념, 가치 체계 등 (everything in human life, that is the things appear among people, such as general and linguistic behavior, attitude, belief, and value system)” (ibid. 22).
According to this statement, being competent in a target language involves more than linguistic knowledge. Namely, learners should learn how and when to apply their linguistic knowledge appropriately by carefully observing native speakers’ behavior in terms of language use. Involvement in learning pragmatic aspects of the English language again illustrates the Ministry of Education’s volition to expand the boundaries of English language learning in South Korea.

5.4. Communicative Activities

As seen in the 7th Foreign Language (English) Curriculum Model, the curriculum does refer to communicative activities. In fact, by putting communicative activities next to communicative competence in the model, the 7th curriculum explains their critical roles in developing learners’ communicative competence.

Citing Savignon (1972, cited in the 7th Middle School English Curriculum, 1998, p.18), the 7th curriculum states that communicative competence can be cultivated only through communicative practices.9 Additionally, quoting Gunternman and Philips’s argument that analyses of grammar or mechanical practice and memorization can do little to improve learners’ communicative competence (the 7th Middle School English Curriculum, 1998, p.18), the curriculum supports the importance of communicative activities in language learning.

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9 The curriculums use the terms ‘communicative activities’ and ‘communicative practices’ interchangeably. Since they do not provide the differences between the terms, this paper regards them as basically same ones.
The 7th curriculum divides communicative activities into speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities (p.19). Through spoken language activities, the curriculum claims, language functions should be taught whereas, in written language activities, linguistic structures in addition to language functions should be taught. Therefore, language functions, such as greetings, exchanging regards, expressions of gratitude, congratulations, promises, wishes, suggestions, etc. are presented along with related linguistic structures in the curriculum. As such, the curriculum believes that learners are expected to learn both language functions and language structures through communicative activities. Given that the traditional Korean English learning classes have already paid too much attention to language structure, the government’s current claim can be understood as an effort to include the language function into the boundary of English education in South Korea. Thus, CLT is operationalized as a ‘functionally based’ language learning approach as follows;

Since English learning is not rote memory of vocabulary or grammatical terms, but it means understanding the language use through interactions and activities and acquiring the use to apply it, it is very essential to enhance motivation for communication. Therefore, the content which can trigger communicative activities should be included in a textbook.

(The 6th Middle School English Curriculum, 1994, p.110)

Here, the curriculum argues that English language learning should be done through interactive activities, which in turn will motivate students to communicate. From this statement, it is possible to infer that communicative activities should include communicative interactions with the outcome of learners’ acquisition English language through English language use.
The same curriculum provides a lengthy explanation of communicative activities as follows:

(Teachers) should withhold the grammar explanation about the structures such as phrases, clauses, and sentences but rather should have (students) do lots of meaningful practices and communicative practices: In English education, the statement, (teachers) should teach the practical language that can be used in real situations but not teach about the language, shows the resistance for the grammar-translation methods with the purpose of the improvement of communicative competence.

When viewing a language as a communication tool, a class with too much grammar explanation and translation is not desirable.

Regarding communicative practices, ………. Instead of explaining linguistic forms or grammars, (teachers) should introduce new forms orally in order for students either to listen to or see them, and the forms should be compatible with the communicative functions. When (students) are believed to understand the presented contents, with the purpose of more specified understanding of texts, teachers guide (students) to recognize the meaning of vocabulary, language function, discourse structure, and a speaker’s opinions and attitudes.

Practices do not include the mechanical practices of linguistic items or the unnatural practices but include oral drills, the activities using information gap, personal story, and oral activities.

(ibid. p.132-133)

The main point in the above statements is that activities in the English classroom should be ‘meaningful’ to students and ‘natural,’ not mechanical with little attention on explicit grammar explanations. As an example of communicative activities, then, the 6th curriculum introduces a typical information gap activity, as seen below:
Students are expected to ask each other questions in order to identify locations on a map. In the 7th curriculum, the same information gap activity is provided along with exemplar interactions:

**Figure 4. Information Gap Activity II**

1. B: Where is the museum?
2. A: Museum? Wait a minute. I have a street map. Look at this map. Here is Tottenham Road.
3. B: Right. Tottenham Road is here.
4. A: Go up along the road.
5. B: OK.
6. A: Then you will see the museum on the left side.
7. B: On the left side? You mean I should cross the High Street?
In order to complete both tasks, students are expected to ask each other questions and then fill in the missing information on their cards or identify the location of buildings on a map. The curriculum expects students to negotiate through meaningful interaction with one another. Also, it expects that the activities will help learners acquire language functions without attention to language forms. Finally, the fact that the curriculum explicitly presents English interaction implies that the medium of communication should be in English.10

5.4.1. Task-Based Language Learning

Unlike the 6th curriculum, the 7th curriculum overtly presents the concept of task-based language learning. In fact, task-based activities are positioned as an important component of CLT (Breen, 1987, Lee & Van Patten, 1995, Lee, 2000, Nunan, 1988). According to Ellis (2003), tasks provide “communicative practices for language items that have been introduced in a more traditional way” (p. 28). That is to say, tasks can provide learners with the opportunities in which they can use their linguistic knowledge in various contexts. The rationale for task-based language learning is stated in the 7th curriculum as follows:

제 7 차 중학교 외국어(영어)과 교육과정에서는 학생들이 영어에 흥미를 가지고 자연스럽게 배울 수 있도록 하기 위하여 교사 중심의 일방적인 설명보다는 학습자 스스로 과업을 수행하고 활동을 하도록 권장하고 있다. 활동중심의 교육에서는 교사의 역활이 중요할 뿐, 그 중에서도 소집단 관리 능력이 매우 중요하다. 교사는 수업을 진행하면서

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10 See the section of ‘English as classroom Language’ in this chapter for the further elaboration.
As a way for students to learn English naturally with interests in the language, the seventh middle school foreign (English) language curriculum recommends students to perform tasks and activities rather than teacher’s unilateral explanations. In activity-process/task-centered learning, a teacher’s role is important, and more especially her or his ability to manage small groups is very important. As a monitor, a teacher should be aware of students’ mistakes and their degree of attention to learning. She or he, as a resource supplier, should help and provide information when students ask.

(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, 1998, pp. 9-10)

The underlying principle of the introduction of task-based language learning, according to this statement, is to maintain learners’ motivation for language learning. To do this, the curriculum argues that language learning classes should provide a lot of student-centered language learning activities. Students are expected to play an active role in learning English while teachers are positioned as a monitor and resource supplier. Also, pointing out the importance of small group management, the curriculum states that small group activities are desirable in task-based language learning.

Since “the real purpose of the task is not that learners should arrive at a successful outcome but that they should use language in ways that will promote language learning” (Ellis, 2003, p.8), participants’ use of language in tasks is both a medium and outcome of task-based instruction. The curriculum even denotes the learning environment that is necessary for successful task-based learning:

Language activity itself is a process of communication, and thus learners’ volitons to participate in tasks and convey meaningful messages (to each other) are rather important. Therefore, the learning environment where the result is only appreciated should be shunned.

(ibid., p. 10)
Again, this statement argues that the negotiation process itself is as important as the outcome of a task. This position is compatible with the argument that “language learning may be seen as a process which grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, texts, and activities” (Breen & Candlin, 1987, p.95) in that ‘interaction’ itself is a place for language use and the development of communicative competence.

In defining tasks, the 7th curriculum adopts Breen’s (1987) definition:

단순하고 간단한 연습 문제부터 문제 해결이나, 시뮬레이션, 의사 결정과 같은 복잡하고 긴 활동에 이르기까지 언어 학습을 촉진하기 위한 목적을 가지는 계획

a range of work plans which have the overall purposes of facilitating language learning….from the simple and brief exercise type, to more complex and lengthy activities such as problem-solving or simulations and decisions making.

(ibid, p.41)

According to this definition, activities that facilitate language learning are defined as tasks. At the same time, however, the curriculum points out that meaningful negotiation is expected and essential during task performance (ibid. p.31). Although the curriculum presents a very broad definition of tasks, it is clear that the curriculum cherishes the interaction that tasks promote. Interestingly, tasks and communicative activities are not differentiated but both trigger meaningful interactions and require learners’ involvement in their language learning.

5.5. English as a Classroom Language

Given that communicative activities and tasks are ultimately designed to help students learn to use English, the curriculum claims that English should be the medium of communication in the classroom. Both the 6th and 7th curricula mention teachers’ use of English in classrooms as important:
According to this statement, it is clear that teachers are expected to use English as a way to promote students’ English communicative competence. In addition, it argues that teachers’ use of English will let learners experience English communication, practice their listening skills, and receive more English input.

In several sections of the 7th curriculum, it states that teachers should use English as much as possible, “수업은 가급적 영어로 진행하도록 권장한다. (it is recommended to conduct instruction in English as much as possible),” and it continues, “수업은 가급적 영어로 진행하는 것을 원칙으로하고, 교사 능력에 맞게 교실 영어를 사용하도록 권장한다 (It is principal to conduct instruction in English as possible, and use of classroom English is recommended according to teachers’ proficiency)” (Ministry of Education, 1998 p.89). This mandate appeared stronger in the 6th curriculum:

In order to lead communicative activities in classroom, it is no wonder for teachers and students to use English. A teacher’s English use in classes is desirable to promote the contexts where students can speak English and to enhance students’ interests (in English).”

(The 6th Middle School English Curriculum Manual, 1994, p.143)
It is not clear why the directive to use English as the medium of instruction is softened slightly in the 7th curriculum; however, the curriculum already expects that communicative activities will be conducted in English. It also assumes that teachers’ English will improve as will students’ interests in learning English. Recognizing that both teachers and students may lack accuracy in English, the curriculum encourages teachers to use English anyway:

Clearly, fluency is considered to be more important than accuracy, with the belief that it is more important to motivate students to communicate than correct their errors (ibid. p.55). The 7th curriculum supports this position, but goes on to argue that because of past practices, a focus on functions should take precedence over language forms:

Because both fluency and accuracy are important in language education, it is a good idea to provide language functions and forms in the curriculum. However, based on the past experience, it is not desirable to adhere to language forms. (The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, p.20).
Finally in 2000, one year before the actual implementation of the 7th curriculum, the Teaching English through English (TETE) policy was proclaimed by the Ministry of Education (Chosun Il-bo, 2000). At an annual press conference, the South Korean President emphasized the importance of English and added that students should have no difficulties communicating in English after high school. Whereas teachers’ English use was recommended in the curriculum, the government’s proclamation of the TETE policy now turns TETE into an obligation. The policy was so unexpected that it received intense public attention, thus imposing pressure on teachers to immediately change their instructional practices.

In a survey that was sent to schools regarding this policy, TETE was defined as:

영어 수업에서 영어를 사용한다는 의미는 설명•질의•응답 등 의사소통을 영어로 하는
상황을 의미함 {단순한 영어교과서 내용 등을 영어로 읽는 것은 제외}

Using English in English classes means that communication, such as explanations, questions, and answers, is done in English. {It excludes a simple reading of the text in an English textbook}

(Ministry of Education, 2002)

Interestingly, this excerpt suggests that policy makers not only believe it is important to use English as a means of communication in classroom, it also suggests they believe communication patterns in language learning are limited to explanations, questions, and responses. Simultaneously, while communicative activities are expected to be conducted in English, teachers’ English use is mentioned more than students’ even though students’ use of English is the major focus of the South Korean curricular reform efforts.
5.6. Learner-Centered Language Learning

‘Learner-centered language learning’ is another central notion in CLT, and it also appears in the current Middle School English Language curriculums of South Korea. Berns (1990) argues that “learners [should] be engaged in doing things with language, that is, that they use language for a variety of purposes in all phase of learning” (p.104). Ideally, learners’ needs should be assessed prior to instruction, and teachers function as facilitators so that students can accomplish their learning goals (Berns, 1990, Nunan, 1988).

The 6th curriculum’s core argument is that learners’ needs and activities should be the bases for English language education (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.32). Individualized instruction and maintaining learners’ interests are considered to be the essence of a learner-centered curriculum. The 6th curriculum defines learner-centered classrooms as a place where learners can realize that language is a tool for social interaction among people and where, through meaningful interaction, students are expected to fulfill their learning goals:

The Learner-centered curriculum starts with the view that language is a necessary tool for the social interaction among humans, and it regards schools as places for self-fulfillments. When [we] see English learning as learning skills which will facilitate English communication, English instruction is an assisting activity which helps students learn subdivided and organized content of communication or interaction patterns based on the analyses of interaction, discourse, and dialogue. When applying a method that moves from teacher-fronted to learners’ activity-centered classroom, teachers need to revise and supplement the method by...
considering learning goals and content, and time and contexts in which we [teachers and students] are located.
(The 6th Middle School English Curriculum, 1994, p.130 -131)

This statement illuminates the importance of providing students with opportunities to acquire interaction patterns while using the target language. Thus, the teacher should devote plenty of time to communicative language activities, and by using English as the medium of instruction the curriculum expects learners to be able to learn how to negotiate meaning competently.

The 7th curriculum also supports a learner-centered curriculum;

지금까지 교육 내용을 선택하는 일은 교육 수요자의 의지와는 무관하게 교육공급자인 국가, 교육청, 학교, 교사에 의해 일방적으로 결정되어왔다. 수요자 중심의 교육이란 학생이나 학부모가 원하는 대로 들어주는 교육을 의미하는 것이 아니라, 배우는 학생의 관심과 흥미, 욕구를 존중하고 수준을 고려하여 그들이 가지고 있는 잠재력과 창의력을 최대한 구현시킬 수 있도록 프로그램을 다양화하고, 교사에게는 자율권을, 학생에게는 선택권을 부여하는 것을 의미한다.

Until today, the decisions over [English] curriculum have been made unilaterally by the education providers, such as the government, local ministry of Education, school, and teacher, neglecting the clients’ wills. Client-centered education does not mean accepting all learners’ or parents’ demands, but it rather means developing diverse programs in which learners’ interests and desires are respected and their potential and creativities are to be nurtured. [Eventually,] it should endow teachers with autonomies and learners with the rights to choose.
(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, 1998, p.3)

Clearly, learners’ interests and desires should be considered when designing instructional activities since they are important in fostering learners’ creativity and potential. Most of all, the curriculum asserts that learners have a right to choose what they will learn, a very innovative educational concept in the South Korean educational context. Learner-centered language learning is presented as:

학생 중심의 수업을 계획하여, 학생들의 수업 활동에 적극적으로 참여할수있도록 하고, 교사는 학생들의 협력자가 되도록 한다: 제 7 차 과정의 특징은 학생 중심 교육과정이다. 과거의 교사 중심에서 학생 중심 수업 활동이 이루어질수 있도록 교사는 협력자로서의 역할을 한다. 학생중심의 수업이 이루어지도록 하기위해서는 교사가 개인별, 능력별 학습 자료를 제작하여 제공해야 하기 때문에 교사의 부담이 더 커진다. 개인별, 능력별 자료개발없는 학생중심의 수업 활동은 불가능하다. 그리고 학생중심의
Preparing a learner-centered class by making students actively participate in classroom activities, teachers should be the students’ collaborators: The characteristic of the 7th curriculum is learner-centered. In order to move from past teacher-centered to learner-centered learning activities, teachers play the role of collaborator. In the learner-centered classroom, teachers should prepare individualized materials according to learners’ proficiency, and thus take on more responsibility [for materials development]. It is impossible to run a learner-centered language classroom without preparing teaching materials. Also, without teachers’ careful planning, learner-centered classes would tend to be a waste of time. The role, teachers as collaborators, connotes lots of efforts and sacrifices on the part of the teachers.
(Ibid, p. 86)

The learner-centered curriculum is assumed to promote active student participation in classroom activities, but it is also quite foreign for most Korean English language teachers and their students. In order to implement a successful learner-centered curriculum, the curriculum expects teachers to develop individualized instructional materials. As mentioned in task-based language learning, this mandate also places teachers in very different roles, functioning as collaborators, monitors, and resource suppliers. In addition, it is anticipated that teachers will prepare instructional materials for individuals at various proficiency levels, thus the curriculum imposes tremendous pressure on teachers’ work.

5.6.1. Tracking System

Since the ‘learner-centered’ curriculum emphasizes the importance of meeting individual learners’ needs, the 7th curriculum (1998) initiated a tracking-system in English classrooms based on students’ language proficiency levels. The two main purposes of this system are to avoid mixed proficiency levels where effective language instruction and learning may be hindered and to enable low-level students to get more
assistance and catch up to their higher-proficient peers. The curriculum also assumes higher achievement criteria for higher-track classes (See Appendix E for an example of the criteria).

Tracking is supposed to function on two levels: that is, small group work in which students in one class are divided according to their language proficiency while teachers are expected to create different materials for different proficiency groups. The second level is to divide the students into two classes according to their proficiency levels and give them different instruction from their counterparts. The latter type of tracking system was being administered in the observed school. The students were put into either a high or low level class according to their scores from school exams and were provided with separate instruction from different teachers.

Because proficiency tracking in English classes is new to the Korean English educational system and because the observed school was administering this, the current study examined how high and low track students experience their language learning under this system. This study also examined how this tracking system influenced teachers’ and learners’ perceptions and practices of English language instruction.

5.7. Summary

The findings suggest that the communicative approach in South Korea is understood as a movement toward function-based and oral-proficiency as a means of enhancing English language learning. To accomplish this, it is argued that teachers must provide learners with ample opportunities in which they can recognize, use, and acquire
language functions. The ultimate goal of language learning is to become communicatively competent language users.

In both curriculums, dissatisfaction with traditional teaching methods based on structuralism is blamed for failing to foster communicatively competent language users, especially in spoken English. In an effort to overcome this, the 6th and 7th curricula promote communicative language teaching in middle school English language classes, and the concept of communicative competence is cited as the ultimate goal of English language instruction. By introducing the concept of communicative competence and its core components, the current curriculum expands the dimensions of English instruction to include sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Thus, the curricula include both functional and pragmatic aspects of English usage.

Communicative activities are expected to foster meaningful interactions and support the development of all four skill areas – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Meaningful negotiation is central to communicative activities. Through communicative tasks that create opportunities for students to engage in meaningful interactions in English, instruction should be designed to help learners acquire more pragmatic aspects of the English language. Also, the curricula both explicitly and implicitly recommend that English should be the language of instruction. In order for learning to be successful, teachers also must consider learners’ needs and proficiencies and create appropriate instructional materials. Finally, the curricula position students as active participants in their own language learning processes. Teachers are also positioned differently, now acting as collaborators and monitors in support of student learning. The curricula also
recognize individual differences in learners’ proficiency levels and learning needs and goals.

As such, the characterizations of CLT evident in these curricula reflect a direct importation of western views of CLT as put forth by North American and British researchers. Whereas this is a general trend in many Asian contexts (Sakui, 2004), several prominent Applied Linguists have warned against assuming that western methods can or should be imported wholesale to non-western educational context (Alptekin 2002, Berns, 1990, Kramsch & Sullivan, 1997, Sullivan, 2000). Berns (1990) argues that both social and cultural contexts have a tremendous influence on how the concept of communicative competence is understood and operationalized in EFL India, Japan, and Germany. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) and later Sullivan (2000) also suggest that communicative competence is interpreted differently in different instructional settings.

The document analysis conducted here found little evidence that policy makers were concerned with how the concept of communicative competence might be understood within the Korean EFL context. Instead, what it advocates in the curricula reflects the ideologies of western educational practices: the individual of active learner, teachers and students as equal, and knowledge construction as emerging out of interaction rather than transmitted by teachers to students. In other words, the present curricula neglect the fact that the instructional practices called for under these reform efforts are contrary to how both teachers and students have been socialized in Korean schooling and Korean society. Therefore, without attempts to localize the communicative approach to fit the South Korean educational context, successful implementation of the curriculum may be extremely hard to achieve.
Because the curricula accept the concept of communicative competence wholesale, expecting teachers and students to shift their understanding and practice to match western views of CLT, it is important to examine how recipients of the curricula-teachers and students in this study-perceive the notion of communicative competence, and how they mediate and operationalize the concepts within their own instructional contexts.

Secondly, although the curricula argue for meaningful and natural interaction as key in communicative activities, few concrete examples provide for natural or meaningful interaction among students. Even in the examples given (Information Gap activities on page 64 of this chapter), the exemplar utterances of A and B would not likely occur in a natural setting. Namely, when both A and B are looking at the same map, which is what A asks B to do, one would not expect the sample turns to be necessary. Instead, finger pointing on the map would most likely occur. Without appropriate and sufficient examples of communicative activities, namely, it may be difficult for teachers to adopt such activities in their own instructional practices.

Also, the issue of whether or how a teacher’s English use improves communicative activities or authentic English communication is underexplored in these curricula. In this situation, teachers’ readiness to conduct their classes in English is most crucial. Yet, teachers who are not confident in or do not feel the necessity to use English in their classrooms will most likely ignore this policy. As van Lier (1991) mentions, a more important issue is how instructional interactions are constructed through English as a means of communication rather than simply having the teacher speak English. This
study will also examine some features of participating teachers’ uses of English in order to see the extent to which the policy is operationalized at the local level.

Finally, although the 7th curriculum argues that learners should be able to choose what they want to learn, the curriculum does not specify what learners can choose or how they might voice their desires or interests. In fact, Nunan (1988) argues that a centralized [curriculum] model where curriculum is planned and designed by others and then distributed to teachers and learners is not learner-centered (p.21). Rather, only when learners’ needs are assessed and actually reflected in every stage of instruction, can instruction be considered to be “learner-centered” (ibid, p.19). Therefore, although the curricula appear to be quite appealing and very innovative on the surface, the extent to which students can or will be empowered to make choices over how they learn seems questionable given the educational milieu of South Korea.

Regarding this issue, Auerbach (2000) mentions, “all classrooms are “teacher-centered” to the extent that it is the teachers’ conception of education that shapes how the learning community develops” (p.145). Her point is that teachers’ belief system including, philosophy, attitudes, values, and instructional goals is critical in the realization of a learner-centered language learning milieu. Thus, exploring the extent to which the participating teachers are willing and are able to act as collaborators, monitors, and materials suppliers for different students will enable us to predict the success of the learner-centered curriculum in South Korea.

Even the curricula recognize this by stating that the teacher must “revise[s] and supplement[s] the method by considering learning goals and content, and time and contexts we (teachers) are located in” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p.131). In this sense,
the curricula seem to support a view of ‘learner-centeredness’ that is different from Nunan’s definition. Therefore, ‘learner-centered’ language learning in the South Korean context is most likely interpreted as teacher-directed learner’s activity-centered language learning in which learners’ active participation in classroom activities are promoted.

Finally, due to the government’s wholesale importation of CLT to South Korea, what the curricula propose does not consider the local school reality. In public school, English education in South Korea routinely places up to forty students in one classroom and relies on rote memorization as the dominant learning strategy. Thus, it is doubtful that local participants will adopt what the government mandates. With a fuller understanding of CLT and TETE put forth in the 6th and 7th curricula, now, the following two chapters examined how the participating teachers understand and attempt to implement these mandated policies.
Chapter 6

The Case of Hee-Won: The New Comer

6.1. A Snapshot of Hee-Won’s Classroom and Instruction

The physical arrangement of Hee-Won’s classroom positioned students’ desks facing the blackboard at the front of the classroom, with two students paired in attached desks. A computer was located on the teacher’s table, and it was connected to a large TV screen on the left side of the blackboard.

During the first few minutes of each class, Hee-Won typically gave a quiz. When homework had been assigned, however, she might spend time checking whether the students did the homework before the quiz activity. The quiz consisted of a student-prepared question for the other students to answer. When fewer than twenty students got the right answer, Hee-Won passed out candies to the students whose answers were correct as well as to the student who was responsible for the quiz that day. The following excerpt illustrates the sort of interaction patterns that were typical during the quiz activity.

Classroom Excerpt 1- Nov. 5 (Male Class)\(^1\)

1→ T: 어: 오늘 병수 퀴즈. 나와봐. (to a student near the teacher’s table) 볼펜
Uh: Today is Byungsoo (‘s turn for) quiz. Come. (g)ive me a) ball pen
((Byungsoo walked to the front of the classroom and students were making noise.)
13→ T: 해봐
Go ahead
14→ Byungsoo: it is a animal. It is a pet to some people. We can make alcohol with it.
..
19  S1:  again
20  S2:  one more
21  S3:  replay (.) replay
((Byungsoo repeats his question and students start raising their hands))
32  S2:  왜 그리 쉬운데
Why is it too easy?
34  S:  oh yeah
35  S2:  왜이리 쉬운데
Why is this too easy?
38  T:  자 what is an answer?
Well, what is an answer?
39  Ss:  snake
40  T:  snake↑
((Hee-Won counts the number of students whose answer is right while some Ss make inaudible
sounds and laughs))
47  T:  okay. the answer is s(h)ake
Fewer than twenty, twenty
((Hee-Won counts the number of students again, and checks the spelling of the word ‘snake’ with
students))
63  T:  근데 [snake 는 어때 동물이 (아니라) 파충류라고 그러잖아?
By the way, Snake is not an animal but (don’t we) call (it) reptiles?
64  Ss:  [(inaudible utterances)]
65  S:  에?
What?
66  T:  [reptile 이라는 단어 알어 reptile?
[do you know the word, reptile? Reptile?
.. 69  S3:  선생님 파충류는 동물 아닌데요
Teacher, reptiles are not animals.
70  T:  어?
Uh?
71  S:  (   )
74  S4:  다 동물 아니에요.
None of them are animals.
((Several turns are exchanged about the reptiles and animals, which seem to cause a student to
misunderstand the teacher’s utterance.))
80  T:  동물류야? (.) 그리고 (.) 자 it is- it can be a pet. Pet 이 뭐야 pet
Do they? And Well, it is- it can be a pet. What is ‘pet’? pet
((Hee-Won finishes reviewing the quiz and passes out the candies.))

As seen from the above excerpt, many students actively participated in the quiz
activity; some requested Byungsoo to repeat the riddle when they did not understand it
(lines 19, 20, 21, 23); some made comments about the quiz (lines 32, 34, 45, 50, 54); and
one student initiated an argument about the concept of reptile (line 69).
During this activity, the classroom atmosphere was lively and enthusiastic with lots of student participation. Students looked comfortable and familiar with the quiz activity implying that was most likely a normed instructional activity. In fact, Hee-Won mentioned that she started the quiz sessions from the beginning of the spring semester, first, she prepared the riddles, then she assigned this responsibility to the students.

Hee-Won stated that she uses this instructional routine to keep her students motivated. She also believes these kinds of quizzes help expand students’ knowledge of vocabulary. Additionally, since the quizzes are student-generated, she believes they help students become more independent users of the target language. Students also responded positively to the quizzes saying it was a fun learning experience, so much so, that a student in one of the low-proficient classes expressed her desire to have quizzes like her counterparts in the high-proficient classes.

Simultaneously, the above classroom interaction reveals several compelling aspects of Hee-Won’s instruction. First, the language of communication in this class is mostly Korean. Second, Hee-Won controls most of the classroom talk; when a student initiated a discussion – whether it is an animal or reptile- (line 69)-, Hee-Won does not uptake the student’s comment but instead shifts to another topic (line 80). Thus, while at times a student might initiate a topic, most were not picked up and thus did not contribute to the co-construction of knowledge in this classroom.

After the quiz activity, then, the lesson usually moved to the content of the textbook. For example, at the beginning of a new chapter, Hee-Won and her students spent a significant amount of class time reading and attempting to understand the

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2 See the ‘Pre-Service Teacher Education as Impractical’ section in this chapter regarding the issue of classroom language choice.
meaning of the new vocabulary. Class time was also spent reading words and sentences aloud and completing translations. During these activities, choral reading as well as some individual oral reading of the texts was common. There were occasions when Hee-Won asked students to work in pairs or as a group of four and allowed them to play ‘jeopardy’ or participate in an ‘information gap’ activity (Appendix G). She usually ended her lessons by giving out assignments for the next class. Most homework assignments were to copy texts from the textbook along with their Korean translations.

6.2. The Structure of the Instructional Activity System

Based on an analysis of the data collected from Hee-Won, the instructional activity system can be characterized as follows;

Figure 5. The Instructional Activity System

[Adopted from Engeström’s Human Activity System Model (1987, 1993, 1999a)]

Hee-Won, as the subject of the activity system, has three objects in her teaching; first, covering the content of the textbooks since her instructional goals were defined by the textbook. Moreover, given that the content of the textbook is linked to school exams,
the school exams also functioned as the object of this activity system. School exams played a crucial role in her lesson preparations for two reasons; first, they were the primary reason for covering the textbook and second, for her, they were the only valid way to gauge students’ learning. Therefore, both the textbook and school exams are important objects around which Hee-Won’s instruction is constructed. Thirdly, maintaining high proficient students’ motivation was also an object Hee-Won set up in the instructional activity system. Letting students prepare their own riddles or introducing some communicative activities was how Hee-Won achieved this object.

Not only do school exams function as the object of in this instructional activity system, but they also function as an implicit rule in the community of the activity system. Hee-Won did not need to use the exam to externally motivate her students, since they were highly proficient and generally obtain good scores on the exams. However, given that the school exam scores are of tremendous interest to students and their parents, preparing students for school exam still prevails as a powerful rule in the community.\(^3\)

Closely related to the school exam, covering the textbook is another implicit rule in Hee-Won’s instructional activity system. Since she agreed with Mi-Ra that their school exams would test only the content of the textbook, focusing on the content of the textbook an explicit rule of the community.

In addition to preparing for exams and covering the textbook, a third rule in the instructional activity system was the actual interactional structure of her teaching, that of a traditional teacher-fronted classroom. The major classroom interaction patterns revealed that Hee-Won’s instruction consisted of presenting content, asking questions, and evaluating student’s answers. Although students periodically initiated questions, the

\(^3\) The relevant issue will be discussed in chapter 8, ‘The Students: Members of the Community’.
initiation, response, and evaluation (IRE) interactional pattern dominated her instruction.

Another component of the instructional activity system was the instructional materials which came directly from the textbook and accompanying CD-Rom. Hee-Won sometimes gave students homework assignments based on the textbook, such as copying and translating texts. In addition, high-stakes school exams also functioned as an important mediational tool since the content of the textbook was almost identical to what was tested on the exams. Students were well aware of the kind of knowledge that will be assessed in school exams and therefore limited their attention to preparing for the exams. In addition to material tools, Hee-Won’s choice of language functioned as an artifact in this instructional activity system. Korean was the dominant language of instruction between students, and between Hee-Won and her students. Of course, on a deeper level, Hee-Won’s beliefs about the role of the L1 in language learning justified her use of Korean, the way she interacted with students, and most of her instructional activities. Finally, several communicative activities such as creating sentences, jeopardy, and information gap activities functioned as instructional tools in this activity system.

Hee-Won’s community included Mi-Ra who was teaching the same grade level, and her other colleagues, especially her teacher friends from college who shared similar views about grammar-translation methods and the TETE policy. When Hee-Won heard that her friends were experiencing similar difficulties in teaching English communicatively (Interview II), she felt relieved. And when her colleagues also questioned the feasibilities of the CLT policies, this fortified Hee-Won’s resistance toward the curriculum mandates (Interview II).
Finally, Hee-Won’s students were also part of her community since their participation was critical to her instruction. The local cram schools that many of her students attended and many of which used the same textbook were also present in her community and influenced her perceptions and instructional choices4.

In order to fully understand the present instructional activity system, the results of the grounded analyses, presented below, illuminates both the origins and complex nature of each component of the instructional activity system from Hee-Won’s perspective. In addition, the results of the grounded analyses exposes the inner contradictions that are present in the instructional activity system and documents how Hee-Won, the subject, understands and responds to these contradictions as a member of the South Korean English teaching community.

6.3. Hee-Won’s Understanding of Self

6.3.1. Self as a Novice

At the time of data collection, Hee-Won, the subject of the instructional activity system, had been teaching English for two years and seven months. She passed the national teacher qualification exam in her senior year and began to teach English upon graduating from college. Before teaching at the current school, Hee-Won taught English for a year in a very small middle school in a rural area of the Kyungnam province in South Korea.

Although she did not explicitly refer to herself as a novice teacher, some of the interview data indicated that she viewed herself as a novice. First, she expressed an

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4 Simultaneously, the researcher includes cram schools as part of the community members in that both cram schools and Hee-Won pursue a similar goal to a certain extent, in terms of exam preparations.
interest in developing as an English teacher. For example, since she felt that teaching in a rural area school had not been very challenging for her, she changed schools after only one year teaching there:

거기는 학교가 학생수도 너무 작고 그리고 너무 거기서 편하게 지내다 가지는 어 제가 너무 한자리 머무르면 발전이 없을까 같고 그날 그렇게 갔었던거예요. 그레가지고 그냥 큰 학교 나가보자 그래가지고 창원으로 냈는데 어떻게 바로 여기로 되가지고 바로 왔죠.

There, the number of the students was so small and too- If (I) spend time without any challenge there, well, I was afraid that there would be no development. So, I decided to move to a large school applying for a transfer to a school in Changwon, and then (my transfer application) was accepted right away.
(Hee-Won, Interview I)

It was also her perception that the academic level of students in urban areas was higher than in rural areas. Hee-Won also noted that because parents of urban students seemed to be more concerned with their children’s education (Interview II), she believed the educational context in a large urban school would be more challenging and helpful for her development as an English teacher. Hee-Won also expressed a desire to teach different grade levels since she felt this would help her development as a teacher by expanding her teaching experiences at different levels (Interview I).

As a novice teacher, Hee-Won’s interest in her own development as an English teacher was also apparent in her quest for alternative teaching ideas. As a result, she tired to carefully plan her lessons, which functioned as a primary mediating artifact in the instructional activity system:

가장 학교에서 내가 가장 중요한 건 내가 수업하는 거니까 아 이거는 교과서 내용에 들렸는데 어떻게 제시를 하까 아 어떻게 할까 이에: 또 이거만 하면 너무 지루할것 같은데 뭐 좀 다른 거 제미있는 거를 한번 넣어보까 그런 고민을 좀 많이해요.
The thing I regard most important in school is my teaching, and thus I ponder hard about how to present the content of the textbook to my students or how to make my students not bored with some interesting activities in certain parts.
(Hee-Won, Interview II)
In addition, because of her limited teaching experiences, Hee-Won mentioned that she had difficulty preparing lessons, spent a lot of time, and sought out many resources while preparing for her classes. To get some ideas for lessons, Hee-Won acknowledged that she frequently referred to resources such as the teacher’s manual, student’s reference book for the textbook, and sometimes English textbooks from other publishers. Also, when she felt a lesson had been unsuccessful, she recalled reflecting on the events of that class and tried to make changes for the next time she taught the lesson. Hee-Won also mentioned that while she listened to English teaching programs on the radio to improve her own English ability, she was simultaneously concerned about how best to teach speaking or listening skills to her students (community members) (SRP II).

However, Hee-Won still felt dissatisfied with the available resources due to a lack of communicative teaching suggestions, revealing that she was in need of more assistance in mediating artifacts relevant to CLT. Hee-Won admitted that the available resources were not really innovative or thought-provoking for her (Interview I). In spite of her desire to be more innovative, she had few ideas of what that could be as she envisioned as a prototypical language class\(^5\). Sometimes, frustrated by her own daily teaching practices, Hee-Won mentioned her desire to see an ideal lesson in which she might learn how to teach different language skills communicatively (SPRIII).

Finally, she voluntarily took part in some teacher training programs in order to learn about English teaching methods as well as to improve her own English

\(^5\) Refer to the section, ‘Teaching Goal & Vision as Fundamental for Instruction’ for her elaboration of language class she idealized.
proficiency⁶. Hee-Won personally believes that it is essential to have high English proficiency, considering it an essential artifact in her instructional activity system and thus believes that a good English teacher should be a fluent English user. Because she does not feel competent about her own English abilities, she sometimes feels guilty as an English teacher. While talking about her preparation for teaching, Hee-Won expressed her concern regarding her own English ability:

제가 참 영어 교사로서 자격이 있나 그런 것까지 들 정도로 그러니까 저도 꾸준히 [회화를 공부] 하는 그런 게 좀 안 되가지고...
I even doubt whether I am qualified as an English teacher since I have not persistently studied (English conversation)
(Hee-Won, Interview I)

Her desire to improve her English skills thus led her to enroll in a one-month English language program during winter break the previous year⁷.

However, the most salient indicator of Hee-Won’s novice status emerged in her view of the discrepancy between the vision of teaching she had constructed while enrolled in her college teacher preparation program and the reality confronting her in this school. Hee-Won recalled that although her exposure to the communicative approach in college was limited to mostly theory with few practical examples, she had learned a great deal about CLT (Interview III). She was also familiar with the 7th Middle School English Curriculum Model having studied its contents while preparing for the teacher-qualification exam.

Moreover, Hee-Won recalled that during her college years she and her classmates, as secondary members of her community, frequently criticized the grammar-

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⁶ Refer to the In-Service Teacher Education as Food for Thought section for more details.
⁷ See the ‘In-Service Teacher Education as Food for Thought’ section for the detailed description of the program.
focused English education they had experienced (Interview I, SPR II) by saying, “우리는 인제 그때 [문법위주와 읽기 위주로 가르치지] 말자 (Let’s not teach English like that [focusing on grammar-translation]) (Interview I).” She felt the grammar-translation method was ineffective for her own language learning, especially her speaking ability.

However, when she started teaching, Hee-Won confessed that it was very difficult to teach English communicatively:

Not being satisfied with grammar-translation methods but having no other alternative methods of instruction to follow, Hee-Won found she was unable to teach the required textbook communicatively and instead focused on grammar and translation. Thus, grammar-translation methods functioned as a major instructional artifact in this activity system. Being aware that her instruction focused on knowledge about the language, rather than actual language use caused her to feel guilt sometimes and creating a primary inner contradiction in the instructional activity system (Interview III).

Overall, Hee-Won, as a novice teacher, remains committed to developing as an English language teacher. She believes that teaching in an academic-oriented school and at different instructional levels would help her develop as a teacher. She was well aware
of the need to increase her English proficiency and increase her knowledge of teaching
techniques so that she could become a better teacher. At the same time, like many new
teachers, Hee-Won was confused by the discrepancy between her vision of teaching and
her instructional reality. And she felt let down by the disconnection between her pre-
service teacher education program and her instructional practices in this school.

6.3.2. Pre-Service Teacher Education as Impractical

Hee-Won’s memories of her pre-service teacher education program during her
college years were generally negative. Most of all, she was dissatisfied with the lack of
practical teaching preparation. Although she remembered one or two classes and the
practicum as having practical applications, her general opinion of the program was
unfavorable:

In fact, although it was a college of education for preparing future teachers, it would
have been good if we had the chances for studying or investigating specific
teaching methods or examining various classroom instructions. But I took the
classes, such as syntax, phonology, and English literature, which are the same ones
offered by English Literature department … There’s nothing helpful that I can use in
my (current) teaching in school.
(Hee-Won, Interview I)

Since what she learned was limited to linguistic theory with few practical
teaching activities, Hee-Won felt there was little she could actually apply to her teaching
context. Similar comments were repeated regarding the communicative approach. Her
knowledge of the communicative approach obtained from her pre-service teacher
education program was too theoretical because “구체적 방법이 제시되어 있기도

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Hee-Won clearly perceives the discrepancy between theory and practice and a gap between her pre-service program in academia and her own teaching at school.

While reading a statement from the curriculum manual, Hee-Won refuted the government’s suggestion that mechanical practice and rote memorization should be abandoned in favor of more communicative activities:

I don’t know the reason why the communicative activities and mechanical activities should be separated in classroom teaching… I really want to ask the person who wrote this [communicative activities] section whether h/she has had actual teaching experience of speaking part in the field. I doubt that this person who argues for (communicative activities) has had thought about how s/he would teach the language in the real situation.
(Hee-Won, Interview II)

Here, Hee-Won sees the Ministry of Education’s curriculum as too idealistic, void of the school reality where she finds mechanical practice and rote memory to be plausible and easy to administrate with forty students in one classroom. Also, based on her own experience, Hee-Won stated that rote memory of words helped her to learn English (Interview II). Despite being dissatisfied with her own English language learning experiences as a student, Hee-Won still found it necessary to use mechanical or rote memorization as artifacts in her own EFL teaching context. In this sense, her current beliefs can be understood through her ‘apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 2002); that is, how Hee-Won was socialized as a student now functions as the basis for
how she thinks about and carry out her own English teaching. For Hee-Won, therefore, the Ministry of Education’s position fails to address the day to day reality of English language teaching in her classroom.

When asked about the communicative activities as proposed in the curriculum, Hee-Won described them as “말하기 능력, 말하기 활동” (speaking ability, I mean, speaking activity) and expressed her puzzlement regarding the government’s intention of placing communicative activities as critical mediational artifacts in achieving communicative competence, an new object imposed by the government (Interview II). She failed to see that communicative activities could improve the four skill areas, which she perceived are components of communicative competence. Instead, she pointed out that communicative activities are only related to the improvement of students’ oral proficiency, suggesting that she has a limited understanding of the communicative approach and the construct of communicative competence.

Implying that being a fluent speaker of English as essential for the communicative approach, Hee-Won also complained that her pre-service teacher education program did not succeed in producing English teachers who were proficient users of the English language:

그까 같이 인체 사년동안 막 끝났을때는 정말 어느정도 반 native 정도는 되 있게 그러니까 학교에서 자체적으로 이끌어봤으면 좋겠는데 그런 것도 없고…
By the end of senior year, I think the college program should have developed the student teachers’ English proficiency to a native like level but it did not … (Hee-Won, Interview II)

Hee-Won believes that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education or college of education to ensure that all English teachers are proficient in English. Her
dissatisfaction with the pre-service teacher training program was mentioned again when she expressed her resistance to the Teaching English Through English (TETE) policy:

As a matter of fact, if the government intends to implement TETE policy (successfully) … I argue that either college education should have made (us) native-like proficient through certain programs or when new teachers are hired, the government should have sent them abroad for a year to learn English….

(Hee-Won, Interview I)

However, Hee-Won’s criticism for the TETE policy comes not only from the inadequacies of her teacher education program but also from her own attempts to conduct her lessons in English. When she tried to use English in her first school, she found it to be impossible and meaningless for both her and her students.

As a result, it was observed that Hee-Won rarely communicated with her students in English during classroom instruction. Clearly, the government’s TETE policy was in conflict with Hee-Won’s own “sense of plausibility” (Prabhu, 1990, p.175) since TETE was not perceived to be plausible in her current instructional context. Subsequently, her resistance created a tertiary contradiction in her instructional activity system.
Of course, Hee-Won’s lack of confidence in her language proficiency also influenced her rejection of the TETE policy. In the above excerpts, it is clear that Hee-Won believes she needs “native-like proficiency” in order to be an effective teacher. To Hee-Won, “native-like proficiency,” means speaking fluently and naturally. She stated when a teacher can joke in English, a teacher has native like proficiency (Interview II). Having such expectations, Hee-Won felt incompetent and thus she simply ignored the TETE policy.

6.3.3. In-Service Teacher Education as Food for Thought

Hee-Won participated in three teacher education programs during her first years of teaching. The first was required by the local government, and instead of focusing on teaching practices, it focused on administrative work unrelated to her teaching.

The second program, which was briefly mentioned in the previous section, was a camp for learning English. Hee-Won enrolled in this program voluntarily to improve her English proficiency. At the camp, the participants were not allowed to speak in Korean, even in the dormitory. In addition to attending regular classes such as reading, writing, and conversation, she also participated in some club activities that included going to movies, finding out about Konglish, and performing a play in English. From the camp, Hee-Won realized that English learning could be enjoyable:

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8 Strictly speaking, the English camp was not designed for English teachers. Rather, it is an English learning camp open to the public. However, since Hee-Won took part in the program after she started teaching and since she admitted that the participation of the program helped her instruction, this study categorized the program as in-service teacher education experience.

9 Konglish is an abbreviation of Korean English and includes some English expressions commonly used in Korea but not used in English speaking countries. For instance, the expression, “hand phones,” is an example of Konglish for English word, “cellular phones.”
I really had a good time with other students in the program. I realized that I can learn English without any burden such for exams but only with fun.
(Hee-Won, Interview I)

She also found the camp to be helpful for improving her English and insightful for her instruction. For instance, by the end of the program, she felt quite comfortable speaking English and stated that this experience had a direct influence on her teaching right after the program. She used what she had learned in the camp in her teaching and had led the school’s English play club. As time went by, however, Hee-Won admitted that she gradually used these ideas less frequently and noted that her English speaking skills deteriorated because the EFL context provided little opportunity for her to use English in her daily life (Interview I).

Hee-Won also voluntarily attended a third in-service program in an effort to enhance her knowledge of teaching methods. For three days, English teachers practicing in different regions of the country met and discussed various issues regarding secondary school English education. For example, the teachers were divided into groups and examined how to teach different language skills such as grammar, speaking, listening, and reading in English or how to teach English through pop songs. Then, each group created lesson plans and presented their lessons to the others, while the others participated as learners. Hee-Won recalled how her group critiqued various textbooks and discussed how to teach each section –speaking, listening, reading, and writing- by developing lesson plans. She felt that the program was very practical, and even though it did not result in a remarkable change in her instructional practices, Hee-Won said that
she sometimes tried to use some of the ideas or activities she learned from the program in her own teaching.

While Hee-Won’s in-service experiences helped her improve her language proficiency and learn new instructional techniques, she confessed that her participation did not have a substantial impact on her teaching (Interview I). Rather, her daily instructional practices seemed to be influenced more by her English instructional history, the imminent teaching context, and her own beliefs about language learning most of which seemed to be constructed through her experience as a language learner.

6.3.4. Teaching Goal and Vision as Fundamental for Instruction

As an English teacher, Hee-Won wanted to help her students understand about the English language and express themselves using the language (Interview I). To reach this goal, she claimed that focusing on basic vocabulary, basic speaking and reading skill was essential:

Well, developing basic knowledge of vocabulary and then conversation ability (.) speaking skill, since the current students already have some basic (speaking) skills, to a degree with which they can talk without being nervous when they meet a foreigner. I think that the government also purports the same goal. And then the development of basic reading skills.

(Hee-Won, Interview I)

Here, Hee-Won also acknowledged that the development of speaking ability is one of her goals. Since her students already have some English oral proficiency as a result of learning English in elementary schools, she wanted to help her students
develop their speaking ability further. Based on her negative memories of being a student in grammar-focused classrooms, it was clear that Hee-Won recognized the need to emphasize speaking skills. Her own goals, she believes, are also compatible with those of the government’s curriculum.

When she spoke about the 7th Middle School English Curriculum Model (Figure 2 in chapter 5), however, she implicitly criticized the emphasis on oral proficiency by the Ministry of Education. Rather, she stated that communicative competence can be achieved through balanced instructional attention to all four skill areas:

Although speaking ability is currently emphasized in the society...but the real English ability is- when all of the four skills are developed, they become communicative competence, English ability
(Hee-Won, Interview II)

Thus, despite her awareness of and focus on the development of students’ speaking ability, Hee-Won believes all skills should be taught in order to achieve true communicative competence.

Also, Hee-Won’s beliefs about English language teaching centers on the belief that motivated students are able to learn English better, and thus she believes that an object of her instruction is to generate and maintain students’ interests in and motivation to learn. While she believes that, ultimately, the responsibility for learning was on the shoulders of the students, Hee-Won recognized that her role as a facilitator in her students’ language learning experiences was essential. As a facilitator, she expects students to learn English through a variety of activities so that they remain motivated.
At the same time, however, she acknowledged that this role comes with some inherent dilemmas. Mostly, it is very time-consuming for her to create activities or to reorganize existing activities for her students (Interview I & II). In addition, when she incorporated additional activities, she covered the textbook more slowly and fell behind other classes, which sometimes lead to students’ complaints (Interview II). Thus, introducing more communicative activities meant breaking the rules of the community and thus not covering the assigned content of the textbook in timely manner.

Most importantly, however, she felt uncertain about facilitating language learning through communicative activities or tasks (Interview II); namely, she was not sure about the effectiveness of communicative or task-based language learning\(^{10}\). Based on her experiences as a language learner and a pre-service teacher in the South Korean context, it is not surprising that Hee-Won is doubtful about the usefulness of these approaches. Additionally, in her institutional context where students’ language learning is not measured by performance on communicative tasks but rather by paper and pencil based exams, it is challenging for her to create time-consuming communicative tasks without believing in their effectiveness.

6.3.5. Conflicting Beliefs about the English Language Learning

Complying with her vision that motivated learners learn better, Hee-Won believes that all kinds of learning, not only language learning, should be interesting. If students are bored, then, their participation will decrease, and thus their learning will be unfruitful. In order to maintain students’ motivation, Hee-Won thought that lessons need

\(^{10}\) This issue is also related to the institutional constraints discussed in the section, 'school exam as instructional goal' of this chapter.
to be interesting so that students remain interested and pay attention during instruction (Interview I, SRP I)\textsuperscript{11}.

Hee-Won also believes it is important for students to have many chances to use the target language in diverse contexts in order to develop communicative competence (Interview I). Pointing out that learning English in the South Korean context means learning English as a Foreign Language, however, she conceded that her students, like herself, rarely had opportunities to use English outside of the classroom. Hee-Won thus mentioned that she tried to provide more chances for her students to actually use what they learn in classroom but felt that the chances were few. So, while she believes ‘language use’ is important, she also recognizes the limitations placed on her and her students in the South Korean context.

Based on the belief that language learning occurs through language use, Hee-Won mentioned that she tried to provide students chances to use English as much as possible. In fact, Hee-Won did use conversational activities in her instruction. In these activities, students were asked to develop their own conversations using the expressions in the dialogues in the ‘Let’s Talk’ section of the textbook. The following excerpt is from the ‘Let’s Talk’ section in chapter 10 (see Appendix F). After finishing an explanation of the content of the dialogues, Hee-Won asks her students to create a new conversation using telephone expressions they just learned (lines 1 – 37). In lines 38-50, finally, two students present their conversations.

**Classroom Excerpt II- Oct. 22 (Female Class)**

1 T: 자 지금부터 여러분들이 한 시간을 줄테니까 여기에 나와있는 -
2 여기 책에서 May I speak 하고 this is he. 막 두가지밖에 안 나와있잖아
3 그렇지? ((tapping batons)) 여기 있는 표현들을 너희들이 아무렇게나

\textsuperscript{11} ‘SRP’ stands for Stimulated Recall Procedure, post observation interview conducted in this study.
Okay, from now on, I will give you time. By using this (conversation) as a frame- in the book there are only two (telephone) expressions ‘May I speak’ and ‘this is he’ right? Make a new dialogue by using these expressions. You may use the expression ‘would you like to join’ or other expressions. As a reference, you can see the other club names (in English) at the bottom of page 167, right? Well, among the three, I think that you know the meaning of ‘basketball team’ or ‘swimming club.’ Then, the third one, what is the word after ‘English’?

Some Ss: conversation

((After whole class practice the word ‘conversation,’ Hee-Won walks around the classroom and helps students.))

T: Is there any volunteer? (is there)anyone who want to perform?

( )

T: anybody who wants( to perform) with your partner?

Min-Ju: 선생님 공책 돼도 되요?

Teacher, is it okay to read (dialogue made on) notebook?

T: Of course, you can

어 민주이랑 영아이랑 일어나

okay, Stand up, Min-ju and Young-A.

((Students cheer them while the two students stand up.))

Ss: (laugh)

Young-A: Hello, may I speak to Min-Ju, please?

Min-Ju: speaking

Young-A: Hi, Min-Ju. This is Min-Young.

Min-Ju: Hi, Minyoung. What’s wrong?12

Young-A: Would you like to join 신화 fan club13?

Would you like to join ‘myth’ fan club?

Some Ss: hhh

Young-A: (to the whole class)웃지마라=

Don’t laugh

영아야, ( ) 면 오. 오. 오. 오. 오하지 말고 똑바로 해야지

Young-A, Don’t mumble but say clearly.

Young-A: ((in bigger voice)) Would you like to join 신화 fan club, 신화창조?

Would you like to join myth fan club, ‘myth creation’?

Min-Ju: No, I wouldn’t. I only like 비14.

No, I wouldn’t. I only like ‘rain.’

12 In the current dialogue context, the expression ‘what’ wrong’ is inappropriate. However, since pointing out the incorrect use of language is not the main focus this paper, the researcher leaves the error as it is.

13 ‘신화’ is the of a musician group of Korea.

14 ‘비’ is the name of a popular Korean singer.
As reflected in the students’ laughter, they seem to enjoy Min-Ju\textsuperscript{15} and Young-A’s conversation. This may be because the topic of the conversation is about two very popular Korean singers. Also, since the students understood most of the English expressions, this might have made the conversation more enjoyable. As such, through this activity, Hee-Won believed that her students, members of this community, had a chance to apply the language they learned to their own lives, and the sharing of these conversations with classmates made the class more interesting.

This excerpt is also interesting in that it gives us an opportunity to see students’ proficiency levels. That is, although Hee-Won encourages the students to create their own context, their conversation is almost identical to the one in the textbook except several different choices of words. Other conversations students constructed were also similar to the one in the textbook. This may suggest that these students’ proficiency is not high enough for them to be self-regulated.\textsuperscript{16}

Along with ‘language use,’ Hee-Won mentioned that she wanted to provide students with linguistic tools that they can use later when they encounter foreigners (Interview I). Therefore, she spent time talking about additional expressions than the textbook presented according to their language functions. This usually occurred when

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Min-Ju is the one of the student participants of this study.
\item According to socio-cultural theory, the development of human cognition usually passes three stages; object-regulated, other-regulated, and self-regulated. When this applies to language learning, learners at self-regulated level are believed to be advanced language learners who had little difficulties in using the target language. (Lantolf & Appel, 1994)
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the class started a new chapter because the language functions are listed as goals of each chapter. In the following excerpt, which introduces a new target language function regarding directions in chapter 11, Hee-Won introduced additional expressions asking directions.

Classroom Excerpt III - Nov. 16 (Female Class)

1 T: 자 길을 몰을때, 자 우체국이 어디있습니까? 저렇게 묻는거. 어떡케?
   Okay, when asking directions, how can we ask 'where is the post office?'
2 S: Where is [ is [the
3 Some Ss: [어]. Where is the post office? ((write on the board))
4 T: 우체국이 어디에 있습니까? 이런거 말고 또 우체국에 – 또
5 다른 표현 어떻게 몰을수 있음까요?
   [yeah, where is the post office? Where is the post office? Not this one, post office- other expression, how can you ask (the same question)?]
6 S: Can I –
7 T: 어? 그래 내가- 전에 이단원에 나왔었ￂ. 내가 우체국에
8 어떻게 갈수 있나요 그린 표현.
   What? Right. I – (the expression) appeared in the chapter 2. the expression 'how can I get to the post office?'
9 S: ((inaudible utterances))
10 T: 어? 기억안나? How=
11 S: Can I –
12 T: 그래. ((starts writing)) How can I(.) [get to the post office
13 이런 표현 있어야아
   Right. We learned the expression, ‘How can I get to the post office.’
14 S: ((inaudible utterances)) 또 또 뛰어. 우체국에 어떻게 갈수 있나요.
15 T: ((finishes writing)) 또 또 뛰어. 우체국에 어떻게 갈수 있나요.
   What else, what else is there (as a meaning of) how I
can get to the post office.
16 T: ((starts writing)) can you tell me t(.) the [(.) way. 자 way 가
17 됩나라 way [.] 길이 길이. 그러? Can you tell me the way- 자
18 나에게 길을 말해 줄수 있습니까? 여? ((keep writing)) to the
19 post office. 우체국가는 길을 말해 줄수 있습니까? 이렇게
20 물어 볼 수 있겠지. 또는(.) 자 can 은 will 로 바꿔들수 있을걸고,
21 will you? (.) 자 show me the way. 자 길을 보여줄수있습니까?
22 자 이렇게 여러가지로 물어볼수 있었지 여?
   Uh? Can you tell me the way- okay- what does ‘way’ mean? Way,
   It means ‘way,’ right? Uh? To the post office. Can you tell me the way
to the post office? Or- well, ‘can’ can be changed into ‘will’ so will you?
   Well, show me the way? Well, will you show me the way? Like this, you
can ask I the same question) differently. Right?
As such, Hee-Won adds alternative expressions beyond the textbook to provide students with more language choices in the hope that they will realize that there are many expressions that can potentially be used in these sorts of communicative contexts. (SRP II). More than that, since the expressions in the textbook are too easy for her high-proficient students, Hee-Won wanted to provide additional expressions as a way of challenging them (SRP II). Instead of repeating the same expressions, she believed that providing alternative expressions would be more beneficial for these students.

Contrary to her beliefs about ‘language use’ and ‘language function,’ however, Hee-Won simultaneously held strong belief about grammar in language teaching and learning. Hee-Won believes that students need to know grammar before having an opportunity to use the language. In other words, grammar is a prerequisite for communication. Recognizing the impossibility of neglecting grammar in English instruction, Hee-Won uses the metaphor of a ‘frame’:

I mean, only when (students) know the frame, can they speak using the frame. For instance, if (I) don’t know the (form) of conditional (sentence), I don’t know how to say (something) in the conditional…
(Hee-Won, Interview II)

Here, the ‘frame’ is the grammar, and knowing the grammar is essential for language learning. Also, her statement, “자기가 (언어구조를) 알고있어야 또 말이 나오는거잖아요 (when students know the (language) structure, they can speak, right?)
(Interview I,) confirms her belief that understanding language structure is a prerequisite for language use. This suggests a contradiction in her beliefs; that is, she wants her students to approach language as a tool for meaning negotiation but at the same time, she wants to make sure that her students know structures before they use them.

The following excerpt shows how Hee-Won’s attention to grammar is prevalent in her instruction. The class is studying the content of the dialogue in the “Let’s Talk” section in chapter 10 (see Appendix F). When the class starts checking the meaning of the sentence ‘trees keep the air fresh,’ Hee-Won asked her students the following question, as a way to initiate a grammar explanation (line 1). From line 9, then, Hee-Won and the students spend quite a long time talking about general English sentence structure. When her explanation is over, in line 55, Hee-Won asks the students to make a sentence using that particular structure.

**Classroom Excerpt IV – Oct. 30 (Female Class)**

1 T: 자 보자( ) 자 그다음에 나무는 공기를 신선하게 해준다는 표현으로 뭐가 나와있어?
   
   *Okay, let’s see ( ) what was (in the book) as an expression ‘the trees keep the air fresh’?*

2 ()

3 S: tree=

4 T: =trees [keep the air fresh

5 Some Ss: [keep the air fresh

   
   *Let’s see the verb ‘keep.’ What is the original meaning of ‘keep’?*

7 S: 계속하다
   
   *Continue*

8 S: [유지하다
   
   *Maintain*

9 T: [유지하다 계속하다라는 거죠, 지난번에 자( ) 단어- 어

10 영어에서 [문장의 형식 정리 한번

   *(it) means ‘maintain’ and ‘continue’. Last time, well, Let’s review the English sentence structure*

11 S: [keep -ing

12 T: 이 keep ing [계속 해서 뭐하디라는 뜻이지 그지? [ 자

13 문장의 형식에 대해서 이야기해보자. 영어에서는 항상 주어 다음에

14 뭐가 따라나와?
Yeah, keep i.n.g. (That) meaning continuously doing something, right? Okay. Let’s talk about the sentence structure. In English, what always follows subject?

15 S: [(   )]

16 S: [네]

17 Ss: 동사= Verb

18 T: =동사가 항상 있고 그지, 그 틀에서 자 계속해서 늘어나면서

19 다섯개의 형식이 있었잖아. 일단 일 형식은 주어랑 [동사가

20 있는거였고, 이형식은 [주어 동사뒤에서 자 주어를 설명해주는

21 [보여가 있었고 그지? 그 다음 세번- 삼형식은 [주어 동사 되어, 자

22 목적어가 나오는거 있고, 자 사형식은 (. ) [주어 동사

There is always verb. In the frame, there were five structures by being added continuously. First of all, the 1st structured sentence is made up of subject and verb. In the 2nd structured sentence. After subject and verb, there is complement which explains subject, right? Next, the 3rd structured sentence is the one in which object follows subject and verb. Then The 4th structured is subject verb

((Hee-Won finishes explaining the overall English sentence structure.))

55 T: 자 그러면 우리 다른 예를 한번 들어보자. 자 너는 너 몸 좀 항상

56 깨끗이 해라. 그런말을 하는가. 자 그럴때 우리 이런 표현을 keep

57 을 가지고 표현할수 있을까 그지? 너는 해야만 한다는 조동사

58 이번 단원에 [나온게 뭐였어?

Then, let’s take another example. Well, let’s make a sentence ‘you should keep your body clean.’ At this time, we can use ‘keep’ to express it, right? What was the auxiliary verb, meaning ‘should’ in this chapter?

Based on the belief that knowledge of English grammar is prerequisite to communication (SRP II), Hee-Won simply converts this speaking activity into a lecture about grammar. This was found to be a pattern in Hee-Won’s instruction, that is, to focus on grammatical structures regardless of different kinds of activities in the textbook. The other noticeable feature is students’ fluency with grammatical ‘jargons’ such as subject, verb, complement, direct object. It is evident that grammar rules have been emphasized in these students’ English language learning activity systems at both schools and cram schools.

Besides seeing grammar rules as ‘frames,’ Hee-Won also sees dialogues in the textbook as ‘frames.’ In line 1 of excerpt II, she explicitly asked students to use the
dialogue as a frame to model. In the following excerpt, Hee-Won also asks her students to memorize the following dialogue in the “Let’s Talk” section:

**Classroom Excerpt V – Oct. 30 (Female Class)**


2. Now, if I give you five minutes, you can memorize (the dialogue), right? Now, divide the role with your pair and memorize your role. I will make this competitions among the rows. So, when a row fails, only the students in the row should do today’s homework, copying and translating of this (let’s talk section).

3. Students: ((start memorizing the dialogue))

In the stimulated recall interview, Hee-Won again invoked the metaphor of frames when she realized that the “Let’s Talk” sections might be useful in real conversations. She claimed that if students memorized these frames, later, they might use them in more realistic dialogues. Hee-Won’s own school English learning history, dominated by the grammar-oriented method, may have made this instructional strategy make sense.

As the semester progressed, however, the conversations in the “Let’s Talk” sections became more difficult for her students to memorize since they were longer and required more explanation on her part. This left little time for students to practice or memorize these conversations, and Hee-Won believed that her student’s fluency declined as a result (Interview II). It appears, for Hee-Won, fluency is related to the ability to memorize ‘frames’ in the textbook rather than to use English to express ideas or engage in meaningful interactions with others.

Undoubtedly, Hee-Won’s own language learning experiences contribute to her belief that knowledge of structure is a prerequisite for communication. Given that her
own English learning experiences were mainly grammar-focused (Interview I), and despite having negative attitudes toward grammar-focused teaching, she continues to believe that grammar-translation methods enabled her to communicate with native English speakers (Interview II). Thus, it is not surprising that she would have doubts about the curricular mandates that emphasize function over form, when she sees herself as a living proof that one can learn to use English via grammar-translation methods.

6.4. Hee-Won’s Understanding of Her Instructional Context

6.4.1. Maintaining Student Motivation as Object

At the time of this study, Hee-Won was teaching three male and two female high-proficient classes. Hee-Won regarded the students in these classes as highly motivated to learn English, “상반아들은 확실히 들리죠. 그리고 관심도 대개 많고…(The students in high-proficient class are definitely different [compared to the students in low-proficient class] and they are very interested in [English]…)” (Interview I). Because her students were very motivated to learn English, one of Hee-Won’s major concerns was to maintain their elevated interest in English. Whenever she noticed that students seemed bored, she did not feel good about herself or her teaching. For Hee-Won, her students, as members of this community, directly influenced her instruction. She said that she tried hard to make her classes interesting since “애들의 (수업시간의) 반응을 보면서 내가 만족을 느끼니까 (my satisfaction over my teaching depends on students’ reaction (during class))” (Interview, III). Clearly, Hee-Won is sensitive to the needs of her students’ and she often modifies her instructions accordingly (Interview III).
In addition to the daily quiz activity mentioned early in this section, Hee-Won said that she used other learning activities such as bingo, jeopardy, and information gap activities in order to maintain student motivation and interest. In the following excerpt, the class plays “Jeopardy” to review chapter 10. When the daily quiz activity is over, Hee-Won reminds her students that the class is going to review the chapter (line 1).

Classroom Excerpt VI - Nov. 13 (Male Class)

1 T: 그 다음, 우리 오늘 10 과 정리한다고 그랬지?
Next, we are supposed to review chapter 10, right?

2 S: 네
Yeah

3 T: ((starts Power Point ))자 책을 닫어보세요.
Okay, close the book

4 Ss: ((inaudible talks))

5 T: 자 다 보이니?
Can all of you see?

..

9 T: 자 quiz show 라고 [되있지 그지?
It says a quiz show, right?

10 S: [quiz show
((Hee-Won explains the rules of the Jeopardy game.))

22 Some Ss: [((inaudible utterance))

23 T: 자 여기 일이분단 A 조. 그 다음 삼사분단 B 조야.
Okay. This first and second rows is group A. Then, next third and fourth row is group B.

24 Ss: ((cheers and other reactions))

25 T: 자 문제는 여러분들이 선택을 해야겠지?
Well, You are supposed to choose the questions, right?

((Hee-Won and the class check each category in Jeopardy according to color in English.))

59 T: 자 보자. 일조. A 조
Let’s see. Group 1. Group A

...

70 S: third pink

71 S: third pink

72 T: third pink? ( ) 자 이거- 표시해나가야 되겠지? 이거 했다고
Third pink? Well, you had better check this (third pink) as already chose.

((some students are surprised because the question is worthy of 40 points.))

77 T: 자 다음 대화를 영어로 옮기시오=
Okay, translate the following dialogue into English.

78 S: hh=

79 S: =우하 좋겠다
hh. good for you.

80 S: we
Throughout the activity, most students seemed interested in the activity. Some students asked questions of their classmates indicating some peer-to-peer interaction. For instance, Won-Jae, one of the participants in this study, later acknowledged that while answering a question during the Jeopardy game, he asked his classmates how to make English ordinal numbers. Hee-Won recalled that she knew that many of her students already studied the content of the textbook at private institutes after school. These private institutes are primarily cram schools with the goal of preparing students for standardized school exams. Since most cram schools in the area focus on grammar and reading comprehension exercises, Hee-Won felt comfortable using alternative types of activities during her instruction:
많이해봐야되지않나 싶어요. 학교에서는 물론 그런것도 많고 넘어가야되고 애들한테 좀 이런저런 활동할 기회를 많이 주어야되겠다 그런 생각이 많이 들죠.

At cram schools, students already studied what they would learn (in school) in advance. Some students’ textbook was filled with notes about grammar from the cram schools … I don’t think students have a chance to practice dialogue (as a role play) there. So, I think they need the chance for doing lots of them in school. At school, of course (Grammar) should be also taught but I think of providing more opportunities for doing diverse activities for students.

(Hee-Won, Interview I)

In fact, Hee-Won believed her students enjoyed her classes most when they participated in these sorts of activities. Believing these activities motivated her students, she even tolerated the noise students made while engaging in such activities.

However, despite Hee-Won’s efforts to provide a variety of language learning activities, some students seemed frustrated by these activities due to their limited English proficiency. In excerpt VII below, students were asked to work in pairs to complete an information gap activity (See the Appendix G for the handout). After introducing the English words on the handout, Hee-Won asks the students to fill out the information gap activity based on the example given at the top of the handout.

Classroom Excerpt VII - Nov. 19 (Female Class)

1 T: 어. 여러분 지금 상황에서 이게 전부나 나와있어야 되는데 이 중에서 몇개만 나와있을꺼야 그렇지? (.) 일단 자기 그림에 나와있는 거에다 동그라미를 한번 찍보세요. 그리고 이제 자기한테 없는거를 합지한테 어 몰라보면 되겠지. (.) 이 글씨 중에는 선생님이 쓴것도 있고 원래 적혀져 있는것도 있고

2 T: Okay. In the current context, all of this should be on (your map) but only some are (on your map), right? First, make circle the ones(words) on your map. And, now, ask your partner about the ones not on your map. Among the words, some of them I wrote and (some of them) are already there.

3 (0.2)

4 T: 그림은 보여주지 말고

5 Don’t show (your) picture

6 Min-Ju: 선생님 떠들어도 되요?

7 Teacher, is it okay to be noisy?

8 T: 어? 어어. 서로 질문 해가지고

9 Uh? Yes. By asking questions each other
While students were doing this activity (line 20), the researcher observed that one of students stopped participating. Hyunmi, one of the top students in the class, said, “안해 (I quit)” and just stopped doing the activity. She later admitted that it was too difficult and simply annoying to fit all of the dialogues into the format of the exemplar dialogue. (Field Note, Nov. 19). Regarding the same issue, Hee-Won also mentioned that she became frustrated when she noticed her students’ lack of ability to utilize the resources available to them (SRP II).

Overall, Hee-Won viewed these communicative activities as supplemental and not the core mediating artifacts in her instructional activity system (Interview III). Although her students were highly proficient, Hee-Won believed that they were still beginners who needed to master language structures (Interview III). Institutionally, students were expected to learn the same as the low-proficient students. In other words,
since “what to teach” at each level is determined by the Ministry of Education and found in the textbook, Hee-Won conceded that what students were learning in different classes should be identical. Specifically, she felt that the same vocabulary and language structures should be covered in both classes. Additionally, both high and low proficient classes took the same school examination based mainly on the content of the textbook (Interview I).

6.4.2. The Textbook as a Necessary Evil

Hee-Won did not think that the government-required textbook was designed to foster communicative competence despite its claim that it reflected the government’s efforts for curriculum reform by using diverse activities. She repeatedly pointed out that many mechanical drills were presented in the book rather than communicative activities (Interview II). She was also concerned that the content of the book was not interesting (Interview I), that some dialogues in the textbook were not natural, and that it was too repetitious and thus too simplistic for her high-proficient students (SRPIII).

Notwithstanding her dissatisfaction with the textbook as an artifact, Hee-Won believed that since the textbook was approved by the government, it must cover everything the students should learn about the English language at their current levels:

The textbook is designed including all of the learning and teaching points suggested by the government in spite of its weakness. So, when I teach the points presented here (textbook) step by step, I believe I can teach everything (the government suggest to teach).

(Hee-Won, SRP III)
Given that Hee-Won also believed that all students should receive the same instruction, covering the textbook was the best way to accomplish this goal. She also believed she must follow the content of the textbook in order to prepare her students for the next level in her school, a clearly defined rule of the school community (Interview I, SRPIII). Thus, Hee-Won believed that following the textbook faithfully would insure consistency in her teaching.

Due to the nature of team teaching at her school, Mi-Ra, Hee-Won’s colleague (community member) was influential in how Hee-Won used her textbook. Mi-Ra believed in the importance of teaching the content of the textbook with few extra materials or activities. Given that she was a senior teacher at this school, Hee-Won acknowledged that she should follow Mi-Ra’s recommendation to focus on the textbook. Compared to the previous year when she co-taught with a different teacher, Hee-Won admitted that this year she was using the textbook more often and using fewer supplemental materials or activities.

Overall, Hee-Won’s lessons were mostly structured around the textbook. In fact, when asked about her lesson objectives, she admitted that she rarely thought about them before each lesson, implying that her instruction followed the textbook. While she did not believe that the textbook reflected the mandated curriculum properly, Hee-Won admitted that covering the textbook drove her instruction positioning it as an object in her instruction. That is, although she did not like the design of the textbook she was using, she used the textbook because it provided her with a sense of security. Within the educational atmosphere where the textbook typically is the core of instruction, the communicative activities she prepared beyond the textbook were regarded as
supplemental. Moreover given that she needs to cover certain chapters in the textbook before each mid- or final term exam, it seems natural for Hee-Won to follow the textbook.

6.4.3. School Exam as the Instructional Goal

There are several exams that students must take in Hee-Won’s school. First, students must take two integrated exams (mid-term and final exams) per semester, which represents 70% of their English grade. These exams are created either by Hee-Won or Mi-Ra, the teacher of the low-proficiency classes. The teachers agreed that exams should be based on the content of the textbook. Subsequently, school exam was a primary reason why Hee-Won faithfully followed the content of the textbook. In addition to these exams, students take dictation exams three times a semester each representing 5% of their grade. A handout, which contains target words, key expressions, and short sentences, is given to the students to review about one week before each dictation test. Finally, a listening test, designed and administered by the local Ministry of Education for all schools in the area, was administered in both high-proficient and low-proficient classes and the scores are reflected in students’ overall English grade.

Since Hee-Won’s high proficiency students usually got high scores and were active participants in most classroom activities, she did not feel the need to mention exams as a way to motivate students or to get their attention. As a result, Hee-Won rarely mention the word, ‘exam,’ which was interesting compared to another participating teacher, Mi-Ra.
Hee-Won in fact viewed these exams as obstacles in her efforts to use communicative activities beyond the textbook. For instance, Hee-Won was aware that adhering to the readings in the textbook in her high-proficiency class was repetitive and boring for her students. Yet, she was hesitant to provide alternative reading materials:

Although I want to introduce other (reading text), my concern is that if new vocabulary or different expressions appear, it will take time to explain them, but they will not be included in the school exam ultimately because the students in Mi-Ra’s class do not read it. … A while ago, a story from Aesop’s fable was introduced in the textbook and since I thought it’s good to read different stories in the fable, I copied another story and gave it to the students. Although I gave it, I don’t believe they read it.

(Hee-Won, Interview II)

Because she knew that her students would not take the extra readings or activities seriously unless they knew they would be on the exams- her students’ main object of the activity system -, Hee-Won was reluctant to assign them. She also expressed the same concern regarding communicative activities; while discussing the purpose of creative use of the dialogues in “Let’s Talk” section, Hee-Won explained;

(I’d like to call it) creative language using ability. When I gave them a chance to create their own dialogue, they are supposed to do it by themselves…they uh they like it and express their excitement… But, when considering the result (of the learning), the exam does not include it (the creative dialogue) in spite of a lot of time, almost a whole lesson time, spent doing it… (Hee-Won, Interview II)
Clearly, school exams work to legitimize what is considered to be relevant for both Hee-Won and her students in this instructional context. Therefore, in spite of her negative attitudes toward school exams, Hee-Won’s instruction closely matched the content of the school exams thus they functioned as the primary object of her instructional system.

6.5. Contradictions in the Instructional Activity System

Hee-Won repeatedly mentioned dilemmas that emerged as a result of conflicts she perceived in her teaching context. For instance, she wanted her students to learn English through various activities and considered herself to be a facilitator of students’ learning (Interview I). At the same time, however, she expressed her hesitancy to use activities beyond the textbook since her students would not be tested on them (Interview I & II). Also, instructionally, she tended to control students’ learning rather than facilitate it. To understand these conflicts more systematically, Engeström’s concept of contradictions (1993, 1999a) is applied to Hee-Won’s activity system. The contradictions that emerged in Hee-Won’s instructional activity system can be categorized mainly as secondary with some primary and tertiary contradictions as seen in Figure 6 below.

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17 This becomes very clear when students narrate about their understanding of the language learning, which will be described in chapter 8..
6.5.1 Tertiary Contradiction

A tertiary contradiction occurred between Hee-Won (subject of a central activity system) and TETE, the government’s proposal (culturally more advanced activity system), when she was asked to use English during instruction. Hee-Won resisted this policy because it unilaterally imposed TETE without proper teacher training and created a huge burden on English teachers (Interview I). Fundamentally, this attitude was related to her perception that her English is not as proficient as native speakers of English (Interview I, Interview II) resulting in her lack of confidence in her English, reflected in her statement, “대개 자신이 없어요. 저는 그런거 (나의 영어실력) 에 (I am quite not confident about my English)” (Interview I – p.12). This negative attitude also came from her direct experience that neither the Ministry of Education nor her pre-service teacher

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18 The folded arrows denote the emerged contradictions, and the numbers are the layers of the contradictions. For example, the number 1 means the primary inner contradiction occurring within Hee-Won as a subject of the activity system. Then, the shaded parts represent the corresponding components involved in the contradictions.  
19 Her lack of confidence in English can also be a source for a primary inner contradiction caused by the policy.
education programs succeeded in producing proficient English teachers. Also, consensus among her colleagues about the policy supported her resistance:

저가 같이 뭐 친구들하고 얘기 해보거나 그러면 그런 부분들에 대해서 많이 공감을 하고 있으니까. 정부의 policy는 그렇지만 우리가 현장에서 느끼는 거는 이게 아니고. 실질적으로는 이렇게(…) 거의 뭐 우리말로 하고 있잖아. 얘기하다보면 그렇고…

When I talk with my friends, we agree to each other about it (the policy). That is, although it is the government’s policy, we do not feel (the needs) in the field and actually conduct the class mostly in Korean. While taking (with my friend), (I came to know) they are also doing the same…

(Hee-Won, Interview II)

Additionally, based on her previous experience with using English to teach English, Hee-Won pointed out several limitations. Specifically, she mentioned that English did not have an authentic communicative function in her class, and she believed that most authentic communication with her students occurred in Korean. For instance, Hee-Won mentioned that if she said, “Be quiet” in English, her students would not listen to her (Interview I). In addition, Hee-Won believed that within the Korean instructional context, teachers were unable to engage in meaningful communication with forty students (Interview I & II). Interestingly, she believed if she communicated with one student, the other 39 would be left out resulting in no learning for them (Interview II). In Hee-Won’s mind, that is, all students should have the same opportunities to learn in her class.

As a result, Hee-Won admitted that she ignored the government’s TETE policy. During classroom observations, Hee-Won used English only when she read from the textbook but not when she interacted with her students. Her resistance to the TETE policy created a tertiary contradiction – between herself (the subject of the central activity system) and government’s policy (culturally advanced activity system).
6.5.2. Secondary Contradiction

Secondary contradictions emerged between (1) subject and tool, (2) subject and object, (3) subject and rule, (4) artifact and rule, (5) artifact and object, (6) subject and community, and finally (7) community and imposed artifact. These secondary contradictions are especially noteworthy in that Hee-Won experienced them while still attempting to adopt a more communicative approach. The first secondary contradiction emerged between Hee-Won (subject) and the required textbook (artifact and object). That is, Hee-Won (subject) wanted to introduce some communicative activities in her classroom since she believed that these activities would provide opportunities for students to use the language as well as motivate them to learn. However, Hee-Won did not believe that the textbook activities (artifact and object) were communicatively oriented but instead mechanical (Interview II).\(^2\) Also, Hee-Won believed that only the “Let’s Talk” section of the textbook could be actually expanded into communicative activities, while the other sections of the textbook could not. As a result, she continued to use teacher-centered instructional activities from the textbook but then spent extra hours creating and organizing supplemental activities to use with her students.

Hee-Won also expressed concern about students’ insincere attitude toward communicative activities. This concern revealed another secondary contradiction in this instructional activity system, that is, between the teacher (subject) and the students (community). In spite of her efforts to integrate more communicative activities into her class, Hee-Won expressed doubt about whether or not her exam-oriented students would

\(^2\) In this sense, this can also mean the contradiction between the textbook designers and government who proposes the communicative activities as a very important medium for achieving communicative competence. However, since it was impossible to make access to the both parties, it is excluded from the focus of this study
regard these activities as relevant\textsuperscript{21}. The data from one classroom observation in which a student, Hyunmi, dropped out of quit an information gap activity provides evidence substantiating Hee-Won’s concern that students will not complete activities they know are not directly related to their grades or to school exams\textsuperscript{22}. Later, this same concern was verified by a student, Min-Ju, who pointed out these communicative activities were not important to her English learning because they were their irrelevant to the school exam (Min-Ju, SRP II). This secondary contradiction simultaneously revealed another contradiction between the communicative activities (artifact) and the students (community), since exam-oriented students did not see these activities meaningful.

This secondary contradiction in this instructional activity system is also related to the contradiction between Hee-Won (subject) and the school exams (rules/object) and between communicative activities (artifact) and the school exams (rules/object). Hee-Won and Mi-Ra had agreed that the school exams would be based only on the content of the textbook and would not include any supplemental activities they did in their classrooms. Consequently, because student learning when engaged in communicative activities was never measured, Hee-Won was uncertain about her decision to do these activities. Her uncertainty along with the other secondary contradictions created a primary inner contradiction.

\textsuperscript{21} This also caused a primary inner contradiction within Hee-Won. See the primary inner contradiction section for further elaboration for this issue.

\textsuperscript{22} As mentioned earlier in the section, it was also possible that the task itself might be too challenging for the student.
6.5.3. Primary Contradiction

The most noteworthy and fundamental primary contradiction emerged between Hee-Won’s efforts to use more communicative activities in her classroom and her beliefs about teaching language structures. Hee-Won wanted to improve students’ language learning through more communicative activities and envisioned herself as a facilitator in the classroom. She also believed that using the language for communicative purposes was the best way to develop communicative competence (Interview I), and she expected communicative activities would increase as well as maintain her students’ motivation to learn English. At the same time, ironically, Hee-Won also supported the use of mechanical practice as well as rote memorization revealing a major primary inner contradiction.

This inner contradiction is closely related to her own learning experiences and school exams. Because she had direct experience with mechanical, rote learning in order to do well on exams, Hee-Won believed these non-communicative activities actually helped her a lot. Moreover, since school exams primarily focus on checking students’ discrete knowledge of English, Hee-Won struggled with whether or not to spend time creating supplemental communicative activities for her very exam-oriented students. Because Hee-Won’s institution measured students’ learning through exams and did not test actual language use, Hee-Won became skeptical about the instructional value of communicative activities. As such, her instructional ‘reality’ challenged her ‘vision’ of language teaching and created a primary inner contradiction within herself.
6.6. Summary

Hee-Won, the novice teacher, revealed multi-layered attitudes, both positive and negative, toward the CLT-based curriculum reform. Like other Korean English teachers, she agreed that the English education reforms were needed and desirable. Her opinion was based on both her own experiences as a language learner through grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods and her awareness of the value of English in Korean society. Her colleagues in her pre-service teacher education program shared the same critique of these teaching methods, indicating that her dissatisfaction was not solely personal but permeated throughout the South Korean English education community. In addition, Hee-Won’s vision as a teacher also aligned with the curriculum reforms requiring teachers to actively engage students in language learning through a variety of meaning-based experiences rather than simply by disseminating knowledge about language.

Contrary to Hee-Won’s belief and desire for change, however, she simultaneously resisted the current curriculum reform measures. She doubted her ability to implement the mandates because she did not feel competent about her own language ability. She admitted she had little knowledge or skill to teach communicatively. She placed the blame for her inadequacies on her pre-service teacher education program and the Ministry of Education for having not fully prepared her to teach according to the new curriculum. As a result, she simply ignored the TETE policy confirming Engeström’s (1987) point that tertiary contradictions, which occur when a new object is imposed on a central activity system by a culturally advanced activity system but not infused enough to
cause secondary contradictions in the activity system, are either resisted by or subordinated to the existing forms of the activity.

In spite of her negative attitudes toward the curriculum mandates, however, Hee-Won acknowledged that she tried to incorporate some aspects of the communicative language teaching in her instruction. There are several factors, both individual and institutional, which made this possible. Both Hee-Won’s own determination to move beyond the grammar-translation method and her vision as a teacher to create a more activity-based learning environment were significant personal factors. In addition to these, Hee-Won’s high proficient students played an important role in her ability to adapt her instructional practices.

However, a recurring primary contradiction emerged when Hee-Won tried to implement more communicative activities in this instructional activity system. She expressed a lack of knowledge about the communicative activities, and in fact, most of her activities were teacher-centered, although at times they did trigger meaningful negotiation among students or between her and her students. More importantly, Hee-Won remained uncertain about how helpful the communicative approach is for her students in this instructional activity system.

She also experienced many secondary contradictions; most of which were present when she attempted to adopt more communicative activities in the instructional activity system. Moreover, contradiction between the artifacts Hee-Won used to teach and her exam-oriented community made her reluctant to try out communicative activities. Contrary to Engeström’s (1993) point that secondary contradictions can be a starting point for change, the secondary contradictions Hee-Won experienced made her
feel that remaining within what she learned from her “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 2002) might be safer in this instructional activity system.

The rules of her activity system also shaped what Hee-Won thought was possible in her classroom. In South Korea where the passion for education is extremely high, high test scores are paramount. Without exception, in Hee-Won’s current teaching context where students’ language learning was mainly evaluated through paper and pencil exams, she preferred to stay with more traditional modes of instruction. Therefore, the secondary contradictions Hee-Won experienced while trying out more communicative activities did not push her to fully adopt a communicative approach in her instruction. Viewed at the macro-level, the main foci of Hee-Won’s instruction was grammar translation and vocabulary along with the memorization of dialogues based on audio-lingual methods. Any communicative activities that did occur remained on the periphery of her instruction.

The fact that Hee-Won’s inner contradictions were interdependent on individual, institutional, and social factors that operated simultaneously made local-level implementation of the CLT-based curricular mandates very difficult. The contradictions within the observed activity system highlight the challenges that Hee-Won and other South Korean secondary school English teachers who intend to adopt the communicative approach face under the curriculum mandates and societal demands for effective English education.
Chapter 7

The Case of Mi-Ra: The Old Timer

7.1. A Snapshot of Mi-Ra’s Classroom and Instruction

Mi-Ra’s classroom set up was almost identical to Hee-Won’s – students’ desks facing the blackboard, a computer on the teacher’s table, and a large TV screen to the left of the blackboard. Students sat in pairs facing the blackboard in most of her English classes.

Very similar to Hee-Won, the majority of Mi-Ra’s teaching was based on the content of the textbook. She used the textbook and CD-Rom as her main instructional artifacts. Mi-Ra provided extra handouts twice, one prepared by Hee-Won (Appendix H) and one prepared by her (Appendix I). She sometimes finished her lesson by giving homework but rarely checked the homework once it was completed.

One prominent feature observed in Mi-Ra’s class was her use of English; that is, whereas Hee-Won rarely spoke in English during her teaching, Mi-Ra tried to communicate with her students in English during her lesson. At the beginning of her lessons, for instance, Mi-Ra frequently asked the whole class about the weather or the lunch menu in English. In addition, when Mi-Ra asked reading comprehension questions, she sometimes asked them in English.

The following excerpt occurred at the beginning of a lesson. Mi-Ra was late for the lesson, and she and her students briefly talked about paying a fine in Korean before she switched into English in line 1. In most cases, Mi-Ra’s use of an English greeting signaled the official start of the day’s lesson.
Classroom Excerpt I – Nov. 20 (Female Class)

((Mi-Ra and students talk about the fine for her being late.))

1 T: =자 hello everybody?
    Well. Hello everybody?

2 Some Ss: hello

3 T: hello,

4 Ss: ((No reply))

5 T: hello there?

6 (.)

7 T: hello?

8 Some Ss: hello

9 T: hello?

10 Two Ss: hello

11 T: 밥도 안 문겨같- did you- uh- did uh didn’t you have lunch today↑
    You sounded that you didn’t have meals- did you- uh- did uh didn’t you have lunch today?

12 Some Ss: [yes

13 S: [먹었어요
    I did.

14 T: what did you have for lunch↑

15 (.)

16 S: uh

17 T: 짜장면↑
    Black bean sauce noodle?

18 S: No

19 Ji-In: 카레라이스
    curry

20 Some Ss: 하이라이스
    High rice

21 Some Ss: 하이라이스=
    High rice

22 T: = no ( ) How was it, was it delicious?

23 (.)

24 Ji-In: yes

25 S: no

26 T: no?

27 (0.2)

28 T: uh how- how was- how about the 딸기? [Strawberry juice? Very good? Strawberry
    [good

29 S: [good

30 T: did you enjoy the strawberry juice?

31 S: [no

32 Ji-In: [yes

33 T: no?

((Mi-Ra then checks what page of the textbook they are going to start with students.))

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Overall, Mi-Ra’s students, as key members of the community of the activity system in which Mi-Ra operated, participated less often when compared to their counterparts in the high-proficiency classes. Only one or two students spoke while the rests were silent. Even though Mi-Ra invited students to engage in simple greetings (lines 4 and 6), only a few students replied. Similarly, only a small number of students answer Mi-Ra’s questions about the lunch menu.

Sometimes, students’ lack of participation made Mi-Ra stop an activity (see the classroom excerpt V of this chapter). To her, students’ minimal participation meant they did not understand her, which she based on her stated belief that “알며는 애들이 대답하는 그린 속-속성은 있거든 (students have a tendency to answer when they know (the answer)” (SRP I).

7.2. The Structure of the Instructional Activity System

Based on an analysis of the data the following portrait of the instructional activity system emerged.

**Figure 7. The Instructional Activity System**

- **Mediating Artifact:** Lessons based on textbook/Blackboard/CD-Rom/Homework/Handout/Korean/English/School exams/Increased repetition drill
- **Subject:** Mi-Ra
- **Object:** covering the content of the textbook/preparing students for school exams
- **Rules:** coverage of the textbook in timely manner for school exams/traditional classroom rules such as IRE and teacher fronted lessons/survival in the exam-oriented society/normed students’ behavior in class
- **Community:** Low-proficient students/Hee-Won/Parents
- **Division of Labor:** teacher controls as knowledge holder/students receive the knowledge in submissive ways
- **Outcome:** Students’ exam scores/more student’s classroom

1 See the section, students as fundamentals for lessons, for the further elaboration of the students.
Mi-Ra, the subject of this activity system, acknowledges that the overarching object of her English instruction is to develop students’ communicative competence which seems to align with the goals of the Ministry of Education. Contrary to her statements, however, classroom observation reveals that Mi-Ra’s instruction focused on mastering the content of the textbook through drill and repetition, translations, and grammar explanations. With her low proficient students, it was also observed that she spent more class time doing repetition drills than any other instructional configuration.

The way Mi-Ra assessed whether or not students had learned the content of the textbook tasks was through school exams, and as such, Mi-Ra regarded exam scores as the outcome of students’ learning. In addition to exam scores, Mi-Ra also believes that increased classroom participation is an outcome of student learning because students who are competent and know the correct answers can participate in classroom activities more than those who are not. Because the exams are the only visible and legitimate outcome of student learning in Mi-Ra’s institutional context, preparing her students for school exams is the object of her instructional activity system. In a similar vein, Mi-Ra believes that higher exam scores will fundamentally motivate students in her instructional context. The exam’s importance is a regular part of her classroom discourse as she repeatedly reminds students of upcoming exams. In this sense, the exams are also a pivotal mediational artifact in this activity system. Moreover, Mi-Ra’s main concern is with accuracy because accurate knowledge of English is required in order for students to do well on school exams.

Given that the textbook is organized systematically and contains basic knowledge that her students should know, she believes that the content of the textbook is the only
legitimate knowledge that her students need to learn. Moreover, because the content of
the textbook is challenging for her low-proficient students, Mi-Ra believes that she does
not have time to use additional communicative activities. As a result, even when
communicative activities or games are suggested in the textbook, Mi-Ra sometimes
chooses not to use them. Since Mi-Ra believes that language learning is in essence,
knowledge of vocabulary, language structure, and the ability to accurately translate, she
believes that these cannot be achieved through communicative activities.

The textbook is Mi-Ra’s principal mediational artifact since most of her lessons
are constructed around the textbook. Along with the textbook, Mi-Ra uses the
accompanying CD-Rom for listening and pronunciation instruction. She sometimes
incorporates handouts but these are also based on the content of the textbook. Mi-Ra also
assigns homework at the end of almost every class, yet she seldom checks it².

Korean is the language of instruction in Mi-Ra’s class although some English is
used. As seen the classroom excerpt I, Mi-Ra usually starts her lessons by talking with
her students in English about common topics or she uses English when completing
reading comprehension questions. She believes that more English equals more input for
her students, therefore, she tries to use as much English as she can in the classroom
(Interview I & II)³. At the same time, she believes that her use of English provides
necessary input which is foundational for students’ output in the future.

Similar to Hee-Won’s class, Mi-Ra’s teacher-centered approach defines the
division of labor in this activity system; namely, the teacher holds and conveys the

² However, I still put classroom assignment as an instructional tool because it is still an instructional tool
from Mi-Ra’s perspective.
³ However, she disagreed to the idea that teachers should use only English during class, which was the
main suggestion of the policy.
knowledge students need to learn, and students are passive recipients of that knowledge. This division of labor is reinforced by Mi-Ra’s attitude toward her low-proficient students, whom she believes are unable to learn by themselves. Hence, Mi-Ra feels the need to control their learning by adhering to the strict division of labor. As a result, Mi-Ra is reluctant to try any learner-centered activities which might make it difficult for her to control class.

Finally, the rules in this instructional activity system are to cover the textbook in a timely manner and to maintain the IRE instructional pattern. These rules are important to Mi-Ra in order to prepare students for exams and the next level of instruction. In order to realize these goals, drill and repetition emerged as her main instructional strategies. In a similar vein, Mi-Ra’s teacher-fronted instruction, IRE interactional pattern, and almost total teacher control are necessary for effective preparation for school exams and thus make up the rules of the present activity system. According to Mi-Ra, all these rules converge into a strong rule; namely, schools in South Korea are charged with preparing students to survive in an exam-oriented society.

Similar to the previous chapter, the results of the grounded analysis are presented in the following section to provide a comprehensive understanding of each component of this instruction activity system. A careful examination of the origin and historical and social development of Mi-Ra’s perceptions of and actions within each component helped to identify the existing inner contradictions in this instructional activity system. Also, the results illustrate how Mi-Ra responds to these contradictions as an experienced English teacher in South Korea.
7.3. Mi-Ra’s Understanding of Self

7.3.1. The Old Timer

Mi-Ra, the subject of the instructional activity system, had 18 years of English teaching experience at the time of this study. Since graduating from college as an English education major, she taught English in several public middle schools both in Seoul and the cities in Kyungnam province of South Korea.

In spite of her extensive teaching experience, Mi-Ra frequently indicated that she was not in as advantageous position as some of her younger colleagues. When describing her recent participation in a workshop for English teachers, she described an impressive teaching demonstration conducted by a younger English teacher in fluent English:

요새 선생님들은 맛있길아 한 일년정도 유학. 어 어학 course 라도 밟고 맛 이래가 수업시간에도 자유자재로 하는데 표정 gesture 완전 원어민인거 있체, (...) 하였든 그 외 배우들 맛- 맛 이래 하는거 있값야, 그런 표정 그까 흠내도 못낼정도로 너무나 자연스럽게...

Today's teachers4, because (some of) them participated in one-year language courses, so they are able to use English competently during class, and their facial expressions or gestures were totally like those of native speakers, like actors. Anyway, the facial expressions are so natural that I cannot imitate… (Mi-Ra, Interview I)

In her view, younger English teachers were also in a better position because they had recently passed the teacher-qualifying exams, knew more recent teaching methods, and spoke English well enough to teach classes in English (Short Interview I). Although Mi-Ra mentioned that there were still some teachers in their forties or late thirties who continued to develop their English, she clearly distanced herself from her younger colleagues by calling them ‘요새 선생님들 (today’s teachers),’ or ‘지금 발령받은 사람들 (newly hired teachers).’

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4 Although she used plural pronouns, her comment was mainly based on one teacher’s presentation.
In fact, Mi-Ra later called herself ‘옛날 사람 (an old generation)’ when she said that she still had a tendency to emphasize grammar in describing her own English learning and teaching histories (Interview II). For instance, since grammar-translation had been the pervasive teaching method throughout most of her teaching career, Mi-Ra felt more comfortable using the grammar-translation method (Interview I). She recalled not feeling uncomfortable about her teaching because no other methods were available and the grammar-translation method was best for preparing students for English exams.

However, she did recognize changes in textbooks and exams, both of which served as instructional artifacts, based on changes in the required curriculum throughout her career (Interview I). She felt that these changes, especially the movement toward enhancing students’ oral proficiency, were positive because “그러니까 수업 시간에 해 보니가 전에는 Speaking 시키면 몇 명만 하고 몇 명은 안 했는데, 지금은 내가 하나하나 돌아보면 꼴지하는 애도 할려고 해” (When I teach, I could see that even the lowest students want to participate in speaking activities where only a few students used to participated before).”

Mi-Ra also acknowledged that since the 6th curriculum, she had become familiar with the idea that improving communicative competence is now a goal of English language teaching (Interview I). She also pointed out that ‘meaningful practice,’ ‘authentic materials,’ and ‘task-based learning’ are characteristics of the communicative approach (Interview III)5. While Mi-Ra was able to describe the components of the communicative approach, at the same time, she indicated that she did not know how to put these into practice. This, she believed, was due to her limited exposure to this

5 Mi-Ra said that she learned the characteristics of CLT from the reading for the projects she was involved.
approach in her teacher education programs and the lack of specific teaching suggestions
given by the Ministry of Education (Interview I).

However, recognizing that teachers have unique teaching styles, Mi-Ra acknowledged that different teachers might have different ways of fostering students’ communicative competence, implying that she also had her own ways. For instance, although she mentioned that developing communicative competence was her goal, she did not believe communicative activities were as effective as those she had already been using (Interview, I). Also, Mi-Ra expressed her disfavor of learner-centered communicative activities:

Communicative activity를 시키면 (.) 그 너무 시끄러울까봐. 뭐 그런 여(h)리가지(h) 있잖아. ((inhale)) 그러니까 교과교실 같은게 없고 기존의 그거 있으니까 나이드신 사람은 또 전체적으로 좁아 통제를 할려고 하는 그런게 있잖아. 근데 젊은 사람들은 ((inhale)) 역사로 시끄러운걸 이렇게 또 하거든?

If (students) do communicative activities, I am afraid that the class can be too noisy. Since there is no classroom for the English subject, and, the old people (teachers) have a tendency to control the whole class. But the young people (teachers) conduct the activities that produce lots of noise.
(Mi-Ra, Interview I – p.13)

That is, as an old generation teacher, Mi-Ra was accustomed to teacher-fronted language instruction where she gave lectures about English grammar, and thus was able to maintain control over large numbers of students, the traditional rules and division of labor throughout her entire career. If students engage in communicative activities in groups, Mi-Ra was concerned that she would lose classroom control. Thus she consistently maintained a teacher-fronted classroom, a consistent rule of the observed activity system. Mi-Ra also believed that teaching is transferring knowledge from

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6 Mi-Ra said that when she started her teaching career in mid 1980s, there were around 65 students in one classroom.
7 Not only the issue of student control, but Mi-Ra also pointed out the effectiveness of communicative games or activities as learning, which will be discussed in her ‘belief about language learning’ section.
teachers to students with the clear division of labor between teacher and student; therefore, students should be under her control at all times.

Mi-Ra’s beliefs about teaching and learning were observed in her actual classroom practices as well. In the following excerpt, the class is playing bingo in the textbook (see Appendix F). At first, Mi-Ra says that students will do the bingo game as groups. Later, however, she changes her mind (lines 43, 56, & 49), and completes the game as a large group in spite of students’ preference for group work.

Classroom Excerpt II – Nov. 12 (Male Class)

1 T: 자 b 번으로 갑니다. 달과 요일을 써 놓은 다음 빙고 놀이를 해
2 봉시다. 자 그린면 여러분들이 입다물어봐라.(.) 달과 요일 이름을 써
3 눈 다음 빙고 놀이를 해봅시다 하는데 이거 선생님이
4 전체적으로 안하고 대명이서 한팀으로- 이리케 할꺼야.

Let’s do number b. ((starts reading direction)) Write months and days (in the grid) and do the following bingo game. Then, you guys- be quiet. Write months and days (in the grid) and do the following bingo game. This- teacher- not doing as a whole class but how about doing groups of four.

((Mi-Ra explains how to play game by drawing a table on the board with 16 spaces.))

13 T: 여기 들어갈수있는게 열여섯개가 되겠죠, What would be in here should be 16.
14 (.)
15 T: Sunday 다. 선생님이 여기다가,(.) 일단 요일을 한번 해보자 ((writes 16 ‘Sunday’ on board)) 자 여러분 아는 요일 말요일부터 말해보래? 왔? Sunday. I- here- Let’s write days here. well, days you know- can you say from Monday? Mon-?
17 Ss: Monday, Tuesday
18 T: 그 다음 ((writes the words on the board)) Next
19 Ss: Wednesday. ((The class checks English words for day.))

43 T: 선생님이랑 같이 하가 아니면 한 팀별로 하까
Do you want to do (the bingo) with me or as a team?

44→ S: team=
45 S: =Team 별로

As Team

46→ S’: Team
47 T: Team 별로?
As Team?

48→ S’: 예
Yeah
49 T: 아이다 선생님이랑 하며는 또 상도 줄.=
At the beginning (line 4), she states that the bingo game would be conducted as a group activity and thus each group would have a leader who would guide them through the activity. However, while reviewing the months and days with the students, Mi-Ra asks the students whether they want to work as groups or with her (lines 43). When students express their preference for group work (lines 44, 46, 48), she tries to persuade them otherwise in vain (line 49). Despite students’ preference for group work, however, Mi-Ra ultimately did the activity as a whole class.

During the interview (SRP IV), Mi-Ra acknowledged that she changed her mind in spite of students’ resistance because she noticed that not all of the students knew the rules of the game. Even though classmates could teach one another, she was unwilling to give up control. Thus, Mi-Ra believes that all students’ learning should be monitored and checked by a teacher. A similar attitude was emerged in her belief about language learning which is discussed in the later section of the present chapter.

7.3.2. Teaching Philosophy and Goal as the Rationale for Instruction

Both Mi-Ra’s overarching teaching philosophy and her beliefs about language learning seem closely related to her teaching practices. Mi-Ra believes that sincerity and
responsibility are two important aspects of life and that they are requirements for successful learning. Therefore, through her English instruction, Mi-Ra expects her students to learn how to live their lives “with honesty and responsibility” beyond just learning the language. When asked about her teaching philosophy, Mi-Ra mentioned:

The thing I regard important is sincerity and responsibility, and I want to teach them (to my students) … In order to develop them- I think they also should be the basis in studying. … I want to help students to develop sincerity and responsibility in their studies.

(Mi-Ra, Interview I)

She also believes that students who are responsible for their studies will be responsible citizens when they grow up. Therefore, she hopes that her classes are a place for her students to develop strong study habits which will transform their lives outside of class. In this sense, Mi-Ra, as a teacher, expresses her desire to act as a role model through which her students can see an example of a sincere and diligent life.

This philosophy is reflected in her general expectations for her students’ behavior in her class, too. She expects her students to do their best at all times, in terms of vocabulary memorization, homework, and participation in classroom activities (Interview I)8. Mi-Ra’s statement, “선생님은 열심히 가르쳐야되고 학생은 열심히 공부해야된다. (As the teacher’s job is teaching hard in school, the students’ job is to study hard.)” (Interview I – p. 6), distinctively reflects her perspective. She believes good learners means serious learners.

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8 However, with her current low-proficient student, she did not believe that her expectation was satisfied. See the ‘students as rationale for instruction’ section in this chapter for detail.
When students do not meet her expectations, she does not hesitate to point this out.

In excerpt III below, Mi-Ra rejects a student’s attempt to interject a comment about exchanging gifts, because she feels the student is simply fooling around and not taking the exchange serious;

Classroom Excerpt III – Nov. 8 (Female Class)

1 T: C 번, 질문에 대한 자신의 대답을 한번 써 봅니다. Number 1. 여기서 with your old: textbook 를 ( ) 대신에 instead of that, write with the money. 그 돈 뭐했어. 여러분들( ) 돈 가지고 엄마나 부모님이 야 그 돈 뭐했어 이런경우 있죠?
Number C. Write your own answers to the questions. Number 1. Here, instead of with your old textbook, instead, Instead of that, write with the money. What did you do with the money? You-. In the case when your parents ask you what you did with the money.

5 ()
6 T: 그런 경우를 답을 한번 해 봅니다. What did you do with the money? Answer for the case. What did you do with the money?

7 (0.1)
8 T: what did you do with the money, (.) I gave you three days ago. 삼일전에 준 돈 그 어때노? (.) 어땠겠노?
What did you do with the money, I gave you three days ago. What did you do with the money I gave three days ago. What did you do?

10→ Mi-Jung: 빼빼로 샀어요
I bought Ppayppaylo.

11 (0.2)
12 T: 나는 자꾸 모지라는 찌 하지마라이:
You, don’t fool around with me.

13 (0.1)
14 T: 이 수업시간에 그냥 남학생하고 관련되어가지고 수업시간에 끌어들이는 (.) 그런게 어땠노?
How dare you bring up the issue relevant to boys during class hour?

16 Mi-Jung: 그렇지 아니해요.
No, I didn’t mean it.

17 T: 맞았어, 빼빼로 day 에 사가지고 (.) [빼빼로 남자친구
Yes. On ppayppaylo day, (you) buy (it) and (give) the ppayppaylo to (your) boyfriend.

18 Mi-Jung: [(          )]

19 T: 그랬어?

9 November 11 is a “Ppayppaylo Day” in Korea, which is similar to Valentine’s Day. “Ppayppaylo” is the name of popular snack in Korea. At first, a snack company announced the “ppayppaylo” day to promote their sales, but it became popular among the youth. On this day, people buy the snack and give it to the people they like.
Mi-Ra acknowledged that she regarded Mi-Jung’s answer in line 10 as an attempt to disrupt the lesson by bringing up tabooed topic (SRP IV). Therefore, instead of extending Mi-Jung’s answer, or recognizing it as an attempt to communicate something meaningful, Mi-Ra rejected the comment and scolded Bi-Na (lines 12, 14, 15). As such, Mi-Ra’s general teaching philosophy and expectations for her students influenced her classroom discourse, instantiating the rules of the community in which Mi-Ra maintains authority.

As another general teaching goal, Mi-Ra claimed that she wanted to help her students prepare for their future opportunities to use English. In other words, since English is very important in Korean society, in terms of getting a job or getting promoted in a company (Interview I), she hoped that her instruction would ultimately help her students prepare themselves for the real world, as well as help them realize the importance of the English language. Included in this were references to school-based exams and the Test of English as International Communication (TOEIC).

Agreeing with the goal of the curriculum, Mi-Ra also stated that the ultimate object in her instructional activity system was to develop students’ communicative competence, that this had been her goal of teaching for some time, and being communicatively competent meant being an independent language user. In her mind, students should be able to read English on the Internet or English newspapers without help and that this could come about by successfully studying English in their textbooks during their secondary school years (Interview I).
More interviews revealed that she held a very limited view of communicative competence, one that is prevalent in EFL contexts. That is, Mi-Ra believes that when her students successfully complete the exercises in the textbook, they are in fact communicatively competent (SRP – IV). Additionally, her goal was to prepare her students for the next level of instruction, and therefore it was her responsibility to teach ‘basic knowledge’ most, if not all, of which was contained in the textbook (Interview I, II, & IV).

Finally, based on her belief that being able to interact in the target language is critical to developing communicative competence, Mi-Ra believes interaction skills are also important in English language teaching. Her definition of interaction skills were centered on students’ ability to use grammatically correct English. In addition, instructionally, most, if not all, of the interaction that occurs in Mi-Ra’s classes takes the form of teacher initiated questions and student responses. As we see in excerpt IV, the IRE interactional sequence dominates all teacher-students interaction. The class practices making questions and answer practice with different tenses.

Classroom Excerpt IV- Oct. 29 (Female Class)

1 T: 자 뭐 하니 시리즈를 기억하시나 모르겠네=뭐하니
Well, I wonder if you remember ‘what do series.’ What do-

2 (0.1)

3 Hay-Jung: will , be going to
((finishes writing on the board)) 자 선생님 말 하는걸 영어로 한번 해봅니다. 일요일에 뭐하니(I) 아침에 일어나면 뭐하니[I] 밥먹고 나서 뭐하니
Okay, change what I say into English. What do you do on Sunday. What do you do when you wake up in the morning. What do you do after meals?

7 S: [what do you=

8 S: =what do you do

9 Some Ss: [what do you do

10 S: [what do you do on Sunday?

11 T: 그러지 what 됩니까 [do you do 가 됩니까. ( ) 무슨 형? 현재 과거

What do you do

Present

It is present. This present form asks routines or habits. Try. What do you on Sunday?

What do you do on Sunday. After lunch. What do you do after lunch?

This excerpt highlights how Mi-Ra approaches the teaching of ‘interaction skills’; namely, she chose a deductive approach by reminding her students of the target structure in terms of verb tense (line 11). However, in spite of her contention that she intended to teach students to use the target structure, she rarely provided her students the opportunity to produce the target structure in meaningful practice. Instead, by answering the teacher’s questions which contained the target structure, students were passively exposed to it. Subsequently, the IRE interactional pattern is pervasive in all of her instruction, in essence, functioning as the rules and division of labor in this activity system.

7.3.3. Beliefs about Grammar as a Prerequisite for Communication

Like Hee-Won, Mi-Ra also believes that the ideal way to learn English is through a balance of the four skills, that is, listening, speaking, reading, and writing:
In order to improve communicative competence, first of all, I believe that in all of the communication, you can listen and understand, then you can speak, then (.) - When the four skills are (developed) in balance, this (listening and speaking) is possible.

(Mi-Ra, Interview II)

Mi-Ra also mentioned that she believes listening comprehension is a condition for speaking. Later, she confirmed that before students have speaking opportunities, they need to master vocabulary, read and comprehend texts containing new vocabulary, and answer basic comprehension questions (SRP IV). Only when all these conditions are met, does Mi-Ra think that her students are ready for speaking activities. In spite of her claim that she needs to address all four skill areas, Mi-Ra believes that speaking is not the focus of her current classes because of the nature of the exam, her students’ low proficiency, and her own low language abilities.

Instead, Mi-Ra emphasizes the importance of vocabulary by arguing that communicative competence begins with the acquisition of vocabulary (Interview II). She believes when vocabulary is mastered, students can move on to the next level of instruction. For instance, Mi-Ra indicated that students must master vocabulary and key expressions first because “어휘나 이런게 되면 듣기도 되고 말하기도 될게 같이서 자꾸 할려고 그러죠 (I assume that when (the students) master vocabulary, they would be able to listen and speak well)” (Interview IV – p. 1). In the same interview, she also stated that vocabulary is very important for the overall comprehension of texts. Therefore, when Mi-Ra believes that students are not ready with vocabulary, they are not ready for the next step of any learning activity. In the following excerpt, for example, Mi-Ra thought
vocabulary in this text was too challenging so she went through the text line by line checking the individual words (See Appendix I for the handout). First, she spent time on checking the meanings of all vocabulary presented on the handout. Then, the class read aloud the sample conversation on the handout, followed by Mi-Ra’s rough translation of the conversation. In line 1, she began to ask comprehension questions based on the conversation they just read.

Classroom Excerpt V- Nov. 20 (Female Class)

1 Now focus on your paper. Okay. where did Jack ask?
2 S: (move in)
3 T: 음?
   Uh?
4 ()
5 S: [gro- gro-
6 T: [what is the first question,
7 S: gro-
8 T: grocery store. What is it, grocery store
9 ()
10 T: 식료품가게니다 그죠? (. 그 다음에 second one 이?)
   It is a grocery store, right? What is the second one?
11 S: 세탁=
   laundry
12 T: =Laundromat. Laundromat 하면? 야까
   Laundromat. What is Laundromat? Before
13 ()
14 T: 세탁소입니라 그죠? 어럼나? 그 다음에 또 뭐를 (.) 뭐 물어봤습니까?
   It is a Laundromat, right? is it difficult? What is the next? What did he Ask?
((Mi-Ra asks more comprehension questions but no students answered her question correctly.))
29 자 다시 한번 읽어보자. Excuse me. 따라 합니다. Excuse me.
   Long hair. So the woman suggests him to cut his hair. Okay? Have a haircut. Let’s read one more time. Excuse me. Repeat after me. Excuse me.
((The class reads aloud the sample conversation again))

During the follow up interview (SRP IV), Mi-Ra acknowledged that she thought that her students would be able to do the activity on the handout. However, when few participated, she concluded that the activity was too difficult for her students mostly
because of too many new words. After a series of oral repetition of words on the other side of the handout, Mi-Ra stopped completing the handout and went back to the textbook making the students read the words in the textbook after her.

Mi-Ra stated that she frequently used a question and answer technique to increase students’ classroom participation, but when they were silent she assumed that they lacked the ability to pronounce the vocabulary words and thus needed more practice repeating vocabulary. In an interview, Mi-Ra recounted that repeating words and key expressions had a positive effect on student learning:

This time, in chapter 11, unlike the previous chapters, I am checking students’ knowledge of new words and key expressions every lesson. And I think this works much better than not doing it. That is, repetition drills to students,- I think if students realize that they know them (new words and key expressions) through it (repetition) and it becomes the base for them to express what they know.

(Mi-Ra, SRP IV- p.13)

She regarded students’ competent choral repetition as evidence of learning, and thus justified this practice as important to her instruction. Clearly, Mi-Ra believes choral repetition is a necessary drill that will enhance students’ memorization and further their learning of English.

Mi-Ra’s belief that language learning occurs through repetition was clearly evident in her strong resistance to the Ministry of Education’s proposal that communicative activities were the most legitimate way to achieve communicative competence. When Mi-Ra read the curriculum excerpts (See the number 2 on Appendix B), she refuted this point. First, like Hee-Won, she pointed to herself as an example of a successful language user who learned language through mechanical practice and rote memorization (Interview II). Then, she argued that mechanical practice and rote
memorization are necessary for learners in language learning before engaging in communicative activities:

저기들이 의사소통 활동을 하기위한 문장같은걸 만들적에 또는 알아들을 적에 (,) 아 이런 뜻이구나 아 이런가 하러면 나는 ((inhale)) 기본적인 그 뭐라할까 그 (,) 그 (,) 문법적인 기초도 있어야하고, 그 답에 기계적인 연습도 필요하고, 암기도 필요하고, 그런것도. Plus 의사소통능력 훈련. 이게 다 그 뭐라할까 그 좀 종합이 되어야될꺼라 생각이 됩니다.

When students make or understand sentences for communicative activities, I believe that grammar knowledge, mechanical practice, and rote memories, all are needed. In addition to these (plus), there come the communicative activities. I think all of these should be integrated.

(Mi-Ra, Interview II, p-4)

By using the phrase, “plus communicative activities,” Mi-Ra indicates that communicative activities are not core instructional artifacts in her current instruction, but more appropriate during later phases of language learning, after students have mastered vocabulary and grammar. Also, she believes that communicative activities and games do not help students retain what they are taught since they are not learned explicated or systematically (SRP IV).

Mi-Ra also mentioned that language structure is a very important requirement for communication. In her EFL context, knowledge of language structures is as important as knowledge of vocabulary (Interview I and II). She likened the language structures to that of a tree where language structures represent the trunk and communicative functions represent the branches (Interview II). Later in another interview, she referred to language structure as ‘the skeleton’ of language learning (SRP IV). Thus, for Mi-Ra, similar to Hee-won, language structure rests at the core of language learning. Once language structures and vocabulary are mastered, learners are ready to move on to speaking activities. Confirming this, Mi-Ra said that at the beginning of a new chapter she frequently explains the ‘Patterns’ section where the key language structures of each
chapter are introduced and later reviews the section again (Interview I) (See the Appendix F for ‘Patterns’ section).

In addition, Mi-Ra’s belief that language form is a prerequisite for language learning is ratified when she read an excerpt from the curriculum manual where a balance between fluency and accuracy is discussed. Mi-Ra acknowledged that fluency should be the focus of instruction since accuracy-focused language teaching lowers students’ participation because they are afraid of making mistakes. She actually noticed that students participated more in classroom activities when students’ mistakes were not explicitly pointed out and corrected (Interview 1). Yet, Mi-Ra pointed out that accuracy is more important than fluency because students need accurate grammar to communicate and to pass the exams:

Mi-Ra believes that fluency is important, but accuracy must precede fluency. Once students memorize vocabulary or sentences accurately, Mi-Ra hopes that they will be able to creatively use them later on in different contexts (Interview II). Thus, in this instructional activity system, Mi-Ra briefly experienced a primary contradiction between fluency and accuracy. Using her instructional reality as a rationale, however, she simply chose accuracy as a focus of her instructional emphasis.
In a similar vein, she believes that input is very important in language learning. Mi-Ra stated, “Input 이 별로 없는데 output 이 되겠냐라는 생각도 가지고 있지 (I believe that without input, there is no output)” (Short Interview – p. 5) suggesting that input precedes output. In other words, to produce output, Mi-Ra believes lots of input is required, and she regards the repetition drills in her instruction as input (Interview IV). Mi-Ra described her own experiences of listening to English on the radio as an example of input:

Listening to the radio while commuting both in the morning and in the evening seems helpful for me to speak (in English) during my lessons. Because there is some input. (Mi-Ra, Interview II)

Therefore, Mi-Ra attempts to play the role of input provider for her students expecting that her input would lead to students’ output later.

Most of Mi-Ra’s beliefs about language learning are related to her own school English language learning experiences with grammar-translation, mechanical practice, and rote memorization. Thus, her “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 2002) represents the basis upon which she selects mediating artifacts for her instructional activity system. Given the milieu of Korean English education in public school, Mi-Ra’s beliefs are not at all out of the ordinary and are most likely the norm. In fact, based on what worked for her as a learner of English in the Korean English education system and what has worked for her students in the same system over many years, Mi-Ra believes that her instructional practice would ultimately help students to achieve communicative competence. Due to her beliefs about what is best for her students to learn English,
therefore, Mi-Ra wholeheartedly disagreed with the government’s recommendations for how to achieve communicative competence. Likewise, due to her philosophy of teaching and her beliefs about language learning, Mi-Ra’s participation in a range of teacher education programs failed to transform her or any aspect of the instructional activity system.

7.3.4. Pre-Service Teacher Education as Impractical

Mi-Ra recalled that there were no specific teaching methods covered in her college curriculum other than Total Physical Response (TPR), implying that her pre-service teacher education program was out-dated. Nor did her pre-service program offer any conversation courses where she could improve her oral English. Mi-Ra said:

When I was in college, there was no conversation class, what we learned- The reason why English teachers have no choice but to teach English through grammar is that college courses did not teach (how to teach English). Like- (English) conversation- Even now, there are no courses about (instructional) activity. (They) teach only theory. (Mi-Ra Interview II)

Mi-Ra admitted that her coursework did not prepare her for how to teach English beyond the grammar-translation method which she had experienced as a learner. Thus, her “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 2002) had a major impact on the way she taught English. A lack of access to alternative teaching approaches or methods left her with little more than grammar-translation. Her memories of her in-service teacher education experiences were no better, either.
7.3.5. In-Service Teacher Education as Impractical

Since Mi-Ra had been a teacher for many years, she did have a range of in-service teacher education experiences. Most of the in-service programs focused on improving her language abilities, particularly in listening and speaking skills (Interview I). She also remembered a one-day workshop where teachers discussed teaching English using songs.

In 1996, Mi-Ra participated in a month-long teacher education program in Canada where she took English teaching method courses for the first time in her career. Mi-Ra recalled that she learned several teaching techniques such as jigsaw activities and participated in activities. However, because she believed the language in these activities would be too difficult for her middle school students and because her school in Korea at that time did not have materials available for her to utilize what she learned, she did not apply what she learned in Canada to her own instruction (Interview I).

After being selected as the winner of a first-ever teaching competition in 2001, the nature of Mi-Ra’s in-service teacher education programs has changed. Instead of acting as a receiver of new knowledge or methods, she became involved in designing English teacher education materials. A year before the current study, Mi-Ra participated as a team member in a lesson plan development project sponsored by the local government. She met regularly with seven other local middle school English teachers and prepared thirty four twenty minute long lesson plans for teaching English. When the researcher visited the web-site where these lesson plans are housed\(^\text{10}\), many of them were designed as language games or communicative activities. However, Mi-Ra acknowledged that, in her own instructional activity system, she hardly used the lesson plans she helped develop professionally. Furthermore, Mi-Ra mentioned that she had rarely used the information

\(^{10}\) The URL of the website is http://211.57.201.1/~english/index.htm.
she learned in the workshops nor did she apply what she learned from these experiences.

In the following excerpt, Mi-Ra discusses the workshops she attended and the teaching materials she received:

workshop 같은 거 할때도 어떤 선생님이 이런 활동을 하니까 좋더라 이런거 있잖아, 
((inhale)) 그렇게 인제 이렇게 자기가 해온거 하면서 이론적인 배경 설명하면서 어떤 때는 
한번씩, 수업을 약간 보여주거든? [고런 workshop: 아니면 또 이런 이런거는 거의 
일년동안 고생을 해가지고 TETE 그 인제 자료개발 하는 요런거 내 주거든? 내주는데 
이런걸 볼 시간이 거의 없지. [*사람들이.° 몸나는 이런거 해서 그런지 생각은 해보기는 
하는데 (.) 요런 식으로 해 보면 어릴까라는 거 있잖아. 그런데 있긴 있지. (.) 근데 요런-
요런 과정에 한 두번 정도 참가했는데 시간은 많이 들고 남는 건 없고 그런것 같애. <음:
남는데 없다라는 거는 실제로 실제 활동이 잘 되고 있지 않다는거.  
11 When attending workshops, some teachers show their actual instructions that they had 
positive results along with some theoretical background. Or like this book, TETE, (we) 
sometimes get the teaching materials as a result of a year-long of hard work. However, 
people (teacher) almost have no time to refer to the reference book. Well, I don’t 
know, because I had been involved in the projects, I think about the ways of teaching. I 
do. But based on my experience of participating in the projects around twice, it 
required lot of my time but nothing left. <What do you mean with “nothing left”? Do 
you mean that --?> [I] do not actually use them [in my class]. 
(Mi-Ra, Interview II)

Mi-Ra admitted that her participation in different teacher education programs had 
little impact on her teaching practices. When asked the reason for not adopting the 
activities or techniques she prepared, Mi-Ra pointed out that the primary focus of her 
instruction is ‘basic knowledge.’ She believes that what her students needed to learn as 
‘basic knowledge’ was in the textbook, positioning it both as an object and as a primary 
artifact in her activity system. As a result, Mi-Ra felt that she had no need or time to 
introduce different materials beyond the textbook (Interview I). In another interview, Mi-
Ra repeated that she hardly referred to the teacher education materials designed by the 
Ministry of Education and further believes that few teachers did, “자기 나름대로의

11 The utterance between < > is the researcher’s clarification question.
Mi-Ra’s most recent professional development experience involved participating as a team leader in a project where technology, more specifically, the Internet, was introduced as an artifact for creating an interactive task-based English language learning environment. An instruction model – perception, expression, and interaction - was proposed to the team by the government. The task of her team was to design three lesson plans following this instruction model. As a team leader, Mi-Ra met with her team members regularly, developed lesson plans, created detailed instructional scripts and then revised those scripts. Then, the lessons were conducted by three different team members and digitally recorded. Finally, the lessons were uploaded on the Internet for other local English teachers to use.

In an interview, however, Mi-Ra doubted the effectiveness of this project. Specifically, she believed that the project did not focus on language instruction through technology, but rather that it focused more on using technology than learning language. However, since she had promised to work as a team leader, she did complete the project but remained doubtful that the lesson plans would be adopted by other English teachers.

From the beginning, Mi-Ra said that she had not expected any classroom applications to come out of her in-service teacher education experiences. She participated in the workshops out of personal interest with the expectation that she would learn theories rather than something that might change her current teaching practices. In this situation, then, quaternary contradictions were unavoidable.

12 This project started two weeks after the researcher’s collecting data and lasted for a month.
Participating in the project actually left Mi-Ra little time to prepare for her current lessons, and she felt guilty about neglecting her own teaching:

In fact, I know that I should have spent more time on my students but because of the project, I think I am a doing poor in my teaching.
(Mi-Ra, Interview III)

Thus, Mi-Ra viewed her involvement in the in-service teacher education program as hindering her instruction. Not surprisingly, Mi-Ra did not use any of these lessons in her current practices because he felt these lessons were inappropriate for low proficient students (Interview IV).

Finally, at the time of data collection for this study, Mi-Ra was pursuing her master’s degree in English education at a local university. She said that she started her graduate study for the purpose of learning new teaching theories and methods that she had not learned in college (Short Interview II). Once she started this program, however, she recognized that attending graduate school was not helpful for her own teaching.

Overall, she assessed her graduate courses as follows:

The graduate courses themselves do not include teaching methods. Rather, it includes basic knowledge through which I can review what I learned in college. But what I actually learn (there) is really little.
(Mi-Ra- Short Interview II)

Even though she completed her undergraduate degree a long time ago, Mi-Ra felt that there was little new information in her graduate classes. So, while Mi-Ra sometimes found theoretical support for her instructional choices, her experience in graduate school did not alter her teaching practices. Disappointed by the coursework, she acknowledged
that she expected little from graduate classes more than getting a higher degree for her future promotion.

Overall, Mi-Ra’s pre-service and in-service experiences were perceived as unproductive, disconnected to the required curriculum as outlined in the textbooks, and beyond the abilities of both her and her students. This is interesting because the typical solution to change teachers’ practices is extensive pre- and in-service training (Fullan, 2000)\textsuperscript{13}. However, Mi-Ra remained unaffected by these experiences due to circumstances she perceived as beyond her control; namely low proficient students and the need to maintain classroom control to cover textbook in a timely manner.

7.4. Mi-Ra’s Understanding of Her Instructional Context

7.4.1. Students as Rationale for Instruction

At the time of this study, Mi-Ra was teaching five low-proficiency classes of which two classes – one female and one male class- were observed. Mi-Ra’s concerns about her students’ low proficiency and low motivation repeatedly came up both in interviews and stimulated recall interviews, implying the significant role of students as community members of the instructional activity system. In general, Mi-Ra said that she did not have high expectations for her low-proficient students; rather, she mentioned that she would be satisfied if her students’ proficiency became better than it currently was (Interview I). Mi-Ra mentioned:

이러케 하반 같은 경우는 ( ) 가르쳐 주는것도 받아들일 준비가 되어있지 않고 이미 영어에 대해서 좌절을 느낀 애들이 많꺼든...

\textsuperscript{13} Regarding the issue of teacher education, the study suggests a direction the South Korean teacher education programs take in the ‘Implication’ section in chapter 10.
In the case of students in low-proficiency classes, (they) are not even ready to take what is being taught [in front of them] and many of them already experienced frustration about learning English.
(Mi-Ra, Interview II)

That is, due to the students’ low-proficiency, Mi-Ra thought it was difficult for them to understand what she taught. Due to their low exam scores - the visible outcome of learning in their learning activity systems - in English subject both in elementary and middle school English classes, the students resultantly believed that English was a very difficult subject (Interview II). Thus, Mi-Ra acknowledged that her students’ motivation to learn English was very low and this concerned her a great deal.

As a way to motivate her students, Mi-Ra mentioned that she often used praise during lessons. Mi-Ra also stated that when she emphasized the possibility of traveling abroad, students seemed more motivated. Because Mi-Ra believed that her students would be fundamentally motivated by higher exam scores, most of all, she frequently mentioned ‘school exams’ to get students’ attention during her lessons.

Mi-Ra believes that students are motivated best when they feel the ‘성취감 (feeling of achievement)’ (Interview II – p.11). She further believes that this feeling of achievement occurs when they answer the teacher’s questions or when students get a better score on their exams. Given that the dictation tests and school exams are based on the content of the textbook, Mi-Ra also believes that the textbook contains what she calls ‘basic knowledge,’ and because “그 아이들한테 고 기본적인 내용에 충실하기도 힘들다고 생각이 되거든 (it is even difficult for the low-proficient students to master the basic knowledge)” (Interview II – p.10), it is not surprising that Mi-Ra adhered so closely to the content of the textbook.
In this context, Mi-Ra does not believe that communicative activities will motivate her students. When the researcher asked about the possibility of using interactive learning activities to motivate the students, Mi-Ra said:

(Activity 그 자체에 재미를 둘이거나 (...) 이거는 일종의 그 시간에만 홍미가 되는거지 activity 를 통해서 그 다음 단계로 뛰 이리케 하는 거. 하기는 어려움이라고 생각이 되고 ((inhale)) 어쨌든 내 생각으로는 이 교과서에 충실해야겠다는 생각을 가지고 ((inhale)) 이것만큼이라도 해야겠다는 생각을 가지고, 또 시간상으로 부족한거 같고 이리나래 도입을 많이 안합니다.

When (students) become interested only in activity itself- this can be motivating only when it is being done, but, through activities, it is difficult to teach systematically according to learning stage. Anyhow, due to my belief I should be faithful to the content of textbook and that I should teach this (the textbook) well, and due to the lack of time, I do not introduce them a lot.
(Mi-Ra, Interview II)

Mi-Ra believes that whereas communicative activities might motivate students temporarily, these activities would not serve to permanently motivate them. Additionally, Mi-Ra does not believe that communicative activities contribute to her students’ language learning because the activities are not systematically organized. In fact, although some communicative games were presented in the textbook, Mi-Ra skipped these sections during her instruction. One student interviewed for this study confirmed that few extra language learning activities were done throughout the year despite his interest in them.

Won-Jae, who just moved up to the high-proficiency class, stated his expectation for the class as follows;

Won-Jae Interview Excerpt – Oct. 30

1  Won-Jae: 그 심판가 구과에 노래가 나왔답아요,  
2 Researcher: 아 그래요?
3  Won-Jae: 노래 나왔나? (...) ((inhale)) 몇관가 모르겠지만 노래가  
4  나오든데=  
5 Researcher: =노래가 나왔었어요? 흥 야=  
= Was it? Hum: ah=  

Was it?
It was but- anyway, in the low-proficiency class, we never did that such as singing a song.

Researchers: Ah: But I know that high-proficiency class does things such as singing a song. So I a little bit build up your English section there are games and songs. Because the low-proficiency class didn’t do it but high-proficiency class did, so you hope to that kind of activity.

Won-Jae: [네] Yeah [그리쵸. that’s what I meant.]

Not only does Mi-Ra believe that communicative activities as instructional artifacts are not helpful, she also pointed out that her students did not have the ability to complete them (SRPIII – p.9). For instance, although Mi-Ra wanted her students to make their own creative dialogues after the class studied the “Let’s Talk” section in the textbook, she said that she did not do this activity because her students’ low language abilities and their low levels of motivation. Resultantly, the “Let’s Talk” section usually centered on listening to, reading, and translating of the text of the textbook.

In a similar vein, Mi-Ra limited her classroom talk in the form of ‘yes-no’ question or an ‘A or B’ question format. Since Mi-Ra believes that her students’ listening comprehension ability is also very low, she acknowledged that she tried to simplify her questions in order to get answers from her students;

이것도 보며는 그냥 질문했을때 대답이 잘 안나오면 인제 다른 방법으로 바뀌서 wh- 해서 잘 안되면 아 wh-가 아니구나. 인제 그날 yes-no 의문문. 안되면 인제 그(.) 선택하는거 해가지고 애들이 빨리 작품을 하데.
As you see, when students cannot answer (my) wh-questions, I switch into yes-no questions. In the case these questions even do not work, either, I gave them options in the questions so that students can choose (one out of two). Then, students seem to answer quickly.
(Mi-Ra, SRPII)

Mi-Ra also believes that controlled language learning is a better way to teach low-proficient students. She clearly stated that in order for learner-centered language learning to occur, there were certain skills students had to already have in place (Interview II). However, she believed that her current students were not there yet. Mi-Ra stated that students must master the vocabulary before they can participate in learner-centered activities:

어: 일단은 단어 하나 외우는거라던가 문장을 접했을때 스스로 하는 능력이 주도적인 학습이 별로 안되기 때문에 이 수업시간에 이런되서도 교사가 통제를 많이 해야 한다고 생각을 합니다
Since (my students) do not have an ability to memorize a word or sentence by themselves, I believe that teacher should control (their learning) a lot.”
(Mi-Ra, Interview II)

Overall, she regarded controlled language learning as a more appropriate way of teaching than student-centered. For Mi-Ra, controlled language learning is conceptualized as learning basic knowledge presented in the textbook through repetition and comprehension checks with which she can both control and monitor students’ performance.

Finally, Mi-Ra believes that her students’ low proficiency is partially formed through their schooling experiences. Citing the relationship between students’ general behavior and their academic achievement, Mi-Ra mentions:

그 보통 보며는 우리 반에서도 보면 공부 잘하는 애들이(...) 청소도 시켜보면 잘 하거든. 공부 안하고 맨 것(...)하는 수업시간 그런(...)하는 애들은(...) 청소시간에도 보면 막 맛 것 하고 거기 집중을 안하고 (그러더라구)
Based on my experience, **students who study well also do cleaning well.** Students who are distracted or do not pay attention during class behave in the same way during the cleaning period.

(Mi-Ra, Interview 1)

Therefore, she assumes that her low-proficient students lack an earnest attitude and effort toward learning, resulting in their low academic achievement. Reflecting this belief, during her lessons, Mi-Ra used phrases such as “바로 앉아 (sit tight),” or “입 닫다물어 (shut up),” or she frequently scolded individual students to control their behavior.

To sum up, Mi-Ra’s perception of her low-proficient students had a considerable impact on both her current teaching practices and her understanding of the curriculum mandates. Since she perceived her students as having low proficiency and low motivation, she did not believe her students were ready for speaking or communicative activities. Instead, her instruction was limited to basic knowledge contained in the textbook because she believes that students will only be motivated by their good school exam scores.

### 7.4.2. The Textbook as Legitimate Knowledge

Similar to Hee-Won, the textbook was a pivotal mediating artifact that shaped Mi-Ra’s instructional activity system. The lessons observed covered the content of the textbook except for some games or communicative activities presented in ‘Build up your English’ at the end of each chapter. Consistent with her teaching philosophy of focusing on ‘basic knowledge,’ Mi-Ra valued the content of the textbook. With her low-proficient students...
Mi-Ra believes that the textbook provides all four language skills in balanced ways, which she believes is ideal for developing communicative competence. Mi-Ra also mentioned that the textbooks have changed to include more listening and speaking activities complying with the curriculum change (Interview I). However, Mi-Ra pointed out that the content of the current book was fairly easy and had a lot of repetition of vocabulary and key expressions within each chapter. Mi-Ra mentioned:

This textbook emphasizes learning through repetition. Hhh. Through lots of repetitions, Hee-Won says that the textbook is a little boring to high-proficient students and that her students already mastered (the content of the textbook) (because it) is easy.

But low-proficient students can memorize the sentences because the content can stay in their brain (due to the textbook’s repetition). So, I guess that through repetition, (the sentences are) internalized enabling students to communicate by listening and speaking.

(Mi-Ra, Interview I).

Whereas the content of the textbook might be boring for high-proficient students, Mi-Ra believes that the textbook is appropriate for her low-proficient students. Through frequent repetition presented in the textbook, she expected that her students would be able to memorize the words, key expressions, and sentences at the end of the each chapter. Clearly, she believes memorizing the content of the textbook is an important goal for language learning.

As mentioned early, Mi-Ra also believes that the textbook contains most of the ‘basic knowledge’ of English that her students should learn, in terms of vocabulary,
sentences, grammar, and language functions. In this sense, the textbook which contains
‘basic knowledge’ is an essential object in her instructional activity system. Even more,
she likes how the ‘basic knowledge’ is systematically presented in the textbook according
to the complexity of language structures:

The textbook itself- There is difference in stage even between the spring and fall
semester. In the case of this textbook, it is designed according the stage around the
(English) verbs, such as questions using be verbs, questions using do verbs, wh-
questions and then (verb) tenses. Thinking of what was learned before, I try hard to
keep this stage in mind while teaching classes.
(Mi-Ra, Interview II)

Therefore, Mi-Ra believes that covering the content of the textbook brings
systematicity to her instruction. Furthermore, she strongly believes this is the best way to
prepare her students for the next level of instruction and thus functions as an implicit rule
of her community.

Mi-Ra also acknowledged that adhering to the textbook, as a dominant mediating
artifact, had been her way of teaching throughout her whole teaching career (SRP IV).
Also, because the textbook reflects the current government’s curriculum changes, Mi-Ra
believes that if she covers the content of the textbook, her teaching reflects the curricular
reforms. In other words, Mi-Ra believes that she is implementing the curriculum reform
as long as she covers the textbook, regardless of how she covers it.

7.4.3. School Exams as Instructional Goal

As already seen in Hee-Won’s class, school exams, as a prominent object of the
instructional activity system, are crucial in understanding Mi-Ra’s current teaching
practices. As already mentioned, Mi-Ra’s emphasis on accuracy was partially due to the school exams where discrete knowledge of the language is tested (i.e., dictation test). Since both high-proficiency and low-proficiency classes take the same exams, Mi-Ra argued that although the high-proficiency class can do extra communicative learning activities, “인제 시험은, 기본을 중심으로 하니까 애들한테 손해는 안되지(there is no disadvantage for (my low-proficiency) students (not doing communicative activities) since the exams are based on basic knowledge)” (Interview I – p.10). In other words, because both high- and low-proficient students took the same exams based on the content of the textbook, not doing extra communicative activities is equitable and appropriate in her school context.

Also, while elaborating her understanding of communicative competence, Mi-Ra asserted, “시험에서 좋은 점수 받으면 communicatively competent 할수있지(when a student’s exam score is good, s/he can be regarded communicatively competent)” (Interview II – p.13). That is to say, Mi-Ra’s concept of language learning is mainly based on the results of school exams. Mi-Ra perceived that as long as her class covered the content of the textbook (object) and as long as her students get satisfying school exam scores (outcome), she did not have to reconsider how she taught grammar, vocabulary, or reading in spite of the curriculum mandates. Subsequently, Mi-Ra primed her students for what they might expect on the school exams which are the common objects of both Mi-Ra’s and students’ activity systems. Mi-Ra frequently said, “시험을 위해 밑줄쳐라 (Let’s underline what will be on the exams)” (Nov. 5), or “시험이 몇일 남았니? (How many days do we have until the exam?)”(Nov. 12) to get her low-motivated students’ attention. By pinpointing particular grammatical features, she also
made sure that students were aware of what would be on the upcoming exams. In this sense, Mi-Ra’s teaching was clearly constructed around the school exams as a central instructional goal.

Her focus on school exams was found to be closely related to the exam-oriented educational atmosphere of South Korea. Admitting that the college entrance exams are very important in her students’ lives, Mi-Ra remains suspicious of the curriculum changes focused on improving students’ language proficiency through the communicative approach. Mi-Ra mentioned:

Since (everybody) knows that English is important and the parents- Although the school is trying this (the communicative approach)- there are two kinds of private institute regarding English. One is an English conversation institute and the other is a cram school. At cram school, (they) mainly teach grammar, right? But most students are going to the cram schools. <why?> to send them the school, a better school. And (they are afraid) that what their children learn at school is not enough. So, since it is a tendency that most students go to cram schools, (parents) cannot see their children stay home. (They) want their children study by sending them to the cram schools. So- because all education is bound to college entrance exam.

(Mi-Ra, Interview IV)

As such, Mi-Ra recognizes that despite the government’s attempts to increase students’ oral proficiency, society at large, a larger community she is also the member, is more interested in preparing students for college entrance exams. Therefore, she believes that her teaching also should focus more on what students, the community members of this instructional activity system but at the same time as those of a larger activity system
of South Korean English educational community, are believed to need, preparing for the entrance exam because it is the object that most South Korean secondary schools pursue.

7.5. Contradictions in the Instructional Activity System

The contradictions that emerged in Mi-Ra’s instructional activity system are illustrated in Figure 8.

![Figure 8. Layers of Contradictions](image)

7.5.1. Primary Contradiction

A salient primary contradiction in her discourse is present when Mi-Ra talks about the importance of fluency and accuracy. She acknowledged the effort to focus on fluency in English is one of the foci of the mandated curriculum, and she admitted that
fluency is as important as accuracy. In spite of this recognition, Mi-Ra admitted that she focused on accuracy in her classroom, revealing a primary contradiction. Even though she was aware of the importance of fluency for language learning as well as in real communicative contexts, Mi-Ra’s belief that fluency should be preceded by accuracy in terms of mastery of vocabulary and language structures made her instruction remain accuracy-focused. To Mi-Ra, fluency is also related to communicative activities where students need to use English creatively (Interview II). However, given that she did not believe communicative activities were necessary for language learning at the beginning levels, she did little to promote fluency in her instruction.

7.5.2. Secondary Contradiction

The fact that Mi-Ra was content with her current teaching practice indicates that she perceived few secondary contradictions. Because Mi-Ra is an old timer with firmly established beliefs and confidence in her teaching methods, she believes her low-proficient students simply need more time to master vocabulary, and thus are not ready for communicative activities. This belief allowed her to ignore the curriculum mandates and continue to teach as she had for many years.

As a matter of fact, these secondary contradictions that emerged in her activity system were not recognized by Mi-Ra because they were experienced by her students15. These included contradictions between some community members (students) and mediational artifacts (drill and repetition), and between some community members (students) and the division of labor (teacher control).

15 Therefore, from Mi-Ra’s perspective, there are no secondary contradictions in her activity system implying little effort to change. However, the researcher included the secondary contradictions experienced by her students because these were experienced and reported regardless of Mi-Ra’s awareness of them.
An example of a secondary contradiction between the students’ preference for diverse activities and Mi-Ra’s instruction style occurred one day during recess (Field Note, Nov.14). Three female students approached the researcher and expressed their desire to have a quiz session or play games that they heard were being used in the high proficiency class. One of the students said that she wanted to have fun because the current class was so boring and she was losing her interest in learning English. A similar concern was expressed in interviews with a female student participant. She mentioned that constant repetition made her ‘sick’ of English in spite of her generally positive attitudes toward Mi-Ra (Ji-In, SRP). Two other students in Mi-Ra’s class also felt they were losing interest due to so many repetition drills16.

By the same token, the female student’s desire to have similar quiz sessions to her counterparts in the high proficiency class, suggests that she wanted to be more actively involved in her own language learning. The students’ desire for bingo games as group work suggests a conflict imposed by the division of labor of this class. However, since Mi-Ra, as the subject of the activity system, was unaware of these contradictions, they were unable to initiate any changes in her instructional practices.

7.5.3. Tertiary Contradiction

Among the layers of contradictions, the tertiary contradictions that occurred between the instructional activity system and a culturally advanced activity system, or the government, are noteworthy. Three tertiary contradictions were apparent between the government-imposed curriculum and the instructional artifacts adopted by Mi-Ra.

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16 Refer to Sung-Woo’s and Hay-Jung’s stories in chapter 8 for the further elaboration.
The first tertiary contradiction existed between the government’s proposal that communicative activities should be core activities in language classes and Mi-Ra’s belief that vocabulary and language structures are prerequisites for communicative activities. In a similar vein, she believes that input (understanding of the meaning of vocabulary and structures) precedes output (interaction expected during communicative activities). For Mi-Ra, once vocabulary and language structures are learned, fluent output can be expected. So, Mi-Ra did not emphasize communicative activities in her teaching at all. This was compounded by her students’ low-proficiency who she believed needed basic knowledge of English. Additionally, Mi-Ra felt the communicative activities in the textbook did not represent a systematic way of learning. She was also concerned about losing control over her students and their learning, and therefore did not use communicative activities in her classes.

The second tertiary contradiction appeared between a government-imposed mediational artifact, or task-based, learner-centered language learning and Mi-Ra’s belief about the importance of teacher control over all language learning activities. A learner-centered curriculum requires that students be involved in various learning tasks in which they have a chance to use the target language for meaningful communication. However, Mi-Ra believes her students have not mastered the necessary vocabulary or language structures and thus needed her input and control in order to learn them first. Concerned about losing control over her students, led her to maintain a teacher-fronted instructional style.

On a more macro-level, these contradictions were closely related to school exams, the object of Mi-Ra’s instructional activity system, and this revealed the last tertiary
contradictions in her instructional activity system. Since exams test students’ knowledge of the content of the textbook rather than their ability to use the language in communicative activities, Mi-Ra wanted to help her low-proficient students memorize more words and sentences because she believes that if they achieve higher test scores, they would be more motivated to learn the language. With her low-proficient students in this institutional context, therefore, Mi-Ra believes CLT-based curriculum, whose object is the even development of the four domains of communicative competence, is inappropriate. That is, the novel object (communicative competence) a “culturally more advanced” activity system (the government) prescribes for another activity system (Mi-Ra’s activity system) is “subordinated to the old general form of the activity” (Engeström, 1987).

7.5.4. Quaternary Contradiction

Finally, a quaternary contradiction was observed between the teacher education program as the subject-producing activity system and the instructional activity system. In spite of Mi-Ra’s interest in attending teacher education programs and her extensive experiences in such programs, she admitted that her experiences rarely influenced her teaching practice. Her reasons for this disconnect were that the activities she was exposed to were too difficult for her students (Interview I) or that she did not believe in the materials she herself had developed (Interview III, SRP IV) The importance of the textbook caused her to believe that teacher-created materials were not useful for students learning. The result of such contradictions was to simply ignore what she learned from the teacher education programs. Given the minimal influence that Mi-Ra’s professional
development experiences had on her instructional practices, the professional development opportunities for teachers like Mi-Ra may be insufficient to ensure teachers embrace curricular reforms.

7.6. Summary

The findings in this section uncover that Mi-Ra, the experienced teacher, neither perceives of the adoption of CLT in a positive way nor adopts the curriculum reforms in her instruction. In spite of her awareness of the ongoing discourse about CLT-based instruction in English education, and in spite of her participation in numerous professional development programs, Mi-Ra admits that her instruction had not changed much. The only significant change she made was to use a new textbook, and by doing so, she believes her instruction automatically reflected the new curriculum.

The findings from Mi-Ra are especially interesting because they are contrary to what some literature suggests will lead to successful implementation of a curricular reform; namely, that providing teachers with updated materials along with more opportunities for professional development will support the implementation of curricular reforms. Yet, the new textbook and her participation in different teacher development programs had little influence on her teaching, and she continued to use grammar-translation and audiolingual methods as major instructional artifacts in the activity system.

Many interdependent factors explain how Mi-Ra functioned in this instructional activity system. Most of all, Mi-Ra has established beliefs about what language learning and teaching should be; namely, mastery of vocabulary and grammar as prerequisites for communication, beliefs which formed during her decades of English language learning.
and teaching experience. In her current teaching context, additionally, Mi-Ra’s low proficient students are another factor that reinforces her adherence to traditional methods of instruction. Due to students’ low proficiency, Mi-Ra believes that constant repetition of vocabulary and key expressions will help them develop the necessary vocabulary and grammar for further language development.

Most of all, high stakes school exams are a powerful factor that supports her beliefs about the effectiveness of traditional methods of instruction. As mentioned, Mi-Ra is well aware of how much her students and South Korean society are exam-oriented, making school exams the prominent object of her instruction. Thus, Mi-Ra believes in the effectiveness of teacher-centered and teacher-controlled instruction.

Other factors that prevented Mi-Ra from adopting CLT was her own low proficiency in English, large class size, the amount of time necessary to develop appropriate communicative activities, and the importance of maintaining classroom control. These factors do not exist independently from each other but are connected to each other and thus constitute the activity system in which Mi-Ra operates.

In sum, the findings from Mi-Ra confirm Pajares’ (1992) contention that “beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior” (p. 311). That is, the current curriculum reform efforts and a series of teacher education programs had little influence on Mi-Ra’s beliefs. In this sense, the findings also suggest that it is difficult to expect CLT-based curriculum reform to occur by simply changing the textbooks and training the teachers or by simply lecturing them about the tenets of CLT and how they should teach in their classes. Contradictions between and among each component within
this instructional activity system and the contradictions that emerged between the activity system and other activity systems (i.e. teacher education program and the Ministry of Education) expose a gap between what the Ministry of Education mandates and school reality. To contend with this gap Mi-Ra simply adheres to the teaching methods she knows well and with which she feels comfortable.
Chapter 8

The Students: Members of the Community

*Student:* I’ve really enjoyed these classes, but what did I learn?
*Teacher:* You spoke every week.
*Student:* But what did I learn?
*Teacher:* You learned to speak!
*Student:* But what can I take home? I have nothing in my book, no notes, no grammar.
*Teacher:* But you can speak English now
*Student:* Will that help me in the exam?
(Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 186)

8.1. Introduction

This study examined students’ perceptions of the activity systems in which they were learning English, particularly with regard to their teachers’ instructional practices under CLT-based curriculum reform. As found in the previous two chapters, teachers’ perceptions of their students had a significant impact on the instructional activity systems. Ironically, however, few studies have actually examined how students, as the recipients of instruction, experience teachers’ instructional practice under curricular reform efforts. This chapter therefore captures the perceptions and experiences of students in the hope that it will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of curricular reform efforts on opportunities for students’ English language learning.

Three students from Hee-Won’s high proficiency class were observed as they participated in her instruction. They were also interviewed to capture their understandings of Hee-Won’s instructional practices. Synthesizing those students’ perceptions and descriptions, then, the researcher was able to create a portrait of the learning activity system in which high-proficient students functioned and to identify inner contradictions
that existed in the learning activity system. The identical procedures were then applied to
data collected from four students enrolled in Mi-Ra’s low-proficiency classroom.

The findings generally showed that students had more or less similar
backgrounds in English language learning whereas their perceptions of English language
learning and their teachers’ instruction differed depending on their personal learning
styles, strategies, and attitudes toward English language learning. In spite of these
differences, a common finding was that all students sought, as the ultimate goal of
English language instruction, to pass the school exams; subsequently, they perceived of
and participated in most of their language learning activities with the sole purpose of
preparing for and passing the school exams. School exams thus functioned as a catalyst
that students used to resolve the inner contradictions that emerged in the observed
learning activity systems.

8.2. Hee-Won’s High-proficient Students

8.2.1. Min-Ju’s story

Min-Ju was a student who actively participated in one of Hee-Won’s high-
proficiency classes. Being an active participant, Min-Ju frequently used what she just
learned during instruction in her personal conversations. For instance, when the class was
studying the modal verb, ‘should,’ they had to make the English sentence, “너는 몸을
깨끗히 유지해야한다 (you should keep your body clean.)” (Field Note, Oct. 30). Right
after the sentence-making activity, Min-Ju used the same English sentence in a
conversation with her seat partner. In an interview, Min-Ju mentioned that she tried to use

\[\text{Her participation also appears in classroom excerpts II and VII in chapter 7.}\]
some of the expressions she learned either at school with friends or at home with her
mother. Min-Ju acknowledged that practicing expressions in this way helped her
remember them.

Unlike the majority of her fellow classmates, Min-Ju also frequently asked
questions to her teacher during class, and her questions ranged from grammar-related
questions, “명사가 없을 경우에는 요? (what if there is no noun [in an exclamation
sentence])?” (Field note, Oct 29), to clarifying questions about the teacher’s directions,
such as “영어로 구체적으로 안 적어도 되죠? (Isn’t it okay not to write in detail in
English?)” (Field note, Nov. 6). Min-Ju did not hesitate to express her emotions during
lessons, either. For example, when her group lost a reading competition, 2 Min-Ju loudly
complained to Hee-Won, “우리 그룹에 못 하는 애들이 더 많아요 (My group has more
poor students)” (Field Note, Nov. 4). This also showed her competitive personality and
how she positioned herself in relation to her fellow students.

Min-Ju’s active participation in class was also apparent in her leadership role
during group work. For instance, during a ‘Jeopardy’ game, 3 Min-Ju selected most of
the categories for her group, and her group members followed her lead (Field Note,
Nov.12). Her classmates did not openly ask questions of the teacher as often as Min-Ju
did. Also, some of the students sitting near Min-Ju’s often asked her questions during the
lessons, indicating Min-Ju’s perceived high academic ability (SRPI & SPR II).

In addition to her oral participation during class, Min-Ju was also an active note
taker. For example, during one lesson, Hee-Won was explaining prepositions of location

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2 Hee-Won sometimes did so-called group reading competition in which an appointed member of each
group read and translated an English text in the textbook. At the end of the competition, the group who had
the largest number of members who could not either read or translate the text well enough should do extra
homework for their lost.
3 This is the same activity done in her male counterparts’ class as seen on excerpt VI in chapter 6.
by writing the prepositions on the board. Even before Hee-Won asked the students to
write what she was writing on the board, Min-Ju was already taking notes in her
notebook. When asked about her note taking, Min-Ju answered, “나중에 시험에 나올까봐
적는거에요 (I am taking notes because they can be on school exams)” (SRP I),
foreshadowing that her English learning and its associated study strategies are built
around school exams.

Even though Min-Ju was a highly motivated student, however, she was not
always engaged in the classroom activity at hand. For example, sometimes when Hee-
Won was giving lectures and the class was taking notes, Min-Ju was observed chatting
with her seat partner who was bored and complained that there was too much to
memorize in English class. Min-Ju was also observed doing other homework during the
teacher’s lecture, and she later stated that she was not concerned about missing the
lecture because she could catch up on her own.

Min-Ju started learning English in third grade, and in addition to her school
studies, she started subscribing to an English study-aid service (Interview).4 Around three
months prior to the study, Min-Ju started attending a cram school where she studied
English along with Korean, math, science, and social studies:

방학때가 되니까 아무도 없는거에요. 놀려고 전화를 하니까. 그래 갖고 다 학원 갔다 해
가지고 엄마 한테 줄라 가지고 심심하니까 그냥 한번 갔다와 보면 안되겠냐고요. 해가지고
계속 아직까지 다니고 있어요.

Summer vacation came, but there was nobody I could play with when I called.
Because everybody was in cram schools and thus because I am bored, I asked my
mother to send me there. Since then, I have been attending there.

(Min-Ju, Interview)

4 A study-aid service is a common educational service in addition to the cram school and private tutoring in
South Korea. A teacher who works for the study-aid service company visits a student’s home once a week
and checks the student’s academic progress with the worksheet the company provides. Then, the teacher
leaves some assignment worksheets which consist of explanations and exercises for the next meeting.
Even though her original motivation for attending the cram school was to socialize with her friends, Min-Ju found that studying at the cram school improved her school exam scores:

I started the cram school because I was bored. I didn’t have any friends (to play with). But I cannot quit (attending the cram school now). During my attendance at the cram school, my grades have been improved. So, I can not stop now because (if I quit,) my grade might decline. Other than that, I could stop (attending there).
(Min-Ju, SPRII)

Min-Ju’s statement shows the importance of school exams to her. It also showed her competitive nature as evidenced by her statement that, “승부욕이 강해서 뭐 순위 결정한다면 죽으라 해요 (Because I am so competitive, I really try hard to death when ranks (grades) are concerned)” (SRP-p.32). Supporting this, Min-Ju pointed out the physical education class as her least favorite subject at school “체육이 너무 점수가 낮게 나와서 (because the score from the physical education class is so low)” (Interview – p.9). Min-Ju felt that English was not difficult for her, implying that her exam scores in English were satisfactory (Interview)^5.

Not only did she mention the fact that English is not so difficult for her, Min-Ju also expressed a positive attitude toward learning English in school in several ways. Most of all, she liked the English class because it was the only school class where she could speak aloud legitimately:

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^5 Her English final exam score of the spring semester was 99% out of 100%, and she got 96% out of 100% on her English mid-term exam, which belongs to one of the top five scores in the high-proficiency class in which she was studying.
The English class is the one where (I) can participate in most… (Teachers) in other classes do not give us the opportunity to talk. The teachers explain everything and we understand and write…But in English [class] (.) because (I) can speak a lot, I feel comfortable.
(Min-Ju, SRP I)

Through classroom activities such as reading the texts aloud or participating in language games and tasks, Min-Ju could practice “회화 (conversation)” which she believed to be important and fun (Interview- p.7). Min-Ju also stated that she especially enjoyed the creative dialogue-making activity in which she could write her own story using the dialogue frame in the textbook (Interview). Compared to English classes at cram school that focused solely on grammar and translation, besides, Min-Ju acknowledged that Hee-Won’s English classes provided diverse activities that she did not experience in other places (SRPI).

Min-Ju also talked about the effectiveness of the quiz sessions at the beginning of every lesson (Interview). Not only did she enjoy the candy rewards, she found the quizzes helpful for learning English vocabulary:

Quiz- When I do a quiz, I can memorize [words] better than when the teacher asked us to solely memorize (a word) only because it appeared on the textbook. (During the quizzes) because I can remember by thinking ‘Ah, this is the same quiz somebody prepared and the word was there,’ (and it helps me) <Is there a case the same quiz repeats?> Yeah, if (it) is on the textbook <u-huh> the teacher asked us, ‘this is the question somebody prepared and what was the (meaning of) the word?’, and then I can remember [the word] <ah-hah> by associating the word with my friend’s face. <I see.>.6
(Min-Ju, SRPI)

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6 < > indicates the researcher’s utterance. (xx) means the interviewee’s inaudible utterance.
Min-Ju believed the format of the quizzes gave her more opportunities to internalize certain vocabulary. In addition, through the quiz session, Min-Ju pointed out that she felt proud when she got the right answer, suggesting quizzes increased her motivation as well as her self-esteem. As a result, Min-Ju concluded, “게임을 하면 더 빨리 익혀지는거 같에도 (I feel that I learn faster through games) (SRPII ).”

In spite of the perceived benefits of language games, however, Min-Ju did not believe these communicative activities were a core learning activity. Instead, Min-Ju said, “근데 애들이 그거는 공부 위주 보다는 <음> 사탕을 받겠다는 한- 하나로 (hh) (We do it (the activities) to get a candy for a reward, not to study (the language).)” That is, her goal of doing communicative activities was for fun rather than to study the language.

As such, Min-Ju’s concept of language study was clearly connected to school exams. When asked how she studied English, Min-Ju mentioned that she only studied English for the exams. When the exams were approaching, she carefully reviewed the content of the textbook but rarely reviewed the communicative activities or games she did in the class (SRP I). This suggests that for Min-Ju, the communicative activities or games played a marginal role in this learning activity system in spite of the positive attitude she had toward them.

Min-Ju’s positive attitude toward her English teacher seemed to contribute to her high interest in school English class. Min-Ju believed that Hee-Won showed affection toward her students and had unique teaching abilities. To Min-Ju, Hee-Won was open-minded and listened to her students (SRPI – p.4) unlike her other teachers at school who required students to be quiet and even threatened to take away points if they talked during lessons (SRPI – p.8). Min-Ju regarded Hee-Won as a teacher who understood her
students suggesting the importance of the affective aspects in her learning. Min-Ju remembered that English class in elementary school was generally strict and thus not fun, but she perceived middle school English classes to be more fun due to the friendly and comfortable atmosphere her current teacher created (Interview).

Min-Ju also perceived Hee-Won’s teaching positively, especially, Hee-Won’s clear pronunciation and her concise and timely pronunciation instruction:

\text{영어 선생님이요 발음이 좋으신 거 같에요. \textlangle u-huh \textrangle} \text{그러니가 좋은 억양을 잘 잡아주시는 거 같에요. 우리 마음대로 막 읽기도 힘들어요. (예) 그럴 때 그때 지적해주는데 좋어요. (ٵ) 시간간격 \textlangle u-huh \textrangle} \text{안 그렇다면 까먹어요.}

\text{I believe that the teacher’s pronunciation is good \textlangle u-huh \textrangle} \text{I mean, she is good at teaching intonation (pronunciation). We pronounce (words) incorrectly. \textlangle u-huh \textrangle then she notices and corrects them timely, and I like it. Otherwise, I forget (the pronunciation).}

(Min-Ju, SPR I)

Min-Ju specifically mentioned that Hee-Won’s timely corrections of her pronunciation helped her not to forget the pronunciation of certain words. Additionally, Min-Ju later mentioned that Hee-Won’s grammar explanations were easy to understand and not boring (SRP II).

At the same time, however, Min-Ju had already studied many of the topics covered in her school English classes in cram school:

\text{근데 학원에서 거의 다 배운거를 학교에서 또 해요. \textlangle u-huh \textrangle} \text{그럼 학원이 예습이 아니고, 애들이 생각하기에는 학원이 본 수업이고 학교수업이 복습. 그리고 시험하기에.}

\text{In fact, the school (English class) repeats what I learned in the cram school. So, the cram school is not the place of previewing, but many students think that the (English) class at cram school is the main class and the school class is the place for reviewing. And then (they) take (school) exam.}

(Min-Ju, SRP I)

Min-Ju’s statement implies that the English class at school was more like review of what she learned at cram school. In fact, Min-Ju acknowledged that she did not study
for her school English classes because they were not difficult at all. However, Min-Ju said she did study for her cram school English (Interview – p.6). Later, pointing out the advantage of attending the cram school for school exams, Min-Ju mentioned:

한국에서 예습을 하고 <음> 그르 갖고 이거를 뒤에 복습이라 생각해요. 학교에서 (...) 하는거를<음> 공부를 두번 하니까 <음> 그르가지고 시험기간에 공부하면 세번째니까 <음> 그르나 학원다니는 애들이 더 유리해요 시험 잘 보기에는.
(The students who attend at cram schools) preview (English textbook) at cram school so they regard (school English class as) a reviewing place because it is their second time (of studying the textbook). So, when they study (the textbook) for the exam, it would be their third time. So, the kids who attend a cram school have an advantage in terms of school exam.
(Min-Ju, SRP II)

Because cram schools make students memorize the English textbook (Interview II), students attending cram schools or private tutoring have a better chance of getting a higher score on the school exams which are based on the content of the textbook. This also suggests that the typical strategy for passing school exams is memorization through repetition. For Min-Ju, who was attending a cram school and a very good student, it was not difficult to get high scores on her English exams.

Finally, Min-Ju expressed her overall satisfaction with studying English in the high-proficiency class. While studying in a mixed-level class, Min-Ju sometimes felt agitated because she had to wait for her classmates to finish in-class exercises that were easy for her (Interview). While she acknowledged that she enjoyed the speedy flow of lessons in the high proficiency class, Min-Ju had other reasons why she enjoyed studying in the current class:

상급반으로 나누니까 좀 좋은개요 <예>קפ 이리애 그래그래 못하는 애들도 있잘수 있었어요. <그리고>그리면 이리애 (,) 저는 (,) 솔직히 말하면 <음 솔직히 말해도 되>(,) 못- 못해- 못하는 애들이 좀 ((inhale)) 많- 많았기(h)든요. 우리반에 <음음음>그러면 좀 아

7 Since she was placed in the most advanced class at the cram school, Min-Ju mentioned the grammar she was learning there was also quite advanced. This can be the reason she needs to preview what she is going to learn at cram school English class.
There are some good things after dividing the class according to proficiency. <yeah> in a mixed classroom, there are some poor students. <uh-huh> Then, to be honest, {you can be honest} there were many poor students in my class <u-huh>. Then I felt arrogant-when I got 98% from a test, I thought I am really good. <uhuh> Then, when the class is divided, I came to think I have to study harder because I could see lots of good students <I see>.
(Min-Ju, SRP I)

Studying in the high-proficiency class gave her a chance to meet more good students who she might not have met in the mixed-proficiency class. This made Min-Ju more motivated to study harder because she felt more competition among her classmates in the high-proficiency class.

In sum, as one of the top students in this school, Min-Ju had mostly positive experiences in her current English language classes. Since she had success in learning both English grammar and conversation in her public and cram school English classes, she did not perceive English to be difficult. The school and cram school learning environments provided her with the skills she needed to pass the required exams. In addition, school provided diverse activities which she regarded as fun and interesting. Therefore, in this school English language learning activity system, Min-Ju experienced few contradictions since she did well on her exams and enjoyed the unique language learning activities she did not have at her cram school.

8.2.2. Soo-Hyun’s story

Soo-Hyun was a quiet male student in Hee-Won’s class, yet his English language learning history was similar to Min-Ju’s and the other students who participated in the study. That is, Soo-Hyun started learning English in elementary school in third grade. He
had two years of subscribing to the study-aid service where he also learned English, and at the time of the data collection, Soo-Hyun was attending the same cram school as Min-Ju. He described his English cram school as follows: “학교 진도 보다 약간 빠르게 좀 예습식으로 (.) 학교 공부하고 똑같이 배우죠 ([at cram school] I usually preview what I am going to learn at school. (.I learn the same things there as I learn at school)” (Interview- p.5). Finally, Soo-Hyun had been enrolled in the high-proficiency English class since its adoption in his school.\(^8\)

During the researcher’s classroom observations, Soo-Hyun rarely spoke up. When he participated in oral reading activities during class, his voice was generally quiet and low. Sometimes, it was observed that he did not participate in the oral reading activities but copied what the teacher wrote on the blackboard in his notebook (Field Note, Oct. 30). Also, during group activities, Soo-Hyun listened to other members of the group most of the time but rarely spoke.

His classroom participation patterns were related to his introverted personality\(^9\). Supporting this, Soo-Hyun shared his experience of taking an English conversation course at a private language school when he was a sixth grader (Interview). He remembered that the class was not interesting at all to him. Soo-Hyun recalled that he had few friends in the class and thus found it difficult to feel part of the class. He mentioned the same reason for his inactiveness in group work during lessons at school English classroom: “좀 아는 애들이 있으면 좀 나았을 겨데 잘 모르는 애들이니까 영창이 빼고는 (I could have participated better [more actively] if there had been more familiar faces in the

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\(^8\) Soo-Hyun got 95% out of 100% from the final English exam in spring semester and 97% from the midterm English exam of fall semester.

\(^9\) Soo-Hyun was very shy at the beginning of the interview and rarely initiated the conversation unless he was questioned.
group. But I didn’t know the group members well except Young-Chan)” (SRP – p.20)

Therefore, to Soo-Hyun, classmates or friends were one factor influencing his participation. In a similar vein, Soo-Hyun said that he enjoyed note taking more than practicing English conversation because he did not need to talk while taking notes (Interview).

Moreover, Soo-Hyun perceived that group work was distracting for him because he did not like the noisy atmosphere it created. Because he sat in the back of the classroom, Soo-Hyun also said that he got frustrated because it was difficult for him to see the screen because student were moving around during group work. As such, he was uninterested in group activities and admitted that he sometimes even fell a sleep while the rest of the class was doing them (SPR).

His apparent taciturn personality made him feel uncomfortable during group activities in which he was supposed to interact with unfamiliar classmates in a boisterous atmosphere, both of which he did not like. Although he could sometimes get peer help during the group activities, Soo-Hyun acknowledged that he did not like group work overall:

Well, I don’t like the group activity much. <then, do you prefer lecture?> yes <can you tell me why?> I don’t know. I don’t like it although I don’t know why <you mean the group activity> yeah <uh> (. ) <why not? Please tell me a reason> (. ) well (. ) boredom <during the group activity> because we are supposed to do everything and the teacher said nothing <uhuh> so I feel boredom (0.1) <So, You feel less bored when you listen to the teacher’s lectures?> Yes.

(Soo-Hyun, SRP)

10 During this group work, four classmates were in one group. Two of the group members were from different class from Soo-Hyun’s.
Here, Soo-Hyun revealed his preferred learning style was teacher-fronted lecture. Since the teacher did not give lectures during group work, he found group work rather boring. He preferred the teacher’s lecture where he felt he was learning something. This reflects Soo-Hyun’s belief that teachers are supposed to teach students, and to him this meant direct instruction in the form of lectures. Since he saw no role for the teacher during group activities, such activities were not seen as ‘real’ learning or ‘real’ teaching.

Soo-Hyun preferred passive learning activities such as note taking.

I like note taking more than memorizing something (I like) note taking\(^{11}\). Because I prefer studying grammar I hope to have more grammar lecture than conversation practice (oh, more grammar than conversation (.) I see)

(Soo-Hyun, Interview)

Preferring lectures and studying grammar, Soo-Hyun believed such passive learning strategies helped him a lot:

I try to copy a lot (what do you mean with ‘copy’?) Well, copying- uh – When the teacher asked to memorize the dialogue, I copy (the dialogue). While copying it, I sorted grammar points. Like this, I sort them which can be on the exam later. And I sometimes take notes what the teacher writes (on the board) and copy them on different place (u-huh) that is how (I study English at home).

(Soo-Hyun, Interview)

For Soo-Hyun, the school exam was always on his mind, and he constructed his learning strategies around it. For instance, he reviewed and organized grammar features

\(^{11}\) When he mentioned memorization, he referred to the classroom activity in which students should memorize the given English dialogue in the textbook and perform it in front of the whole class. This activity was routinely conducted when Hee-Won’s high proficiency class studied “Let’s Talk” section both in chapters 9 and 10.
because they are likely to be on school exams. Soo-Hyun also pointed out his belief in the importance of grammar by saying, “일단 문법이- 일단 문법이 되야 회화가 되니까요 (once grammar is mastered, conversation is possible)” (Interview – p.8). Like many teachers and students in South Korea, Soo-Hyun believed that grammar was the core of English language learning and a prerequisite for conversation skills.

Whereas he was interested in studying grammar, he did not like memorization. Soo-Hyun’s criterion for what makes the textbook interesting was thus based on the amount of the content to memorize. When asked which chapter he enjoyed learning in the textbook, Soo-Hyun said:

Lesson 1 단원 이런거는 쉬우니까((inhale)) 외우기도 쉽고 <예> 음 뭐. 철단원같은 경우에는 일단 외우는게 너무 많으니까요. 힘들었구요.
Chapter 1 (was interesting) because the content of the chapter was easy and thus easy to memorize. <u-huh> yeah. In the case of the chapter 7, there were too many things to memorize. So it was hard.
(Soo-Hyun, Interview)

Even though he disliked having to do so much memorization, Soo-Hyun still used it as his main learning strategy. Supporting this, when asked whether he liked the “Build up English” section of the textbook which includes some communicative activities, Soo-Hyun said:

별로=아이- 이런거는 만데에 비해서 제멋조 <예> 이런것도 다 외워야되(h)는데(h) <이런것도 다 외우라고 그립니까> 이번에 수행평가 나왔기때문에요? <아> 그래가지고 이건 썩다다 외워서 풀수있는 문제이기 때문에(,) 죽(h)도록 외(h)랬거든요? <아> 그래서 그냥 실죠.
(it’s) so so. No- compared with other sections, it’s more fun <u-huh> but I had to memorize them <are you asked to memorize the ‘build up English’ section too?> this section was on the exam. <ah> so, because I could answer the questions only when I memorize all the story, I memorized them to death <ah, so just-> I dislike (it).
(Soo-Hyun, Interview)
Even in sections of the textbook intended to foster communicative interactions, such as the “Build up English” section, his approach was to memorize the content, especially if he expected it to appear on an exam. Given that he did not like memorization but was required to memorize for school exams, English held little interest for him (Interview).

Soo-Hyun believes communicative activities and group work were unnecessary for his English language study. At the same time, his personality was such that he preferred note taking and lectures rather than participating in group activities. This revealed a contradiction between him (subject) and the imposed tool (communicative group activity) in this learning activity system. Also, because the rule to follow during communicative activities was to actively participate in ongoing activity, this caused another conflict between Soo-Hyun (subject) and the required rule for the activities (active students’ participation). The result was a lack of interest and a negative attitude toward learning English in spite of receiving high scores on school English exams.

8.2.3. Won-Jae’s story

Won-Jae moved into the high-proficiency class from the low-proficiency class during the second week of the researcher’s classroom observation. Although he was a newcomer to the high-proficiency class,\(^\text{12}\) Won-Jae’s participation was generally active. He paid attention to the teacher’s lecture, answered the teacher’s questions, and participated in classroom activities such as reading texts aloud. In addition, during group

\(^{12}\) As a new comer, Won-Jae actually experienced difficulty during the dictation exam. That is, whereas Mi-Ra recited the items in dictation examination both in English and Korean in low-proficiency class, Hee-Won only recited them in Korean. This difference caused a difficulty while Won-Jae took the dictation examination, resulting in his disappointment for getting lower score (SRP – p. 11).
activities, he energetically participated, discussing answers with his group members and asking questions of them. Overall, Won-Jae was a very active participant in this class.

Since it was Won-Jae’s first time studying in a high proficiency class, he expressed excitement about being in this class. Won-Jae acknowledged that being in the low-proficiency class hurt his pride whereas moving to the high-proficiency class made him feel better about himself (Interview). Later, he acknowledged that he studied very hard in the low-proficiency class in order to move up to this high-proficiency class (SRP).

He also recalled that the atmosphere in the low-proficiency class was very strict and his classmates were generally quiet which made him sleepy (Interview, SRP). In contrast, he felt that his classmates in the high-proficiency class were more active because they knew what the teacher wanted and could answer successfully. Won-Jae also recounted that one advantage of studying in the high-proficiency class was that he could get help from his classmates when he was not sure of his answers (SPR). For Won-Jae, an atmosphere of active participation made the class more lively, which he learned from and enjoyed.

While talking about his expectation for the high-proficiency class, Won-Jae mentioned that they did very few language activities in the low-proficiency class (refer to the interview excerpt with Won-Jae in chapter 7). Won-Jae was hoping to participate in more communicative activities in the high-proficiency class and fewer lectures because he did not like to sit still, listen, and take notes (Interview). Even though Won-Jae was looking forward to communicative activities, such as quizzes or games, he did not believe
they were valuable for English language learning and viewed them simply as ‘play’ and time-killers. When asked about the ‘Jeopardy’ activities, Won-Jae noted:

It was fun <was it?> yes. (Because it) was not a study but a guessing (game) … This (Jeopardy) is not helpful for my study (of English). But because killing time is an issue (to me, I need them).

(Won-Jae, SRP)

In fact, he viewed these activities as ‘play’ but not as ‘learning’. Regarding the possible learning opportunity from these activities, Won-Jae said:

Because it is a game, it’s natural to play with fun. <because it is a game. Okay. But didn’t you happen to memorize words during the game?> well, my brain becomes blank during games <But isn’t there any case for you to come to know some expressions you didn’t know before?> sometimes I do although I forget it later <it is natural to forget, isn’t it?> Yeah. That is why I started studying one or two days before the exam but I do not usually study English afraid of forgetting.

(Won-Jae, SRP)

In this sense, Won-Jae and Hee-Won have different goals for communicative activities; namely, Won-Jae does not see these activities as learning. To him, learning entails studying for school exams by memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary. Won-Jae has been socialized into seeing learning as rote memorization, which he recalls as being the focus of English learning at both elementary and middle school. When asked about differences in English classes between the middle school and elementary school, Won-Jae answered as follows:

(Won-Jae, SRP)
(English classes in middle and elementary school are) almost same <what do you mean with ’almost same’?> words and <uh-huh> memorization (of them) is all. <I see.> I mean, in elementary school, there was memorization of words and here [in middle school] too, once memorizing words (is) done (everything is fine) <I see>. (Won-Jae, Interview)

He also commented that nothing new happened in his middle school English classes, and the teachers’ instructional styles in both the high and low-proficiency classes were essentially same:

What we do (in English class) is same- memorizing words, sentences and translating (them) <u-huh> then, copying things like this. Everything is same now. (Won-Jae, SRP)

Even though Won-Jae was excited to be in the high-proficiency class, he disliked English because he found it to be difficult and boring. In spite of his active participation in classroom activities, Won-Jae said:

There’s no use for my classroom participation. Nothing I can store in my brain (Is it necessary to store something in your brain while studying English to you?) But still something must be stored in my brain/mind but I can’t. (Won-Jae, SRP – p.54)

Yet he chose to participate in classroom activities actively on more of a surface level because he wanted a good evaluation of his classroom behavior from the teacher (SRP). 13

In this learning activity system, the instructional artifacts used by his teacher did not create contradictions for him because he found they ended his boredom in class even

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13 In South Korean secondary schools, students’ behavior at school is evaluated and appeared on their transcripts.
though he perceived the communicative activities as not helpful for achieving his goal of high scores on school exams. The communicative activities (tool) still satisfied one of his objects in the class, which is to have fun.

8.3. The Learning Activity System of High-Proficiency Class

8.3.1. The Structure the Learning Activity System

As subjects of the current English learning activity systems, the English learning histories of each participating student in Hee-Won’s high proficiency class were very similar in that they each had assistance out of the school English classroom. On the other hand, these students’ attitudes toward learning English and their teacher’s instruction were more diverse. Whereas Min-Ju had a positive attitude, Soo-Hyun and Won-Jae’s attitudes were rather negative in that neither of them enjoyed their English classes.

As mediational artifacts, the students had their own learning strategies which were somewhat different; for instance, Min-Ju enjoyed group work and quiz sessions where she had a chance to speak in English, but Soo-Hyun preferred a lecture style classroom from which he could learn grammar and was not required to speak. Also, in this English learning activity system, it was undeniable that the textbook was the most powerful mediational artifact through which the students pursued their most important goal of passing the school exam.

The school exam was the object of this learning activity system. Even though Min-Ju expressed her interest in learning English conversations through communicative activities, she acknowledged that they were peripheral to her English learning. Rather,

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14 Refer to Figure 9 in this chapter for the structure of the English learning activity system in which these three students operated.
what she and the other two students focused on in the school English class as well as at cram schools was to obtain higher English exam scores. Consequently, these students did not perceive communicative activities, imposed tools by their teacher, as necessary or crucial learning activities in their activity systems.

Hee-Won and the students’ classmates belonged to the same community. Cram schools also are the member of the same community because all three students were attending cram schools and these experiences had an impact on their perceptions of school English classroom (i.e. a place for reviewing). In this community, the participating students still regarded the teacher as a knower, so it was important for them, as recipients of knowledge about English, to take notes on what the teacher wrote on the board. Students sometimes enjoyed being active participants while doing certain communicative tasks such as quizzes or the Jeopardy game, but this role was placed on them by the teacher with authority and did not occur frequently. Overall, the division of labor in this learning community was characterized as that of a traditional classroom; teachers are expected to transmit knowledge and students are expected to receive knowledge passively. The structure of the high-proficient students’ activity system along with the contradictions that emerged is depicted in Figure 9 below;
8.3.2. Inner Contradictions: Secondary Contradictions

Few contradictions were observed or emerged in Min-Ju’s and Won-Jae’ stories. In Soo-Hyun’s case, however, several noticeable secondary contradictions occurred; (1) between subject (Soo-Hyun) and mediating artifact (communicative activities), (2) between subject (Soo-Hyun) and the rule of the community (required active participation) and (3) between students’ object (high scores on school exams) and mediating artifacts (communicative activities).

For Soo-Hyun, due to his taciturn personality and his passive learning style, doing communicative activities raised some emotional resistance, a secondary contradiction. Simultaneously, the fact the participation in communicative activities (artifacts) required new rules for the community (required active participation) also

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15 Given that three students, as the members of the same community, were in identical learning activity system, one activity system is drawn for them. The student who experienced contradictions and the components that caused the contradictions are shaded.
caused a secondary contradiction between Soo-Hyun (subject) who preferred to remain passive. The way he resolved this contradiction was either to be inattentive or quiet during these activities.

Another secondary contradiction that emerged in this activity system was between the mediating artifact (communicative activities) and students’ object (school exam). In this activity system in which communicative activities did not represent ‘real learning’, learning for school exams, the students did not feel the needs to change their learning styles or strategies as long as their scores on the school exams were acceptable. This contradiction and the way it was resolved, as seen in Soo-Hyun’s story, suggests that a major challenge for South Korean English teachers is satisfying diverse students learning preferences but also enabling them to believe that communicative activities will, in fact, enable them to meet the object of their study, that is, to pass the school exams.

8.4. Mi-Ra’s Low-Proficient Students

8.4.1. You-An’s Story

You-An was generally an active participant in Mi-Ra’s class. He replied to Mi-Ra’s English greeting loudly, often answered Mi-Ra’s questions, and actively participated in classroom activities including reading texts or repeating words played on a CD or spoken by his teacher. He followed Mi-Ra’s directions and even asked questions during classroom activities, “화장품이 영어로 뭐에요?(What is ‘cosmetics’ in English?)”(Field note – Nov. 8). It was clear that he was not afraid to try his English skills when he had a
chance. On the third day of the classroom observation, You-An also spoke in English, 
“Why don’t you try some?,” as he offered the researcher a piece of candy.¹⁶

You-An started studying English in fifth grade (Interview). Unlike other 
participating students who were enrolled in cram schools and tutoring programs, the 
English textbook was his only source of English, and this class was the only place where 
he could get assistance¹⁷. He recalled that he had no reference books at home, and his 
older sister who was in 10th grade was of no help because she was not interested in 
English.

You-An recalled that learning English in elementary school was difficult for him, 
but he acknowledged that it was becoming easier now. This comment stands in contrast 
to other students who commented that learning English had become more difficult. You-
An explained his feelings:

아마도 초등학교때는 (.) 위 동사도 모르고 그랬지만 중학교 올라와서 그 뜻을 
알고((inhale)) 많은 단어를 알아가니까 <뜻을 안나라는데 예를 들어(...) 동사가 뭐라는 걸 
알겠겠다 이런거에요. 아니면(...) 단어들의 뜻을 알게되서 단어들의 뜻- 많은 단어((inhale)) 
아마도 중학교와서 시험에 들어가기 때문에 (...) 많이 외우다보니까. 
Maybe because, in elementary school days, I did not know what the verbs are, (I felt 
English was difficult.) But I came to know what they are now and as I came to know 
the more (English) words, (learning English becomes easier than before) <what do 
you mean with “knowing”? For instance, do you mean that you learned what the verbs 
are, or because you came to know the meaning of the word-> the meanings of the words-
because I should memorize words a lot for school exams in middle school.
(You-An, Interview)

This change in You-An’s attitude toward learning English emerged when he 
understood what he needed to know. For You-An, grammar and vocabulary are essential 
in English language learning:

¹⁶ Later in the interview, You-An said that he learned that expression in a previous chapter of the textbook 
and used it with the researcher for practice (Interview).
¹⁷ Two weeks after the first interview, however, You-An started a private tutoring.
To be able to write in English, (I) should know lots of words and language structure such as subjects and verbs, but I don't know them well. I can keep writing only when I know them. Also, because (I) should memorize the principle, I memorize it.

(You-An, SRP)

Since You-An’s schooling had socialized him into placing a high priority on performing well on school exams and because Mi-Ra’s instruction focused on the exam requirements, he believed in the importance of learning English was to do well on school exams. When asked about any difficulties he had with learning English, You-An noted that memorizing sentences, especially long ones, was very challenging for him (Interview). This concern was natural in this schooling context where memorization skills were critical to score well on the exams.

You-An mentioned his concern about school exams several times during the interviews. Whenever he heard the word ‘exam,’ in the classroom, he paid more attention, “시험이라는 소리만 들어도 갑자기 집중이 되잖아요? (Only the word ‘exam’ makes me suddenly pay attention (to the lesson))”(SRP – p.36). You-An said he started private tutoring in order to get higher exam scores, "성적 좀 올려볼라고(in order to increase exam scores) (SRP – p.1)"\(^\text{18}\).

Since You-An’s understanding of language learning was similar to his teacher, Mi-Ra, who emphasized knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, he appreciated Mi-Ra’s focus on these aspects of language and had a positive attitude toward her instructional approach:

\(^\text{18}\) He studied English, math, science, and social science with 8 other students in private tutoring.
You-An was very satisfied with Mi-Ra’s instructional strategies because he believed he benefited from his teacher’s detailed explanations and frequent repetition of words and comprehension checks. You-An also enjoyed Mi-Ra’s questioning patterns because he felt proud when he could answer her questions while his classmates could not (Interview). Because his classmates were mostly quiet during instruction, You-An had more chances to express what he knew than he did in the mixed-proficiency class, and this also motivated him. Believing English will be helpful someday, he also appreciated his teacher’s increased use of English although he recalled sometimes he could not understand her (Interview).

You-An had a positive attitude toward his teacher’s instructional practices, and this made him actively participate in classroom activities most of the time. His positive attitude was also reinforced by his improved English exam score (Interview). He agreed with Mi-Ra’s emphasis on memorizing words and sentences in the textbook since he knew that it was what he needed to get high scores on exams. In fact, You-An acknowledged that English was his second favorite school subject next to physical education (Interview, SRP).

Consequently, You-An, as the subject of his learning activity system, experienced few contradictions in Mi-Ra’s class. This was due to the fact that the
instructional artifacts, repetition drills and detailed grammar explanations, were what he expected and what he believed he needed to do well on exams. Overall, You-An perceived Mi-Ra’s emphasis on vocabulary and grammar as necessary and conducive to learning English.

8.4.2. Ji-In’s story

Ji-In, a female student in Mi-Ra’s low-proficiency class, was an active participant. She usually answered Mi-Ra’s questions loudly even if her answers were sometimes incorrect. During group work, compared with her quiet classmates, Ji-In asked more questions about words she did not know, such as “each 가 뭐에요? (what does ‘each’ mean?)” (Field note- Oct. 18), or “떡이 영어로 뭐에요? (What is a ‘rice-cake’ in English)” (Field note – Nov 8).

Ji-In started learning English when she was in elementary school and had been attending a cram school since she entered middle school. Interestingly, unlike the other students in this study, Ji-In was taking an English conversation course, and she acknowledged that she enjoyed the course very much (Interview). It was not surprising then that what she enjoyed most in school English classroom was the speaking activities where she could actually practice English and the listening activities in which she could complete more meaningful task (SRP).

Several of Ji-In’s family members are married to Americans, and thus, Ji-In mentioned that she had chances to talk with her American uncles and cousins. She also said that she visited the U.S. when she was a fourth grader, and she remembered the trip as a fun experience. Because of her family, Ji-In acknowledged that although she could
not communicate competently in English, she was not afraid of speaking English (Interview). Also, Ji-In pointed out that her mother emphasized the importance of English as an international tool of communication in the future, thus Ji-In’s mother positively influenced her perceptions about learning English as a potential tool for communication.

Although Ji-In enjoyed her conversation class, she felt that she lacked the grammar she needed to perform better in the conversation class. Based on her own experiences with English learning, Ji-In believed that English learning should start with mastery of grammar and not with learning how to speak and believed that her lack of grammar knowledge was at root of her lack of conversational ability: 

문법(.)을 배우며는 회화를 더 잘할꺼 같아요. <문법을 배우면 회화를 더 잘할꺼 같다> 음<br>어두한 회화를 하면서 더 좋은데 저는 키스로 시작했잖아요.

I believe that when grammar is learned first, conversation ability would become even better. <I believe that when grammar is learned first, conversation ability would become even better.> uh <uh> it is better to start (learning English) from grammar and then conversation, but I started the other way around.

(Ji-In, Interview)

Ji-In reiterated that belief when she talked about the speaking abilities of her classmates in the conversation class:

근데 회화시간에도 공부 잘하는 애들 많아요. (...) 하고싶은 문법이 다 되는 애들이요. 문법이 되는 경우에에 회화를 또 하니까 애들이 실력이 늘어나는 애들이 많아요.

In the conversation class, there are many classmates who are good at studying. They mastered the grammar they want to use. Since they already have grammar knowledge, their language ability improves a lot when they additionally take the conversation class.

(Ji-In, Interview)

Thus, to Ji-In, mastering grammar rules is the key to improving her English conversational ability, and she equated “studying well” with “having good knowledge of grammar rules.” Ji-In also perceived a successful language learner as a student with a solid knowledge of grammar that translated into high exam scores. Her mindset was
grounded within this institutional context where grammar and reading comprehension rather than conversational ability was more valuable for the English exams. Ji-In suggested that it would be better to teach students grammar in elementary school and then conversation later in middle school (Interview).

In spite of her beliefs that grammar should be a prerequisite for communication and for the exams, Ji-In did not believe that the grammar class at her cram school was helpful. Because students’ proficiencies varied at the cram school she was attending and because the instruction was designed for highly proficient students, it was difficult for her to understand the instructor’s grammar explanations. As a result, Ji-In stated that she rarely participated at the cram school (Interview – p.10). Ji-In complained that the instructor at her cram school did not pay attention to lower level students, and she was discouraged by this.

Compared with the grammar she was learning at the cram school, Ji-In acknowledged that the grammar in Mi-Ra’s class was easier for her because it was geared at her level (SRP). Also, because she was with other low proficient students in her school English class, she believed that she had more chances to get the teacher’s attention and thus felt more motivated:

제가 뭐 따라하고 그러는데요. (.) 선생님이 그 알아들으시고 ↑(.) 그래 뭐 그러치 뭐 이런식으로 얘기하면서요, 좋아요.
When I repeat, the teacher notices (my performance) and provides positive feedback, and that makes me feel good.
(Ji-In, Interview)

19 However, Ji-In did not like the idea of dividing classes according to proficiency at cram school. Ji-In said that a proficiency-based English class at school was enough for her (Interview).
Not only did Ji-In regard grammar knowledge as important, she also found that she could improve her English through ‘repetition’ of the English she learned in class. She noted that repetition was an important and successful strategy, and through repetition, she tried to memorize grammar rules, idioms, new words, and the translations of the sentences in the textbook, all in preparation for the exams (SRP). Ji-In believed her low exam scores were from her lack of repetition, reviews, and attention to material she was to memorize:

내가 공부를 너무 집중을 안 하는거 같기도 하고, 그리고 아는데, 분명히 아는데 반복을 안 하나가 왜 할려고도 하지 않으니까 막 잊어버리는거 같애요. (The low scores (on school exams) seem to be caused) because I do not concentrate while I am studying. Also, I know (something) clearly, but because I do not repeat it until I memorize it, I forget it. (Ji-In, SRP)

Thus, Ji-In appreciated Mi-Ra’s use of repetition drill because it saved time that she would have to spend after school memorizing material. She felt repetition of words and grammar rules was useful, at the same time, she admitted that too much repetition made her bored and lose interest (SRP – p.18).

While Ji-In felt repetition drills would help her memorize the words and expressions which will be on the exams, she also wanted more speaking and listening activities because they were more interesting to her. Ji-In admitted losing interest during grammar-based instruction despite seeing grammar as very important for language learning (Interview). Ji-In mentioned that she only enjoyed the speaking and listening activities in the textbook, because she felt embarrassed and frustrated because there were
so many new words in the materials beyond the textbook (SRP)\textsuperscript{20}. Lastly, Ji-In mentioned that sitting near the teacher made her participate actively, suggesting that the physical location influenced her participation. Because of her seating assignment, she could see the letters on blackboard and CD clearly, and she thought she received more attention from the teacher, too (SRP).

At the same time, however, Ji-In complained that the lack of interest on the part of the other students in the class sometimes discouraged her. For example, Ji-In wanted to practice oral reading through role plays as Mi-Ra asked them to do, but her seat partner, who was busy passing notes to another student, was not interested in participating. When her classmates were quiet, Ji-In hesitated to actively participate in the class because it was uncomfortable for her (SRP - p.3). Ji-In also mentioned that it was difficult to find a classmate who could answer her questions in the low-proficiency class.

Overall, Ji-In had a positive attitude toward Mi-Ra’s instructional practices and experienced few prominent contradictions in this activity system. Ji-In found Mi-Ra’s detailed and often repetitious explanations of grammar useful and was motivated by Mi-Ra’s appreciation of her participation. With the exception of her resistance to participating in activities that were not in the textbook and would not be on the exam, few contradictions existed between her own learning activity and the learning artifacts (detailed explanations and repetition) imposed on her by Mi-Ra. In fact, the only salient contradiction in her activity system was between herself (subject) and her seat partner (community) and her other classmates because she felt they were unmotivated and thus hindered her own learning.

\textsuperscript{20} This can be also related to the nature or appropriateness of the communicative activities to her current proficiency level. See the handout I in Appendix H.
8.4.3. **Sung-Woo’s story**

Sung-Woo was not an active participant in Mi-Ra’s male class. He mostly sat quietly with his head down and almost never answered the teacher’s questions out loud. When the class did group work or a bingo game, however, Sung-Woo’s classroom behavior changed, and he became excited and spoke out. However, he admitted that his participation was not related to the learning activities, but rather to the opportunity to talk and play with his classmates (SRP II). Sung-Woo was also observed chewing gum during the lessons and sometimes even laid across the desk, both unacceptable classroom behaviors in this learning community. These defiant behaviors suggested that he was a non-participatory, resistant student who rejected classroom norms.

Sung-Woo began learning English in school and through subscription to a study-aid service when he was in third grade. A week after the interview with the researcher, he also started attending a cram school where he had another English class.\(^{21}\) In fact, Sung-Woo was far ahead of Mi-Ra’s class since he had covered much of the textbook in his English class at cram school. Another interesting point about Sung-Woo was that previously, he had been placed in the high-proficiency class\(^{22}\).

When asked about his English learning experiences in elementary school, he recalled memorizing sentences in the textbook and learning vocabulary and English grammar rules (Interview). He recalled English classes in elementary school as fun and interesting. However, in middle school, Sung-Woo admitted that he had lost interest in

\(^{21}\) Sung-Woo had an experience of attending the different cram school before. In the new cram school, he studied English with a reference book in which most grammars and readings from other publishers’ textbooks were presented. Also, the cram school covered the content of the textbook selectively based on tutees’ needs.  
\(^{22}\) Sung-Woo first studied in a low-proficiency class, moved to a high-proficiency class after spring semester final exam and then moved back into a low-proficiency class due to his low scores on fall semester mid term exam.
English (Interview). He complained that middle school English required too many tests and too much memorization of words which he did not retain for very long (Interview).

Like other students in this study, Sung-Woo was most concerned about his score on the school exams. Because school exams required extensive memorization and reading comprehension, Sung-Woo also believed memorizing words and grammar rules was most important. Getting high scores on his school exams was his goal (SRPII), and he was not at all interested in English conversation skills (Interview). Like many of the other students, Sung-Woo regarded English as a subject that required good exam scores and not as a tool for communication.

Although Sung-Woo acknowledged that the best strategy for studying English was memorizing words and grammar rules, memorization was not his favorite learning style (Interview). Science was his favorite subject because the class neither followed the content of the textbook strictly nor did it require a lot of memorization. Sung-Woo seemed to prefer understanding, analyzing, and synthesizing rather than straight memorization.

Sung-Woo also mentioned that he liked science class a lot because the teacher was funny, and he could talk freely in the class. Because the science class was fun, Sung-Woo admitted that he participated more actively and paid attention more. Clearly the instructional style of the teacher was a factor in determining how much he enjoyed learning. In English classes, however, Sung-Woo perceived that he was supposed to be quiet thus he did not enjoy learning English (Interview).

Sung-Woo particularly disliked the way his teacher repeated what she already taught them (Interview). He complained that Mi-Ra kept repeating the meanings of words
he already knew and oral reading was boring. Sung-Woo did not think that drills were helpful. He also stated that he disliked her long and detailed explanations “아- 알아들었는데 계속 하기 때문에 (because she keeps explaining even though (I) already understood what she said)” (SRPI). When asked what interested him, Sung-Woo said he liked group work where he could work with his classmates. In general, Sung-Woo found that his current English class was very boring, “영어수업은 재미없다 처음부터 끝까지 (English class is really boring from the beginning to the end)” (SRP I – p.27). Thus, he hoped class would pass quickly (SRP I).

The physical condition of the room also had an influence on Sung-Woo’s class participation. Sung-Woo felt that his seat location compounded his bad eye sight, making it difficult for him to read the letters on the board (SRPI). In other classes, Sung-Woo sat closer to the blackboard which he felt helped. He also complained that his classmates’ lack of interest in learning English also negatively influenced his participation. Sung-Woo felt that his English teacher did not seem to care about his difficulties, and he was uncomfortable talking about it with her.

Sung-Woo believed that Mi-Ra did not like him because he thought she stared at him during lessons. Later, Sung-Woo mentioned a previous incident where Mi-Ra had accused him of not paying attention. When he denied her accusation, Mi-Ra got upset and took him to the teachers’ room, where he lost face in front of many teachers. Although

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23 In Korean secondary school, students stay in the same classroom all day long while the teachers move classrooms. However, due to tracking system, Sung-Woo moved to other classroom during English class while his classmates of high proficiency-level did not move to their seats.

24 This happened during the spring semester around 5 months earlier.
Sung-Woo said that he did not care about this incident, he still believed that the teacher
did not like him, suggesting he did not like Mi-Ra, either.

Sung-Woo also admitted that he sometimes felt distressed about being in the low-
proficiency class. He said that he did not like this class because his close friend was in the
high-proficiency class:

제 옆에 앉은 애가 공부를 좀 잘 하거든요, <아. 그 학자라는 친구?> 네<어어> 그래서
sh((inhale)) 아 (.) 영어시간되면 막 갈때 (.) 아 써 갈게 이럴때 좀 기본(h)이(h) <아. 안
조무나. 그 친구랑 친하다고 그랬잖아요 성환이가.> 네 <어: (. 친구하고 해어지아써서.
일반>어. 그리고 여 친구가 뭐 빨리 온나 이럴때(hh).
My seat partner is an excellent student. <Oh, the friend you mentioned before?> yeah
<uh-huh> So, sh((inhale)) uh, when English class comes and when I have to say good
bye to him, I feel(h) bad <oh. You feel bad. You told me that he and you are close
friends> yeah <I see. So, the first one is that you have to part your close friends> = uh,
and when he said “come back soon,”[I feel bad.]
(Sung-Woo, SRP I)

Sung-Woo had positive recollections of his experience in the high-proficiency
class. He admitted that he actively participated in class activities such as oral reading
which he rarely did in his current class. Although he felt there was not much difference
between the two teachers’ instructional practices (Interview), he felt more motivated in
the high-proficiency class “아 여서하면 기운이 꼬总面积(h)치고 <기분이> 그러니까 한번씩
막 게임도 해주고하니까는 (uh, here(in the high-proficient class), I felt energized <your
mood?> well, because (I) sometimes had chance to do certain games there” (Interview I).

As such, Sung-Woo’s attitude seemed important to his learning. He felt more
motivated and participated more when he was among friends and excited about the
content. In the low-proficiency class, there were few language games (Interview – p.16);
his seat partner was uninterested in studying English (SRP II); most of all, being in the

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25 In fact, Mi-Ra had a negative attitude toward Sung-Woo regarding him as a resistant and non-cooperative
student.
low-proficiency hurt his pride a lot. Consequently, his attitude toward the current class had become gradually negative.

Sung-Woo’s main focus as a subject of this learning activity system was to do well on the exams because his score influenced his personal life. When his exam scores declined, his parents refused to let him spend time chatting with his brother who was away at college. Clearly, Sung-Woo’s parents were concerned with his school exam scores and this impacted Sung-Woo’s life both inside and outside of school. Therefore, he was understandably concerned about his school exams. As a result, on the surface, while Sung-woo seemed defiant and uninterested, he, in fact, selectively paid attention to the classroom activities he thought would benefit him (SRP).

Contradictions Sung-Woo experienced in the learning activity system occurred between the subject and community (both teacher and classmates), between the subject and the rules, and between the subject and the imposed mediating tools (repetition drills and detailed grammar explanations). Since there was not much he could do to resolve these secondary contradictions, Sung-Woo become quiet and even resistant in the classroom except when the class did an activity that he perceived as either preparing him for upcoming school exams or giving him a chance chatting with his classmates.

These contradictions also showed that Sung-Woo’s classroom participation was both institutionally and socially constructed. His history with Mi-Ra and his perceptions of her teaching style, his learning preferences, his relationships with his friends, classmates and even his parents, helped to shape the way he participated in his English class. In addition, when considering the institutional (public school) and social (South Korea) context where exam scores represent an important and legitimate learning
outcome, it is not surprising that Sung-Woo was passive in class. As long as his passivity did not negatively influence his scores on the school exams, changes in his attitudes or classroom behavior were not expected, or even necessary.

8.4.4. Hay-Jung’s story

At the beginning of the classroom observations, Hay-Jung was an active student in Mi-Ra’s female class. She often answered the teacher’s questions loudly while most of her classmates were quiet and she was sometimes the only student who answered in English. Along with Ji-In, Hay-Jung was comfortable asking questions during class about word meanings. As the observations continued, however, Hay-Jung’s participation changed. She became quiet and answered the teacher’s questions less frequently, yet still more often than most of her classmates. It was also observed that Hay-Jung did not participate in group work at all but sat with her head down. In another classroom observation, while Mi-Ra was giving a lecture, she was reading a novel hidden under her textbook.

Hay-Jung had an outgoing personality. She was neither shy nor hesitant in expressing her opinions. She said that she wanted to learn to speak in English, what she called “회화 (conversation).” She remembered meeting a foreigner at a bus stop who talked to her in English as an interesting experience. From this event, she became interested in learning conversational English. She also sometimes watched Arirang TV, a Korean TV channel in English, and felt proud of herself when she could understand the news anchor’s English.

26 This was due to the fact that her answers were prominent because she usually answered what her classmates did not.
From her exposure to English in everyday life, she became interested in more meaning-based aspects of learning English. Hay-Jung enjoyed when her teacher used English because she believed it was an opportunity for her to practice speaking (Interview). Hay-Jung acknowledged that she did not like oral reading practice because she felt it was boring, so she rarely participated in choral readings.

Hay-Jung was eager for communicative activities used in learning English at school and found repetition exercises boring by saying, “똑같은거- 그러니까 영어가 계속 반복되는데요 (.) 색다른 수업 안 할 때요 (When the same thing- I mean, there are lost of repetition in English (textbook) (. When there is nothing new)” (Interview – p.8). While she was interested at the beginning of a new chapter, she often lost interest as the same words and grammar structures were repeated (Interview).

Hay-Jung wished for a fun and interesting learning environment. Supporting this, she mentioned that one of her previous English tutoring sessions was not helpful to her, not connected to what she learned in school and very boring, “재미가 있으면 이러케 할려고 하잖아요? 재미가 없으니까 하기가 싫어요. 영어가 싫구요 (When [a class] is fun, (students) try to participate, right?. when it is not fun, I dislike to (participate). (and) I come to dislike English)” (Interview – p.7). In a similar vein, Hay-Jung disliked the textbook because it did not have interesting language activities. She continued, “게임하면요. 자동적으로 말하게 되고요. 그러니까 좋은데요 여기는 없어요 (If I do the game, I can have a chance to talk, which is good. But there is no game here [in this book]” (Interview, p.17). She pointed out that some games in the book were too simple and thus not fun. In addition, she said that Mi-Ra rarely gave them a chance to play language games during lessons. In fact, Hay-Jung said, “이 선생님은 지루하고 저
선생님은 안 지루하고 (this teacher’s (Mi-ra’s) class is boring but that teacher’s (Hee-Won’s) class is not” (SRP). Because she valued interaction and fun language learning activities, it was not surprising that Hay-Jung lost interest and became quieter and more distracted as the semester progressed. Hay-Jung admitted daydreaming while the teacher was translating the contents of the “Let’s Read” sections in chapters.

Being placed in the low-proficiency class did not have a positive influence on her learning, either. When she talked about the atmosphere of the low-proficiency class, Hay-Jung said:

안 좋아요. <안 조타라는게 어떤 의미니까> ((inhale)) 조용하고요. <음> 공부하기 싫은데 역지로 하고요. (으)];// 이기 없는데 (.) 앞반에는 막 틀고 그러고야? ((inhale)) 그리고요 제미도 없어요. 저 반은 재밌는데.

(the class atmosphere) is not good. <what do you mean ‘not good’?>. (it’s) quiet <uh-huh> I don’t want to study. There is no interest. (.) (I could hear) the laughter from the other class and (this class) is not interesting whereas the other class is having fun.

(Hay-Jung, SRP)

Hay-Jung envied her counterparts in the high-proficiency class based on their laughter, she believed that they learned English in fun ways. She did not feel like participating in her quiet class (Interview- p.10), and the more silent she became, the more quiet and boring the class became.

Along with her decreased interest in the English class, the content of the textbook also became difficult for her. Specifically, Hay-Jung pointed out that the “Let’s Read” section was very difficult for her in that there were too many unfamiliar words to translate:

너무 어려워요. 너무 어려워요. <뭐가요> 이 어려워요 이 자체가 <영어가요>에 (.) <왜 감자기 그런 생각이 들었어요> 나 이거 어렵다네요 모르겠어요. (.) 아는 단어도 적게 나오고 <어> ((책장을 넘기다가)) 못하겠어요. (h)이거는 <Let’s Talk> 쉬운데요 이거는 <Let’s Read> 어려워요.
Another factor influencing Hay-Jung’s participation was her relationship with her classmates. During group activities, her group members just looked at the textbook with their heads down and did not speak to each other. When asked why this was so, Hay-Jung admitted that she and her seat partner had had a fight and no longer talked to each other. Hay-Jung said that she never talked nor did the assigned pair work, such as performing the role-plays by reading the dialogues, with her new partner. She admitted that since she had been working with her new partner, she did not want to come to class nor pay attention. Her only thought was “수업 빨리 안 끝나나 (May the class be over soon)” (SRP). Thus, the social dimension of her classroom milieu limited her participation in learning activities that she might enjoy otherwise.

Like Ji-In and Sung-Woo, Hay-Jung also pointed out the influence of the physical context on her classroom participation. During the stimulated recall interview, Hay-Jung expressed her desire to sit near the teacher claiming that she would be better able to pay attention to the lessons. Hay-Jung also complained that she had difficulty seeing the screen or board clearly.

In spite of these issues, Hay-Jung knew that the most important reason for studying English was school exams, and thus, she constructed her study strategies around this goal. She memorized words and paid attention during class if she believed the topic might be on the exam:
She also noted that the ‘new words’, ‘key expressions’, and ‘pattern’ sections were very important to her “시험을 위해서요. (for the exam)” (Interview I). She pointed out that “Test Yourself” or “Build up English” were not important because they would not be on school exams (SRP). Like the other students, Hay-Jung oriented her learning around school exams. Finally, like Sung-Woo, she discussed her parent’s interest in exam scores and mentioned that she had been forbidden to use the computer at home when her scores dropped.

With her outgoing personality and desire for communicative activities, Hay-Jung (subject of her learning activity system) experienced contradictions with the imposed repetition and translation-focused learning tools Mi-Ra used. As a way to cope with this contradiction, she became silent and uninterested. Also, her conflict with her classmate (community member) made her a less active participant. Although her classroom participation was influenced by her personality, preferred study styles, and relationship with her classmates, however, Hay-Jung chose what she would pay attention to or study based on school exams. Therefore, because classroom participation was not required as part of her course grade, Hay-Jung did not participate as much as she could have.
8.5. The Learning Activity System of Low-Proficiency Class

8.5.1. Structure of the Learning Activity System

Overall, like the student in the high-proficiency classes, these four low-proficient students’ stories manifested abundant commonalities shared as members of the classroom English learning activity system in a South Korean middle school. All four students had similar stories in terms of their English learning backgrounds; all of them had either attended at cram schools or had some private tutoring. However, these students’ understanding of their teacher’s instruction and learning of the English language were different from each other, and their attitudes have had a significant influence on their current perceptions.

As the subjects of the learning activity system, each student came to the language classes with his/her own beliefs, values, attitudes, and goals, all of which constituted who they were as the agents of their own English learning. Also, their relationships with friends, family members, teachers, and the physical conditions in the classroom, substantially influenced their perceptions and classroom participation, a strong indicator of the social nature of human cognition and action.

Most noticeably but not very surprisingly, school exams emerged as the most powerful object of the learning activity system four students were pursuing. Even when Hay-Jung expressed her desire to learn English conversation skills, obtaining high scores on school exams was undeniably her main learning goal. As a result, these students learning strategies were constructed around the school exams. For instance, in spite of

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27 See Figure 10 in this chapter for the structure of this learning activity system the low-proficient students functioned.
Sung-Woo’s defiant classroom behavior, his selective attention to Mi-Ra’s instruction still showed that he was concerned about school exams.

In addition to the mediational power of school exams, student learning was mediated by other tools such as the textbook, handouts, the blackboard, and the language of the classroom along with their attitudes, beliefs, and prior experiences. As subjects of the learning activity system, they also had their own learning strategies which served as mediational tools that affected how they accomplished their goals.

Another noticeable mediational tool in this activity system was the ‘imposed learning strategies,’ repetition drills, which affected them in different ways. For instance, Ji-In and You-An perceived Mi-Ra’s frequent use of repetition drills for memorizing words and key expressions as helpful, yet the other students (Hay-Jung and Sung-Woo) did not appreciate these strategies, thus creating secondary inner contradictions in this activity systems.

Community was another critical component in constructing each student’s learning activity system. The classroom community included their relationships with their seat partners and other classmates influenced their classroom participation. Teachers were critical community members as were parents whose goals for their children had a significant influence on how the students operated in this learning activity system. Finally, the cram schools and/or private tutoring were also part of their community influencing each student’s actions and perceptions within the learning activity system.

For instance, Ji-In’s positive attitude toward Mi-Ra’s detailed grammar explanations was partially constructed from her participation in conversation class; that is, she believed
students who were good at English conversation were also good at English grammar, solidifying her belief that knowledge of grammar is paramount.

Another component of Engeström’s human activity system model is the rules that are pervasive in the community of an activity system. For the four low-proficiency students, the rules, at the macro level, included traditional South Korean classroom rules; that is, students were to be passive and obey their teachers’ requests. Students, like Sung-Woo, who behaved differently were viewed as resistant, were marginalized, and received negative appraisals from the teachers. Because the low-proficiency class was predominantly conducted as teacher-controlled lecture, the traditional classroom rules were reinforced in this learning activity system. Finally, the community members were well aware of the high stakes school exams, thus preparing for them functioned as an implicit rule in this activity system.

Closely related to the rules of the community, the division of labor of this learning activity system also reflected expectations of traditional South Korean classrooms; that is to say, teachers were the providers of knowledge and students passive recipients. Having been socialized into teacher-centered classrooms as normative learning experiences, the students believed that lecture was the only valid and authoritative form of learning. Thus, even though students like Hay-Jung and Sung-Woo desired group work or communicative activities, they were cognizant that what their teacher emphasized during lessons was what they need to focus on in this learning activity system for the object.

Based on this analysis, the contradictions that emerged in the learning activity system of low-proficiency class are depicted in Figure 10 below.
8.5.2. **Inner Contradiction: Primary and Secondary Contradictions**

The majority of the contradictions from the low-proficiency classes occurred in the form of secondary contradictions in various places in this activity system. You-An and Ji-In had positive attitudes toward their current English learning class and thus experienced few contradictions. Yet, Sung-Woo and Hay-Jung who were not satisfied with their current English class experienced several secondary contradictions within the same learning activity system.

Among them, the most noticeable secondary contradiction that emerged was between the subject (Sung-Woo & Hay-Jung) and the imposed mediating artifacts (Mi-Ra’s use of repetition drill). Although Mi-Ra strongly believed that it helped low-proficiency students prepare for the exams, the two students perceived her instructional practices as boring and unmotivating and refused to participate in the drills. This suggests

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28 Similar to high-proficient students’ case, one activity system is drawn in that all four students were in almost identical learning activity system. The student(s) who experienced contradictions and the components that caused the contradictions are shaded.
that students, whose proficiency was believed not to be ready for communicative activities by the teacher, in fact wanted to participate in some learning activities where they could participate in building their knowledge in English.

This contradiction also caused another secondary contradiction between a subject (Sung-Woo) and the rules of the community. Being unsatisfied with his teacher’s teaching and distressed about being in the low-proficiency class, Sung-Woo often did not follow the rules of the community. Exhibiting prohibited classroom behavior and a defiant attitude caused this contradiction. Since his behavior was not regarded as acceptable in this community, Mi-Ra’s appraisal of Sung-Woo had become negative.

The third secondary contradiction experienced in these students’ activity systems occurred between subjects (Sung-Woo, Hay-Jung, Ji-In) and their seat partners (community). This secondary contradiction suggests the community plays an important role in the function of the activity system. Since the teachers in their activity system failed to recognize and act on this contradiction, the students simply opted out of group work when their seat partners refused (Hay-Jung) or failed to participate in the on-going classroom activities feeling helpless or frustrated (Sung-Woo and Ji-In). Interestingly, because of her unpleasant relationship with her seat partner, Hay-Jung refused to do group work even though she had wanted to participate. This showed a primary contradiction within the student who wanted to participate in communicative activities but did not, due to the dynamics of social relationships within this classroom.

While secondary contradictions impacted the students’ classroom participation, the students resolved their contradictions on a personal level. For example, each student (Sung-Woo and Hay-Jung) devised their own coping strategies, either by being silent,
indifferent, or by doing their own actions (i.e. reading a book). In fact, this is not surprising because the power structure of these classrooms did not empower students to resolve the contradictions they experienced. Additionally, since the goal of all the students was to obtain higher scores on the school English exams, they were complacent within the current activity system as long as they could obtain satisfying exam scores. This was also possible because these students, both those who experienced contradictions and who did not, had resources outside of the classroom (i.e. cram schools, private tutoring) to compensate for the contradictions and disadvantages that shaped their classroom English learning.

8.6. Summary

These students’ perceptions and experiences demonstrate that they came to their language learning classes with their own beliefs about language learning and attitudes, which influenced their classroom participation substantially. Also, student data uncovered that their attitudes and beliefs had been constructed through both their schooling experiences and their extended participation in diverse communities as English learners as well as students in South Korea. As seen in their relationships with teachers and peers, the affective aspects of their perceptions and experiences were also found to have a significant impact on their understanding of and participation in the English learning activity system in which they operate.

The findings in this chapter suggest that students’ exposure to the current curriculum reforms was indirect and limited and primarily filtered through the teachers’ instruction practices. Therefore, depending on a teacher’s perceived language teaching
strengths, views about curricular reform, and beliefs about language learning education, students had very different experiences with the CLT-based curricular reform.

In this study, for instance, students in Hee-Won’s class participated in a range of activities such as quizzes, information gap activities, and dialogue creation activities. Students in Mi-Ra’s class, on the other hand, had few of these types of learning experiences even though students wanted to do them. Ironically, Hee-Won rarely spoke English during her lessons and gave fewer opportunities for her students to converse with her in English. In contrast, to provide students with many opportunities to use English for communication as well as listen to it, Mi-Ra used English in many classroom activities such as opening her lessons and asking comprehension questions.

However, when student learning was examined at a more macro-level, their apparent language learning experiences in both classes was more or less same. Specifically, students in both classes were overwhelmingly regulated by school exams, a goal clearly shared by the teachers in this institutional setting. Since the school exams primarily test students’ knowledge of discrete words, idioms, and grammar, along with students’ ability to translate the texts from textbook, while in class, students paid attention to material they knew would be on the exam. While some students enjoyed participating in communicative activities, they did not regard them as essential learning activities. Consequently, in an educational atmosphere where ‘real’ learning was perceived as what was on school exams, the value of communicative activities and more broadly, the basic premise of the curricular reform efforts, was apparent neither in the

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29 However, as discussed in chapter 7, it was observed that most of meaning negotiations through English did not result in co-construction of knowledge in the class. In this sense, it is difficult to call their English use as ‘negotiation of meaning’ advocated in CLT.
students’ perceptions and/or experiences nor in they way they participated in these learning activity systems.
Chapter 9
Discussion

9.1. Introduction

Several significant findings emerged as a result of the multi-level examinations of CLT-based curricular reform efforts in this South Korean middle school. The participants envisaged the curricular reform efforts in ways that reflect their own personal and professional perceptions of English language teaching and learning within the local social, cultural, and schooling context. Their experiences and perceptions make it possible to identify contradictions in the activity systems and their causes, confirming that such contradictions are the result of the complex interplay of competing factors within the activity systems in which teachers and students participate as part of the English language educational system. The overarching contradiction identified in the study is grounded in the growing sensitivity of the needs for the curricular reform while at the same time the observed institutional inertia that maintains the status quo of the South Korean English education system.

The teachers

The most salient contradiction in this study exists between what the Ministry of Education prescribes in the curricular reform manual and teachers’ interpretations of that manual at the local level. While on the surface, both teachers agree with the goal that South Korea’s secondary-level English education should be to help students develop communicative competence, the tensions they experienced trying to implement the curricular reform mandates in the instructional activity systems in which they operated
made it difficult for them to fully support the Ministry of Education’s version of a CLT-based curriculum.

Specifically, whereas the government’s prescriptive CLT-based curriculum supports learner-centered, task-based communicative activities conducted in English to promote students’ communicative competence, the teachers personal beliefs about language learning and teaching and their apprenticeship of observation as students had a much stronger influence on they way they carried out their teaching. Both teachers believe that teacher-centered classroom that emphasizes the mastery of language structures is a prerequisite for authentic communication. That belief, coupled with a lack of confidence in their own English language competence and an insufficient understanding of the CLT-based curriculum, represented an insurmountable obstacle for them to implement the curricular mandates.

These teachers’ beliefs and perceptions are further reflected in their classroom practices. Both teachers’ instruction centered on the textbook, although neither of them believed the textbook was designed communicatively. Methodologically speaking, repetition, choral readings, grammar explanations were predominant instructional strategies observed. Even though one teacher (Hee-Won) occasionally used a more communicative-orientated activity, her motivation for doing so was to give her students a break from the typical classroom routines rather than as a mean of fostering the development of communicative competence. In fact, both teachers held deep seeded doubts about the effectiveness of communicative activities and thus regard them as non-essential relative to their current teaching practices.
The students

One of activity theory’s basic tenets - all human activities are joint and collaborative (Leont’ev, 1978, 1981) - was evident in the fact that teachers’ perceptions of the CLT-based curriculum was shared by their students; that is, while students found the communicative activities to be fun and motivating, they did not regard them as core learning activities. As typical of EFL learning contexts where authentic communication through the target language is not students’ main learning objective, passing school exams is paramount for most students and for the participating students in this study in particular. Consequently, any activities not centered on that goal were viewed as unimportant. Despite the goal the Ministry of Education curricular reform efforts, in this milieu, students are cognizant of the marginalized position of communicative activities and thus regard them as trivial.

These findings highlight several issues regarding the CLT-based English curriculum reform movement in South Korea and these issues are explored further in the remainder of this chapter. The first issue is the inherent challenges of importing a teaching philosophy from one educational context into another without careful consideration of how that philosophy will be localized. In a similar vein, the second issue is the effect that major curricular reforms have at the local level when they are instituted in a top-down manner. Third and most important is the obvious interplay between institutional, cultural, societal, and personal activity systems and the impact these have on teachers and students and the nature of their activities in individual classrooms.
9.2. Localization in Curricular Reform

In a cultural atmosphere where access to higher education in western countries plays a key role for South Koreans in obtaining highly-paid or respected professions, it is not surprising that the educational philosophies from western countries will be perceived as more advanced and thus more desirable. Complying with this, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) note that “terms like ‘communicative approach’, ‘learner-centered’, and ‘group work’ have long become for many non-native teachers and learners synonymous with progress, modernization, and access to wealth, even if these terms do not mean the same for them as for native ESL teachers in the UK or USA” (p. 200). Because this ideology has permeated the global English education community, South Korea like many other Asian countries has chosen to adopt a CLT-based curriculum.

The blind imposition of western educational ideologies implies that the South Korean Ministry of Education believes that western methods are better than those currently used in Korean English language education. Given this dominant perception, it stands to reason that even after several years of efforts on the part of the South Korean Ministry of Education to reform the English language curriculum, the findings from this study reveal a mismatch between the government’s and teachers’ goals for language learning and an underlying skepticism about the feasibility of curriculum reform.

The findings also confirm that the local educational reality in which the curriculum is implemented does not operate in a vacuum. Rather, there exists a community of practice which has gradually evolved around its own history and traditions. For both of the teachers in this study, a Confucianism-based classroom atmosphere is not only the prevailing style but expected in their middle school. This is still the case in most
South Korean public schools in spite of significant social changes influenced by western societies. In these Confucianism-based classrooms, teachers are expert knowers who convey knowledge to students and thus control all classroom activities (Hu, 2002). In this educational context, therefore, the western concepts of ‘learner-centered’ or ‘task-based’ learning with students’ active participation and initiation of ideas strongly encouraged do not appeal to teachers or students, nor are they socially or culturally appropriate.

This is evident in the interviews and observations of the teachers in this study. While Mi-Ra participated in a series of teacher education workshops that focused on the implementation of CLT, the workshops only caused her to be more skeptical about what she learned and its application to her teaching practice. Neither she nor Hee-Won took any concrete steps to alter or even adapt their daily teaching practices to be more in line with communicative activities.

Mi-Ra in fact acknowledged that ‘teacher-centered’ instruction was comfortable for her because she did not need to worry about losing control over her students. Similarly, Hee-Won was also reluctant to use communicative activities because group activities made it difficult for her to track how well her students were doing. Hee-Won found comfort in controlling how her students learned in her classroom. This perception is not surprising because most Korean teachers, just like their students, have been socialized to view teacher-centered classrooms as normative and they have had no direct experiences with CLT approaches. In this situation, the long term ‘apprentice of observation’ (Lortie, 2002) of teachers’ and their students’ schooling experiences plays a
powerful role in sustaining these teachers’ instructional methods as well as their pedagogical beliefs.

At the same time, students who have been socialized into Korean classroom expectations are also hesitant to accept communicative approaches as a primary method of instruction. In Korean, students are expected to respect their teachers through submissive behavior, and they have been socialized into those normative behaviors throughout their schooling experiences. Like most Korean secondary school students, the students in this study were socialized into passive styles of learning and were not used to taking an active role in classroom activities or assuming overt responsibility for their own language learning. Such new ‘ways of being’ in school felt uncomfortable, and they either became apathetic about English language learning or they totally rejected CLT approaches in the classroom. After almost a decade of reform efforts, the South Korean curricular reforms continue to encounter resistance and indifference from both the main agents (teachers) and beneficiaries (students).

As implied in many CLT-based curricular reform studies (Block 2002, Guiloteaus, 2004, Mangubhai, et al., 2005, Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999, Sakui, 2004), to address the issue of localization, it is necessary to acknowledge that curriculum reform must begin with mutual agreement by all stakeholders on the goals being pursued, the meanings of the concepts used to meet those goals, and the ways of assessing the goals. While it may not be easy to reach such agreements, careful consideration of the local educational realities and including the voices and insights of local stakeholders is critical. In the South Korean curricular reform efforts, teachers and students have been left out of all relevant conversations but positioned as implementers of the government’s reforms.
Given that teachers are the key implementers of curriculum reform, legitimizing teachers’ ways of knowing and paying attention to their voices as representatives of the local level, leaving them ‘out of the loop’ will most certainly make any curriculum reform more difficult, if not impossible, to implement.

9.3. Top-down Curricular Reform

As mentioned previously, the first consideration of curricular reform should be the effect of that reform at the local level. Fullan (1994) supports this idea by arguing that “governments cannot mandate what matters, because what matters most is local motivation, skill, know-how and commitment” (p. 187). Yet regardless of what we know about how we should conduct large scale reform, it is often the case that reforms are managed in a top-down fashion with little or no regard for localization (Fullan, 1994, 1998, 2000, Karavas-Doukas, 1998, Markee, 1994, Sakui, 2004). Top-down curriculum reform generally has “a poor track record as an instrument for educational improvement,” (Fullan, 1994, p. 187). This is evident in the current study. CLT-based curriculum reform has been in place in South Korean secondary schools since 1997, yet the findings of this study show little impact of the CLT-based curriculum on teachers’ daily teaching activity.

Three important issues emerged from the teacher data that help explain the obstacles to the overall success of the curricular reform. First, the teachers did not truly believe there was a need for reform as prescribed by the government. Second, they did not believe they had support for the requirements of the reform. And finally, they did not
have direct experiences that would enable them to make connections between and among the various activity systems that exist within the teaching profession.

Believing in a reform effort is critical if change is going to happen. However, neither teacher felt that CLT-based teaching methods met their needs or the needs of the students. Their imminent goal was to help their students obtain higher scores on the school exams. From this perspective, the CLT curriculum mandates did not succeed in embracing ‘what matters most’ for teachers, for their students, or for their schools.

The second issue to emerge from the analysis was the lack of external support. The teachers repeatedly mentioned that they were not confident in their language abilities or their abilities to use communicative teaching approaches effectively. They did not believe that they received enough external practical pedagogical support at either the federal or local levels for improving their language competence or for implementing communicative teaching practices. The only change they could point to was the textbook, which as was mentioned previously, neither teacher regarded as focused on CLT. With little practical assistance or specific follow-up steps for successful implementation, Korean English teachers saw little need or incentive to change their teaching practices. In fact, they cited this lack of support as a rationale for maintaining the status quo and placed the blame on their students, the school exams, their own low levels of English proficiency, and other institutional issues.

The third issue is particularly intriguing given that Fullan (1998) argues that continuous professional development of teachers is a necessary follow-up step for the successful implementation of any curriculum. Mi-Ra did not adopt CLT in her classroom in spite of having attended several teacher education programs that focused on
developing activities and tasks based on CLT methods. This indicates several issues regarding the implementation of curriculum reform and teacher professional development. An examination of the nature of the teacher education programs Mi-Ra participated in showed that most of the programs were conducted like the curriculum reform efforts, in a top-down manner. Mi-Ra, once again, played the role of a passive recipient of imposed knowledge and a mechanical applier of it into tasks but had little or no engagement in constructing knowledge or taking ownership for that knowledge throughout the process.

Her case shows that the adoption of CLT-based curriculum is not just an issue of having the right ‘skill’ or ‘know how’. It also hinges on what teachers believe about what constitutes appropriate teaching and appropriate students’ learning in their own contexts. As long as curriculum reform efforts and their associated teacher education programs occur in a top-down manner, it seems unlikely that teachers will embrace these reforms.

**9.4. Institutional and Cultural Factors in Curricular Reform**

The nature of teachers’ instruction is not solely the product of individual thought or learning, but rather it has been formed and reformed through cultural and historical processes embedded in teachers’ life-long schooling and professional experiences. That is, the interplay of societal, historical, and cultural activity systems each teacher has undergone work to shape their ways of knowing and thinking and consequently their teaching activity. If there is consistency in the interplay within and between the activity systems, concepts about teaching and teaching activity may change. But when there is
dissonance between and among them, i.e., personal beliefs and imposed beliefs, change in teaching activity is unlikely to occur.

Markee (1994) suggests that successful curriculum reform depends on a balanced development of ‘new materials,’ ‘methodological skills,’ and ‘pedagogical values’. From an activity theory perspective, this means consistency of ideas among and between activity systems is critical. As mentioned above, however, these teachers did not perceive the textbooks as communicative in nature. They did not believe they had enough methodological or language skills to use CLT nor the external support available to develop either skill. Most importantly, the ‘pedagogical value’ of the curricular reform did not address the perceived needs of the members of the educational community the teachers belong to. Whereas the curriculum’s goal was to develop communicative competence, the paramount goal of the teachers and students, as imposed on them by the school and Korean society, was to obtain high scores on the school exams, an achievement strongly valued in their community.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the findings of this study indicate that the CLT-based curriculum reform has not changed the goals of teachers and students to align with those of the Ministry of Education. Because the Korean society as a whole regards test scores as extremely important for future professional success, teachers and students, in turn, make high test scores their goal. As such, the content of the school exams becomes the content of EFL instruction in this school. Communicative activities which are not tested in school exams are regarded as nonessential and extra activities. Thus, the ‘washback effect’ of exams has a powerful influence on CLT-based curriculum reform efforts in South Korea (Choi, 2000, Li, 1998, Sakui, 2004).
9.5. Activity Theory and Curricular Reform in South Korea

Engeström’s (1993) activity system model suggests valuable insights for those involved in curriculum reform. In this study, the beliefs of the teachers and the students contradicted the goals of the Ministry of Education, and the teachers were left to determine how to deal with those contradictions. According to Engeström’s (1987, 1993, 1999a) model, many of the contradictions the teacher and student experienced are considered to be secondary contradictions. Engeström (1993) argues that secondary contradictions are the “moving force behind disturbance and innovation and eventually behind the change and development of the system” (p.72).

More specifically, Engeström and Cole (1993) suggest that people can overcome contradictions through “reflective appropriation of advanced models and tools” (p.40) and transform their activity systems (cited in Daniels, 2004, p.189). In spite of their exposure to ‘advanced models and tools’ in terms of the 6th and 7th curriculum, pre- and in- service teacher education programs, and revised textbooks, these teachers’ instruction did not align with the mandated curriculum. These teachers were unable to overcome several secondary contradictions and thus were unable to reorient their teaching activities toward more communicative approaches. This suggests that the “reflective appropriation of advanced models and tools” is even more important for teachers in the midst of curricular reform. As shown in the findings, these teachers did not appropriate the basic underlying premises of the curricular reform efforts in the same way that the Ministry of Education expected them to. For successful curriculum implementation teachers in the midst of curricular reform efforts need to gradually reorient their teaching practices which may eventually reorient their beliefs.
Specifically, a community of practice in which teachers were encouraged to accommodate what to them were novel, through reflection as well as find tangible support for implementing the CLT curriculum, was absent in the current activity systems. A community of practice plays an important mediational role by influencing the rules and division of labor of the community (Engeström, 1999a). However, because the activity systems that these teachers participated in provided no supportive community to scaffold their learning and/or teaching, the result was that their teaching activity remained unchanged in spite of the curricular reform efforts.

Engeström (in Ryder, 2006) argues that the “mediational role of community and that of social structures including the division of labor and established procedures” is embedded in an object-driven human activity system. In other words, the subject of an activity system mediates what the community of the system believes, values, and pursues. The norms and rules of the community also function as psychological artifacts for the members of the community, including the subject. In the case of the South Korean educational community, like many Asian educational communities, schools measure academic performance based on exam scores (Hiramatsu, 2005, Li, 1998, Pennington, 1995). Therefore, in this community where a zeal for higher education as a must-have for financial and social success is very high and thus where the result of exams are critical, high scores on exams is regarded as the dominant objective of study in secondary schools. Most South Korean educational community members are driven by this goal. To obtain this goal, teacher-centered language classes is a preferable and pervasive rule that defines the division of labors between teachers and students. Lastly, this attitude also supports the notion that the meanings of language as well as consciousness are formed in
collective activity (Leont’ev, 1978). That is, collective activity is apparent in the meaning of what is ‘real learning’ in the South Korean educational community. Together, schools, community members, teachers, students, and parents have co-constructed this unique but mutually shared meaning of ‘real learning’ and ‘pedagogical value’ in this community.
Chapter 10

Implications, Limitations, & Future Research

10.1. Implications

The findings of this study point to several suggestions for educational policy makers, teacher educators, and teachers. These suggestions include the need for conversations, for building capacity for change, and for evaluating and reforming teacher education and professional development.

To begin, the tertiary contradictions that emerged in the data indicate that conversations are needed among teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers. Each operates in a separate and distinct activity system, yet their systems overlap. This means that policy makers and teacher educators need to be more aware of the needs of teachers and the culture of schools in order to create policy that makes sense for those who have to respond to it. This awareness can be encouraged through creating supportive spaces, i.e., in teacher education programs and through respecting teachers experiential knowledge, to engage more teachers in educational policy discussions (Johnson, 2006).

Secondly, policy makers and teacher educators have to work together with teachers, schools, and communities to help them build capacity for change. In this study, the teachers struggled with low levels of language proficiency and the lack of practical knowledge of how to implement CLT-based instruction. They also struggled with challenging classroom conditions, such as 40 students in one class, and using non-communicative textbooks to institute CLT. This implies that in addition to building capacity in teachers, physical and institutional conditions should also be included in what is required to initiate successful reform (Fullan, 2000, Li, 1998).
Most importantly, the findings of this study indicate that the existing English teacher education programs in South Korea have not succeeded in preparing a teaching force that can implement CLT-based instruction ways that the Ministry of Education expects. In South Korea, CLT represents a paradigm shift in how English language teaching and learning should happen. This type of a shift requires “a dialogic process of transformation of self and activity rather than simply the replacement of skills” (Valsneer & Van der Veer, 2002, cited in Johnson & Golombek, 2003) which will not happen drastically.

Regarding the teacher education programs, Freeman (2002) suggests teacher learning occurs through transformation of ideas into activity and is possible when teacher education programs focus on two main concepts: “teaching the skills of reflectivity” and “providing the discourse and vocabulary that can serve participants in renaming their experience” (p.11). That is, teacher education programs should help teachers make sense of their current teaching activities by reflecting on why they are doing what they are doing through articulation with the help of “external input”¹ (p.11). In order to achieve this, among many efforts, Freeman (2002) suggests that teacher education programs can organize networks among new teachers and experienced teachers² so teachers can be supported by one another and provide assisted performance as they are gradually socialized into new ways of conceptualizing teaching and organizing their instructional activities. These opportunities cannot be instituted successfully in a top-down manner as was evidenced in this study. Instead, they must evolve out of a combination of both top-

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¹ Theory, prescriptions, and the experiences of other people are mentioned as examples of the ‘external input.’ (Freeman, 2002)
² The term, ‘experienced,’ should not be understood in terms of length of a teacher’s teaching career but in terms of a teacher’s familiarities with communicative language teaching.
down and bottom up efforts because while reform efforts will most certainly continue to be imposed by policy makers “teacher learning emerges out of and is constructed by teachers within the settings and circumstances of their work” (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p.735).

In this sense, South Korean teacher education programs can work to create supportive communities of practice in which teachers have opportunities for dialogical mediation by reflecting on their teaching and externalizing their ideas through discussions with more knowledgeable and experienced teachers as well as with policy makers. Important are the characteristics of these community of practice since when balance is created between policy makers and teaching professionals it creates opportunities for “more equitable social roles and typically take place in settings that are more connected to daily activity of teachers and students” (Johnson, 2006, pp. 243 – 244). Such alternative professional development opportunities for Korean English teachers need to take place within their local settings if they are to enhance their own language proficiency as well as to gain better access to CLT teaching methods and materials.

There are no guarantees that the English educational context will change even if the South Korean government were to promote a paradigm shift in how English language teachers are prepared. There are simply too many constraints that continue to influence what happens at the local level including institutional and social factors like school exams, class sizes, teachers’ and students’ socialization into the educational context, and subsequent beliefs they come to have about language teaching and learning. However,
recognizing these types of constraints is definitely a burgeoning movement in the right direction to motivate change because it enables us to see such problems holistically.

Finally, the findings of this study highlight the impact of grammar-orientated exams on school-based English language learning. Like teachers, students have also been socialized into a particular view of English language learning, most notably obtaining high scores on school exams. Therefore, as was mentioned in the discussion section, issues related to assessment are critical to South Korean English education. When students’ perceptions and learning practices have been shaped by school exams, changes in assessment practices might promote positive rather than negative ‘washback effects’ on students’ language learning behaviors in that students may begin to pay less attention to knowledge about language and be more inclined to think about the importance of language use. Recently, efforts to introduce alternative assessments such as performance-based tests have been made, but the teachers in this study seemed not to fully understand the concepts and rationale behind performance-based tests and therefore have chosen to replace them with more traditional forms of assessment, such as dictation test. Clearly, great efforts in planning and implementing alternative assessments are needed.

10.2. Limitations

There are several limitations in the current study. The first limitation is the access the researcher had to the activity systems in which teachers and students functioned. According to activity theory, consciousness is constructed through participation in

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3 Even though the assessment is a critical issue based on the findings of this study, this study leaves the issue aside as it is beyond the scope of this study.
everyday activities (Leont’ev, 1979). As such, observing the participants engaging in activity systems other than their English classrooms could have provided a more comprehensive picture of their experiences. That picture could include additional explanations of the components of Engeström’s (1987) model—community, its rule, and division of labor—and how they construct the observed activity systems in this study. For example, the students’ participation in other classes at school and in cram schools or the teachers’ participation in teacher education programs could have provided more an extensive understanding of how the various activity systems influence the central activity systems.

The next shortcoming of this study relates to the students. With the exception of Min-Ju, most students were very reluctant to talk about their language learning experiences during the interviews and stimulated recall interviews with the researcher. In spite of the researcher’s attempts to make them feel relaxed, some of the students appeared quite uncomfortable. Because they were in their early teens, articulating their language learning experiences may have been a challenge for them as well as an unfamiliar request. Conducting group interviews might present a more fruitful method of data collection with this age group in that they might feel more comfortable with their peers, resulting in saying more.

Finally, because this is a case study restricted to two teachers and seven students from one educational context, the findings cannot be generalized. Examinations of students and teachers from other grade levels or other regions might render very different findings.
10.3. Future Research

The findings and limitations of the current study provide several suggestions for future research. First, as was mentioned previously, future research should explore other secondary school English learning contexts with other students and teachers. An accumulated body of research relevant to English curricular reform efforts could provide a blueprint for the improvement of the current instructional situation in the South Korean English education community.

Secondly, when the researcher left the site, the school was planning two projects: to introduce communicative textbooks into the classrooms and to build an English-zone classroom where English classes could be conducted in an innovative classroom setting with round tables. It would be interesting to observe the same teachers in this new instructional environment with different students. Based on activity theory’s principle of situated consciousness, i.e., observing how teachers mediate new tools, it would be possible to see whether a changed context influences teaching activity, and if so, how those changes emerge in English teaching and learning activity systems regarding CLT-based curricular reform.

Finally, the researcher suggests a study regarding changes in assessment of English language learning and the influence of the changes on students’ perceptions and behaviors. As long as standardized testing is the dominant measurement instrument, it will be hard to convince students to set their goal as achieving communicative competence beyond what is required by school exams. Alternative assessments would influence how teachers teach and students learn a foreign language. A possible place to initiate such research would be in a prep class for the Test of English as Foreign
Language (TOEFL) in South Korea. Educational Testing Service (ETS) recently changed the TOEFL into a more integrated-skills test. By analyzing the impact of the new TOEFL on instructors and students, research might provide valuable insights for the English teaching community of South Korea.

10.4. Final Notes

In spite of the limitations, this study contributes to the existing body of literature on secondary school English curriculum reform in South Korea by examining the implementation of a CLT-based curriculum. Whereas most previous studies of CLT in South Korea were conducted at the beginning of the curricular reform implementation, the current study provided a current picture of CLT curriculum reform by focusing on how it is being constructed at local classrooms.

By adopting an activity theory framework to curricular reform research, the current study has also provided a theoretical and methodological framework in which personal, social, and institutional factors are viewed simultaneously in understanding English teaching and learning classrooms. Integration of middle school students’ voices in this study also broadened the boundaries of the English curriculum reform research which usually focused only on teachers’ perceptions and instructional practices.

The researcher hopes that this research makes a contribution to the field of TESOL by corroborating the importance of teachers’ roles in implementing curriculum reforms efforts and by reconfirming the importance of professional development of teachers to ensure success of any curricular reform efforts. More specifically, for Korean TESOL programs where teachers are generally regarded as passive implementers of
theories and practices designed by others, this study argues that South Korea policy makers should acknowledge teachers as agents in knowledge construction as they internalize, reflect, externalize, and re-internalize their teaching activity within a supportive community of practice.

Finally, this study also expands the boundaries of Applied Linguistics since it attempts to better understand real world problems related to English language education in South Korea. By doing so, the study hopes to provide one more attempt at narrowing the gap between theory and practice in the field of Applied Linguistics.
References:


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Appendix A

Interview Questions (Teachers)

Background
1. How long have you been teaching English?
2. Which grade did you teach last year?
3. How did you become an English language teacher?
4. What kinds of workshops or teacher education programs have you attended since you became a teacher to improve your teaching practices?

Belief and Attitude
5. What is your philosophy of Education in general?
6. What is your philosophy regarding English language teaching?
7. What do you think is the best method for learning English?
8. What do you think is the best method for teaching the English language?
9. What do you think is the purposes of learning the English language?
10. What is your philosophy about the students? What is your attitude toward students?
11. As an English language teacher in Korea, what is your opinion of the current fever for English language learning among Korean people?

Teaching Practice in Your Current Context
12. What is your major concern while teaching and working in this school?
13. How would you describe your teaching practices? Briefly describe how you plan and conduct your everyday English lessons.
14. What is your goal in teaching English to your current students?
15. What do you expect from your students as a result of your English teaching practices?
16. What do you think do the students enjoy most in your English lessons?
17. On the other hand, what do you think do your students enjoy least in your English lessons?
18. What do you like most in your current English teaching practice in this school with these students?
19. What do you like least in your current English teaching practice in this school with these students?

20. What are the principal's and vice principal's opinions of the English as a subject area? Have you had any chances to discuss about it with them? If yes, have the discussion influenced your teaching practices in any ways?

21. Describe the collaboration among the English language teachers in your current context.

**Communicative Approach and TETE policy in the 7th Curriculum Innovation**

22. What ideas or concepts come into your mind when you think of 7th English curriculum change?

23. What do you think are the differences between 7th English curriculum and the previous ones?

24. How did you get the information about the 7th English curriculum change?

25. What is your understanding of TETE policy?

26. Describe how you have adopted TETE in your classrooms. Please, give me three specific examples.

27. In the 7th English curriculum, 'communicative competence,' which requires more communicative approach in teaching practices, is more emphasized. What is your understanding of this issue?

28. Describe how you have adopted communicative language teaching in your classrooms. Please, give me three specific examples.

29. Regarding TETE or communicative language teaching, have you had attended any teacher education program? If so, could you describe what kinds of program it was and what you learned from it.

**Textbook**

30. What textbook are you using? Were you involved in choosing the textbook?

31. How do you think does the textbook you are using reflect the current English curriculum changes?

32. What do you think does the textbook designers emphasize on the textbook?
33. What are the prominent characteristics of this textbook compared to the other textbooks you know?

34. How do you utilize the textbook in your classrooms for your lessons?

35. Are you using other teaching materials? What are you using and when are you using them?
Appendix B
Second Interview Prompts (Teachers)

1. The first prompt used was the 7th Middle School English Curriculum Model (Refer to page 64 of this paper).

2. 의사소통 중심의 영어교육은 문법적인 지식은 풍부하나 적절한 의사소통에 어려움을 겪은 학생들을 양산해 왔던 과거의 영어교육에 대한 현실적 반응이다. 이는 또한 교양으로서의 영어교육보다는 의사소통을 위한 영어 교육을 기대하는 사회적 요구의 반영이기도 하다. 의사소통 능력은 의사소통 능력 훈련을 통해서만 신장될 수 있고 (Savignon, 1972), 문법적인 분석이나 기계적인 연습 및 암기를 통해서는 의사소통 능력을 키울 수 없다 (Gutermmann & Phillips, 1982).

The introduction of the communicative approach in English Education is a practical reaction to the previous English education where students experienced trouble in competent communication although they were knowledgeable of the English grammar. This is the also the reflection of the social demands for English education for developing communication skills rather than nurturing cultural knowledge. The communicative ability can be developed only through communicative activities but not through grammar analysis, mechanical practice, or memory (Gutermmann & Phillips, 1982).

(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum Manual, p. 18)

3. 언어 형식은 의사소통 기능과 함께 언어의 중요한 요소이다. EFL로써 영어를 배우는 경우, 언어 형식은 학습자에게 정확성의 측면에서 큰 도움이 된다. 언어교육은 유창성과 정확성이 모두 중요하므로 의사소통 기능과 언어 형식을 모두 교육과정에 제시하는 것도 좋은 방법으로 생각하였다. 그러나 과거의 경험에서 보았듯이, 언어 형식에 지나치게 치우치는 경향은 바람직하지 않다.

Language structure is an important element of a language along with communicative functions. In EFL context, language structure is helpful for learners in terms of accuracy. Because both fluency and accuracy are important, it is good to present
communicative functions and language structure over all curriculums. However, as experienced in the past, it is not desirable to lean too much to the (instruction of) language structure.

(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum Manual, p. 20)

4. 영어과 교수 학습 방법

(1) 각 단계는 연계성이 있도록 지도한다
(2) 단계별 인지수준에 맞게 동기 유발 및 학습 활동을 구함한다
(3) 동일 단계에서의 보충, 심화 학습을 위한 열린 교육을 계획한다
(4) 학생중심의 수업을 계획하여, 학생들의 수업 활동에 적극적으로 참여할 수 있도록 하고, 교사는 학생들의 협력자가 되도록 한다.
(5) 교사와 학생, 학생 상호간의 다양한 활동을 전개하여 의사 소통 능력을 기르도록 한다.
(6) 효과적인 의사 소통 활동을 할 수 있도록 다양한 의사소통 전략을 준비한다.
(7) 개인차에 따라 수준에 맞는 학습 활동이나 과업을 수행 할 수 있도록 준비한다.
(8) 단계 진급시 유급생이 생기지 않도록 보충 학습계획을 구안한다.
(9) 각 단계를 지도할 때는 전후 모든 단계의 성취 기준을 충분히 이해하고, 해당 단계의 수준과 내용에 맞게 교수 방법을 다양화한다.
(10) 각 단계에서는 단계별 성취 기준을 달성 할 수 있도록 지도함과 동시에, 이전 단계에서 배운 내용도 반복 학습을 통해 내재화하여 자연스러운 표현을 할 수 있도록 한다.

*English Teaching Methodology*

(1) Instruction should be connected (between each level).
(2) Design motivating and learning activities that are proper for (students’) cognitive levels.
(3) Plan an open-education where low-and high-track within a grade is possible.
(4) Plan a student-centered class and encourage students to actively participate in classroom activities. Teachers try to be facilitators for students.
(5) Develop (students’) communicative competence through diverse activities between teachers and students and among students.

(6) Teach to use diverse communication strategies for effective communication.

(7) Prepare learning activities and tasks considering the individual proficiency.

(8) Plan a supplementary teaching plan to prevent repeaters.

(9) When instructing each level, (teachers) should understand the contents of the previous and next levels and diverse teaching methods according to each level.

(10) Instruct (students) to satisfy the achievement criteria for each level but, at the same time, teach them to naturally communicate by internalizing what they already learned through repetition.

(11) In high-track class, encourage individual study, self-leading study, and cooperation. In lot-track class, on the other hand, plan lesson which identifies and remedies the weaknesses of students.

(12) In teaching listening and speaking, actively utilize the multi-media materials and teach (students) to express (in English) naturally.

(13) In speaking instruction, rather than mechanical exercises, adopt meaningful and communicative practices to foster fluency and accuracy. Also, nurture creative language ability that can be used in real situations.

(14) Reading instruction should focus on translation right after reading and timed reading.

(15) (Teachers) should teach writing by guiding (students) develop passages around a topic beyond the sentence level composition.

(16) Through culture education, help (students) to develop the ability for healthy judgment and value.

(17) (We) propose to conduct the instruction in English as much as possible.

(The 7th Middle School English Curriculum, pp. 85-89)
Appendix C

Interview Questions (Students)

1. When did you start learning English?
2. What word or idea comes to your mind when you think English subject?
3. What do your parents think about your learning English?
4. Are you attending a private English language institute? Describe the classes.
5. What do you think are the differences between English classes in elementary school days and your current ones?
6. What do you think about your English teacher’s uses of English during the class?
7. What do you enjoy the most in your English classroom?
8. What do you enjoy the least in your English classroom?
9. Why do you think learning English is or will be useful or helpful?
10. Why are you learning English?
Appendix D

The 6th Middle School English Curriculum Model (1994, p. 44)

의사소통 기능
(Communicative Functions)

에시문
(Exponents)

어휘와 문법
(Vocabulary & Grammar)

교육과정의 내용 구성 모형
(Curriculum Model based on the Communicative Approach)
Appendix E

Achievement criteria for 7-b level

Speaking

(1) (Students) conduct simple conversations about everyday lives.

This talks about the level at which learners can conduct simple conversations about everyday lives competently. Regarding the stages of speaking, Rivers and Temperly (1978) divided them into skill acquisition stage and skill use stage. Paulston and Bruder (1976) divided them into mechanical practice, meaningful practice, and communicative practice. Finally, D. Byrne (1988) categorized them presentation, rehearsal, and production stages.

The above achievement criterion is the skill use stage where learners fill information gap through meaning negotiations with their partners without their teachers’ controls.

(2) (Students) speak a series of events in accurate orders.

‘Speaking (a series of events) in accurate orders’ means speaking reasonably and logically, that is, effective speaking. There can be various ways to convey events that happen to learners or they want to tell. When being told without logical connections, the powers of communication/conveyance of a story would drop, and listeners’ understanding and interests will be decreased. Trainings are believed to be needed to speak logically and orderly from beginning levels.

(3) After (students) listen to or read easy and short talks or texts about everyday lives, they talk about causes and effects.

---

1 7-b level is equal to the second semester of the 7th grade. Students in the present study are in the 7-b level. Whereas criteria from number 1 through number 4 can be applied for both high and low-track course, number 5 and 6 are only for a high-track course.
(This item) is about an activity that integrates listening, reading, and speaking. In order to speak about causes and effects, understanding of the received contents is a precondition. The following short talk or text can be an appropriate material for practicing speaking of cause and effect.

(Example) After reading the following text, speak about the reason why Dixon doesn’t like his job.

Arthur Dixon is a salesman. He sells men’s clothes in a small shop. He gets up at 7 o’clock. After breakfast he goes to work. The shop opens at 9:30. He has lunch at twelve and then works from 1:00 until 6:00. He does the same thing every day. It is no fun. So Arthur does not like his job much.

(4) (Students) speak about their experiences or plans in simple ways.

The item (5) in speaking for the 6th grade is ‘(students) simply ask and answer about past events or future plans.’ This one was upgraded at the 7-b level to the point ‘(students) speak about their own past experiences or future plans.’ Compared to ‘ask and answer simply,’ the activity, ‘simply speak,’ implies that sentences become longer or speaking times become longer.

The concerns, when designing speaking activities, are degrees of controls, interests, types of interactions, linguistic reactions, accuracies and fluencies, and durations of talks. (Teachers) can introduce activities that concern each factor by meeting students’ levels. Among these, regarding durations of speeches, although it is possible to think the longer speech time would be better because (learners) cannot learn English without speaking it, it should be concerned that (learners) can feel burden of speaking time. An important thing is to make learners feel like speaking voluntarily without feeling burdens.

As ‘their own experiences or plans’ are familiar and specific to learners, they are basic (common) topics. In the case when learners feel difficulties for what and how to speak, teachers can provide plausible expressions or words that can be used for speaking
of experiences and plans in advance or guide the activities by providing material and controls for the contents to be spoken through questions and answers.

[Achievement Criteria for] High-Track Course

(5) After (students) listen to incomplete sentences, they create conclusions.

This achievement criterion is an activity that integrates listening and speaking. (This is an activity of) freely speaking the part that connects to what was heard and the part what was heard controls what will be spoken and shapes the contents with certain structures, certain functions, and certain topics.

(Example) *My favorite sport is (basketball. I like to jump. I like to watch basketball games on TV.)*

The speaking parts are not only possible as speaking formats at the levels of sentences by completing conclusions of sentences, but also as forms of adding sentences. Also, the format in which (learners) listen to various sentences and complete the conclusions of the last sentences is possible.

(6) (Students) recite their favorite short stories.

The effectiveness of stories was already mentioned. If the stories are the ones students are interested in, reciting them won’t be big burdens and can be natural. As repeatedly listening to or reading stories is needed to be recited, (teachers) should encourage (students) to feel interests and to repeat (stories). If (teacher) guide (learners) to change volumes (loud and silent), pitches (high or low), and speeds (fast or slow) of voices according to the contents of stories when they recite the stories, the recitations would be live ones. A story reciting is useful for accurate pronunciations, intonations and for the practices of accurate and clear speaking.
Appendix F
Textbook (Chapter 10)

Due to copyright, this appendix is not included here. Please, contact exk188@gmail.com to request this appendix
Appendix G

Handout (Information Gap Activity)

Lesson 11. 문과 영어기 활동

- 다음 장소 중 자신의 그림에 있는 장소에 원지 ○를 하고 히자 있는 장소를 아래 그림에 있는 장소에 원지올리고 하는 장소를 아래 그림에 있는 장소에 원지 날리지 않는 장소를 아래 그림에 있는 장소에 원지 날리지 않습니다.

department store    post office    park    library

gas station    museum    church    teacher’s house

flower shop    hospital    restaurant    bank

(예시 대화)
A: Excuse me. Is there a supermarket nearby?
B: Yes, there is. There’s one next to the school.
A: How far is it from here?
B: It’s two blocks away.
A: How can I get there?
B: Go straight one block and turn left. It’s on your right.

Lesson 11. 일 문과 영어기 활동

- 다음 장소 중 자신의 그림에 있는 장소에 원지 ○를 하고 히자 있는 장소를 아래 그림에 있는 장소에 원지 날리지 않는 장소를 아래 그림에 있는 장소에 원지 날리지 않습니다.

department store    post office    park    library

gas station    museum    church    teacher’s house

flower shop    hospital    restaurant    bank

(예시 대화)
A: Excuse me. Is there a supermarket nearby?
B: Yes, there is. There’s one next to the school.
A: How far is it from here?
B: It’s two blocks away.
A: How can I get there?
B: Go straight one block and turn left. It’s on your right.
Appendix H
Handout I in Mi-Ra’s Instruction
(Developed by Hee-Won)

Do you want to be the top?
필요한 조사 둘어 담은 해 봅시다.
정답 확인자 몇 개나 뭔가 세어 봅시다.

❖ 10차 Let’s Read(p186~188)
A. 다음을 연결하시오.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>▶ 단어, 숙어 연결하기</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. take part in~</td>
<td>a. 올라가다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. clean-up campaign</td>
<td>b. もを分(여)하여</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. be surprised</td>
<td>c. 적극을 잘 보존하다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. treat the earth well</td>
<td>d. 나도 ~가 아니다라고 생각한다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I don’t think that~</td>
<td>e. ~에 찌각하다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. not ~, either</td>
<td>f. 전경과 운동</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. through</td>
<td>g. ~도 역시 아니다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>▶ 단어의 둘 연결하기</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. following</td>
<td>a. 빚은(수, 양)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. collect</td>
<td>b. 포으나 수집하다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. a lot of</td>
<td>c. 해야한다</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. factory</td>
<td>d. 공장</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. must</td>
<td>e. 다음과 같은</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>▶ 동사와 현재형 - 과거형 연결하기</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. go</td>
<td>a. wrote</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. take</td>
<td>b. came</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. write</td>
<td>c. went</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. come</td>
<td>d. made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. make</td>
<td>e. took</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. 186~188을 읽고 다음 질문에 양조한 말을 고르거나 쓰십시오.
1. What campaign did Na-ri take part in ○?  

2. 다음 날말을 바르게 배열하시오.(알기의 날짜 쓰기)
   October 24th. Saturday. Sunny
→
Appendix I
Handout II in Mi-Ra’s Instruction

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Program Coordinator, South Korean English Teacher Training Program, The Pennsylvania State University, Summer, 2004

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