

4 | Innovative English Education Curricula and the Strategies of Implementation in Korea

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INTRODUCTION

A curriculum is defined as the set of courses and their contents as presented by a nation or institution. It also serves as an educational construct or framework in which the components of educational principles, objectives, content, methodology, and evaluation are included. Thus, a curriculum is an educational blueprint. It is a guideline for what an education system includes and how it is operated in the present as well as the future. In this sense, Korea's English curriculum can be regarded as the foundation on which English education is developed in a desired way (Kim & Jeon, 2005). By studying a curriculum, it is possible to discover what and how to learn and what and how to teach in the English subject at school.

In Korea, education is controlled by the government in terms of the development and implementation of policies and curricula. Reflecting national policy as well as societal requirements, English education policies are primarily top-down; most of the ideas of what to teach and how to teach it are decided by the federal government. In essence, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MOE&HRD), which was renamed from the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2001, determines the National Curriculum and as such, its objectives and content mirror the educational philosophies and principles of the established government. As each new government takes office, it tries to set up its own educational philosophy, and, as a result, develops a new curriculum for school education.

The same principle is applied to the development of English education. Each new government considered English education as a major school subject and tried to reflect the government's educational principles and visions. In each of the eight curriculum revisions since the first guideline

was established in 1946, there have been additions, deletions, or modifications to the content and organization of the curriculum. Although English curricula have been developed in an evolutionary way, recent- developed curricula adopted more innovative ideas, bringing far-reaching changes in the framework of the English education system.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how English curricula have been developed to adopt innovative ideas in Korea and what pedagogical strategies have been employed to make these innovative ideas feasible in Korean schools. In this discussion, this chapter will focus on three things. First, it will review the chronological development of English education in Korea as it pertains to English curricula (Choi, 2007; MOE, 2000). Second, it will discuss curriculum innovations that brought about a paradigm shift in English education in recent-developed English curricula. Finally, this chapter will highlight the strategies that have been used to implement these innovations in the classroom.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF KOREA'S ENGLISH CURRICULUM

The Joseon Dynasty Period (1883-1910)

English education in Korea began in 1883 at a government-established institute, named Tong-mun-hak. Three years later, a more modern-style school named Yuk-yeong-gong-won opened and remained until 1894. It was then that an English teacher by the name of Hutchinson from the Korean Naval Academy opened the Foreign Language School. In this school, Koreans began to participate in the program as instructors. The school remained in operation until 1910 when Korea was annexed by Japan.

In these government-operated schools, English was taught for specific purposes. The purpose of English education in these early days was to prepare government officials for diplomatic relations with foreign countries. With strong support from the government, English was taught for the modernization of the nation. In addition, since the mid-1890s, several private schools were opened by missionaries, where English was taught not as a popular school subject, but for a Christian mission.

Over all, at the end of the Joseon Dynasty, English was a popular academic subject at various government-run and private schools. The English curriculum was developed on a school-by-school basis. Each

school developed its own criteria and standards for content and methodology. In most schools, although the memorization technique was also widely used, English was taught using a direct method of instruction that focused on the use of authentic language. Students were expected to achieve a high standard of achievement through well-planned guidance from native speaking instructors. For example, in Yuk-yeong-gong-won, students were expected to master 3,000 English words in just 10 months; this is quite a lot compared to the current standard of achievement of English education in Korea (Kwon, 2000).

The Japanese Colonial Period (1910-1945)

English education declined as Japan gained influence on the Korean government in the early 1900s. Japan's colonization of Korea in 1910 brought a dark period for English education (Moon, 1976). English was no longer a main subject or even the medium of instruction at Korean schools. Instead, the Japanese language became the first language to be taught in school. In addition, as school-based education during this period reflected Japanese national philosophy, the curriculum for English education, which was applied nation-wide at the secondary school level, was based on Japan's English curriculum in both content and method.

In the early period of colonization, as English education became de-emphasized and classroom instruction hours and the amount of material covered in class decreased (Park, 1974), English was taught for two hours a week. It was only for business majors with explicit grammar explanation by the teacher as the primary method of instruction. However, after the March 1st Independence Movement in 1919, the Japanese colonial government loosened their control on curriculum at the higher-education institutes. Private colleges developed strong English programs, focusing on the cultivation of language skills for pre-service English teacher training. But this restoration of English education did not last long. At the start of World War II, English education was prohibited in Korea as Japan completely removed English from the Korean school curriculum.

The English Syllabus Period (1945. 10-1955. 7)

When the annexation of Korea ended in 1945, English education began to flourish. In that period, as English was considered a means of political and economic development, Korea placed a strong emphasis on English education in schools. This period is sometimes referred to as the 'birth'

period in the history of English curriculum development (Pae, 1999).

The U.S. military administration, which governed Korea at that time, tried to re-establish Korea's English education system. Together with several Korean scholars, it developed a national framework for English education that would serve as a national guideline to facilitate teachers' decisions on what to teach in their English classrooms. However, because of the limited human resources of the time, the administration only provided the teaching principles, syllabus, and teaching techniques, and not the personnel to actually teach (Oh, 1975).

In 1946, a national syllabus for English education was developed and applied to middle and high schools nation-wide. Influenced by the educational principles of the colonial period, basically, the Grammar-translation Method was recommended for English classroom instruction. As for the composition of curriculum organization, an analytical approach was applied, in which language skills, such as composition, grammar, reading, and handwriting, were separated in the secondary school (Moon, 2005). At the same time, listening and chorus reading were also emphasized to improve oral language proficiency.

From 1950 to 1953, Korea's educational system suffered because of the war between North and South Korea. Consequently, English education was extensively damaged at first, but was restored quickly with the strong support of the U.S. military (Pae, 2002). Since 1952, despite an impoverished educational environment, English began to be taught again at school.

The First English Curriculum Period (1955. 8-1963. 1)

After the Korean War armistice was signed in 1953, the first national curriculum for English education was developed in August, 1955. This early curriculum organized content according to school level and aimed to balance the development of educational and practical values through English education.

This curriculum brought a momentous advancement in Korea's English education. Although it was still an elective subject during this period, English was strongly emphasized at school. Class hours and the amount of material to be covered were described specifically in accordance with a student's grade. It also had several defining characteristics such as the separation of middle and high school curricula; and more emphasis on American rather than British English.

The content of English education in this curriculum contained four language skills, with an emphasis on grammar and structure. As for

teaching approaches, a new holistic approach was employed, emphasizing the integrative practice of the four language skills. In reality, however, more mechanical approaches of drilling and pattern practice were popular at school (Choi, 2007). In addition, contrastive analysis was employed in both content selection and instructional methods to help learners understand the differences between the English language and their mother tongue in terms of structure and grammar (Pae, 1987).

Despite its status as an elective subject, English was given similar importance as compulsory subjects like Korean in terms of class time at school. Table 1 shows the time allotment for English education at school designed by the MOE.

TABLE 1
English Class Hour Allotment (MOE, 1986)

	School	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade
Class Hours	Middle School	105-175	105-175	105-175
	High School	105-140	105-140	105-140

The Second English Curriculum Period (1963. 2-1973. 8)

The second curriculum for English was developed right after the political turmoil of the early 1960s. In 1961, a coup d'état placed a military government in power. The new government wanted to show a strong alliance with the U.S. government that still had an influential power on Korea. As a result, English education in schools was strengthened. In addition, separation in English education occurred between middle and high school. High school English education was no longer divided by grade, but instead by the subject type (English I and II) according to the level of difficulty. In addition, class hours increased to five hours per week.

The Second English Curriculum employed a more practical description in regard to the objectives, syllabus, and teaching methods than the previous one. In addition, specific information about evaluation was described for the first time in this curriculum. From a structural point of view, the new curriculum consisted of three parts: objectives, syllabus, and teaching methods.

This curriculum, which was different from the previous one in that it described objectives in regard to the improvement of comprehension over production skills, described its objectives in regard to four language skills and culture. More specifically, English education set the aims, first, to cultivate learners' listening and speaking ability with simple utterances

normally used in ordinary conversational contexts; second, to promote learners' reading and writing ability utilizing plain grammar structures and sentence patterns; and finally, to improve learners' understanding of the daily life and culture of English speakers.

This curriculum focused more on the teaching of integrative language skills compared to the previous one. The syllabus consisted of learning activities, language components, and the subject matter that were described according to language skills. To fulfill the objectives of English education, pronunciation, sentence patterns, vocabulary, and spelling were considered the four most important areas for both middle and high school students to learn. For middle school students, this curriculum featured a smaller vocabulary of new words to learn compared to earlier curricula and limited vocabulary to more familiar words. For high school students, a larger number of new words was prescribed: 1,800-2,500 for English I and 2,300-2,900 for English II. Furthermore, influenced by the contemporary theories of Behaviorism and the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, the use of pattern practice and oral conversation techniques were suggested. In addition, the implementation of integrative methods to teach the four language skills simultaneously was encouraged.

Despite its reinforcement of English education, this curriculum was criticized for its excess of what to teach and learn and the impracticality of how to teach and learn these things due to the limited number of competent teachers.

The Third English Curriculum Period (1973. 2-1981. 11)

In this period, thanks to the new trends of cognitive learning theory and discovery learning in Education, a knowledge-based curriculum was developed in all subjects with more specific analysis of learning materials. But some critics suggested that the level and the amount of learning content went beyond learners' ability (Choi, 2007). In reality, however, there was little difference in the objectives, content, or methodology compared to the previous curriculum. The objectives of the new English curricula of both middle and high schools, for example, emphasized the cultivation of grammatical knowledge similar to the English education objectives of the 2nd English Curriculum.

English was a compulsory subject at school during this period. Although it also emphasized learners' communicative ability, the new curriculum employed a structural syllabus that included a 765-word general vocabulary list, sentence patterns, and grammar structures. Language skills were

designed to be taught with a proportional approach; oral language skills were emphasized in the lower grade levels and written language skills received more emphasis as grade levels increased. The syllabus consisted of detailed information about sentence categories, sentence pattern types, structural components and functions, and the like. Sentence length was limited to 10 words in the 1st grade, 15 words in the 2nd grade, and 20 words in the 3rd grade (MOE, 1986). As in the previous curriculum, teaching and learning content of this curriculum contained a variety of topics familiar to learners as well as cultural information about the target language.

As for teaching and learning activities, audio-lingual paradigms influenced lessons a great deal. Teachers were dissuaded from giving explicit explanations of grammatical structures. Instead, pattern practice and mechanical drills were popular among teachers. Sentence patterns were the main content for these practice sessions. In addition, interactive activities accompanied with pattern practice were also encouraged as a way to improve learner's communicative competence. Language laboratories also played an important role in the cultivation of learners' communicative abilities.

The Fourth English Curriculum Period (1981. 12-1987. 2)

Entering a new era of Industrialized Society, Korea began to expand its trade with foreign countries and adopted an open diplomatic policy. The expansion in the areas of trade and foreign policy accompanied with the upcoming 1988 Summer Olympic Games required a new paradigm in English education. In order to facilitate this paradigm shift, the English curriculum was revised in 1981 immediately following the inauguration of the new government.

The new curriculum had several defining characteristics, as shown below.

1. A slight increase in class time allotment. (See Table 2.)
2. Oral language skills such as listening and speaking were emphasized in every level of proficiency.
3. The concept of 'live English' was used to stress the importance of learners' communicative ability in everyday contexts.
4. The use of audio-visual materials and familiar topics was encouraged in order to improve learners' motivation to learn English.

TABLE 2
Middle School English Class Hours per Week (MOE, 1986)

	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
The 3rd Curriculum	4	2-5	2-5
The 4th Curriculum	4	3-5	3-5

Although a structural syllabus was also employed in this curriculum, grammatical structures were not highlighted as the main content for learning. Instead, context-embedded dialogues were supplemented to enhance learner's ability to use the language accurately. The Fourth English Curriculum basically diminished the amount of content to be taught compared to the previous one. For example, in secondary school English classes, the number of essential words to teach was just 730, which was less compared to 765 words in the previous curriculum.

In this curriculum, teachers were encouraged to use a variety of teaching techniques to improve learners' language ability. In addition, restrictions on methodological applications were loosened, and the types of structural patterns and grammar elements were reduced. This reduction permitted teachers to employ new pedagogical approaches such as phonics and audio materials, for example, to teach accurate pronunciation.

The Fifth English Curriculum Period (1987. 2-1992. 10)

Ahead of the 1988 Seoul Summer Olympic Games, the new government revised the English curriculum, promoting communication-oriented aspects of English education. The Fifth English Curriculum, which was based partly on the previous one, preserved the basic ideas of the importance of learners' communicative ability based on an integrative use of the four language skills. In addition, during the period of the Fifth English Curriculum, English was taught as a compulsory subject for six years from the first grade of middle school (7th grade) to the third grade of high school (12th grade).

The Fifth English Curriculum repositioned the goals of English education toward cultivating learners' communicative competence and accumulating cultural information pertaining to the target language. However, it was assumed that these goals could be achieved through the systematic instruction of functional grammar. In this curriculum, structural syllabi were employed, focusing on activities to promote the four language skills in the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, instructions on grammatical knowledge and structural patterns were encouraged for middle

school students although explicit explanation by the teacher and the use of meta-linguistic elements were not advocated. The curriculum included fewer essential grammatical elements, which, in turn, helped bring more freedom and creativity to teachers with what to teach and how to teach it in class.

This curriculum employed an integrative approach, combining grammar-translation and communication-oriented activities. It also set forth a lengthy list of teaching approaches, focusing mainly on the integration of language skills and the gradual improvement of communicative ability. Regarding evaluation, the curriculum recommended the use of both discrete and integrative types of evaluation and suggested detailed criteria and standards for testing.

The Sixth English Curriculum Period (1992. 11-2001. 2)

The 1990s were marked by a government-led Korea-wide globalization policy aimed to move Korea into the center of politics, economy, culture, and the like. This policy also reinforced Korea's participation, cooperation, and collaboration in international society. As such, Korea's Globalization Steering Committee emphasized the importance of English education in effectively carrying out its globalization policies.

The Sixth English Curriculum declared English as the primary foreign language to learn in school. The general goals of English education focused more on the cultivation of learners' communicative competence and integrative ability to use the language in everyday communicative contexts. More emphasis was placed on language use rather than usage; on authentic language use rather than the use of language in limited contexts; on learning context-embedded expressions rather than context-reduced elements; on discourse-level utterances rather than sentence-level utterances; and on fluency-oriented activities rather than accuracy-oriented activities.

One major innovation in Korea's English education history during this period was the implementation of an elementary school English program in 1997. This new English program provided two hours of English instruction a week from 3rd to 6th grades. Adopting the framework of the secondary school curriculum, the development of the elementary school English curriculum facilitated the trend of learner-centered communication-oriented English education of the Sixth English Curriculum.

Realizing the effectiveness of affective factors on the improvement of learners' language ability, the Sixth English Curriculum also had the affective goal of emphasizing the importance of learners' interest in learning English. It was a monumental modification compared to previous

curricula that centered on the accumulation of grammatical knowledge of the language.

To improve students' communicative ability, learning and teaching content was organized around language functions instead of structures. However, a structural principle of organization was still used to control the structural difficulty for each grade. Following the principles of the Natural Approach (Krashen, 1981), it was suggested to teach comprehension-based skills prior to production-based skills. Each textbook lesson began with listening activities followed by reading, speaking, and finally writing activities. Grammar was not emphasized, and as a result, grammar instruction was even ignored by some teachers. In addition, the Sixth English Curriculum emphasized learner-centered learning by encouraging more recurrent use of group work and cooperative learning activities.

The Seventh English Curriculum Period (2001. 3-2009. 2)

There was little change in the basic principle of the Seventh English Curriculum compared to the previous one. The Seventh English Curriculum also aimed to develop basic communicative abilities to understand and use the English necessary for daily life and to provide a basis to introduce the culture of English speaking peoples. In addition, it strived to cultivate learners' English ability to introduce Korean culture to foreign countries (MOE, 2000).

Although learners' communicative ability was emphasized in English education, a balanced development of students' language abilities was emphasized between fluency and accuracy in the Seventh English Curriculum. It was assumed that communication-focused English education alone would not be the most effective approach for students to develop their ability to communicate effectively in a natural language context. Unlike the Sixth English Curriculum, the Seventh English Curriculum adopted a grammatical-functional syllabus by providing both communicative functions and grammatical structures (Kwon, 2000). The use of focus-on-form instruction was also encouraged, in which language forms and expression patterns were taught in a communicative context.

In the Seventh English Curriculum period, a clearer hierarchy was observed regarding the organization of the content and standards of achievement between elementary and secondary school English programs. In addition, English curricula were developed based on the new national education system. For example, the elementary and secondary school curricula were divided into two separate ones: the National Common Basic

Curriculum for 1st through 10th graders and the High School Elective Curriculum for 11th and 12th graders. In the National Common Basic Curriculum, English was taught with a level-differentiated approach in which English courses were offered with different levels to meet the diverse academic abilities of students (Kwon, 2000). For elementary school students, grade-differentiated courses were offered; while for secondary school students, stage-differentiated courses were offered. For this, two stages were designed for each grade at the secondary school level. For each grade or stage course, three levels of lessons – baseline, remedial, and advanced – were offered according to students’ level of achievement.

The Revised English Curriculum Period (2009. 3-)

In 2006, the Seventh English Curriculum was partially revised and a new English curriculum was developed which will be implemented in schools beginning in 2009. Although the content and structure of the Seventh English Curriculum was moderately revised to improve its applicability to actual school settings, the basic principles for English education at the primary and secondary school level remain the same. There are minimal changes in the objectives, content, methods, and evaluation. For example, the general objectives of English education remain almost the same as the Seventh English Curriculum, focusing on the cultivation of learners’ basic communicative abilities and the promotion of the exchange between the culture of the learners and the target culture.

In the Revised English Curriculum, learning content, such as language functions, communicative activities, and language materials are also similar to previous curricula. However, the number of new words to be learned in each grade is reduced to minimize the learning load on students.

TABLE 3
Number of New Words by School Levels (KICE, 2006)

School Level	Number of New Words			
Elementary School	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade
	110	120	130	140
Secondary School	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	10th Grade
	170	280	390	450

The curriculum lists 2,315 words, of which 75% are expected to be taught in schools. Of this, 736 words are expected to be taught at elementary school. In addition, there are some changes to content organization. Written language

is introduced one semester earlier than in the previous curriculum and now begins in the second semester of the 3rd grade.

Some changes in teaching-learning methods are also expected in the Revised English Curriculum. The four language skills are taught in an integrated manner; communicative functions are the main content for oral language instruction; language forms for written language instruction; and learning and teaching content should be selected on the basis of learners' cognitive and language level. In the new curriculum, a learner-centered approach that includes various teaching methods including individual, pair, and small group activities, is recommended. In addition, various multimedia and ICT-related materials and methods are recommended to motivate students to become involved with the learning activities.

Perhaps the most significant change in the Revised English Curriculum is that it abolishes the stage-specific curriculum from 7th to 10th grade. This curriculum posed some problems regarding the practicality of its application to the school setting. For example, one stage, which is designed to be one semester, is too short for students to complete one course. The organization of learning materials was not designed effectively for the stage-specific course. The implementation of remedial courses for students who failed was not possible due to limited capacities of school administration.

CHANGES IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The English curriculum in Korea has been revised to reflect new needs as the nation and society developed. From the 1950s, until the 1970s, English was the language of only the educated elites. In the 1980s, English became an instrumental tool in securing a better career. After the Seoul Summer Olympic Games, as overseas travel became more common, English was also learned for leisure purposes. In the 1990s, there was a movement that advocated the English language as the second national language for Koreans. Since that time, English has been taught in schools as a major subject for dual purposes. English education aims to foster learner's communicative ability in this modern lingua franca and also aspires to help students become part of the international community.

Throughout all of this revision, there have been several defining changes in the process of Korea's English curricula development. First, there has been a shift of focus in the curriculum components such as the objectives, content, methodology, and evaluation. Until the Fifth English Curriculum, emphasis was placed on the acquisition of grammatical knowledge. Accuracy

was the primary concern at that time. However, in the Sixth English Curriculum, there was a shift of learning objectives to learners' fluent use of the language. Oral language skills were emphasized and students were encouraged to practice authentic expressions and utterances in everyday conversation contexts. In the Seventh English Curriculum, another shift occurred, although it was a minor one. This curriculum tried to make a balance between language accuracy and language fluency. It was assumed that learners would be able to use the language fluently when they were equipped with accurate knowledge about the language. As such, detailed information about language forms was added to the curriculum. English teachers were encouraged to focus their lessons both on grammar and pragmatic practices. Second, the amount of learning content has decreased, thereby reducing the workload on students. More specifically, the number of new words that middle school students must learn has decreased with each curriculum revision. As shown in Table 4, the total number of new words in the Seventh or Revised English Curriculum are nearly half that of the First English Curriculum.

TABLE 4
Number of New Words for Each Grade Across National Curricula

	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	Total
First Curriculum	400	500	600	1,500
Second Curriculum	300-400	350-450	400-600	1,050-1,450
Third Curriculum	300-350	350-400	400-450	1,050-1,200
Fourth, Fifth, & Sixth Curriculum	300	350	400	1,050
Seventh & Revised Curriculum	200	250	350	800

In more recent-developed curricula, leaning focuses not on how many words students know, but on how well they are able to use the learned words in a given context. Thus, textbooks are designed to include activities in which learners are involved in communication interactions with limited expressions and vocabulary, and in which the same expressions are introduced in different communication situations. In this way, learners become familiar to the pragmatic rules of the expressions.

Third, there has been a shift regarding learning and teaching activities from teacher-centered to learner-centered. As Gattegno (1972), and Richards and Rodgers (2001) emphasized learner independence, autonomy, and responsibility in second language learning activities, learner-centered English education induces an active participation in classroom tasks. Since the Sixth English Curriculum,

learning activities such as role play or games which would necessitate learners' active participation are included in the textbook and recommended to use frequently in class. Students interact a great deal with one another in various configurations: pairs, small groups, teams, and whole class. Traditional teacher-centered drills and exercises were also used, but peripherally. Instead, teachers utilize or create learning activities and situations which prompt learner-involved interactions and communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). They should encourage students to participate in the activities and help them understand what they should achieve in the activities. The teacher's role has evolved from that of a class-dominator to that of a learning facilitator, helping learners to become involved in learning activities.

Fourth, as English curricula developed, the use of various instructional techniques and learning materials was encouraged. Teachers' reliance on traditional teacher-centered techniques, especially explanation-based or drill-oriented techniques, diminished. In addition, techniques accompanied with learners' autonomous practice became popular as learning machines and computer-oriented language learning techniques were introduced in English education. In the Third and Fourth English Curriculum periods, for example, the introduction of audio-visual machines and materials made learning more learner-controlled, helping learners control the learning process and pace. More recently, the rapid development of e-learning and Information Communication Technology (ICT) incites English teachers to bring them to their English classroom, which makes it feasible for learners to gain knowledge of English in more learner-designed ways.

Fifth, as the curricula have developed, more detailed information about evaluation has been added to help teachers understand what learners should achieve, and, at the same time, what and how to test the achievement of their learners. For example, the Fifth English Curriculum suggested validity, reliability, and practicality as the key criteria of good English testing (Choi, 2007). Furthermore, in the Sixth English Curriculum, the standards of achievement were described according to the language skill, which worked as criteria for testing.

In addition, the evaluation process for English education has been changed from production-based to process-based. The importance of a paper-and-pencil test has been decreased. Instead, various process-oriented evaluation approaches, such as portfolios, observations, peer-evaluations, and self-assessments, are encouraged as evaluation methods to recognize how well students acquire and utilize the learning content. In addition, appreciating the theory of interference of affective factors on language learning (Krashen, 1981), recent-developed English curricula encourage

teachers to be attentive to how much learners are motivated to learn English.

INNOVATIONS IN THE ENGLISH CURRICULA

School English education in Korea, despite its short history, has undergone eight curriculum revisions. Reflecting the needs of the nation, society and individual learners, each revision has served to develop English education in Korea. The addition of new pedagogical ideas and the modification of old principles that occurred in the course of curriculum revision have affected the teaching of English both directly and indirectly.

The development of English curriculum has been both evolutionary and revolutionary. Until the Fifth English Curriculum, there were limited changes and modifications in the curriculum components. However, in the Sixth English Curriculum, innovative changes occurred; and they were more ground-breaking than any previous changes. The background for curriculum innovation included new national and societal goals focusing on Korea's desire to play a part in international society, and Korea's burgeoning economic development. As such, more English-competent personnel were needed. To meet these new needs for English education, the government revised English education and proposed an innovative approach to developing content and methods in relation to Communicative Language Teaching. Here are some of the innovative ideas included in the recent-developed English curricula.

The Adoption of a Communicative Syllabus

Upon entering the 1990s, the concept of communicative ability had a significant impact on English education in Korea. The need for communication-based English education played an important role in curricular restructuring. The whole idea of a communicative approach to Korea's English education is based on the 'weak' version of Communicative Language Teaching (Howatt, 1984) and the sequence of communication activities proposed by Littlewood (1981). Learning materials consisted of pedagogical tasks in which learners are able to acquire the pragmatic rules of meaningful expressions.

A substantial change occurred regarding the selection and organization of learning content in the Sixth English Curriculum that was launched in 1995. It was a communicative syllabus that provided a list of 47 communicative

functions with 87 sub-functions to learn including greetings, introductions, requests for information, expressing and inquiring about emotional feelings, and so on. Each of these sub-functions was illustrated with exemplary expressions. The curriculum recommends the use of the examples and functions of communication in spoken and written language activities, while other examples are permitted (KICE, 2006). Below is an example of these communicative functions and exemplary expressions.

Function:	Expressing Gratitude
Sub-function:	Expressing Gratitude
Exemplary expression:	*Thank you (very much). *Thanks (a lot). I am very grateful. It was very nice of you (to help me).
Sub-function:	Replying to Gratitude
Exemplary expression:	*Sure. *You're welcome. *No problem. *(It was) My pleasure. Don't mention it. I was delighted to... (be able to help).

Expressions marked with an asterisk are recommended for the elementary school level, with the rest left for the secondary school level. The words or phrases in the parenthesis are optional and can be used in certain circumstances.

The implementation of communicative syllabi also brought a change in the learning content from structure-oriented to function-oriented. English classes became more activity-oriented and focused on the acquisition of authentic expressions through real-world conversation contexts. Textbook lessons have been organized on communicative functions rather than grammar structures. Based on the principles of communication, task, and meaningfulness (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), various learning activities were selected in order to promote learners' engagement in meaningful communication tasks. Interaction between students and between the student and the teacher was encouraged during classroom activities. This increase in interaction brought more chances for students to practice the exemplary expressions prescribed in the curriculum. Through interactive activities, learners became familiar with authentic pragmatic rules that they can later apply to the real world.

This implementation of a meaning-focused communicative syllabus encountered some criticism toward the end of the Sixth English Curriculum period. Critics suggested that, without grammatical knowledge, the linguistic ability of learners would be akin to “a castle built on sand.” Since the Seventh English Curriculum, language forms became part of the syllabus and received more attention when developing classroom activities for English education. As a result, both grammar-oriented and communicative-focused lessons are recommended to help learners to cultivate a more balanced communicative ability in terms of accurate and fluent language use.

The Implementation of Elementary School English

Perhaps the most significant innovation in the history of Korea’s English education occurred in 1997 with the introduction of English education at the elementary school level (Kwon, 2000). After several years of debate about its effectiveness, the MOE decided to implement English education in elementary school and developed the curriculum for English as a regular subject. The characteristics of the elementary school English curriculum are as follows (MOE, 1995).

1. The leaning of oral language is the primary goal.
2. English is taught from the 3rd grade.
3. Affective goals are more important than cognitive goals; thus various techniques to improve learning motivation are encouraged.
4. Vocabulary is strictly controlled. See Table 5.
5. Sentence length is controlled to seven words for 3rd and 4th grades and nine words for 5th and 6th grades.
6. A functional syllabus was employed with nine categories of functions.
7. Cognitive-oriented evaluation is not encouraged to test student progress.

TABLE 5
Number of New Words for Elementary School English Education

Curriculum	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade
Sixth	approx. 100	approx. 100	approx. 150	approx. 150
Seventh	80-120	80-120	90-130	90-130
Revised	less than 110	less than 120	less than 130	less than 140

The Sixth English Curriculum for elementary school English originally outlined two hours per week of instruction starting from the 3rd grade. But

since the Seventh English Curriculum, class time has been reduced to one hour for 3rd and 4th graders. Within this, elementary school English adopts a proportional approach in terms of the introduction of language skills. As such, 3rd grade students only receive instruction pertaining to oral language skills like listening and speaking. Reading skills are introduced to 4th graders, limited to the alphabet level. Reading on the word level and writing on the alphabet level are taught to 5th graders. Only with 6th graders are all four language skills taught together with an increase in writing skills to include short sentences.

Following the framework of the secondary school Sixth English Curriculum, the elementary school English curriculum adopted a functional syllabus. This syllabus included nine broad categories of communicative functions and 128 exemplary sentences, which were familiar to primary students' everyday conversation contexts. In addition, the curriculum recommended activity-oriented instruction including pair or small group activities such as games, role-plays, songs and chants. For the elementary school English program, textbooks and teaching materials were prepared by commercial publishers, with 16 of them being authorized for use by the government.

At elementary schools, English was originally taught as a single subject by homeroom teachers. Currently, it is increasingly common that English is taught by subject-responsible teachers who teach only English. Since elementary teachers do not major in English at college, they require intensive in-service teacher-training to become competent English teachers. Teachers were trained on how to teach this new subject, mainly focusing on the improvement of their skills in teaching and material development.

The implementation of primary school English programs brought large-scale changes to the whole paradigm of English education in Korea. For example, since, at the elementary school level, oral language receives more focus than written language, more oral-based classroom activities are used for both elementary and secondary school students. The proportional approach in regard to oral and written language skills has brought more emphasis on oral language skills in the lower grades with a gradual increase of written language in the higher grades. In addition, affective goals such as promoting learning motivation and lowering anxiety, both of which are emphasized in elementary English education, brought about changes in attitude in both learners and teachers that English can be learned better when learners are more highly motivated.

The Use of a Level-differentiated Curriculum

Another innovative idea in recent English curricula is the use of a level-differentiated curriculum to help improve the effectiveness of curriculum application. In this curriculum, English is taught using different materials and methods to meet learners' language proficiency. It was commonly observed that learners with diverse ranges of language proficiency and learning ability were taking lessons in the same classroom. Thus, teachers experienced difficulties in applying materials and teaching methods to them. The level-differentiated curriculum aims to overcome these difficulties.

It is a very complicated system. First, students are divided into three levels according to their language proficiency: the remedial or supplementary level, the basic level, and the advanced level. Then, there are three types of level-differentiated courses: a level-specific course; a stage-specific course; and a subject-choice course. In each course, English is taught according to the three levels of students' proficiency. In all courses, the majority of classroom instruction is focused on baseline instruction; remedial or advanced instruction is offered for learners who achieve scores higher or lower than the baseline standards.

A level-specific course, which is the basic idea of the level-differentiated curriculum, is offered to elementary school students. Here students of each grade can receive the lesson according to their language proficiency level. In this course, classroom level-differentiated instruction where students work in a small group of the same proficiency level is recommended. With this system, teachers are required to prepare level-differentiated materials that utilize identical learning tasks.

A stage-specific course is offered to students from the 7th to 10th grade. In this course, each grade is separated into two stages, A and B, and the concept of promotion is employed. Students who attain the achievement standards of a particular stage can move up to a higher stage; however, those students who do not attain the achievement standards have to repeat stage.

A subject-choice level-differentiated course is offered to 11th and 12th grade students. In this system, students are expected to choose two English-related subjects from among five: General English I, General English II, English Reading, English Conversation, and English Writing, each of which is designed for students with different levels of language proficiency.

Critics have derided the effectiveness of the level-differentiated courses for English education, especially the use of stage-specific courses in the grade system of Korean schools. Neither teachers nor students are familiar with the concept of promotion according to learners' level of achievement

in the requisite stage. Negative responses were raised by the teachers who were concerned that the students who fail to achieve the minimum standard should repeat the same stage. Questions also arose concerning the effective implementation of such courses due to the stringent grade system of Korean schools. As a result, the stage-specific course will be discarded in the Revised English Curriculum.

The Use of Achievement Standards

The concept of achievement standards started with the Seventh English Curriculum. Until the Sixth English Curriculum, general objectives for each grade or level were the criteria of achievement and the standard for evaluating students' ability. However, they were so vague that teachers were unable to assess student achievement with any degree of accuracy.

The Seventh English Curriculum's achievement standards are described in accordance with the grade in elementary schools and with the stage in secondary schools. In each grade or stage, the curriculum describes five to seven standards that learners should achieve regarding the four language skills. In addition, to improve the evaluative validity for level-differentiated English education, the curriculum also includes three to four achievement standards for the advanced level. This dual description of achievement standards will be abandoned in the revised amendment that will be effective from 2009 because this new curriculum focuses on basic level learning. In the new curriculum, level-differentiated courses are implemented more systematically through government-initiated development of level-differentiated learning materials.

The use of achievement standards helps textbook developers as well as teachers understand the specific goals of each proficiency level that students need to attain in the lesson. As mentioned earlier, achievement standards also work as criteria for evaluation.

The Application of E-learning

E-Learning includes education through networked technology, such as Internets or Intranets. It enables students to learn without limiting them to a particular time or place. The MOE&HRD expects to boost public education and reduce private education costs by providing a varied and high-quality selection of e-Learning programs. As such, the Korean government will spend 126.3 billion won (approx US \$130 million) each year to enlarge the nation's e-Learning infrastructure. The effort, which is based on Korea's already extensive high-speed Internet penetration and is expected to expand

the everyday use of on-line learning, is part of South Korea's goal to become a leading e-Learning country by 2010.

To this end, the MOE&HRD and local offices of education have been working on the development of various types of e-Learning models and teaching-learning materials for English education. One example is the 'digital textbook' proposed by the MOE&HRD. This study program operates via digital media such as personal computers and wired or wireless networks. It can go beyond conventional paper textbooks by using such features as video clips, animation, and virtual reality.

In today's rapidly changing society and with the massive influx of information, the government needs to revise textbook content as required. Digital textbook content can, and will be, updated whenever needed. The digital textbook will also be networked to social databases, enabling students to use much more information than just the textbook itself. Some 66 billion won (approx. US \$70 million) will be put into the project. The government also plans to develop study terminals compatible with other multimedia devices and make them available to students. Undoubtedly, e-learning will be one of the most important issues in English education in the next decade.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

For an effective application of innovative English curricula, the implementation of new strategies and policies has been adopted. Teacher-related strategies, such as the employment of communication-oriented teaching methods and techniques, have been emphasized in the on-going in-service training. In addition, government financial support in the policy making has also increased, making it possible to develop new strategies. The following items are the main implementation strategies.

The Use of Activity-oriented Textbooks

As new curricula innovations were implemented in English education, curricula components, especially the learning content, changed to include more communicative features. On the basis of the idea that communication-oriented English education views language acquisition as a process of acquiring skills rather than a body of knowledge, the new curriculum encourages teachers and material developers to pay more attention to tasks that actually have learners interact.

English textbooks developed since the Sixth English Curriculum have become more activity-oriented while grammar structures have moved to the periphery. Lessons focused on communicative functions and activities that allow students to practice authentic expressions in context-embedded situations to develop communicative processes and strategies have been implemented.

The Invitation of Native Speaking English Teachers

In accordance with the communicative goals and objectives of the Sixth English Curriculum, the MOE&HRD set up a policy that English should be taught through English. However, the lack of English proficiency of Korean teachers caused a low effectiveness of the policy. To overcome this matter, the government set forth to increase the number of first language speakers of English in English classrooms.

To this end, in 1995, the government created a program to invite native English speaking teachers to Korea. The aptly named English Program in Korea (EPIK) works with 19 Korean Embassies and Consulates abroad and is responsible for the screening, selecting, placing, and training of first language speakers of English in Korean schools. At first, the number of invited instructors was not more than 200, however the number increased rapidly until the 1998 Asian financial crisis. As Korea recovered from the crisis, the number has been increasing again. Recently, in addition to EPIK, provincial offices of education have begun their own programs to bring native English speaking teachers to their schools. In 2006, the total number of English Language Assistants in Korea solely under EPIK totaled 1,950.

EPIK and its instructors have a mandate to 1) foster the English communicative competence of primary and secondary students; 2) provide English conversation training to Korean teachers of English; 3) assist in the development of English textbooks and other teaching materials; 4) improve and expand English teaching methodologies; 5) encourage and facilitate cultural awareness; and 6) better the international image and reputation of the Republic of Korea.

Demand for first language English speaking teachers is expected to increase until such time that Korean teachers of English acquire a level of English proficiency that allows them to use English as the exclusive language of instruction in their classes.

The Development of Level-differentiated Materials

As the Seventh English Curriculum was implemented in schools, the MOE&HRD, local offices of education, and individual schools developed teaching and learning materials for the effective application of level-differentiated lessons. There are two types of level-differentiated materials: one is developed with different content according to learners' levels and the other with identical content but including additional activities for in-depth study. The former can be used in interclass level-differentiated lessons because the instructor can choose different kinds of materials according to the learners' levels and differentiate both the content and the activities for the class. In this case, it is important to provide specific standards for the differentiation of content in developing differentiated materials.

The purpose of the in-depth study materials is to teach students differently by using different educational activities. All levels of students study together using the same material in the basic level class. Students then study separately using different material for the in-depth and supplementary classes. Therefore, this kind of material is suited to elementary school English classes where a level-specific curriculum is applied.

In this system, much more effort is required to develop supplementary course materials. The teacher may have to prepare more interesting course materials since students in need of supplementary study usually have the burden of studying what they have already learned. Teachers can develop those materials in association with other teachers in the school or from other schools teaching the same level students rather than developing them individually.

However, the level-differentiated materials in the Revised English Curriculum that will be launched in 2009 differ from the previous ones. The learning content such as dialogues and reading passages will be identical in the lessons of all three proficiency levels. However, distinctive activities with different levels of difficulty will be developed to implement level-differentiated learning.

The Development of ICT Materials and Methods

The education of this century requires a new kind of environment that can realize autonomy, creativity and diversity of education in cyberspace by means of technology. As such, the development and application of ICT has become one of the most important solutions of the times to overcome the individual differences of learners.

The application of ICT in English education through Web-based and

CD-ROM content suggests a large variety of learning materials more interestingly and effectively by minimizing learners' affective filter. After the appearance of the Seventh English Curriculum, diverse computer-assisted materials have been developed and applied directly to English lessons, especially in elementary English education. CD-ROM materials produced and dispersed by the Seventh English Curriculum include, among others, instructional activities such as silent view, visual off listening, pause, and repeated watching. Still, various ICT materials such as conversations with first language speakers of English through audio/video conferences or text-based communication by keypad are in the process of development. In light of this, orientation and training for teachers is essential so that English education through ICT materials happen with greater frequency. Furthermore, in the Revised English Curriculum period, digital textbooks will be used as teaching materials. These digital texts will move beyond conventional paper textbooks by using features as varied as video clips, animation, and virtual reality.

Reinforced Teacher Education

The most important criterion for successful implementation of these innovations and continued improvement of the quality of English education in Korea depends on schools having enough capable teachers in both language ability and teaching skill. From this perspective, the Korean government has been reviewing pre-service and in-service training programs for English teachers, and has proposed innovative policies to improve the quality of these programs.

Pre-service Teacher Training

For pre-service teacher training programs, the MOE&HRD has proposed a policy to cultivate competent and capable English teachers. It determined that existing pre-service teacher training programs ineffectiveness is the result of a dominance of linguistic and literature subjects or courses. Recently, more language skill courses and ELT pedagogy subjects have been included, and the proportion of literature and linguistics courses has been reduced. The MOE&HRD is planning to implement a nation-wide authentication system for pre-service English teacher training programs in the near future. In this system, the government will evaluate the quality of each pre-service program's ability to cultivate competent and capable teachers with the required language abilities and teaching skills. For example, curricula of English education departments at universities will be

restructured to remove their emphasis on literature-based study and place a greater emphasis on delivering and developing practical teaching methodologies.

In-service Teaching Training

In its continuing drive to boost the quality of English education in Korea, the MOE&HRD has emphasized in-service education for English teachers. For example, the MOE&HRD created an intensive in-service training program for English teachers in 2003. The aptly named Intensive English Teacher Training Program (IETTP) is a nation-wide government-funded training program. The purpose of the program is to cultivate leading teachers who are able to teach English through English. As such, the IETTP focuses not only on the training of English teachers' communicative competence but also on the cultivation of their ability to deliver course content efficiently in English.

The IETTP is a long-term teacher training program which consists of approximately 800 hours of instruction over a six-month (26-week) period including four weeks of overseas training in an English speaking country. The Program is divided into four main sessions: Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, and Advanced Plus. The first three sessions (22 weeks) are conducted at the Foreign Language Training Center in the Center for In-service Education at the Korea National University of Education. The Advanced Plus session consists of four weeks of overseas training.

The IETTP is part of a multi-stepped approach toward ensuring that English becomes the language of instruction in English classrooms throughout Korea. As such, the IETTP focuses not only on the English communicative competence of Korean teachers of English but also on their ability to deliver course content in English. In support of these goals, the IETTP maintains the following standards.

1. Small class sizes (less than 15 trainees) that maximize in-class learning opportunities;
2. Communicative-based curricula that focus on both linguistic and pedagogical development;
3. Micro-teaching presentations and demonstrations that allow trainees to put theory into practice; and
4. Practicum-based overseas field study that facilitates communication in an authentic English environment.

In addition to the IETTP, the MOE&HRD has tried other ways to

strengthen training for English teachers. One such way has been to reduce the length of time between mandatory training programs. For example, in the very near future, teachers will be required to undergo in-service training program every three years instead of the current five years.

CONCLUSION

As Koike (2007) mentioned, history is not the past, “but it is about how past events have led to our present conditions” (p. 95). In the short history of English education, as the curriculum was revised, new ideas and implementation strategies have been adopted to improve the quality of English education, sometimes in a limited way, and other times in an innovative way. There are two main factors that have caused Korea’s English curriculum innovation. One is the shift in the basic principles of English education that occurred in the mid-1990s and the other is the applicability of the curriculum to actual school settings.

In the mid-1990s English curriculum shifted from grammar-focused to communication-focused; from knowledge-based to skill-based; and from teacher-centered to learner-centered. Since then, Korea’s English education has focused on communication-oriented, learner-centered, and experience-oriented approaches.

Recently, the applicability of the curriculum to real school situations has driven change in curriculum innovation. The MOE&HRD changed its policy of curriculum revision from an unconditional whole-revision approach to an as-needed partial-revision approach. Unlike traditional revisions in which the fundamental principles of the curriculum were changed, recent changes focused more on minor problems observed in the process of curriculum implementation. The upcoming 2009 Revised English Curriculum is an example of this new curriculum revision policy.

The English curriculum has been constantly revised and developed to meet the needs of the learner, the society, and the nation as well as to improve the applicability of the components of the curriculum. However, there is always criticism about the discrepancy between ideals and reality (Choi, 2007). What is planned does not always equate to what is actually being taught (Chew, 2007; Nunan, 2001). In reality, English classes did not adopt all the components described in the curriculum. For example, oral language has been emphasized since the Fourth English Curriculum, but reading remains the dominant language skill taught in the classroom. Lessons for communicative activities have been recommended since the

Fifth English Curriculum, however grammar knowledge is still the major content of many English lessons. The level-differentiated curriculum of the Seventh English Curriculum was not carried out in the classroom as it was designed and as a result, the stage-differentiated curriculum will be abandoned in the next curriculum revision.

There are several reasons for this gap between theory and reality, and most of them have been ignored by the MOE&HRD. One such reason is the rigid understanding of the concept of learning and teaching held by many teachers in Korea. Korean teachers often understand learning and teaching as a set of fixed processes in which learning occurs only when knowledge of the subject is provided. With such a rigid view of education, these teachers are not yet ready to accept the innovative ideas of learner-centered lessons in their lessons. In short, the gap that exists between the ideals of the curriculum and realities of the classroom can be attributed to a lack of professionalism on the part of many teachers. There is a saying that the quality of education depends on the quality of the teacher. In situations where teachers are not well-equipped with competent language proficiency and teaching skills with a positive attitude to adopt innovative ideas in the classroom, the innovative ideas of the English curriculum remain unfulfilled.

Another reason for the gap between what should happen and what is actually happening in the classroom is a strong washback effect from Korea's College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) that was first administered in 1993. The test focuses on measuring learner's knowledge and ability mainly in the areas of communicative competence, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and grammar knowledge. It is designed to evaluate learner's comprehension and production ability; however, in reality, the evaluation of productive abilities is limited due to the paper-and-pencil testing method. Another drawback of the test would be the almost fixed pattern of the test. Despite the drawbacks of the CSAT, in Korean secondary schools, especially in high school, school English education has been focused on the improvement of learner knowledge and skills to deal with the test. Since English is one of primary subjects on the CSAT, the framework of school English education incorrectly focuses on reading and listening.

Without solving these issues, the innovations of Korea's English curricula and creative strategies for implementation will not attain effective development. Thus, the next task in English curricula innovation is to focus on finding better ways to solve these problems. Then, Korea's English education will be ready to adopt even more innovations.

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